RURAL TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT
IN THE MIDST OF THE CONFLICT

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

2010

JORGE ALBERTO CASTRO HERNÁNDEZ

SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RURAL TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT AS THE STARTING POINT</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A GAP TO BE FILLED</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Theoretical Contributions to the Rural Territorial Development Approach</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Empirical Applications to the Field of Peacebuilding</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THESIS STRUCTURE</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER ONE: METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDENTIFYING THE RESEARCH STRATEGY TO ANSWER THE RESEARCH QUESTION</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PDPMM AS A CASE-STUDY</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Evolution of the PDPMM Proposal</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. PDPMM’s Aim</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. PDPMM’s Methodology</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELEVANCE OF THE CASE STUDY</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH POSTULATES</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. First step: Actors and Views of Rural Development</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Second step: Incommensurabilities Among Views of Development</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Third step: Dealing with Conflict</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Semi-Structure Interviews</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Documents, Data Bases and Secondary Bibliography</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER TWO: THE MIDDLE MAGDALENA REGION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MIDDLE MAGDALENA: A REGION TO BE BUILT</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Building a Region</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDDLE MAGDALENA: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Republican Period</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. First Half of the XX Century</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. The Bipartisan Period of Violence and the National Front</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER THREE: A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO CONFLICT

I. THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND CONFLICT

II. CONCEPTUALIZING CONFLICT

III. APPROACHING VIOLENT CONFLICT

IV. THE CAUSES OF VIOLENT CONFLICT
   A. The Structural Approach
   B. Subjective Causes of Violent Conflict

V. THE CASE OF COLOMBIA
   A. Objective Causes
   B. Subjective Causes

VI. OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE APPROACHES REVISITED

CHAPTER FOUR: LATIN AMERICAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT: PARADIGMS, PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES

I. THE MODERNIZATION PARADIGM

II. DEPENDENCY THEORY
   A. Structuralist Dependency Theory
   B. Radical Dependency Theory

III. NEOLIBERALISM
   A. Neoliberal Contribution to Rural Development
CHAPTER FIVE: VISIONS AND ACTORS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN MIDDLE MAGDALENA

I. THE RURAL COMMUNITIES’ VIEW
   A. Peasant Struggles in Middle Magdalena: 1975-2006
      1. The Fight for Land
      2. Human Rights
      3. Government Policies
   B. Plan for the Development and Integral Protection of Human Rights (PDPIDH)

II. THE CAPITALIST VISION
   A. ECOPETROL
   B. African Palm
      1. Oil Palm Production
      2. Palm for Biodiesel
   C. General Observations about the Capitalist Vision

III. THE TERRITORIAL APPROACH
   A. PDPMM’s Proposal

IV. THE STRATEGIC AND MILITARY APPROACH
   A. ELN
   B. FARC
   C. AUC

V. THE COCAINE “MODEL”
   A. The cocaine economy

VI. CONCLUSION

CHAPTER SIX: INCOMMENSURABILITIES AND CONFLICTS AMONG VIEWS

I. MIDDLE MAGDALENA: DEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDST OF THE CONFLICT
II. THE CULTIVATION OF AFRICAN PALM IN MIDDLE MAGDALENA: VISIONS AND ACTORS........................................ 194
   A. General Observations............................................................... 194
   B. Modes of Palm Production..................................................... 195
      1. The Capitalist Model........................................................ 195
      2. The PDPMM’s Peasant Palm Project...................................... 198
   C. The Cultivation of African Palm from Other Visions................. 200
      1. ACVC................................................................................. 200
      2. The Approach of FARC......................................................... 201
   D. The Case of the Municipality of Regidor: Development for Whom?........................................................................ 202
      1. African Palm Arrives at Regidor........................................... 202
      2. The Conflict Came to Light.................................................. 205

III. INCOMMENSURABILITY BETWEEN VISIONS OF DEVELOPMENT...................................................................... 209
   A. Teleological Incommensurability............................................... 210
      1. The Different Aims of Development....................................... 210
      2. Development in a Post-Conflict Situation versus Development in the midst of the Conflict............................... 211
   B. Territorial and Productive Incommensurability.......................... 213
      1. Middle Magdalena: Region in Construction or Territory in Dispute?....................................................................... 213
      2. An Agro-Industry without Peasants Versus Peasants in Agro-Industry................................................................. 216
      3. The Conflict over Land.......................................................... 219

IV. CONCLUSION.................................................................................. 224

CHAPTER SEVEN: DEALING WITH CONFLICT........................................... 229

I. INTRODUCTION.............................................................................. 229
II. DEVELOPMENT IS THE NEW NAME FOR PEACE.......................... 230
III. A TERRITORIAL APPROACH TO PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT........................................................................ 233
IV. THE PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL PEOPLE IN THE PRODUCTIVE PROCESS.......................................................... 236
V. MAKING PEACE THROUGH PRODUCTIVE AND SOCIAL PROJECTS..................................................................... 237
   A. The Regional Cocoa Project...................................................... 238
 VI. TOWARDS A REGIONAL PROPOSAL........................................... 244
    A. The Dialogue with Armed Actors.......................................... 248
    B. The Dialogue with Entrepreneurs and Investors..................... 252
    C. The Cira-Infantas Project: An Opportunity for Growth........... 255
       1. The Right to Remain in the Territory................................... 256
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1. Relevant Situations for Different Research Strategies................. 40
Table 1.2. Types of Social Studies................................................................. 41
Table 2.1. Departments, Sub-Regions and Municipalities in Middle Magdalena According to the PDPMM........................................................ 69
Table 2.2. Conflict Related Murders in Middle Magdalena: 1997-2007............... 77
Table 2.3. Murder Rate of Civilians for Political Reasons in Middle Magdalena: 1997-2007.......................................................... 78
Table 2.4. Urban-Rural Population in Middle Magdalena: Census 1993 and 2005........................................................................... 82
Table 2.5. Unmet Basic Needs in Middle Magdalena: 1993 and 2005............ 84
Table 2.6. Middle Magdalena Annual Gross Product Value – 2005............. 86
Table 2.7. *Palma Campesina* (Peasant Palm) in Middle Magdalena – 2006................................................................................. 94
Table 3.1. Overview and Definitions of the Conflict Intensity........................ 104
Table 5.1. Agrarian Economies: Comparative Features.............................. 183
Table 8.1. Principal Views and Actors of Rural Development in Middle Magdalena........................................................................ 273

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 0.1. Typology of Rural Territories....................................................... 27
Figure 2.1. Conflict Related Murders in Middle Magdalena: 1997-2007........ 76
Figure 2.2. Trend of Displaced People in Middle Magdalena: 1994-2007...... 80
Figure 2.3. Trend of People Forcibly Displaced into Middle Magdalena: 1997-2007......................................................................... 81
Figure 2.4. Oil Production in Middle Magdalena: 1990-2005...................... 90
Figure 2.5. Evolution of the Planted Area and the Area in Production of African Palm in Middle Magdalena: 1994-2005......................... 92
Figure 2.6. Trend of the Planted Area and the Area in Production of Cacao in Middle Magdalena: 1995-2004........................................... 94
Figure 2.7. Land Use in Colombia................................................................. 96
Figure 2.8. Trend of Coca Cultivation in Middle Magdalena: 1999-2005..... 97
Figure 5.1. Major Peasant Struggles in Middle Magdalena: 1975-2006...... 156
Figure 5.2. Reasons for Struggles in Middle Magdalena: 1975-1990........... 157
Figure 5.3. Reasons for Struggles in Middle Magdalena: 1991-2006......... 157
# LIST OF MAPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Map 2.1.</th>
<th>The Middle Magdalena Region</th>
<th>68</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Map 2.2.</td>
<td>Economic Activity in Middle Magdalena</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 2.3.</td>
<td>Economic Activity in MM - Geographical Location</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The aim of this dissertation is to provide a critical understanding of a Rural Territorial Development (RTD) intervention in a context of conflict dynamics, by looking at the case of the Programme for Development and Peace in Middle Magdalena (PDPMM) - Colombia. To accomplish this task the research process discussed both theoretical and empirical inputs. Firstly, a theoretical framework was developed to understand the dynamics of the development-conflict nexus in rural territories.

Secondly, supported by the examination of a case-study, systematic empirical information was collected, incorporating quantitative and qualitative evidence in order to explore the explicit conflict dynamics, namely the practical and theoretical incommensurability between opposite views of rural development taking place in the Middle Magdalena region. Such analysis was further elaborated in three steps: first, the research characterized the main visions of rural development that are being pursued in Middle Magdalena; second, a comparative analysis was carried out in order to identify incommensurabilities and contradictions among those views of development; and third, the study focused on the PDPMM in order to examine how its rural territorial development strategy influences the course of conflict dynamics. On the basis of this methodology, the study shows that rural territorial interventions should focus on building pragmatic articulations among opposite views of development to establish a common development proposal that overcomes conflict and poverty in rural territories.

**Key words:** Rural Territorial Development; violent conflict; conflict dynamics; incommensurability; pragmatic articulations; the Middle Magdalena region (Colombia); Programme for Development and Peace in Middle Magdalena.
DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT

1. The author of this thesis (including any appendices and/or schedules to this thesis) owns certain copyright or related rights in it (the “Copyright”) and he has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative purposes.

2. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made only in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has from time to time. This page must form part of any such copies made.

3. The ownership of certain Copyright, patents, designs, trade marks and other intellectual property (the “Intellectual Property”) and any reproductions of copyright works in the thesis, for example graphs and tables (“Reproductions”), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions.

4. Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialization of this thesis, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy (see http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/policies/intellectual-property.pdf), in any relevant Thesis restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, The University Library’s regulations (see http://www.manchester.ac.uk/library/aboutus/regulations) and in The University’s policy on presentation of Theses.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout this academic journey I was very fortunate to have met people who were very helpful and kind in my time as a PhD student. This research project would not have been possible without the support of so many people, whose inputs I feel truly grateful for.

Above all, I want to give thanks to God who gave me the strength and confidence to accomplish this challenging task. Additionally, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks and profound gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Anthony Bebbington, for his invaluable guidance, supervision and useful suggestions throughout this research work. His continuous guidance enabled me to complete my thesis successfully. I am also thankful to my second supervisor, Dr. Phillip Woodhouse, for his valuable suggestions throughout this study.

My Deepest gratitude also goes to my friends and companions of the Society of Jesus in the U.K. and Colombia, whose human, spiritual and financial support allowed me to accomplish this study. I am similarly grateful to Fr. Christopher Dawson, who gave me accommodation at St. Augustine’s presbytery in Manchester, and the people of the Loyola Hall Spirituality Centre in Rainhill, whom kind-heartedly accompanied me during part of this academic process. I am also grateful for all the support I received from my friends of the St. Augustine’s Parish in Manchester, which certainly helped me to get through the challenging moments of this process.

In these years, I have also benefited a lot from the extensive knowledge and experience of the people working in the PDPMM and CINEP, in particular their Directors Francisco de Roux and Mauricio García respectively, who unconditionally backed my research project and gave me all the support required.
I am also grateful to all the inhabitants of the Middle Magdalena region, the place in which this study bore fruit, for sharing their dreams and hopes of everlasting peace. Among them, I am deeply grateful to all the people who agreed to be interviewed and shared honestly with me their thoughts and experiences on conflict dynamics and rural development matters.

Moreover, I want to mention the people who helped me find the adequate way to express my ideas in a different language from the native one. Thanks to Mia Azicate, Kirsten Horwarth, Maureen Farrellf, Marianna Koly and Angélica Meza, who checked and corrected the different drafts so that this piece of work could be presented in accurate English.

I am as ever, especially indebted to my family María Cenén, Harold, Veronique, Simon and Gabrielle, for their continuous love throughout my life. They gave me the courage to keep working towards my goal and purpose.
# LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACASITIMUR</td>
<td>Asociación de Campesinos Sin Tierra del Municipio de Regidor</td>
<td>Landless Peasants’ Association of the Municipality of Regidor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACVC</td>
<td>Asociación de Campesinos del Valle del Río Cimitarra</td>
<td>Peasant-Farmer Association of the Cimitarra River Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGA</td>
<td>Anglo Gold Ashanti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANUC</td>
<td>Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos</td>
<td>National Association of Peasant Land Users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUC</td>
<td>Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia</td>
<td>United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCB</td>
<td>Bloque Central Bolívar</td>
<td>Central Block of Bolívar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOPD</td>
<td>Barrels of Oil Per Day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDPMM</td>
<td>Corporación de Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio</td>
<td>Corporation for Development and Peace in Middle Magdalena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CER</td>
<td>Centro de Estudios Regionales</td>
<td>Center for Regional Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CINEP</td>
<td>Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular</td>
<td>Centre for Research and Popular Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMR</td>
<td>Crude Mortality Rates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONPES</td>
<td>Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social</td>
<td>National Council for Economic and Social Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTA</td>
<td>Cooperativas de Trabajo Asociado</td>
<td>Cooperative of Associated Labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DANE</td>
<td>Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística</td>
<td>National Administrative Department of Statistics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DNP: *Departamento Nacional de Planeación* (National Planning Department)

DRI: *Desarrollo Rural Integrado* (Integrated Rural Development Program)

ECOCACAO: *Cooperativa de Cacaocultores* (Cooperative of Cocoa Farmers)

ECOPETROL: *Empresa Colombiana de Petróleos* (Colombian Petroleum Company)

ECLA: Economic Commission for Latin America

ELN: *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Army)

EPL: *Ejército Popular de Liberación* (Popular Liberation Army)

ERP: Economic Recovery Programme

EU: European Union

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

FARC: *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)

FEDEPALMA: *Federación Nacional de Cultivadores de Palma de Aceite* (National Federation of Oil Palm Growers)

FINAGRO: *Fondo para el Financiamiento del Sector Agropecuario* (National Found of Guarantees)

FMOEP: Free Market Economy Policy

FTA: Free Trade Agreement

ICR: *Incentivo a la Capitalización Rural* (Rural Capitalization Incentive)

IDB: Inter-American Development Bank

IDEMA: *Instituto de Mercadeo Agropecuario* (Agricultural Marketing Institute)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IFI</td>
<td>International Financial Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IICA</td>
<td>Instituto Interamericano de Ciencias Agropecuarias (Interamerican Institute of Agricultural Sciences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCODER</td>
<td>Instituto Colombiano para el Desarrollo Rural (Colombian Institute for Rural Development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KBPD</td>
<td>Thousand Barrels Per Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LP</td>
<td>Laboratory of Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-19</td>
<td>Movimiento 19 de Abril (19th April Movement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAS</td>
<td>Muerte a Secuestradores (Death to Kidnappers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MERCOSUR</td>
<td>Mercado Común del Sur (Southern Common Market)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>North American Free Trade Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPI</td>
<td>Observatorio de Paz Integral (Holistic Peace Observatory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OXY</td>
<td>Occidental Petroleum Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDIC</td>
<td>Programa de Desarrollo Integral Campesino (Integrated Peasant Development Programme)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDPIDH</td>
<td>Plan de Desarrollo y Protección Integral de los Derechos Humanos (Human Rights Development and Integral Protection Plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDPMM</td>
<td>Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio (Programme for Development and Peace in Middle Magdalena)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRS</td>
<td>Poverty Recovery Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REDPRODEPAZ</td>
<td>Red de Programas de Desarrollo y Paz (Network of Development and Peace Programmes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIMISP:</td>
<td>Centro Latinoamericano para el Desarrollo Rural (Latin American Center for Rural Development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTD:</td>
<td>Rural Territorial Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUPD:</td>
<td>Registro Único de Población Desplazada (Unified Registration of Displaced Population)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP:</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEAP:</td>
<td>Society of Economist Friends of the Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIPOD:</td>
<td>Sistema de Información de Población Desplazada (Information System of Displaced Population)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIPRI:</td>
<td>Stockholm International Peace Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNC:</td>
<td>Sistema Nacional de Cofinanciación (Joint Financing National System)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UBN:</td>
<td>Unmet Basic Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR:</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDP:</td>
<td>Uppsala Conflict Database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USO:</td>
<td>Unión Sindical Obrera (Oil Workers Union)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDR:</td>
<td>World Development Report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are several reasons why a piece of doctorate research is carried out. Mine has to do with an increasing concern about the situation of Colombia. I was born in a beautiful country rich in natural resources and friendly people. However, violence and poverty reveal the contradiction between how we might live and how we are actually living. Every day our national problems become more and more known to the world. Every day there are questions that beg concrete and applicable answers. How would you feel if your country’s claim to fame was its cocaine production and its human rights violations?

For many years I have experienced this contradiction. For good or bad, I have borne witness of the kindness as well as the cruelty of my people. I have spent wonderful times on the peasant farms harvesting corn and at communal planning meetings with the authorities. Yet, I vividly remember arduous situations such as the funerals of innocent victims of war and dialogues with guerrilla and paramilitary forces solving conflict situations. I have tried to fathom why in Colombia, where people have such a joie de vivre, there is violence and cruelty to others. I have tried to find answers that will allow me to comprehend the causes of underdevelopment in a country rich in natural and human resources.

I certainly believe that undertaking a PhD program gave me the necessary tools to deepen my understanding of the complex Colombian situation as well as contribute to long-lasting peace and sustainable development. My starting point was direct contact with people. I have been inspired by the reality of Colombian life and the numerous friendly faces of Colombians. Since I have faith in my country and I believe that we can solve our national problems, this thesis is a modest contribution to the efforts of other Colombians. Therefore, I am of the opinion that a suitable contribution to development and peace comprises both analytic academic thought and to work with the people in their concrete situation. In such an effort, my years of studying, working and living in Bogotá, Medellin,
Barrancabermeja and the Middle Magdalena region, have provided me with the raw material I processed in this research.

My background is in the humanities and the social sciences. Throughout my student and professional life I have had a multi-disciplinary approach to philosophy (BA in 1996), theology (BA in 2000) and economics (Master in 2005). As a philosophy student at the Javeriana University I wrote a dissertation about the moral philosophy of Alasdair McIntyre. Then I was a teaching assistant in logic and ethics in the Faculty of Philosophy in the same university, and a teacher of philosophy at the Saint Ignatius High School in Medellin. While a student of theology at the Javeriana University, I wrote a thesis, later published by the Jesuit Refugee Service that analyzed the context of internally displaced people in Colombia. During my time as a student in the Master of Economics at the University of Los Andes, for which my research was a study of the impact of *Merquemos Juntos*, a communal organization located in Barrancabermeja (Colombia).

This background has been complemented by some work in which I put into practice some of what I have learned from university. For many years I have worked in peripheral neighbourhoods in Bogotá, Medellín and Barrancabermeja consolidating civic, religious and political organizations. From 1996 to 1998 I worked with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), an international organization working with refugees, migrants and internally displaced people. My work there involved supporting internally displaced people and researching into the problem of internally displaced people in Colombia. From 2000 to 2001 I worked in the Program for Development and Peace in Middle Magdalena (PDPMM), where as a part of the working team of the PDPMM I managed and supervised the economic projects in the southern Bolivar region, and directed service projects undertaken by undergraduate students.

The research and work conducted in these institutions and places provided me with the motivation as well as a kind of laboratory for my thesis proposal. I
consider that the PhD in Development Policy and Management at the University of Manchester was a natural move within an interdisciplinary career that started more than fifteen years ago embodying social thought, social justice and action.

My gratitude knows no bounds to those friends and companions I have worked with who have contributed towards building a better world. This thesis is dedicated to them and to all peacemakers of my country working tirelessly to make a situation of peaceful coexistence and human development in my lovely Colombia a reality.
INTRODUCTION

I. RURAL TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT AS THE STARTING POINT

There is a growing demand for and interest in territorial approaches to rural development in Latin America. This reflects dissatisfaction with traditional approaches that have failed to tackle poverty. De Janvry and Sadoulet (2004: 1) declare that “progress in rural social development has not been accompanied by reductions in income poverty and inequality… [In fact], the incidence of extreme rural poverty remained at 28% in Latin America [during 1970-2000]”. A more recent estimation made by ECLAC (2008) indicates that rural poverty and indigence levels have remained high in Latin America (52.1% and 28.1% respectively for the year of 2007¹).

Part of the problem resides in a misunderstanding of the contemporary dynamic of rural development. Berdegué and Schejtmann (2004), de Janvry and Sadoulet (2004) and Chiriboga (2002) indicate some of these conventional misconceptions about the nature of ruralidad (rurality) and rural development: 1) An identification of the rural poor as poor male farmers; 2) A restriction of rural development to the agricultural sector; 3) A dissociation between the concept of citizen and producer; 4) A failure to internalize market imperfections; 5) A separation of the rural and urban economies in intervention strategies; 6) A focus on coordinating government interventions; and 7) A failure to incorporate the diverse activities and different dimensions that characterize the survival strategies of the rural poor. In sum, the predominant approach was blind to the transformations that had occurred in the rural sector because it was centred on the agricultural sector and on coordinated government interventions (de Ferranti et. al. 2005).

¹ Estimates made by ECLAC (2008) based on 19 countries: Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.
Given this dissatisfaction with traditional approaches, as well as, the new nature of rural development - that is, strong rural-urban linkages, the progressive globalization of the rural economy, and the increasing importance of decentralization and participation processes -, some thinkers and development institutions have asserted the need to tackle the problem of rural development with a **territorial perspective** (BID 2005; FAO 2005):

> “If once it was possible to talk of the "agrarian question" (de Janvry, 1981) this is no longer the case. One now has to talk of the "rural question," and quite conceivably – given the depth of urban-rural articulation – the "territorial question" (Bebbington, Abramovay and Chiriboga 2008: 2875).

Now then, the theoretical and practical background of the **territorial development** approach has been most developed in Latin America. “Territorial approaches emerged in the 1990s as attempts to reformulate policies and strategies for rural development in response to changes in the nature of rural societies and economies, changes which Latin America thinkers have come to refer to as a “new rurality”, arising from the effects of globalisation and the impacts of previous development policies” (Quan and Nelson 2005: 29). According to RIMISP (2007), Berdegué and Schejtman (2004), de Janvry and Sadoulet (2004), Chiriboga (2002), FAO (2000), da Veiga (2000), and Abramovay (1999), a territorial approach to rural development (both analytically and in policy terms) can be more effective than the traditional integrated rural development. Three main reasons are given to justify this claim:

First, there are critical problems in rural areas that cannot be addressed with conventional strategies. Macro broad-based and sectoral policies, for instance, are not sufficient by themselves to stimulate territorially-balanced growth. Conversely, territorial factors have been shown to play a major role in determining economic growth, poverty and inequality (WDR 2008).
Second, the process of globalisation has changed the rules that govern the operation of the national and international economy. As a result, transformations in productive structure and institutional arrangements are required to improve the well-being of the rural population in a context of liberalization and competitiveness (RIMISP 2007).

Third, traditional misunderstandings of rural development have become obstacles to moving the countryside forward. In particular, many projects have failed to understand the dynamic of development at the level of specific territories. An orthodox application of structural reforms that conceive of each region and the agricultural sector as “generic” has predominated, overlooking the heterogeneity of Latin American rural societies (Chiriboga 2002).

In Latin America, the initiative for a new theory of rural development has crystallized in the so-called Rural Territorial Development (RTD) approach, which even if at its infancy, has received recognition in the developmental field. Indeed, notions of RTD inform the Inter-American Development Bank Rural Strategy (particularly implemented in Argentina and Chile), and underlie part of the World Development Report 2008. The main exponents of the RTD approach (Berdegué and Schejtmann) provide an interpretative synthesis of the principal economic and political views of rural development with a distinctive territorial perspective aimed at eliminating poverty and inequality. Such an approach is based on the analyses of industrial agglomeration (Marshall 1954; Krugman 1995); clusters (Porter 1991); industrial districts (Camagni 2000; Bagnasco 1998; Saraceno 2000); learning regions or milieu (Maillat 1995; Maskell and Malmberg 1999; Storper and Salais 1997); and Neoinstitutionalism (North 1990).

If these are the theoretical pillars of RTD, exponents also justify the approach by noting successful experiences with a territorial perspective2, such as: the

---

2 Several case-studies of RTD are available in the literature that permit to characterize the dimensions of a territorial approach and some determinants of success. Notable among these is the work of Abramovay (1999, 2003), Schejtmann and Berdegué (2003), and Llorens, Albuquerque and del Castillo (2002).
LEADER rural development program of the European Union (Ray 2000); the Petrolina-Juazeiro irrigation development in the San Francisco Valley of Brazil (Damiani 2002); the Community Empowerment Program of the USDA in the United States (Cfr. web page); Agro-Exports from the Central Valley of Chile (Gómez and Echeñique 1994); the roundtables in Cajamarca – Perú (Scholl 2003); and the organization of small producers for the production of non-traditional exports in the Central Highlands of Guatemala (Von Braun et. al. 1989).

Based on contributions from the social sciences and evidence from case studies, and taking into consideration the changes in the rural context and the failure of traditional approaches of rural development to eliminate poverty, de Janvry and Sadoulet (2004), Berdegué and Schejtman (2004), Chiriboga (2002) identify the following strategies that would improve rural strategies being implemented in Latin America:

- The first and most important is the need to adopt a territorial dimension, which means that any project is not restricted to the agricultural sector.
- Second, instead of focusing initiatives on poor families, the new approach should work from an acknowledgment that territories are characterized by social heterogeneity, and additional groups need also to be taken into consideration.
- Third, it is necessary to include both farm and off-farm employment as sources of income in all schemes.
- Fourth is the need to emphasize the linkages between the different sectors of local society and economy.
- Fifth, rural institutions have become a crucial component of any new approach to rural development.
- Finally, it is essential to strengthen the links between rural and urban areas.

At this point, it is important to emphasize how territorial development is necessarily an urban-rural project, rather than a “rural project” itself. RTD strategies seek to integrate rural and urban activities in a territorial dimension.
centered around regional economic projects which seek to eliminate rural poverty. “The promise of such a distinctive territorial approach” indicates that:

“Rural territorial development [can be understood as] a process of simultaneous productive transformation and institutional change with the aim of reducing poverty and inequality in rural territories” (Berdegué and Schejtman 2004: 30; emphases added).

Berdegué and Schejtman emphasize (as the first criterion of RTD) that productive and institutional transformations are mutually constituted, and both are necessary to achieve significant reductions of rural poverty. In addition, seven related criteria complement the RTD strategy (Cfr. Berdegué and Schejtman 2004):

**Criterion 2:** RTD programs must operate with a broadened concept of rurality.

**Criterion 3:** For the purposes of RTD programs, a territory is an area with an identity and a development project that has been arrived at through a process of social consensus.

**Criterion 4:** RTD programs need to consider the heterogeneous nature of territories.

**Criterion 5:** RTD programs should engage the different types of agents in the territory.

**Criterion 6:** RTD programs must consider different routes out of poverty.

**Criterion 7:** RTD programs call for a complex institutional architecture.

---

3 Expression adapted from the World Bank’s (2005) study entitled: “Beyond the City. The Rural Contribution to Development”.
**Criterion 8:** RTD programs must be managed and formulated for both the medium and long term.

As a major goal, the RTD approach aims at implementing public policies that will stimulate “rural territorial dynamics,” understood as “processes of change in the economic structure and in the institutional framework of rural territories and their concomitant changes in development outcomes – economic growth, social inclusiveness and environmental sustainability.” (RIMISP 2007: glossary). From this definition, it follows that any rural territorial development project has two pillars: productive transformation and institutional change.

**“Productive transformation** is required in order to articulate the area’s economy with dynamic markets in a competitive and sustainable way. This implies changes in patterns of employment and production within a particular rural territory” (Berdegué and Schejtman 2004: 30; emphases added).

**“Institutional development** has the objective of promoting the concerted action of local agents, both among themselves and with relevant external agents. Further it aims to change the formal and informal rules that perpetuate the exclusion of the poor from the processes and benefits of productive transformation” (Berdegué and Schejtman 2004: 30; emphases added).

The simultaneous process of productive and institutional change should lead to the establishment of an innovative institutional architecture, namely the regulatory structure that is formed by organizations and institutions, where “institutions” consist of "the formal and informal rules by which system actors interact... such as normative structures, culture, legal frameworks, policies and trends, [while] “organizations” are defined as formalized entities that involve a cluster of people who are brought together for a common purpose. Organization both conforms to and influence institutions. They include a wide spectrum of human activity and can be categorized as private or public, for-profit or non-profit, governmental or non- governmental, and so forth” (Lusthaus et. al. 2002, as quoted in FAO 2005: 38).
Berdegué and Schejtman (2004) argue that it is through institutional development that a geographic space becomes a territory, understood as a rural space with identity and a collectively agreed upon development project. This conception of the territory as a social construct conceives of it not as a physical or geographical space, but as a set of social relations that create and express a particular identity and a common purpose shared by multiple public and private agents.

“Actors define the territories they live in or interact with. The actors’ territorility, or territorial vision, helps to establish a common identity and supports the realization of actors’ strategies and projects” (FAO 2005: 2).

An “operational definition” of rural territory is given by Quan and Nelson in the following terms:

“What most definitions of territory have in common is an aspect of subjectivity – territory is not simply geographical space and physical resources, but space and resources on which some social group depend and exercise some form of control or authority. Implicit in this, is the idea of social identification with geographical space and the social construction of territory, which may in turn involve the concrete development of political authority, economic relations and cultural symbolism and modes of communication… In Latin America social, cultural and economic conceptions of territory generally do not coincide with municipal boundaries, but rather with the territories of particular e.g. indigenous groups, or as a function of the processes of land occupation and economic development, wider regions with common environmental features, markets and production systems, means of communication, and a sense of cultural belonging shared by a variety of actors” (Quan and Nelson 2005: 5).

Based on the two pillars of the RTD approach, Berdegué and Schejtman (2004) propose a typology of territories. Taking productive transformation (vertical axis) that generates growth, and institutional change (horizontal axis) that creates inclusion, they define four different types of rural territories (see figure 0.1).
Type 1 territories (T1) correspond to those that have undergone positive productive transformation and institutional change and have achieved a significant level of growth and social inclusiveness.

Type 2 territories (T2) exhibit important economic growth. However, they are institutionally fragmented and present social conflicts due to the level of exclusion generated.

Type 3 territories (T3) are characterized by their solid institutional structure, but lack economic projects that contribute to resolving poverty.

Type 4 territories (T4) have low economic growth and experience social conflicts. Exclusion and stagnation are the main characteristics of a type 4 territory.

Source: Berdegué and Schejtman (2004)
Within this typological framework, Berdegué and Schejtmann identify five possible dynamic transitions in which growth and/or inclusion change. The explanation of such change is exemplified by them with some exploratory cases (Berdegué. Personal Communication. 25 July 2008):

**From T2 to T1:** One possible scenario for this type of transition is where a dominant coalition of large producers is challenged by an emerging coalition made up by other large producers in alliance with small producers and workers.

**From T2 to T3:** This transition could be the result of a conflict between two coalitions in which the presence or action of one of these leads enterprises to disinvest and even exit the territory.

**From T3 to T1:** This can typify a process in which product innovation and producer organization increases access to extra-territorial dynamic markets.

**From T1 to T2:** This transition can be the result of a process of concentration in a territory characterized by a more or less unimodal production structures that progressively excludes certain producers.

**From T1 to T3:** This transition can occur when territorial competitiveness is lost due to the inability of production patterns to adapt to new conditions in extra-territorial markets.

What is notable in their illustration of different transitions is that, Berdegué and Schejtmann do not include transitions either from or to a type 4 territory. Why is there no analysis of such cases? Why did Berdegué and Schejtmann not suggest that a type 4 territory could improve? The question is important because a significant part of rural Latin America, and particularly rural territories in Colombia, can be characterized as Type 4. What happens then, in the case of those Colombian regions in which armed conflict and violence exists, creating a
situation of exclusion and stagnation? Is there any possibility of their moving to T 1, 2 or 3 conditions, and if so how?

In the light of all this, the crucial question is: how can a territorial rural development strategy be developed in a type 4 territory? Explicitly, how can a RTD intervention be implemented in a territory characterized by conflict dynamics? Addressing this question is the main practical objective of this investigation. There is a normative vision behind this question that I need to make explicit: the desire to strengthen the different development and peace initiatives underway in Colombia, particularly those located at the grass-roots level, in order to consolidate a social movement with enough power to promote productive and institutional transformations towards a more developed and peaceful country.

II. AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION

I argue that the conceptualization of RTD needs to be complemented by and adjusted to the elements offered by the struggle for peace, particularly in circumstances of protracted armed conflict. With this proposition in mind, the research question that will be addressed in the present study is: How does a rural territorial development strategy confront and shape conflict dynamics in a specific territory?

With this purpose in mind, the aim of the proposed research is to provide a critical understanding of a rural territorial development intervention in a context of conflict dynamics, by looking at the case of the Programme for Development and Peace in Middle Magdalena (PDPMM) - Colombia. In such a context, this research states that in order to contribute to the possibilities for peace, it is necessary not only to focus on the military dimensions of the armed conflict, but also and primarily, to assess the developmental forces and mechanisms able to transform conflict dynamics in a specific territory. In other words, it is necessary to assess whether the productive and institutional changes generated by a society
have the potential to transform violent conflicts and build more peaceful coexistence. In the particular case of Colombia analyzed in this thesis, it was necessary to systematize and evaluate the collective efforts for peace that many people and social organizations of the Middle Magdalena region have engaged in, highlighting the remarkable contribution that the *Programme for Development and Peace in Middle Magdalena* (PDPMM) has made to the field of peacebuilding and development.

III. A GAP TO BE FILLED

Having presented the starting point of this dissertation and the research questions that this study addresses, it is important to highlight the main theoretical contributions and empirical applications that the research makes. Those contributions fall into two main areas: Rural Territorial Development and Peace Studies.

A. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE RURAL TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

Despite the growing experience of rural territorial development programs amongst national and local governments in Latin America and international NGOs, knowledge regarding the precise dynamics of rural territorial development remains at a germinal stage. Intervention has thus raced ahead of our knowledge base – or put differently, while the RTD seed has been planted, it has not yet grown. It is therefore, necessary to tend to its germination with contributions that would improve its theoretical basis and thus its potential practical success. This research attempts to contribute to that task by filling a “special gap”: the relative failure of RTD to conceptualize the relationship between development and conflict.
Notwithstanding the significance of the RTD approach, its proponents have remained remarkably unwilling to incorporate conflict dynamics into their analytical framework. It can be said that RTD reflects the same vacuum that for many years characterized development studies and practice: i.e. the more general tendency to neglect violent conflict due to the emphasis on conceiving development under peaceful conditions.

Although there is a lack of incorporation of warfare into development analysis, the actual situation of a world at war that leads to the suffering of innocent victims demands relevant interpretations and actions. For that reason, this study seeks to place the problem of conflict centre stage, arguing that it is one of the major obstacles to economic and human development (Collier 2003). It is not only poverty that has to be addressed: conflict must also be confronted if the goal is to enhance humanity's well-being.

In principle, RTD has focused on the problem of poverty as its main concern, but has fallen short in its contribution to conflict resolution. It can be argued that a more systematic and conceptualized study of a RTD intervention in the midst of conflict is yet to be carried out. A personal desire to face this challenge constitutes the chief reason for undertaking this research proposal. Consequently, the proposed study advances the debate on the relationship between productive and institutional transformation by placing conflict dynamics at the very core of this relationship. After all, productive and institutional transformations in rural territories ought to address not only poverty (as RTD stresses), but should also seek conflict resolution (as this study points out).

With this purpose in mind, the three main theoretical contributions of this proposed research can be summarized as follows:

First, the proposed study will contribute to the original conceptualization of the RTD approach itself. As RIMISP (2007: 9) indicates, the “collective understanding of rural territorial dynamics is almost at an infant stage”. In this
sense, the investigation will provide original information to the ongoing academic debate on rural issues in Latin America.

Second, the study draws attention to the need to implement processes of both productive change and institutional transformation that generate positive outcomes in reducing poverty, as well as resolving conflict. While territorial development approaches, as presented by their main exponents, seek to eradicate poverty, this study will indicate that development is as much a crucial condition to achieve peace as it is to promote economic growth.

Third, while development studies have more recently generated considerable information on the relationship between development and violence, there is still no general theory that explains the association between them. The link between underdevelopment and conflict is often mentioned, but seldom the nature of the link (Agerbak 1996; Schrijvers 1993). Most studies follow the cause-effect approach, emphasizing either the negative effects of violence in the development process (which translates into arguments regarding violence as a major obstacle to development), or the lack of development as a cause of conflict (with claims that high levels of violence in Latin America are basically due to the extent of inequality\(^4\)). The research reported here adopts a dynamic perspective that distinguishes it from conventional cause and effect studies. It will attempt to explain the link between underdevelopment and conflict from a territorial perspective focusing on the factors that structure and sustain conflict dynamics.

In sum, this dissertation makes an important contribution in developing the idea of conflict dynamics as an integral part of “development”, and violence as a “normal” hazard to be overcome through development initiatives executed from a rural territorial perspective, in which both productive and institutional transformations are required as precondition.

\(^4\) On the relation between violence and underdevelopment see: Ayers (1998); Moser and Bronkhorst (1999); Morrison, Buvinic and Shifter (2003); Heinemman and Verner (2006).
B. EMPIRICAL APPLICATIONS TO THE FIELD OF PEACEBUILDING

The second set of contributions that the research makes are related to the field of peacebuilding. Focusing on the Colombian case, this study adopts an empirical and normative approach to peacebuilding. It moves beyond the “problem-solving” approach that characterises much research and literature on the implementation of peace accords and fulfilment of peace process. In effect, the peace movement in Colombia has been studied and interpreted mainly focusing on the analysis of the peace processes and the phenomena related to the violence (Villarraga 2003: 53). Curiously, there has been a substantial production of documents concerning the situation of multi-plural violence in Colombia, but a reduced contribution of explicit and critical studies of peacemaking initiatives.

By adopting a dynamic and critical stance, this study shows that one of the key elements to understanding the nature, successes and failures of contemporary peacemaking is the conceptualisation of territorial peace and developmental experiences based on a basic premise: conflict resolution and development are reciprocally constituted and both are necessary to overcome poverty and violence. This research analyses and systematizes a particular peacebuilding project (the PDPMM), which offers significant insights to conflict management and conflict resolution which can be applied in other parts of the world with similar or less dire conflict dynamics.

In the light of all these, the main empirical contributions to the field of peacebuilding that this study formulates are described as follows:

First, this research focuses on a very peculiar peacebuilding experience - the PDPMM - which merits deeper analysis due to its original nature: being a prototype project in the area of development and peace. Based on the civil society and located in a highly strife-torn region of Colombia, it represents a peacebuilding from below initiative that promotes the increasing of social capital and the defense of human dignity through two related means: 1) A regional socio-
economic process that overcomes poverty through sustainable human development, and 2) A process of encouraging peaceful coexistence among those in search of a non-violent solution to the armed conflict. The systematization of its best practices allows us to demonstrate how structural transformations in the productive and institutional patterns generate significant reductions in poverty and violence at local levels.

Second, the study stresses the need to adopt a broad concept of peace, one which implies much more than the silencing of the rifles and the signing of peace accords. In such an effort, the case-study analysed in this research allow us to indicate that the solution of a conflict situation is possible through the execution of a participative and inclusive model of development. In the specific case of the PDPMM, the main strategy for incorporating settlers into the regional productive process is the execution of social and productive projects that not only increases people’s capacities, but also eliminates the structural factors that cause exclusion (one of the main causes of conflict dynamics).

Third, the present research also highlights the need to understand conflict as a dynamic variable involved in the developmental process itself. In such an effort, a particular “working definition” of “conflict dynamics” was created in order to gain understanding on the relation between underdevelopment and violence. For the purpose of this study, conflict dynamics is understood as the wide range of conflicting relations between opposite actors each one with its own vision about what development is and should be. In this scenario, violence reflects the inability of actors to manage the incommensurability that exists among their divergent visions and experiences of development.

Such a consideration constitutes an interesting challenge in the sense that this approach runs counter to conventional approaches that tend to analyse violence as an exogenous (external) and negative variable in the developmental process. The critical approach proposed here shifts from a monolithic concept of development (development as improvement) to a dynamic one in which conflictive relations
between opposite views of development are embedded within the developmental process itself. Such an approach has the potential to provide a better understanding of both the processes that produce and maintain the factors that perpetuate conflict in a development strategy, and the practices that might help to address peacebuilding challenges and conflict transformation.

Fourth, this work identifies “pragmatic articulations” as the central concept around which contemporary processes of conflict management and resolution can be implemented. The use of the proposed pragmatic articulation model allows us to identify the way in which incommensurability - hence conflict - between rival actors and visions of development can be addressed. Rooted on Alasdair MacIntyre’s philosophy (Cfr. Chapter Four), it is possible to demonstrate how despite the existence of rival and incommensurable visions and paradigms of development, communication and interactions among them is possible and attainable. In consequence, the practical aim of an RTD strategy consists of bringing together opposite actors of development with the view of establishing a communal and concerted development proposal in which private and personal interests take a back seat, and the construction of a territory can be possible.

In summary, this study draws attention to the importance of solving conflict dynamics by creating pragmatic articulations among incommensurable visions and actors of development. The practical goal of such pragmatic articulation is the creation of a concerted development project by all actors presented in the territory, which according to the RTD approach constitutes – apart from identity – one of the two main pillars in the construction of a rural territory.

**IV. THESIS STRUCTURE**

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. *Chapter One* presents the methodological approach followed, firstly for translating the research question into specific research instruments, and secondly for collecting and analysing the
necessary data. The main research strategy followed during the research process was the case-study method, as this was by far the more suitable research instrument to use in an interpretative investigation into the relationship between conflict dynamics and rural territorial development strategy. For the purpose of this study, the region of the Middle Magdalena and within that region the Programme for Development and Peace in Middle Magdalena (PDPMM) was selected as the illustrative case-study. As will be explained, such case offers significant insight into the ways in which conflict dynamics and development processes interact.

Chapter Two focuses on the territorial context in which the PDPMM operates. It presents a general characterization of the Middle Magdalena Region, in order to explore the historical, economic and social conditions that define the contours of PDPMM’s intervention. Such a description is imperative since the research question itself regards the interaction between a given intervention and a given set of territorial conditions - namely the implications of pursuing a rural territorial development strategy in a type 4 territory characterized by high levels of exclusion and violence, as in the case of Middle Magdalena.

The design of such an approach demands a specific framework that makes it possible to understand from the theoretical point of view what is happening in Middle Magdalena. To that end, Chapter Three will explain three of the most important concepts running through this research: conflict, violent conflict and conflict dynamics. Beginning with a general characterization of conflict, the chapter moves to the study of the nature and causes of violent conflict, with a special reference to the Colombian case. The final section of the chapter will introduce a specific definition of conflict dynamics, which for the purpose of this study, refers to the practical and theoretical incommensurability among conflicting actors and their visions of how the development process is or should be.
This investigation emphasizes that in order to understand conflict dynamics between opposite views of territorial rural development in a specific territory, a comprehensive analysis of the political economy is necessary. This is because some of the disputes over development within a territory themselves derive from differences among rival theories and views of development. Addressing that premise requires a two-stage process: first (at a theoretical level), the study analyzes the incommensurability between the different paradigms of rural development implemented in Latin America since 1950. Second (at a practical level), the research identifies and characterizes the different views of rural development that are being pursued in Middle Magdalena today. Chapters Four and Five address those two issues respectively.

*Chapter Four* provides an overview of the three main paradigms of rural development that have been implemented in Latin America since the end of the Second World War: Modernization, Dependency and Neoliberalism. Each paradigm is presented, first, at a general level and thereafter in terms of its main contributions to rural development. In this analysis, special reference is made to the Colombian case, focusing on the main programmes and policies of rural development implemented since 1950.

*Chapter Five* focuses on presenting the main actors and views of rural development that coexist in the specific territory of Middle Magdalena. Specifically, five views will be presented: 1) The view of the rural communities; 2) The capitalist model; 3) The territorial approach; 4) The strategic and military vision; and 5) The cocaine “model”. This characterization helps illuminate the nature and specific features of the latent and implicit conflicts that exist between these models.

Within this conflictive context of Middle Magdalena, *Chapter Six* then explores the two main dimensions in which actors differ profoundly: the teleological and the territorial-productive. Whereas the former focuses on specifying that disagreements and conflicts among actors are related to the purpose and meaning
of the development process, the latter indicates that discrepancies exist over the control and productive occupation of the territory. To gain an understanding of the nature of such conflict dynamics, the chapter will illustrate a specific sub-case associated with the plantation of African palm. This case allows the identification of the trigger and contextual factors that turn contradictions between actors into aggressive conflicts.

Chapter Seven focuses on the PDPMM in order to examine how a specific rural territorial development strategy influences the course of an internal conflict, and the extent to which its combined focus on institutional and productive transformation creates the basis for a reduction in conflict dynamics. In this chapter, a sub-case study will also be presented: the exploitation of the “Cira and Infantas” oil wells located in a village called “El Centro”. The case demonstrates the implications of building a coalition around a negotiated and common view of development as a means of resolving disparities through non-violent and legal methods.

Finally it is important to note that this project has involved an extensive interaction between two languages: English and Spanish. The literature review was in English and Spanish, but all the information collected in the fieldwork was in Spanish. I hope the translation into English has been accurate, making transparent the meaning and conveying the richness of some of the expressions in the original language.
CHAPTER ONE

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

In the introduction it was specified that my research interest in this investigation consists of analyzing how a rural territorial development strategy faces conflict dynamics in a territory characterized by high levels of violence and poverty. A general presentation of the RTD approach was given in order to establish the theoretical and practical points of departure for this investigation, to explain its genesis and to outline its main contributions to the development field. The following methodological step is to outline the process through which I came to establish the research strategy for collecting the pertinent information to assess and answer the research question.

The methodological discussion has four sections. I begin by explaining the reasons for selecting the case-study method as the main research technique used in this study. The second section presents the case study selected for this investigation: the Programme for Development and Peace in Middle Magdalena - PDPMM. In the third part, I discuss the objective and research postulates that guide the study. In the final part, the two main research instruments used in the research will be specified: semi-structured interviews and literature review of primary resources complemented with secondary resources.

I. IDENTIFYING THE RESEARCH STRATEGY TO ANSWER THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Identifying the specific and most suitable research strategy to be used in an investigation is crucial. The criteria established for making that choice vary from school to school. The Hierarchical Approach, for example, reinforces the notion
that research strategies can be organized and phased hierarchically. This means that each method ought to be used and is appropriate only for a specific phase of the research process. Following this logic, surveys and histories are suitable only for the descriptive phase; experiments should be used in the explanatory phase; and cases studies have to be used just for exploratory purposes (Shavelson and Townes 2002).

In contrast to this hierarchical approach, Yin proposes a more inclusive and pluralistic approach, in which each strategy can be used without problem in any of the research phases. According to Yin (2003: 1), the nature, relevance and purpose of each research strategy depends on three conditions: 1) The type of research question; 2) The control that the researcher has over behavioural events; and 3) The focus on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomena. The relation between these three conditions and five of the most important research strategies are shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Form of Research Question</th>
<th>Requires Control of Behavioural Events?</th>
<th>Focuses on Contemporary Events?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>How, Why?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival Analysis</td>
<td>Who, What, Where, How many? How much?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>How, Why?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case-Study</td>
<td>How, Why?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cosmos Corporation (quoted by Yin 2000: 5)
According to Yin, among the three requirements mentioned above, **the type of research question** is what determines the choice for a specific research strategy:

“In general, ‘what’ questions may either be exploratory (in which case any of the strategies could be used) or about prevalence (in which surveys or the analysis of archival records would be favoured). ‘How’ and ‘why’ questions are likely to favour the use of case studies, experiments, or histories” (Yin 2003: 7).

Yin’s association could be complemented with Britha Mikkelsen’s categorization of approaches to social research. Mikkelsen (2005: 125-126) indicates four different kinds of studies - descriptive, explanatory, interpretative and action-oriented – each of which is related to specific research questions. Combining Yin’s and Mikkelsen’s descriptions, five types of social research can be identified. These are presented, along with two of their main features (key questions and the typical research strategy) in the following table.

### Table 1.2
Types of Social Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Social Studies</th>
<th>Key Questions</th>
<th>Typical Research Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exploratory</strong></td>
<td>What can be learned from X strategy? “What” questions in general.</td>
<td>Survey Archival Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive</strong></td>
<td>How does X vary with Y? “What” questions in general.</td>
<td>Survey Enumeration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explanatory</strong></td>
<td>Which X causes Y? or, Which Y is caused by X? How did X overcome the Y situation? “How” and “why” questions in general.</td>
<td>Experimental Histories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretative</strong></td>
<td>What is X? and, How does Y interpret the phenomenon X in the Z context? “How” and “why” questions in general.</td>
<td>Case-Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action-Orientated</strong></td>
<td>How do people act on the basis of the knowledge accumulated in the research process?</td>
<td>Action Research Formative Evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Table adapted from Mikkelsen (2005) and Yin (2003).
Looking at the possible scenarios, the case-study method emerges as the more suitable research method to use in an interpretative investigation into the relationship between conflict dynamics and rural territorial development strategy. The advantages of a case-study method over the other methods are that (Cfr. Mohd 2008; George and Bennett 2005; Yin 2003; Gomm 2000; Ragin 1992):

- It is more suitable for answering “how” and “why” questions about contemporary sets of events over which the investigator has little or no control (Anderson 1998).
- It implies direct observation of the phenomenon being studied.
- It investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real context.
- It is a strategy that is more appropriate for analysing phenomena in which the boundaries between them and their context are not evident.
- It implies contact with the people involved in the event.
- It can incorporate quantitative and/or qualitative evidence.
- It can include both single and multiple case studies.

In the light of all this and given the purpose of this investigation, the selection of a suitable case-study was crucial. As a consequence, it is important to indicate that such a case-study approach necessarily involves selection bias, given the need to select a case that allows the research to fulfil the main objective of the proposed study. In the case of this work, the Programme for Development and Peace in Middle Magdalena – PDPMM (Colombia) was selected as the illustrative case-study. As will be explained, the PDPMM offers significant insight into the ways in which conflict dynamics and development processes interact. Consequently, the research seeks to understand the PDPMM’s practices and their applicability in type 4 territories (à la Berdegué and Schejtmam).
II. THE PDPMM AS A CASE-STUDY

As already noted, the *Programme for Development and Peace in Middle Magdalena* was not selected at random. It was chosen for being a prototype project in a new area: development and peace (Word Bank 2004). For almost 15 years the PDPMM has been developing a social strategy that seeks to achieve human development and conflict resolution in a zone where different actors are disputing control over the territory, and where illegal armed groups are active. A brief history of the PDPMM, its methodology, its main principles and objectives, and the reasons explaining why such a project was developed in Middle Magdalena, are the topics addressed in this section.

A. EVOLUTION OF THE PDPMM PROPOSAL

The formation of the PDPMM was the result of a collective effort involving the Catholic Diocese of Barrancabermeja, the *Unión Sindical Obrera* – USO (the Oil Workers’ Union), the Society of Economist Friends of the Country (SEAP) and the *Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular* - CINEP (the Centre for Research and Popular Education) to create a project in the Middle Magdalena Region to counteract the structural dynamics that generate poverty and violence in the zone. To this end, in 1994 the representatives of SEAP, CINEP, ECOPETROL⁵ and USO came up with a proposal for a development and peace project. As a result of this effort, the *Programme for Development and Peace in the Middle Magdalena Region* was created.

Since its inception to the present, four periods have characterized the PDPMM’s development and management (Cfr. PDPMM web page). In its first period (1995-1998) the PDPMM carried out a participatory diagnostic study of the region to develop a coherent strategy for action. Perhaps the most important achievement of this diagnosis phase was the creation of a citizen’s network. Through several workshops and meetings the PDPMM made contact with some 300 social

---

⁵ The National Oil Company.
organizations of the region. It is important to note that ever since its beginnings, the PDPMM has been able to promote alliances and attract public and private entities to a zone that had been previously neglected, forming what Romero (1999: 64) calls a public space, conformed by several institutions, the National Government, International Cooperation Agencies and NGOs.

In the second period (from 1998 to 2000) the PDPMM initiated a “Learning and Innovation Phase” through the implementation of productive and social initiatives or sub-projects. To support this purpose, the Colombian government obtained a US$5 million “Learning and Innovation Loan” (LIL - I) from the World Bank and US$1.25 million from ECOPETROL. During this period, 90 productive and social initiatives were executed by 64 community organizations; 29 Municipal Planning Councils were created; and 29 PDPMM’s núcleos (municipal nuclei) were established.

PDPMM’s third period began in 2001 with the implementation of a second phase of the “Learning and Innovation Loan” (LIL - II) supported by the World Bank for a further amount of US$5 million. In this new phase (2001-2003) the PDPMM sought to produce local impacts through consolidating the more successful

---

6 The PDPMM works together with the Catholic Diocese of Barrancabermeja, ECOPETROL, The Oil Workers Union (USO), the Popular Female Organization, the Federation of Peasants and Miners in the South of Bolivar (FEDEAGROMISBOL), the Regional Coordinator for Human Rights (CREDHOS), the Association of Peasants and Workers of Carare, the Peasant’s Association of the Cimitarra River Valley, The Human Rights Workers Space, the Women’s net, the Youth’s net, the fishermen and the Community Radio Station Association in Middle Magdalena. Among local institutions, the PDPMM is working together with the Ombudsman Office, the University of Peace, the Center of Regional Studies (CER), and the Association of Mayors of the South Bolivar and Provincia de Velez. Also, there are some companies involved in the process such as: ISA and MERIELECTRICA. International Agencies are present as well such as: Secours Catholique, Christian Aid, Cafod, the Japan and Sweden Embassies, and the UN (PNUD, UNFPA, ACNUR). Also the OIM. The main supporters of the PDPMM process have been the World Bank, the European Union and the National Government.

7 The technical definition of an “initiative” given by Moncayo (1999: 91) indicates they are proposals of short duration that would become projects in the future. Those initiatives are executed by community organizations of limited resources that hardly formulate projects, but demonstrate great enthusiasm, internal organization and team-work. Conceptually, as Katz (1999: 85) points out, the initiatives differ from pure demands or requests, because they are framed in a negotiable dimension.

8 Núcleos are voluntary associations of citizens and organizations in each municipality that work with municipal authorities to develop Municipal Development Plans.
initiatives that had been launched during the second period. The objective was to transform those initiatives into sustainable productive projects that would change the life conditions of the poorest families.

The fourth phase (2003–2010) started with the involvement of the European Union. Simultaneous to the process supported by the World Bank, the PDPMM established relations with the European Union to implement a “Laboratory of Peace (LP)” in Middle Magdalena. This new project seeks to develop a sustainable human development model that aims to overcome conflict and can be replicated in other regions of Colombia.

On the 25th of February of 2002 the agreement between the European Union and the Colombian Government to create the LP in Middle Magdalena was signed. This Laboratory of Peace has had two phases. The first one lasted three years (2002-2005), and €17 million were invested (€14.8 million came from the EU, and €2.2 million come from the National Government). Based on the results of the first Laboratory of Peace, the European Union is now supporting a second phase from 2006 to 2010, in which €25.2 million will be invested (€20 million donated by EU and €5.2 contributed by the nation).

As can be seen, the PDPMM has received national and international recognition in the form of financial and political support. Moreover, in recognition of its efforts the French Government conferred on the PDPMM the 2000 Human Rights Award. Also, in 2001 the PDPMM received Colombia’s National Peace Prize and an award from the Lawyers’ Committee for Human Rights in New York City. At the national level the PDPMM’s approach has encouraged regional civil society initiatives with similar objectives to the PDPMM and now 17 of them have formed a Red de Programas de Desarrollo y Paz - REDPRODEPAZ (Network of Development and Peace Programs). In the face of the continuous armed conflict in Colombia, the geographical expansion of the PDPMM intervention model has become an imperative.
B. PDPMM'S AIM

In order to understand the region, the PDPMM carried out a Participatory Diagnostic enquiry aimed at understanding the nature and causes of the fundamental problems of Middle Magdalena. Two questions were basic when analysing the situation: Why in a region abundant in natural resources, is there a situation of poverty? Why in a region that seems to love life, is there violence?

As one of the most important conclusions of the diagnostic phase, six perverse dynamics were identified as the main causes of poverty and violence in the region. They are as follows (de Roux 1999, 1996; Rudqvist 2001):

- The enclave or extractive economy characterized by investments (oil, mining, livestock, oil palm) which extract value while failing to contribute to the development of human and physical capital in the region.
- The expansion of extensive cattle raising.
- The lack of State institutions.
- The increasing destruction of the environment.
- The use of violence to solve disparities between peoples.
- An education system which is disconnected from peasant based development and the construction of society.

To respond to these perverse dynamics the PDPMM elaborated certain strategies and prioritized areas that sought to transform the perverse dynamics and to reorient the development of the region towards human sustainable development and peaceful coexistence. The chosen strategies and areas were: urban and rural development; culture and education; institutions; social organization; peace and coexistence; environment; health; and oil investments.

With the formulation of its strategies the PDPMM reached a clear definition of its goal: the defence and promulgation of human dignity. Two related objectives were established (Cfr. PDPMM web page; Katz 2004; Rudqvist 2001):
First, to foster a regional socio-economic process that overcomes poverty through sustainable human development. This aim involves the improvement of the region’s productive and social capital, including strategies for increasing the region’s appropriation of its surplus, and promoting economic circuits which will generate employment and participation of local people in the regional productive process.

The second objective refers to the institutional process that creates conditions for peace and non-violent resolution of the conflict. Putting in practice this objective implied: the empowerment of the citizenry as the main planner, executor and controller of social and political initiatives; dialogue with armed groups; and conflict resolution without violence.

As seen, there is a connection between the RTD approach and PDPMM’s purposes, but the PDPMM adds further explicit aims: first is the emphasis on integral development as a process leading to a non-violent solution of the armed conflict. Another is the focus on human dignity – the PDPMM has a much more humanist focus, compared to RTD’s materialist focus. According to de Roux (1999) this kind of intervention is what distinguishes the PDPMM from other organizations working in the region. In other words, PDPMM’s uniqueness consists in developing peaceful coexistence through the economic and social results of a human and sustainable development strategy.

C. PDPMM’S METHODOLOGY

The conceptual challenge faced by the PDPMM consisted of setting up a participatory methodology which people could use to build a regional process in which human dignity would be possible.

The establishment of such methodology faced two requirements: first, it had to be participatory. Second, following the results of the diagnostic, the methodology
had to establish strategies aiming to transform the perverse dynamics that cause poverty and violence in the region. With this in mind, in 1997 a particular methodology was designed in which the municipality was considered the basic planning unit of the PDPMM, since it is the place where the State and the local community interact most closely (Katz 1999: 80).

In 1997 the Municipal Proposal for Development and Peace was created as the principal methodological strategy to congregate key stakeholders in each municipality. The idea was that the Municipal Nucleus (as the basic unit of the PDPMM Citizen’s Network), should work together with municipal authorities to develop such Municipal Proposals.

The operational procedure of the Municipal Proposal is a step-by-step process (Katz 1999; Castro 2008: field notes): first, a basic diagnosis of each municipality has to be carried out, enabling the community to obtain adequate information about the reality and the main needs of the municipality. Second, the process shifted toward identifying projects. These are recommendations made by the municipal nucleus to solve the problems and needs identified previously. Finally, the municipal diagnosis and the set of needs and projects were compiled in the Municipal Proposal. Among the initiatives included in it, the Nucleus selected some which were likely to produce economic and social impacts. At the end of the process, consensus and commitment must be reached to address and develop the final proposal to be presented to the PDPMM’s staff for approval.

As a result, the participatory nature of the Municipal Proposals ensures that the projects come exclusively from the inhabitants of each municipality, who subsequently commit to their execution. It is worth mentioning that in some municipalities, the Municipal Proposal was the basis for beginning a negotiation process with local authorities that led, in many cases, to the incorporation of some of the recommendations of the proposal into the Municipal Development Plans.
Once the different Municipal Proposals were formulated, the PDPMM also emphasized that there would have to be complementarities among them and with other sub-regional proposals. In this regard, the importance of elaborating a Regional Proposal became apparent. As de Roux (1999: 26) indicates, little by little the need to combine all municipal and sub-regional proposals together in a regional perspective became more and more apparent as a response to the need to build a territory with identity.

The objective of the Regional Proposal is to construct a space where the agents share a communal development plan. This challenge implies dialogue, communication and interaction among the diverse and incommensurable views and actors of rural development that are present in the region. As a consequence of this idea, the creation of such a regional vision has become not only the most important conceptual and practical challenge that the PDPMM currently faces, but also, PDPMM’s primary aim (de Roux 1999).

III. RELEVANCE OF THE CASE STUDY

Having presented in a general sense the PDPMM, it is important to emphasize the reasons determining the selection of such a case. Those factors are divided into two types: 1) Those related to the nature of the Colombian conflict; and 2) Those related to the specific character of the PDPMM as a rural developmental project.

1) Selecting the PDPMM as a case-study becomes relevant given the characteristics of the Colombian conflict in which the project is immersed. There are two main points here.

First, the Colombian conflict is not a racial, religious or ethnic one. In effect, over 90% of Colombians are Roman Catholics and there is no militant minority in either racial or religious terms (Restrepo and Vargas 2004). Moreover, most of the population are mestizos (mixed Spanish white and Native people). Therefore, the
uniqueness of the Colombian conflict allows focusing on its economic, political and military nature, isolating variables such as ethnicity or religion that in many other cases can increase the variability and complexity of the factors in question when investigating conflict dynamics.

Second, the Colombian conflict is a chronic one. Many of the specific issues that characterize a “protracted conflict” are found in the Colombian one (Cfr. MacGinty 2006: 76-80; Azar 1990; and Kaldor 2006): the development of sophisticated war economies; the “institutionalized character” that agents and systems of war come to assume; the all-embracing nature of violence affecting the normal life of the conflict area; the unclear distinction between political violence and crime; the atrocious military strategy directed at civilians and which turns them into the main victims of contemporary wars. Such characteristics allow us to focus on conflict maintenance factors that go beyond those that would be identified by conventional approaches that stress cause-effect aspects in conflict escalation.

2) Turning to the second set of factors that make this a relevant case-study, there are several specific characteristics of the PDPMM that mean it is a particularly useful case study for the questions posed in this research.

First, the characteristics that constitute a rural territorial development strategy can be found in the PDPMM case. Although the PDPMM was not inspired by the theory of RTD, it is a process that aims to transform the productive and institutional bases of a particular territory: the Middle Magdalena. Since 1995 the PDPMM has been developing a strategy that promotes human dignity through two related means: 1) A regional socio-economic process that overcomes poverty through sustainable human development; and 2) A process of encouraging peaceful coexistence among those in search of a non-violent solution to the armed conflict.
Secondly, the PDPMM adds a specific contribution to the theory of RTD, for it affords a case in which productive and institutional transformations are necessary not only to eliminate poverty (as RTD states), but also violence (as the PDPMM indicates).

Thirdly, the PDPMM is a precursor and/or prototype experience. As a development project, the PDPMM might potentially offer significant insights to development thought and practice. As already noted, the PDPMM has been considered a model for other attempts at rural development and conflict resolution in Colombia.

Fourthly, the PDPMM, as a new social phenomenon, merits attention and more analysis. In Colombia there is a dearth of critical analysis in the peace and development field. This research attempts to make a contribution that addresses this gap, bringing together both conceptual elements of analysis and systematic data about the topic.

Finally, the research will provide an analysis of a rural territorial experience that is taking place in a territory characterized by a stagnant economy and an excluded society. This kind of territory corresponds to Berdegué and Schejtmam’s (2004) type 4 territory (those with negative productive development and negative institutional architecture). As such, an added value of this research is that it analyzes a rural territorial intervention that has been implemented in a type 4 territory within a broader intellectual and policy context in which RTD projects (and systematizations of RTD) have been executed primarily in territories 1, 2, and 3.

IV. OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH POSTULATES

As stated in the introduction, the research question of this investigation is: How does a Rural Territorial Development strategy (in this case the PDPMM) confront and shape conflict dynamics in Middle Magdalena?
At this point it is important to clarify that conflict dynamics refers to the practical and theoretical incommensurability among opposing visions and actors of rural development, each of them with their own view about how development is or should be implemented. From this perspective, the execution of a determined model of development might entail the exclusion and/or elimination of alternative visions. In the particular case of Middle Magdalena, the implementation of both the capitalist and cocaine “models” have implied the weakening of the traditional peasant economy. The disparities between such dissimilar visions of development have generated conflicts that far from being solved by peaceful means and democratic agreement, have become violent. In a context of armed conflict, this situation has formed a dynamic in which the armed actors have been “functional” to certain models of development. It has therefore formed a belligerent scenario where diverse agents of development and certain armed actors dispute the control of the territory.

Thus, the primary objective of this investigation is to present a critical analysis of the way in which the Programme for Development and Peace in Middle Magdalena implements and promotes unique forms of productive and institutional changes leading towards the peaceful solution of conflicts and poverty reduction in a context defined by the confrontation between opposing visions of development, and the presence and intimidation of armed actors.

With this goal in mind, the research postulates that guide the proposed study are:

Conflict dynamics in specific territories can be understood as the expression of a dispute between opposing views of rural territorial development. As they interact with each other and are influenced by specific economic, political and social arguments, the opposition among these views can generate conditions that foster the solution of disparities through coercive, illegal or violent methods in the absence or weakness of institutions that might otherwise have fostered non-violent and legal means of negotiating the conflict. It follows that rural territorial
development, as a process that builds institutions and forms of production in the normative sense proposed by Berdegué and Schejtmann, would facilitate peaceful interactions and pragmatic articulations among these distinct views of rural development.

Addressing these postulates, and in pursuit of the overall objective of the research, the study does the following:

First, the research must identify and characterize the different visions and actors of rural development present in Middle Magdalena. This is the first vital step in assessing the hypothesis that disputes over development within Colombia and Middle Magdalena are derived from deep-seated differences and incommensurabilities among these views of development.

Second, the research analyzes these views, identifying incommensurabilities and contradictions among them. In this effort, it is necessary to identify the most relevant dimensions and factors that intensify contradictions and generate conflicts between those visions.

The third stage of the research focuses on the PDPMM in order to examine how a specific rural territorial development strategy influences the course of conflict dynamics, and the extent to which its combined focus on institutional and productive transformation creates the basis for a reduction in poverty and conflict dynamics. The research also analyses how far a RTD intervention in such a context is able to mediate between those differences and build broader coalitions around a negotiated view of development.

Rooted within this scheme are certain methodological issues that had to be addressed in order to outline how the research would address its core hypothesis. The methodological challenge consisted of translating the three postulates outlined above into research instruments that allowed collecting the information required to test the hypothesis. The following sub-sections outlines three steps
involved in this process. For each step, I define the objective, note the specific questions addressed, and identify the variables and themes for which data was collected.

A. FIRST STEP: ACTORS AND VIEWS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

1. **Objective:** To provide an analytical characterization of the main views of rural development executed in Middle Magdalena in order to understand the nature and specific features of the latent and implicit incommensurability that exists among these models. The characterization of these different views focuses on their visions of the productive and institutional transformations that must be pursued in the region.

2. **Specific questions:**

   - *What are the major views of rural development among different actors in Middle Magdalena?*

   - *What institutions and forms of production does each approach to rural development seek to build and how?*

3. **Key Variables:** The comparison and characterization of the different views of rural development generated information on the following features of these views:

   a. Vision and role of development.
      - Type of development.
      - Final aim of the development process.
      - Notion of a territory.
      - Control of the territory
b. Agents of development.
   o Main actors in the development process.
   o Relationship with other actors, State entities and with the local and regional government.
   o Alliances.

c. Productive transformation.
   o Forms of production.
   o Description of the productive process.
   o Stages of the productive process developed in the region.
   o Market (local, regional, national or international trade).

d. Institutional architecture.
   o Description of the institutions (formal, informal).
   o Role of the State.
   o Political and social impacts.

During this stage, five main visions and actors of rural development were identified:

First, the view of the rural communities whose forms of production are oriented basically to household subsistence.

Second is the capitalist vision, which comprises petroleum industry, mining, extensive cattle ranching and agro-industry (palm and rubber). It is a model of an extractive nature that favours investment and modernization, in which Democratic Security is an essential condition for development.

Third, there is a territorial approach to rural development implemented by some sectors of Civil Society, the Catholic Church, and different NGOs working in the region. The PDPMM brings together these actors developing an economic and social process which aims to promote the production of life with dignity.
The fourth group of views and actors are the armed ones. On the one hand, the *revolutionary view*, espoused by guerrilla movements, states that through the organization of the populace, a space can be created in which the revolution can take place and a new economy be built. On the other hand, the *paramilitary view* pursues regional development based on the promotion of industrial and agro-industrial projects. Military and political control is necessary in order to create ideal conditions for international and national investment. As a prerequisite for such development, guerrilla movements must be eradicated.

The final vision is that of the cocaine “model” which has become not only an important income source for many peasants of the region, but also a critical source of financing for the armed groups.

**B. SECOND STEP: INCOMMENSURABILITIES AMONG VIEWS OF DEVELOPMENT**

1. **Objective:** To analyze the incommensurability that exists between the different views of development in Middle Magdalena. This implies identifying the trigger and contextual factors that transform contradictions between actors into violent conflicts, and analysing the ways in which this affects the development process of the region.

2. **Specific questions:**

   • *In what ways are these different views of development mutually incommensurate?*

   • *To what extent are there latent conflicts among these views of rural development?*
What and why do specific socio-economic and political factors contribute to the increase of conflict dynamics in the development process?

To answer these questions two approaches were followed:

First, for the analysis of the incommensurability and the high number of disputes among visions and actors of development, a Case-Study-Comparison was carried out. Taking the diverse development processes as units of analysis, the investigation compares the model of the African palm plantation implemented by the large scale investors and promoted by the National Government, and the peasant model of palm production established by the PDPMM.

Second, the sub-case of African palm allowed the identification of various themes in which contradictions exist between these visions of development, focusing particularly on two dimensions/variables: the aim and purpose of the development process, and the productive occupation of the territory. The reason for this is two-fold: first, these two themes relate to production and institutional arrangements, and thus allow us to address points of commensurability under the two main pillars of RTD. Second, the literature, such as it is, suggests that who controls land, what it should be used for, and who should participate in the developmental process are themes on which groups differ profoundly (González et. al. 2003; Richani 2002).

C. THIRD STEP: DEALING WITH CONFLICT

1. Objective: To analyze how a rural territorial development strategy has affected the course of conflict dynamics in the region. In particular, the proposed research examines the specific contribution of the PDPMM in the domains of conflict resolution and poverty eradication.
2. Specific questions:

- What are the main implications of pursuing a RTD strategy in a territory in dispute?

- What are the theoretical and practical contributions of the PDPMM in the domains of conflict resolution and poverty eradication in its zone of influence?

- In which ways have the productive and institutional strategies implemented by the PDPMM facilitated pragmatic articulations among opposing views of rural development and so transformed such conflict dynamics?

To address these questions, a systematization of two developmental and social experiences was made: the first one is the PDPMM’s peasant cocoa project; the second one refers to the exploitation of oil in a village called El Centro (Barrancabermeja). These sub-cases help to understand strategies that might transform conflictive situations. From this perspective, the Peasant Cocoa Project implemented by the PDPMM emerges as a landmark project in the region in implementing alternative proposals of territorial development. Additionally, the sub-case-study referring to the exploitation of oil allows the identification of the main elements of a strategy for building coalitions around a negotiated plan of development in a context where there are different interests in dispute.

The hypothesis drawn from such analysis is the following: taking territories as units of analysis, not only can violence and poverty be eradicated but also pragmatic articulations between opposite actors of development can be promoted despite the existence of violent conflictive dynamics (as in the case of Middle Magdalena). This is possible through a Rural Territorial Development strategy based on the productive and institutional transformation of rural areas.
V. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

As stated in the first part of this chapter, a case-study analysis implies not only direct observation of the phenomenon being studied, but also contact with people who are involved in the events in their real context. For this reason I spent seven months living in Middle Magdalena (from December 2007 to June 2008). This period of time allowed me to gain knowledge of the conflict dynamics of the region. As the work was conducted in a zone of acute conflict, there were clear logistical challenges in gaining access to certain zones and informants that required a specific safety protocol and security issues. I was able to address these challenges on the basis of: my own prior work as a priest in the region during two years (2000-2001); my links to the Jesuit Community, which itself has links to actors in the region; and my links to and prior work with PDPMM which also has access to a wide range of actors (armed and unarmed).

Such links made it possible for me to work in the diverse areas of Middle Magdalena, access to which is otherwise restricted due to the presence of armed actors. In these visits, I could meet people, and conduct first hand interviews with the communities and actors. The investigation of the case-study, therefore, was made in its real context, using participant observation as the main instrument for the registration of information\(^9\).

In order to collect data referring to rural development dynamics in Middle Magdalena, it was necessary to take an active part in the accomplishment and execution of different events and activities. These included:

- Taking on an internship financed and supervised by the PDPMM that allowed not only access to the information elaborated by the PDPMM, but also participation in internal and external meetings, seminars and activities

\(^9\) The method of participant observation includes the systematic recording, analysis and use of information. It is traditionally defined as “a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture” (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002: 1).
organized by the PDPMM. This internship also permitted visits to and data collection in diverse economic and social projects that the PDPMM executes with the settlers of the region.

- Participation in marches, civic acts, forums, seminars and strikes that happened in the region during the period of my fieldwork.

- Visits to the towns and peasant communities of the municipalities in the south of Bolívar, Barrancabermeja and of the south of Cesar, with the purpose of observing the economic dynamics of palm and cocaine cultivation, oil exploitation, and cattle raising. Such visits also allowed me to identify institutional dynamics, the local armed conflict and the situation of forced displacement.

A. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

One of the key elements in the conceptualization of rural development is the way in which the different agents and organizations frame reality. Through the different interviews, it was possible to approach the diverse opinions and perspectives of development actors and their opinions about other actors. Semi-structured interviews were particularly useful for understanding the different visions of rural development in Middle Magdalena from the perspective of the main actors, having the chance “to access people's ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher” (Reinharz 1992: 18). At the same time, interviewing provides in-depth information which complements and verifies the evidence collected through the application of other research instruments.

“Semi-structured interviews are non-standardized, and are often used in qualitative analysis. The interviewer has a list of issues and questions to be covered, but may not deal with all of them in each interview. The order of questions may also change depending on what direction the interview takes. Indeed, additional questions may
be asked, including some which are not anticipated at the start of the interview, as new issues arise. Responses will be documented by note-taking or possibly by tape-recording the interview. The semi-structured interview allows for probing of views and opinions where it is desirable for respondents to expand on their answers” (Gray 2004: 215-217).

For the purpose of this investigation, a set of 44 semi-structured interviews with key informants from different sectors: i.e. business leaders, State officials, peasant leaders, PDPMM’s staff and armed actors, was carried out. The objective of these interviews was to explore the way in which these actors frame and understand the development process in Middle Magdalena. Two types of semi-structured interviews were carried out: the first group were general in the sense that their main objective was to obtain information about the development process of the region, the actor’s own view of rural development and his/her opinion about other visions. The second type of interviews was specific. They focused on gaining information about the two sub-cases systematized in this investigation: the African Palm project developed in the municipalities of Regidor, Puerto Wilches and Sabana de Torres, and the exploitation of oil in the village of El Centro. Due to the conflict situation that prevails in the Middle Magdalena region, the names of all interviewees are confidential (see Appendix 2 for the list of people interviewed).

Interview questions were elaborated throughout participant observation and the literature review, and were solidified in light of the theoretical framework that guides this research. An interview format was used for conducting the interviews (a core set of questions that all interviewed were asked is included in Appendix 1). The interviews took place face to face and all interviews were conducted by the researcher. Also, all interviews were recorded digitally and supplementary notes were taken during the interviewing process. The digital audio files of the interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

In order to analyse the transcripts, an inductive and selective coding process was employed to develop categories of the subjects the main actors of rural
development in Middle Magdalena mentioned. Such topics were for instance “vision and role of development”, “productive and institutional transformation”, “similarities and differences among actors”, “causes of conflict”, “PDPMM’s principles and values”, etc. After these topics were characterized, transcripts were coded methodically using the coding technique of “thematic coding”. The product of this method was a new document for each of the subjects from which the further qualitative analysis was developed. Finally, the statements of the interviewed actors were contrasted with documents and secondary bibliography in order to verify if there were differences and similarities.

B. DOCUMENTS, DATA BASES AND SECONDARY BIBLIOGRAPHY

In addition to the semi-structured interviews, it was necessary to collect data on relevant features that characterise the conflict dynamic analysed in this investigation. This data was complemented with information on relevant variables, using both qualitative and quantitative indicators, in order to establish the nature of socio-economic dynamics in the region and their correlation with the development process. In terms of complementary information the study analysed the following:

First: Documents, publications and websites of the organizations and actors in Middle Magdalena. This allowed the characterization of each view of rural development.

Second: Data bases. Given that the developmental process in Middle Magdalena is linked to the dynamic of the internal conflict, it was necessary to collect data on:

62
• **Political violence** in which the data set on “Human Rights and Political Violence\(^{10}\)” produced by OPI-CINEP was used to describe the situation of violence in Middle Magdalena during 1997-2007.

• **Forced displacement**: The statistics of expulsion and reception of displaced population between 1994 and 2007 were taken from the *Sistema de Información de Población Desplazada – SIPOD\(^{11}\)* (Information System of Displaced Population) elaborated by Acción Social.

• **Peasant struggles**: The data base of “Social Struggle\(^{12}\)” elaborated by CINEP was consulted in order to present information on the major peasant struggles in Middle Magdalena from 1975 to 2006.

**Third: Economic and social indicators.** The characterization of the Middle Magdalena region in terms of its economic activity, social dynamic and demography were carried out using the different indicators published by the National Government, the National Planning Department of Colombia, CINEP, PDPMM, OPI and the Center for Regional Studies (CER).

---

\(^{10}\) The data base elaborated by CINEP-OPI provides detailed documentation of political violence in Colombia in order to measure the impact of conflict on the population. The data set presents a description of chronologically ordered violent event in Colombia. This description includes date of occurrence, geographical location, the groups deemed responsible for causing the event, results of the action, and individuals killed or injured. There are two primary sources: 1) Press articles from more than 20 daily national and regional newspapers; and 2) Reports gathered by members of NGOs and other organizations. From 1996 the data set applies four categories: 1) Violations of human rights; 2) Violations of International Humanitarian Law; 3) Political and Social Violence; and 4) Bellicose Actions.

\(^{11}\) The Subdivision of Attention to Displaced Population of Acción Social offers the information of the *Registro Único de Población Desplazada – RUDP* (Unified Registration of Displaced Population), contained in the Information System of Displaced Population (SIPOD). The registration of displaced people is carried out considering the following variables: 1) Sex; 2) Age; 3) Ethnic group; 4) Educational Level; and 5) Civil status. The tabulation of this information follows four parameters: 1) Type of displacement; 2) Type of displacement and year of declaration; 3) Type of displacement and year of exodus; and 4) Type of displacement and year of arrival.

\(^{12}\) The “Social Struggle” data base elaborated by CINEP contains information about the social protest in Colombia since the 1970s, compiling the evolution of the social movements and their influence in the national context. The data set is divided into seven different categories: 1) Field of influence; 2) Social actors; 3) Forms of collective struggle; 4) Reasons; 5) Organizers; 6) Adversaries; and 7) Geographical location.
Fourth: Developmental context and dynamic. Books and articles with a pertinent analysis of the development process in Colombia and Middle Magdalena were also consulted.
CHAPTER TWO

THE MIDDLE MAGDALENA REGION

The previous chapter presented the methodological issues and case-study selected for this investigation. This chapter presents some of the empirical evidence which will aid in answering the research question guiding this study. As mentioned in Chapter One, the PDPMM is developing a rural territorial strategy in a type 4 territory characterized by its high levels of violence and poverty. The next obvious step in this investigation is to provide a general characterization of such a territory. That is the main objective of this chapter, which will be divided in three parts. In the first section, the reasons why the PDPMM chose to work in the Middle Magdalena territory will be explained. The second part presents some of the historical facts that contributed to the establishment of what is known today as Middle Magdalena. Finally, some of the indicators and data related to the state of violence and the economic dynamics of the territory will be clarified.

I. MIDDLE MAGDALENA: A REGION TO BE BUILT

The Middle Magdalena is neither a department, nor a political-administrative unit. It is a territory located in the central part of the Magdalena River course. Subsequently, neither the geographic borders, nor the official political-administrative division of the country, established what today is named as Middle Magdalena. In fact, there is no “official” definition of the region, and the Middle Magdalena area did not acquire importance until the late 1950s, when the zone became the centre of conflict between different social and political actors (Castro 2008: field notes). Ironically, as Amparo Murillo (1999: 44) points out, this peripheral territory’s claim to fame was the establishment and settlement of a
society characterized by the confrontation, survival, and social resistance of its inhabitants.

“Despite the existence of a denomination Middle Magdalena to refer to the territory determined by a zone in the Magdalena river, one cannot state that this region exists as a cultural, political or economic unity; on the contrary, what stands out is a geographical continuity with a history of conflict which has led it to be constituted as a mosaic of different cultures, interests and ethnicities” (Cadavid 1996: 10).

However, despite this fracture, the PDPMM discovered elements which allowed one to visualise the Middle Magdalena as a possible region. The PDPMM established itself as a strategy of territorial rural development which took the challenge of building a territory in the midst of complex conflict dynamics (Cfr. Duque 1996; Peña 1996).

A. BUILDING A REGION

Middle Magdalena became known and defined as a specific territory because of the efforts of the PDPMM. Through their endeavours, the PDPMM made explicit what was previously an implicit and potential region, becoming itself part of the social construction of the territory, as Berdegué and Schejtman specify:

“In other cases, territories emerge as a potential entity that a development project can help to materialise. This can happen when the productive structure of an area is changed by the establishment of an agribusiness, when the linkages and exchanges of particular population groups are redefined by the building of a major road, or when a social demand identifies a community within a particular area. We are talking here about territories that are “produced” or “built” insofar as it is an exogenous event that makes it possible for the actors in the development process to construct a “territorial identity” (Berdegué and Schejtman 2004: 34).

In advance, it is important to emphasize that the PDPMM does not intend to establish a new political-administrative entity. According to de Roux (1996: 12)
“the PDPMM has preferred to speak about the paradox of human and sustainable development in a ‘no-region region’ (Misas 1996), ‘a problem region’ (Duque 1996), and ‘a being-built region’ (Peña 1996)”. Therefore, the PDPMM’s aim is to build a region in a territory broken by violence and poverty. Two main reasons are given to justify that effort (Cadavid 1996):

First, Colombia is a country of regions, where the construction of a national and unified country has been impossible because of a lack of homogeneous cultural identity. For that reason, there is a tendency to view the country’s development from a territorial perspective.

Second, the economic, social and political reality of the zone led its social actors to request development and peace projects and programmes that would mitigate poverty and violence in Middle Magdalena.

In the light of this, the criteria used by the PDPMM to define the Middle Magdalena as a region were (Cadavid 1996; de Roux 1996):

**First: Geography.** According to the PDPMM, the Middle Magdalena Region is a physical space of 30,117 square kilometres located in the middle course of the Magdalena river, in which 801,231 inhabitants live in 30 different municipalities (see map 2.1). The majority of these municipalities are rural, with the exception of two urban centres (Barrancabermeja and Aguachica). In order to gain a better geographical coverage of the region, the PDPMM divided the zone in 8 different sub-regions (see table 2.1).

**Second: Oil dynamic.** Life in Middle Magdalena revolves around petroleum since the region is the home base of ECOPETROL’s main refinery. This led a large percentage of its current settlers to migrate to the territory looking for new jobs and better living conditions.
Map 2.1
The Middle Magdalena Region

Source: Observatorio de Paz Integral
Table 2.1
Departments, Sub-Regions and Municipalities in Middle Magdalena
According to the PDPMM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEPARTMENT</th>
<th>SUB-REGION</th>
<th>MUNICIPALITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolívar</td>
<td>Sur de Bolívar</td>
<td>Regidor, Tiquísio, Morales, Arenal y Río Viejo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sur-Sur de</td>
<td>Santa Rosa, Simití, San Pablo y Cantagallo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bolívar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cesar</td>
<td>Sur del Cesar</td>
<td>Aguachica, Gamarra, San Martín, San Alberto y La Gloria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antioquia</td>
<td>Magdalena Medio</td>
<td>Puerto Berrio, Puerto Nare, Puerto Parra y Bajo Simacota.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antioqueño</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santander</td>
<td>Vélez</td>
<td>Bolívar, El Peñón, Cimitarra y Landázuri.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yariguíes</td>
<td>San Vicente, Betulia y El Carmen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mares Norte</td>
<td>Sabana de Torres, Puerto Wilches y Bajo Rionegro.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barrancabermeja</td>
<td>Yondó y Barrancabermeja.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PDPMM

Third: Poverty and socio-economic isolation. The municipalities included in the region not only have low living standards, but also are distanced from the socio-economic activity of their departments.

Fourth: Violence. Municipalities with a history of conflict, displacement and generalized violence were also included.

Some of the historical reasons that can also justify this characterization will be given in the next section where I discuss Fernán González’s (2004), Amparo Murillo’s (1999), Manuel Alberto Alonso’s (1997), and Ubencel Duque’s (1996) historical description of the region.
II. MIDDLE MAGDALENA: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

A. REPUBLICAN PERIOD

After Colombia’s independence from Spain, the establishment of the Colombian Republic was distinguished by constant disputes between the two traditional parties (Liberal and Conservative). In this context, Colombia’s Constitution was established in 1886 yet, according to the liberals, the new Constitution created a vacuum for individual rights and freedom. The discrepancies between liberals and conservatives led to a civil war. Between 1899-1901 the Bipartisan “1,000-Days War” occurred in which the liberals attempted a revolution against the conservative regime as they excluded them from participating in the government (Deas 2005).

The war ended with the Conservative’s triumph forcing the liberals to take refuge in peripheral zones, like Middle Magdalena. There, thanks to activities such as fishing, hunting and timber, not only did those refugees survive, but the liberal ideology also endured. As Murillo (1999: 48) points out, the strong influence of liberal ideas could be considered a main source of the liberal and rebel tradition present in Middle Magdalena.

B. FIRST HALF OF THE XX CENTURY

In 1920 the modernization process of Colombia began due to four related factors (Murillo 1999: 49): coffee exports, industrialization, international capitalist relations and new infrastructure (roads, railroads and ports). Two important modern developments took place in Middle Magdalena. First was the construction of the railroad across the territory that connected the central part of the country with the Magdalena River. Second was the establishment of oil processing centres in Barrancabermeja, Yondó, Cantagallo and Puerto Wilches. Attracted by the establishment of the new oil companies and river transportation, a significant exodus of peasant families came to the region.
Related to these two developments, from 1920 unions were created in most of the transport and oil companies, and strikes became a common form of collective social protest in the region (Duque 1996). In fact, during January and February of 1948 one of the most significant anti-imperialist strikes in Colombia occurred in Barrancabermeja. For 45 days the oil workers acted in defence of national sovereignty by demanding an end to foreign oil exploitation. After a revision of the oil concession contracts, the Colombian Government established the Empresa Colombiana de Petróleos – ECOPETROL (Colombian Petroleum Company), in response to those demands.

In Murillo’s view, the union’s resistance in Middle Magdalena consolidated an important social cohesion in defence of collective interests that gave rise to a territorial identity, and created a certain national image of Middle Magdalena as a region of “social resistance” (Murillo 1999: 54).

C. THE BIPARTISAN PERIOD OF VIOLENCE AND THE NATIONAL FRONT

Apart from the specific events which occurred in Middle Magdalena, the year 1948 constitutes a decisive rupture in Colombian history. On the 9th of April 1948, Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, the popular liberal leader and presidential candidate, was assassinated by his opponents, starting a bipartisan period of violence, called La Violencia (The Violence), in which an estimated 200,000 people were killed from 1946 to 1953 (González 2004).

At a regional level, when news reached the inhabitants of Middle Magdalena about Gaitan’s assassination, members of the Liberal party organized meetings and protests against the local conservative power. As a result, the Revolutionary Junta, made up of local liberal leaders, took power for 10 days in Barrancabermeja. As nowhere else in the country did anything similar, those “ten days of popular power” (as the historian Apolinar Díaz calls them), were the most
important demonstration of the liberal protest against the conservative hegemony in Colombia (Díaz 1988).

The “ten days of popular power” ended in negotiations between the regional and central powers, but the Government reneged on the agreement. Consequently, Rafael Rangel, the leader of the Revolutionary Junta, fled to the mountains and formed the liberal guerrillas which consisted mostly of peasants from the region and those who were fleeing the conservative persecution. In 1953 General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla took power and offered amnesty to all subversive forces. After five years of struggle, Rangel and his group surrendered and demobilized.

Ironically, the need to end the bipartisan conflict and the military dictatorship led to an agreement between liberals and conservatives. Through the institution of a regime known as El Frente Nacional (the National Front), the two traditional parties decided to alternate the Presidency and divided the positions of state power between them. This arrangement, which lasted 16 years (from 1958 to 1974) contributed to the political stability of the country. However, the shared monopoly of power excluded alternative political visions and organizations (Archila 1997).

D. THE REVOLUTIONARY AND COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE

According to Alejo Vargas (1992: 183), out of the earlier violence marked by bipartisan politics, a new type emerged, this time marked by political revolutionary ideology proposing a struggle against the political regime and capitalism by different guerrilla groups that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Three main factors contributed to the creation of guerrilla groups at that time (González 2004): first, the two traditional parties did not address the rural communities’ necessities; second, the limitations of agrarian reform; and third, the criminalization of social protest. In this context, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional – ELN (the National Liberation Army) was formed in 1964. In 1966 some peasant movements influenced by the Communist Party evolved into the
guerrilla group called *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* – FARC (the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). The *Movimiento 19 de Abril* - M-19 (19th of April Movement) and the *Ejército Popular de Liberación* – EPL (the Popular Liberation Army) were also created in the 1970s.

During the 1970s and 1980s these guerrilla groups acted as a revolutionary movement participating in armed violence against the traditional government and capitalist economic system (Duque 1996). To achieve their objectives, the guerrillas not only expanded their control from peripheral zones toward richer areas more integrated into the national economy, but also began to use extortion and kidnapping of rich people as a means of financing their actions. According to González (2004) these kinds of actions substantially altered society’s perception of the conflict and increased public sympathy for the use of authoritarian solutions against guerrillas. In 1982 landowners, politicians, military personnel, ranchers, businessmen and a large oil-company formed the group *Muerte A Secuestradores* - MAS (Death to Kidnappers), in response to guerrilla kidnappings and extortions. This phenomenon began to extend across the country, mainly after 1984 when the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* – AUC (the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia) were established. In the 1990s the paramilitary group called *Bloque Central Bolívar* – BCB (Central Block of Bolívar) was created to fight guerrillas in Middle Magdalena.

González (2004) indicates that in this period war was characterized by a regional dynamic in which guerrillas and paramilitaries were fighting to control natural resources and strategic corridors. But the dynamic expansion of each group was different: while guerrillas set up their bases in underdeveloped areas where the presence of the State was weak, paramilitary forces were located in areas that were relatively prosperous and enjoyed some local power. This was the case in Middle Magdalena at the end of the 1990s where the guerrillas controlled poor areas (hillsides and mountains), while the paramilitary forces dominated the valley of the Magdalena River and all the municipal capitals where the economic and political powers are to be found. As González (2004) states “these counter-
posed logics of territorial expansion illustrate the confrontation between two contradictory models of rural economic development, as well as the different levels of integration of regions into national politics”.

However, over the last decade, the dynamics of the conflict have changed considerably as both the guerrillas and paramilitary groups became involved in the drug business. The guerrillas and paramilitaries have created a confusing combination of simultaneous alliances and clashes with drug-traffickers and with the official forces (HRW 2000). After relative success in the offensive against the drug cartels in the mid-1990s, these groups assumed control of the initial phases of narcotics production as their main means of financing the war. As a consequence, military strategies turned to control territories planted with coca, forcing poor peasants to cultivate and process the illegal drug. It can be argued that nowadays coca production and the trafficking of cocaine are the main military objectives of both paramilitary and guerrillas groups. Gone is the social belief in the idea of justice, peace and equality that most of the guerrillas groups and some of the paramilitary forces once promulgated to justify their fighting.

Alongside the history of armed conflict, successive governments attempted to negotiate peace with revolutionary armed groups. In the early 1990s, several thousand members of the M-19, part of the EPL, and the Quintín Lame group demobilized as a result of the peace agreement reached during the governments of Belisario Betancur and Cesar Gaviria. However, the FARC and the ELN did not demobilize and are still active.

During the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010), some leaders of the AUC publicised their intent to negotiate terms for the demobilization of their forces, declaring a unilateral cease-fire the first of December, 2002. In the following months, representatives of the Government initiated contacts with members of the AUC, and on July 15, 2003, a preliminary agreement was reached setting goals for demobilization by 2006. In the specific case of the Middle
Magdalena region, the Bloque Central Bolívar (Central Block of Bolívar) joined the process of demobilization in February 2006.

Although this process of demobilization is not finished yet, in recent years, new paramilitary structures called Águilas Negras (Black Eagles) were created to control the territory and drug business left by the previous paramilitary forces. Today the Middle Magdalena Region is the site of a new confrontation between the government forces, the guerrillas and the new paramilitary structures.

III. THE REGION TODAY: A PLACE IN WHICH CONTRADICTION IS AT HAND

Based on this historical context, the Middle Magdalena could be characterised as a space in which contradiction is at hand. The PDPMM itself expressed that contradiction through two related questions: why is there violence and cruelty to others in a region where people have a love for life? And, why are people so poor in a region so rich? In other words, in a place plenty of natural resources, where friendly people live, there is a paradox of violence and poverty. This section explores this contradiction, focusing on issues of violence, wealth distribution and the nature of the regional economy.

A. THE INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN LOVE FOR LIFE AND VIOLENCE

For the PDPMM “Middle Magdalena is its people”, indicating that without people there is no territory. As a social construct, the Region is made up of people living their lives in a similar way as many of the human beings of the planet. People who enjoy life, making fun of others as much as they can; people who play and dance tambora, one of the most difficult dances in Colombia; people who grew up in front of the Magdalena River as its friend and companion; people for
whom time is not measurable and life is not rushed. People who consider life a gift.

However, alongside this carnival of happiness there is a situation of violence that makes life uncertain. Easy going people become frightened and distrustful because of the war. For almost 40 years, the ongoing armed conflict has radically changed life in the Middle Magdalena Region, turning it into a place in which contradiction thrives.

1. An armed conflict that has turned against the civilian population

The expansion of the irrational and complex conflict in Colombia has shown a perverse dynamic where the civilians have been the principal victims. The inhabitants of Middle Magdalena have been struggling to survive in the midst of an armed conflict in which they do not have any part or interest.

“This situation is an internal conflict described as a "war through third groups", where opponents do not confront each other directly, but instead attack the real or supposed social base of the enemy. For this reason the Colombian conflict has been characterized as a war against the civilian population” (González 2004).

The statistics confirm this statement (see figure 2.1 and table 2.2).

![Figure 2.1](source: CINEP - OPI)
### Table 2.2
Conflict Related Murders in Middle Magdalena: 1997-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>CIVILIANS</th>
<th>GUERRILLAS</th>
<th>SOLDIERS AND POLICEMEN</th>
<th>PARAMILITARIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,355</strong></td>
<td><strong>512</strong></td>
<td><strong>125</strong></td>
<td><strong>286</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CINEP - OPI

The CINEP-OPI database of political violence indicates that during the period 1997-2007, 71.8% of the murders attributed to the conflict were of citizens (2,355 victims). In contrast, the groups in combat present low percentages and numbers: 512 dead guerrillas correspond to 15.6% of the whole. Meanwhile, 8.7% and 3.8% of the victims belong to paramilitary groups (286 murders) and members of the public forces (125 victims) respectively. Conflict in Middle Magdalena has focused on the destruction of the civilian population because of the assumption that they are collaborators and the social base of the enemy. The murder rate registered for Middle Magdalena between 1997 and 2007 was 26 civil dead for every 100,000 inhabitants (see table 2.3).

Analysing the motivations behind these civilian murders through a socio-political lens uncovers a direct correlation with the dynamics of the armed confrontation. Thus, during the 70s and 80s, the guerrilla groups imposed their control in the whole territory. However, with the paramilitary onrush in the 90s the situation changed radically. In that decade, the paramilitary dominated not only all the urban centres, but also the flat area of the region where most of the social infrastructure, the big industrial and agriculture projects, and the cattle farming ranches are located (Vicepresidencia de la República 2001). As a consequence,
the guerrilla groups remained cornered in the mountains where conditions are arduous and a traditional peasant economy prevails.

### Table 2.3
Murder Rate of Civilians for Political Reasons in Middle Magdalena: 1997-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NUMBER OF MURDERS</th>
<th>POPULATION IN MM*</th>
<th>MURDER RATE**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>796.379</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>808.463</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>820.809</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>833.434</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>844.833</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>856.099</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>856.099</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>880.511</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>801.231</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>808.796</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>815.548</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,355</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DNP and CINEP.
* The population in 2005 corresponds to the Census 2005. The rest of the years are projections made by the National Department of Statistics – DNP.
** Number of crimes for every 100,000 inhabitants.

It is evident from table 2.3 that there are two periods in which the murder rate was higher than normal. The first period was between 2000 and 2001 when the highest number of murders was registered (430 and 363 respectively). This is the period when a paramilitary onslaught commenced in the South of Bolivar and the invasion of Barrancabermeja (a bastion of the guerrilla power at that moment) took place. The second period was between 2004 and 2005, when a murder rate of 41 and 29 murders (respectively) was registered. In 2004 this translated into 358 civilians murdered, whereas in 2005 230 murders were registered. During this period, the number of murders for political reasons increased due to the actions of emergent paramilitary groups seeking to gain control of the drug trafficking business in the areas where the AUC was placed. Ironically, the growth of these new paramilitary forces occurred during a context of demobilization and dialogue with the government.
2. The right to remain in the territory

In addition to a consistently high murder rate, another consequence of the socio-political violence in Colombia is forced displacement. Undoubtedly, this is the most serious humanitarian problem that Colombia faces today, as it modifies the demographic and social structure of the expelling and recipient areas. The elusive question raised in regards to the development of a region such as Middle Magdalena would be: How to implement a rural territorial development programme when the right and ability to remain in the territory is uncertain?

a. Dynamics of expulsion

According to the Acción Social Database of Internal Displacement, 116,453 people have been forced to leave the region during 1994-2007. This number is equivalent to 14.5% of the current population of Middle Magdalena.

The dynamics behind such expulsion coincides with the dynamics of the internal armed confrontation (see figure 2.2). In general, from 1995 up to 1999 displacements were registered in the region. However, with the onset of the war, notably the paramilitary rush to control the South of Bolivar and the city of Barrancabermeja, the number of displaced people increased considerably. As a consequence, during 2000 and 2002, a total of 59,354 displacements took place. After that period the figure drops in 2003 and 2004 due to the demobilization of the AUC and its dialogues with the government. Nevertheless, after 2005 with the emergence of the new paramilitary forces, the situation of displacement increased considerably, registering a number of 34,180 people displaced in three years (2005-2007).
b. Recipient Dynamic

The other side of the phenomenon of forced displacement is the reception of people. According to the Acción Social Database of Internal Displacement, during 1997-2007 the Middle Magdalena region received 73,636 displaced people. This number is equivalent to almost the whole population of the municipality of Aguachica. Worth mentioning is the way in which both the expelling/recipient dynamics coincide in time (see figure 2.3). In this sense, during 2000 and 2002 the highest reception of displaced people (32,325 persons) occurred. After that, during 2003-2005 the figures drop and, then, the number of displaced people arriving to the region increased notably in 2006 and 2007 with 11,049 and 12,413 new arrivals registered respectively.
Trend of People Forcibly Displaced into Middle Magdalena: 1997-2007

The migratory effect due to forced displacement has two characteristics: firstly, the pattern of migration is one of circular behaviour, that is, the displaced population has moved itself internally within the region in an effort not to leave their way of life and their territory. Secondly, the displaced people have preferred to settle in the urban areas, intensifying the phenomenon of “de-ruralization” in the zone.

“Micoahumado is very special in Middle Magdalena. It has been the slogan for territory’s defence and permanence. In this acute conflict we moved from one county (rural zone) to another, in order to avoid the internal conflict. That is why we do not figure in the displaced people lists. The Red Cross International Committee does not recognize us as displaced people because we have never gone away. We stay in the territory. On the contrary, we have been receivers of other displaced people” (Peasant leader of Micoahumado. Personal interview. 25 December 2007).

Despite the circular pattern of forced migration, the region has lost 42,817 inhabitants (the difference between the number of people who were expelled and received). Such a pattern demonstrates that the region is characterized as being an expelling territory – a feature that both challenges and hinders a sustainable process of development that demands the permanence of the inhabitants in their
A summary of the population dynamics of Middle Magdalena will give an idea about the effects of forced displacement on the development process of the territory.

c. Population Dynamics

According to The National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), during the period from 1993 to 2005, the Middle Magdalena’s annual Population Growth Rate (PGR) was 1.6%. During this period, the region shifted from 664,030 inhabitants in 1993 to 801,231 inhabitants in 2005 (an increase of 20.7% in the population). Examining the urban-rural movement of the region, a clear pattern is observed which shows the trend towards urbanization of the territory (see table 2.4).

Table 2.4
Urban-Rural Population in Middle Magdalena: Census 1993 and 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>POPULATION 1993</th>
<th>PERCENTAJE 1993</th>
<th>POPULATION 2005</th>
<th>PERCENTAJE 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban Area</td>
<td>Rural Area</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Urban Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Area</td>
<td>343,842</td>
<td>329,012</td>
<td>672,854</td>
<td>466,134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In percentage terms, the rural population decreased 7.1% (while 48.9% of the population was living in the rural area in 1993, in 2005 this percentage diminished to 41.8%). In just twelve years, the urban population of Middle Magdalena went from 343,842 inhabitants in 1993 to 466,134 inhabitants in 2005, which means an increase of 122,292 inhabitants (a figure that is similar to the urban population of Barrancabermeja in 1993). This urban phenomenon can be explained as follows:

First, the situation of armed internal conflict in the region has mainly expelled people from the rural areas to the cities. "A decrease in the rural population of 7 percentage points in 12 years is due to an extraordinary phenomenon like a war. It can be assumed, that people prefer living in the urban areas because they feel
safer there” (Demographer. Personal interview. 25 March 2008). Moreover, a trend has developed whereby the displaced population migrate to the main municipalities searching for government assistance.

The second cause that explains the urban population growth is the construction of the main road of the region in 1994: *la Troncal del Magdalena Medio*. This is the only route that connects the region with the north and the center of the country. In the specific case of Middle Magdalena, the construction of this road meant a radical change of the region’s social configuration. Big landowners, agro-industrialists and stockbreeders bought the land near to the new road, diminishing the smallholdings and, consequently, the rural population living there.

**B. THE DISPARITY BETWEEN WEALTH AND POVERTY**

The second contradiction that characterizes Middle Magdalena is the disparity between the wealth that exists in the region and the poverty of most of its inhabitants.

For the PDPMM the principal cause of inequality and poverty is the prevalence of an enclave economy. Products such as oil, tobacco, wood, palm oil, soy bean and cotton, attain only the basic stage in the economic process. In fact, the region produces less than 10% of its final goods and services, which consequently, must be brought from other parts of the country, where the transformation and generation of excess production remained (de Roux 1996). The disparity in the productive and distributive processes indicates not only that the majority of the population is excluded from the productive process, but also that local people do not profit from the gains produced from the region’s resources.

According to Peña (1996) in 1995, 52.73% of its inhabitants had unmet basic needs, and 70% of the population live below the poverty line. Also, 32% of the population live under conditions of misery, which means that they experience at least two of the following variables: 1) Inadequate housing; 2) Lack of at least one
of the utilities, such as potable water or sewage system; 3) Overcrowded households; and 4) Low degree of education. As a general trend (except in Barrancabermeja), the population in situations of poverty and misery are located principally in the rural areas. Recent comparative data can be seen in the following table.

**Table 2.5**

**Unmet Basic Needs in Middle Magdalena: 1993 and 2005**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Region/Municipality</th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arenal</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>59.12</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantagallo</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>62.18</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morales</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>63.80</td>
<td>-22.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regidor</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>66.73</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Río Viejo</td>
<td>90.04</td>
<td>79.00</td>
<td>-11.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Pablo</td>
<td>77.07</td>
<td>66.08</td>
<td>-10.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Rosa del Sur</td>
<td>73.83</td>
<td>55.43</td>
<td>-18.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simití</td>
<td>80.47</td>
<td>62.00</td>
<td>-18.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiquisio</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>86.48</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUR DE BOLÍVAR</strong></td>
<td><strong>81.50</strong></td>
<td><strong>66.75</strong></td>
<td><strong>-14.75</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aguachica</td>
<td>51.99</td>
<td>41.90</td>
<td>-10.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamarra</td>
<td>59.55</td>
<td>50.52</td>
<td>-9.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Gloria</td>
<td>66.33</td>
<td>54.77</td>
<td>-11.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Alberto</td>
<td>44.89</td>
<td>33.93</td>
<td>-10.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Martín</td>
<td>60.63</td>
<td>46.89</td>
<td>-13.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUR DE CESAR</strong></td>
<td><strong>56.68</strong></td>
<td><strong>45.60</strong></td>
<td><strong>-11.08</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrancabermeja</td>
<td>29.48</td>
<td>22.21</td>
<td>-7.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betulia</td>
<td>45.58</td>
<td>43.15</td>
<td>-2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolívar</td>
<td>54.12</td>
<td>55.94</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cimitarra</td>
<td>58.63</td>
<td>45.14</td>
<td>-13.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Carmen de Chucurí</td>
<td>70.24</td>
<td>51.08</td>
<td>-19.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Peñón</td>
<td>72.84</td>
<td>66.29</td>
<td>-6.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landazúri</td>
<td>62.60</td>
<td>48.84</td>
<td>-13.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Parra</td>
<td>62.74</td>
<td>50.83</td>
<td>-11.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Wilches</td>
<td>64.02</td>
<td>49.08</td>
<td>-14.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rionegro</td>
<td>52.89</td>
<td>39.65</td>
<td>-13.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabana de Torres</td>
<td>49.35</td>
<td>33.24</td>
<td>-16.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Vicente de Chucurí</td>
<td>39.90</td>
<td>29.14</td>
<td>-10.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simacota (bajo)</td>
<td>59.54</td>
<td>48.18</td>
<td>-11.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MM SANTANDEREANO</strong></td>
<td><strong>55.53</strong></td>
<td><strong>44.82</strong></td>
<td><strong>-10.71</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Berrío</td>
<td>42.41</td>
<td>38.43</td>
<td>-3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Nare</td>
<td>49.47</td>
<td>31.86</td>
<td>-17.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yondó</td>
<td>70.64</td>
<td>59.09</td>
<td>-11.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MM ANTIOQUEÑO</strong></td>
<td><strong>54.17</strong></td>
<td><strong>43.12</strong></td>
<td><strong>-11.05</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MIDDLE MAGDALENA</strong></td>
<td><strong>61.97</strong></td>
<td><strong>51.33</strong></td>
<td><strong>-10.64</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COLOMBIA</strong></td>
<td><strong>35.80</strong></td>
<td><strong>27.63</strong></td>
<td><strong>-8.17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures indicate that living conditions have improved in Middle Magdalena. In fact, between 1993 and 2005, the UBN shifted from 61.97 to 51.33 respectively, though the percentage of people living under unmet basic conditions is still high. In three of the Subregions the UBN decreased nearly 11 points between 1993 and 2005: South of Cesar (from 56.68 to 45.6), Magdalena Medio Santandereano (from 55.53 to 44.82) and Magdalena Medio Antioqueño (from 54.17 to 43.12). In this context, the South of Bolívar presents the greatest change among the four sub-regions: from 81.5 in 1993 to 66.75 in 2005, though it presents the highest percentage of people living with UBN in the territory.

The previous data gave evidence of a structural situation of inequality and poverty that affects most of the population, especially those located in rural areas, notably in the South of Bolívar. This economic situation can be traced back to the historical processes of regional accumulation based on extractive economies. In addition, the liberalization of trade, the concentration of land, the armed conflict against the population and drug trafficking, have brought negative effects to the region: they hinder the construction of alternative sustainable development that overcomes poverty; they create the propensity to migrate as a means to escape from the armed conflict; they contribute to a situation in which most households experience a lack of basic goods and services; and they increase the dependence on illicit activities such as the coca plantation and the theft of petrol.

C. GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT

The PDPMM in its white paper estimated that the Gross Product generated in Middle Magdalena was US$2.6 billion in 1995. However, only 21% of the revenues produced remain in the region. Based on those results the PDPMM calculated the Regional Income Per Capita for 1995, indicating that 30% of people received an average of US$1,400, while 70% of the population received an average of US$396 per year (de Roux 1996).
A most recent estimation of the annual Gross Product of the Middle Magdalena Region was made by CER and OPI for the year of 2005. The results are presented in table 2.6.

Table 2.6
Middle Magdalena Annual Gross Product Value - 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCTS</th>
<th>ANNUAL GROSS PRODUCT VALUE*</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Petroleum</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Palm</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle and Pigs</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cacao</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>2.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coca and Cocaine</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>n.i.</td>
<td>n.i.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>n.i.</td>
<td>n.i.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>n.i.</td>
<td>n.i.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>n.i.</td>
<td>n.i.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>4,163</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CER – OPI
* All values are given in million dollars.

Some inferences can be made from table 2.6:

- In economic terms the oil industry is by far the dominant industry in the region, representing 88.8% of the total production (a high degree of dependence of the regional economy on petroleum).
- Among agricultural products, African Palm contributes the greatest share (3.1%) of the Gross Regional Product. This is because of the growth in the number of palm plantations in the region due to the increasing demand in bio-combustibles.
- Although cattle and pigs were in the past an important sector of production in Middle Magdalena, today they do not contribute significantly (only 1.34% of the GP – less than the percentage of African Palm).
• Even though the economic circuits of cocaine, fishing and cacao are present in the region, their contribution to gross production is less than 1% each.

Having presented a general overview of Gross Regional Product, it is necessary to study in depth the specific systems of production in Middle Magdalena and their role in the development of the zone.

D. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Geographically and economically the Middle Magdalena region has two different zones (see map 2.2).

Map 2.2

Source: PDPMM
The first zone is the river valley or the flat part of the region, where petroleum activity, extensive palm production, cattle farming and large estates are concentrated. This zone is crossed from north to south by both the Magdalena River and the highway of the Middle Magdalena region. The second area corresponds to the mountainous area, where a smallholding peasant economy prevails. Products such as cocoa, red beans, tropical fruits and coffee are cultivated there. Additionally, the entire coca production of the region is concentrated in this area, as also are extensive gold and coal deposits. It is an underdeveloped area with little infrastructure, deficient communication routes, and almost no presence of State institutions.

In general, the Middle Magdalena region plays a strategic role in the generation of national wealth, becoming an attractive zone for investors due to its potential natural wealth. Worth mentioning are some of its natural resources such as (Cfr. OIM – CDPMM 2006):

- It is one of the major areas of water resources in Colombia due to the location of several swamps and the Magdalena River.
- The San Lucas Range is considered one of the main gold deposits in Latin America (approximately 1,500,000 hectares).
- The home base of ECOPETROL’s refinery is located in Barrancabermeja where the majority of Colombia’s oil is processed.
- In Landázuri and el Carmen de Chucurí there are important deposits of coal (137,000 hectares approximately).
- The Cimitarra Valley is rich in wood resources.
- In the agro-industrial sector, the region is nationally important producing 27% of Colombian palm oil, 44% of its cacao, and 6% of its rubber.
- Also, products such as tropical fruits, tobacco, soy bean, cotton and fish are commercially exploited to send to the rest of the country.
The next part of this section offers an overview of the most dynamic economic sectors of the region. Their geographical location is showed in map 2.3.

Map 2.3
Economic Activity in MM – Geographical Location

Source: OPI
1. Petroleum

According to CER the production, refining and transport of oil and gas represented 88.87% of the Gross Regional Product (nearly 3,696 million dollars) in 2005. This demonstrates how the oil industry is the axis of the Middle Magdalena economy (as it has historically been). In fact, during the first three quarters of the XX century the municipality of Barrancabermeja was the biggest hydrocarbon producer in Colombia. Nevertheless, due to the depletion of its fields and the discovery of new deposits in other parts of the country, oil activity in Barrancabermeja is now focused on oil refining.

a. Oil Exploration, Perforation and Production

As already mentioned, the Middle Magdalena region has seen diminishing oil production in the last fifteen years (see figure 2.4). While in 1990, 49,486 BOPD\(^{13}\) were produced, in 2005 only 13,420 BOPD were obtained (8% of the national production). Oil production is mainly concentrated in three municipalities: Barrancabermeja, Sabana de Torres and Yondó.

\[\text{Figure 2.4}\]

**Oil Production in Middle Magdalena: 1990-2005**

Source: PRONET

\(^{13}\) BOPD: Barrels of Oil Per Day.
• **Barrancabermeja:** According to ECOPETROL, there was a reduction in oil production in this municipality (from 13,449 BOPD in 1991 to 10,324 BOPD in 2005 respectively). For that reason, ECOPETROL began an aggressive recovery plan of the Cira and Infantas oil wells\(^\text{14}\), seeking to increase the oil production from 150 to 200 million barrels.

• **Sabana de Torres:** There is also a downward trend in the oil production in Sabana de Torres, decreasing from 13,657 BOPD in 1991 to 6,025 BOPD in 2005.

• **Yondó:** The decline of oil production is also observed in Yondó, which produced 13,059 BOPD in 1991, and 6,868 BOPD in 2005 (53% of the production in 1991).

**b. Refining**

According to ECOPETROL, in 2005, 74.83% of the oil was processed in Barrancabermeja, whose refinery provided 75% of the petrol, diesel fuel and other fuels to the country, and 70% of the petrochemical products that are commercialized in the national market. As a result of this process, the municipality of Barrancabermeja has been a beneficiary of the petroleum revenue generated by taxes. For instance, in 2005 ECOPETROL transferred to the municipality of Barrancabermeja US$33,306,320.

However, despite the high level of industrial development achieved by the oil industry in Barrancabermeja, petroleum activity has not been a symbol of progress and development for the Middle Magdalena region.

“What is significant when one approaches the general view of this sector during the last 10 years… is to understand two situations: on the one hand, petroleum production activity generated 90% of

\(^{14}\) Chapter Eight will explain in more detail this project.
regional surpluses, of which 90% left the region. On the other, this activity involved little integration with the local industry” (OIM - CDPMM 2006: 37).

2. African Palm

In the Middle Magdalena region, palm production began in the 1960s in the municipalities of San Alberto with Indupalma Company, and in the municipality of Puerto Wilches with the companies of Bucarelia, las Brisas and Monterrey, (each one cultivated 1,500 hectares). At the end of the 80s, 14,000 hectares had already been established in these municipalities.

Between 1994 and 2005 there was an intensive growth of palm production in the region. In those 12 years, cultivation went from 27,946 hectares to 64,630 hectares. This meant that 3,057 new hectares were planted per year. During the same period, the area in production grew from 27,679 hectares in 1994 to 40,557 hectares in 2005 (see figure 2.5).

![Figure 2.5](image_url)

**Figure 2.5**

Evolution of the Planted Area and the Area in Production of African Palm in Middle Magdalena: 1994-2005

Source: FEDEPALMA
As can be seen from figure 2.5, in the last few years the region has experienced an intensive growth of palm culture, constituting 16% of the entire national area. The pattern of growth will continue to rise due to government policies and to international demand for the product. According to OIM - CDPMM (2006: 83), it is projected that in 2020 the total area planted will be 142,000 hectares (78,000 new hectares).

Notwithstanding, the interest that the national government has in the palm business, the sector is not without its problems (Castro 2008: field notes): first, the expansion of palm mono-culture reduces the farming area for foodstuff production. Secondly, the majority of the revenue produced by this agro-industry does not remain in the region. Finally, expansion has occurred in areas where there is neither a cultural nor historical tradition of palm culture, as in the case of the South of Bolivar (a suitable area for cattle farming, cultivation of tropical products and fishing).

Such impacts associated with the palm business have encouraged diverse communities and organizations of the Middle Magdalena (notably the PDPMM) to develop an alternative model to cultivate African palm according to the needs and characteristics of the peasant economy. In order to counter the effects of mono-culture, the Peasant Model of African palm is cultivated in a maximum of 10 hectares (minimum 8) in rural farms that are not bigger than 50 hectares. Nearly 9,700 hectares have been planted following the technical specifications of this model (see table 2.7).

---

15 Chapter Six will explain in more detail the Peasant Project of African Palm implemented by the PDPMM.
Table 2.7
*Palma Campesina* (Peasant Palm) in Middle Magdalena (2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MUNICIPALITY</th>
<th>PDPMM</th>
<th>OTHER ORGANIZATIONS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simití</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Pablo</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantagallo</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Wilches</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrancabermeja</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>2,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Vicente</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabana</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Martín</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>5,700</td>
<td>9,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CENIPALMA

3. Cocoa

In Middle Magdalena, cocoa culture is principally located in the municipalities of San Vicente, el Carmen and Landázuri. Figure 2.7 shows its development. Looking at the planted area, we see a downward trend. The number of planted hectares decreased from 42,114 to 37,071 between 1995 and 2004. The same pattern is registered at the productive level, which diminished 22% (from 41,253 hectares in 1995 to 35,954 hectares in 2004).

![Figure 2.6](image-url)

**Figure 2.6**
Trend of the Planted Area and the Area in Production of Cacao in Middle Magdalena: 1995-2004

Source: URPA
According to OIM – CDPMM (2006: 50) the planted area has not increased in the region due to the genetic improvement of the seeds, and the new organic practices implemented. Such techniques have contributed to higher levels of production per hectare, shifting from 448 kg/ha in 2000 to 504 kg/ha in 2004. In this cocoa renewal project, the PDPMM’s support has been vital in strengthening the basic stage of the productive process. Through the investment in ECOCACAO (a Cooperative of Cocoa Farmers), 1,546 new hectares of cocoa have been established in the region\(^\text{16}\).

Some projections undertaken by OIM – CDPMM (2006: 50) indicate that the entire planted area of cocoa in 2020 would reach 46,950 hectares, which would represent 40% of the national area. At the same time, it is estimated that the area in production would be 42,790 hectares (approximately 54% of the national production).

### 4. Cattle Farming

Despite the importance that cattle farming has had in the local economy of Middle Magdalena, in the last decade this mode of production has declined for three reasons (Castro 2008: Field notes). First, it constitutes an unproductive occupation of the territory. In the region this kind of farming system is practiced in very large farms, characterized by low levels of inputs per unit area of land. On average, 100 hectares of land are necessary to feed between 70 and 80 cows, which can be controlled by only two or three cowhands. Second, in Colombia there are 41.7 million hectares dedicated to the cattle farming, when only 10.2 millions of hectares are suitable for that (see figure 2.6). The national government is conscious of this problem and has encouraged the productive occupation of the territory, implementing policies promoting the cultivation of African palm in the lands previously occupied by inefficient cattle farms. Third, various cattle farming strategies have been linked to violence. Alliances between ranchers and

\(^\text{16}\) Chapter 7 will systematize the best practices of the cocoa project implemented by the PDPMM.
paramilitary groups have led to the territorial expansion of cattle farming in some places.

**Figure 2.7**

**Land Use in Colombia**

![Bar chart showing land use in Colombia](chart.png)

Source: DNP (2007b: 153)

5. **Mining: Gold and Coal**

Middle Magdalena has great mining potential due to its natural reserves of gold and coal. Traditionally, such mines have been worked manually by poor miners. Nevertheless, the present government has concentrated national and foreign investment in this sector - as a result, the presence of multinationals has increased in the region. For instance, since 2004 the South African company Anglo Gold Ashanti (AGA), has been dedicated to the exploration for **gold** in the Saint Lucas chain, where there is an estimated 1,5 million hectares of gold. However, the exploitation phase of this project has been interrupted due to the strong pressure of the guerrilla group ELN who refuse to accept the presence of multinationals in the region. On the other hand, companies like Centromin and Río Tinto have been making arrangements with the national government to explore the **coal deposits**\(^\text{17}\) located in the municipalities of Carmen de Chucurí and Landázuri respectively.

---

\(^{17}\) An estimated 137,000 hectares of coal are in Middle Magdalena (OIM – PDPMM 2006).
However, these projects are still in their exploratory phase given the presence of guerrillas and the different conflicts concerning environmental sustainability.

6. Coca

The production of coca and its processing into cocaine are mainly located in the municipalities of the South of Bolivar, where 70% of the plantations can be found, above all in the municipalities of Santa Rosa, San Pablo, Simití, Arenal, y Cantagallo. The remaining 30% of the planted area is located in the Municipalities of the Magdalena Medio Santanderano (Briceño 2008). This is mainly because those are zones of peasant production existing in a scale of poverty and perpetual crisis, while also resisting the pressure of the armed groups. The lack of any kind of social services leaves poor peasants with little or no choice but to turn to coca, especially when a legitimate income is effectively unavailable and there is a lack of other employment opportunities (Cfr. Fonseca, Gutiérrez and Rudqvist 2005).

The National Police (2006) indicate that coca cultivation in the region reached a peak of 10,832 hectares in 2000. From that year onwards, there was a reduction in the number of planted hectares due to the action of anti-drug forces, which reduced the planted area to 2,830 hectares in 2005 (see figure 2.8).

**Figure 2.8**

*Trend of Coca Cultivation in Middle Magdalena: 1999-2005*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Hectares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>6,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>10,832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>6,815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>4,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>3,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2,830</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to mention the strong correlation that exists between the coca business and the internal conflict dynamics of the territory. Looking at the different figures presented in this chapter, it was observed that the year 2000 saw the highest number of hectares sown with coca, the highest number of murders of the civilian population registered, and the highest number of civilians displaced in the region. Both the guerrilla and the paramilitary groups fight to gain control over the territory (notably coca plantations), and in the process develop an economy of war resulting in death, displacement and the exploitation of poor peasants.\footnote{On the relation between violence and coca cultivation in Middle Magdalena see: Fonseca, Gutiérrez and Rudqvist (2005), and Cabieses et. al. (2005).}

IV. FINAL OBSERVATIONS

The present chapter has presented the elusive contradiction that exists in Middle Magdalena. Unfortunately, the territory is characterised by an inconsistency between love for life and violence, and the disparity between wealth and poverty. On the one hand, despite the potential of its natural resources, the dynamic oil industry, and the farming and agro-industrial production that the region has, the majority of the population do not profit from the gains produced with local resources. Consequently, “the region does not take control of the massive amount of wealth that it produces” (González, Castilla and Merchán 2003: 29), leaving the majority of the population in a situation of poverty and misery. On the other hand, the region is witness to high levels of violence and forced displacement that destroy the area’s human and social capital, questioning the right to life and the right to remain in the territory.

These two contradictions characterize what Berdegué and Schejtman (2004) have denominated type 4 territory: territories with depressed and stagnant economies, and suffering from strong social fractures and weak institutions that make it difficult to structure local life in a constructive way. As a territory in dispute, the
region is experiencing *conflict dynamics* in which development agents and armed actors struggle over control of the territory, generating high levels of inequality, and conflicts over commodities, resources and land.

Notwithstanding, the conflictive situation that prevails in Middle Magdalena, the PDPMM took the challenge to build it as a territory, that is as a social construct where the main actors share a common development project. According to the PDPMM, Middle Magdalena is a promising region, a territory in construction, where the link between violence and underdevelopment needs to be broken. That is what Francisco de Roux calls *desarrollo en caliente* (hot/bare development), namely a process of sustainable development that aims at producing peaceful conditions in a territory in dispute.

The remainder of this thesis will study the implications of pursuing Rural Territorial Development strategies in type 4 territory such as this. The first step in this analysis is to elaborate a theoretical framework addressing the nature and sources of conflict and its relations to development. To this I now turn.
CHAPTER THREE

A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO CONFLICT

The characterization offered in the previous chapter of the Middle Magdalena Region demands a theoretical framework that illuminates the analysis of the conflicting dynamics that occur in that territory. Such a comprehensive framework requires the specification of key concepts that are essential to this investigation. The present chapter will explain three of the key concepts of this research: conflict, violent conflict and conflict dynamics.

Beginning with a general characterization of conflict, the chapter will delve deeper into the study of the nature and causes of violent conflict, with a special reference to the Colombian case. As a conclusion, the final section will open the door to the subject matter of the next two chapters of this investigation presenting a brief analysis of the forms in which conflict and the development process interconnect. Such conflict dynamics refer to the practical and theoretical incommensurability between opposing actors and visions of development, each one with its own view about how the development process is or should be.

At this stage it is important to clarify that the emphasis of the present study is on analyzing the implications of doing rural development in the midst of “conflict dynamics”. In that sense, the aim of the research does not consist in describing the nature and origin of the armed conflict that takes place in Middle Magdalena. Although that is a valuable task, it demands elucidation of the causes and consequences of the political violence at the risk of focusing on the military level of the conflict (as has been the case with several investigations already concluded in Colombia).
Although, many previous investigators have emphasised the correlation between development and conflict from the armed actors’ perspective, this investigation will analyze the conflicting dynamics involved in the development process. This perspective establishes the analysis at a different level than the military one. Understanding the conflict does not only require a reflection on war; understanding the conflict implies the study of the contrasting interests, aims, means and positions among rival actors and visions, in which the implementation of a specific model could lead to the exclusion and/or elimination of alternative views.

I. THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND CONFLICT

Understanding a violent conflict is not an easy task. In fact, it is an impossible one. Even if violence could be categorized and analyzed, its brutality and irrationality exceed concepts, ideas and theories. For many years I have experienced that dilemma. As a Colombian I have been immersed in a sea of uncertainty due to the violent conflict in which I have lived. Every day there are situations revealing the inconsistency between how we might live and how we actually live. Every day in the Colombian mass media there is news of murder, drug trafficking, corruption and general inequality. Our national problems seem to be our daily bread. It is not easy to accept that one’s own country’s claim to fame are its cocaine production and its human rights violations. Every day there are questions that I need to respond to in some tangible way. Colombia is truly a country in which it is vital to come to a conceptualization of conflict.

I consider, therefore, that a suitable contribution to development and peace issues could be both practical work and analytical thought rooted in the study of the Middle Magdalena case. Together these can guide us to human development and conflict transformation in rural areas. A theoretical framework based mostly on the territorial development approach and conflict theory might validate this purpose and would help identify ways to move the countryside forward. In this
regard, the conceptualization of conflict becomes the starting point to understand the relation between peace and development. After all, “in order to deal with violent conflict we need to understand it” (Mac Ginty 2006: 58).

II. CONCEPTUALIZING CONFLICT

Conflict conceptualization is complex not only because of the ambiguous ways in which the concept itself is used, but also because of the different methods through which it is approached. On the one hand, conflict is regularly used as a synonym for dispute, violence, war, or aggression. On the other, almost every academic discipline has its own theoretical approach to conflict: psychology focuses on behavioural factors; sociology takes status and class conflicts as the focal point; economics focuses on rational choice and game-theory; political science is centered on intra-national and international conflicts; and so on. Therefore, to achieve an all-encompassing definition of conflict is a fruitless task. Parameters and boundaries are required.

In this sense and given the purpose of this research, this investigation conceives violent conflict as the political violence resulting from protracted armed conflict. At this point, it is vital to remark that violence is different from conflict. Violence is the pathologic face of conflict, whereas conflict is no more than an essential dimension of human nature. Since conflict is part of the anthropological structure of human relations, its intrinsic character embraces much more than the notion of violence. Indeed, it is part of the very nature of human interaction. Peace and conflict research assumes that conflicts are the expression of opposing interests and incompatible goals that two or more parties (individuals or groups) have or think they have. A graphic definition given by Nicholson helps us to understand the intrinsic character of conflict in human nature:
“A conflict exists when two people wish to carry out acts which are mutually inconsistent. They may both want to do the same thing, such as eat the same apple, or they may want to do different things where the different things are mutually incompatible, such as when they both want to stay together but one wants to go to the cinema and the other to stay at home. A conflict is resolved when some mutually compatible set of actions is worked out. The definition of conflict can be extended from individuals to groups (such as states or nations), and more than two parties can be involved in the conflict. The principles remain the same” (Nicholson 1992: 11).

If conflict is understood as an innate aspect of human life, to address it, is less a question of its elimination than its management (Pfetsch 2005: 3). In this sense, it is not possible to imagine humankind without conflicts, but it is possible to imagine it without violence. In contrast to conventional approaches, the prevention, settlement or resolution of conflicts do not aim to eliminate conflict, or even the elimination of opposing interests. Conflict research should be aimed at seeking peaceful interaction and rational agreement between incompatible postures. In particular, the proposed research, based on Alasdair MacIntyre’s approach (1988, 1990), advocates pragmatic articulations among incommensurable and rival paradigms of theory and practice (see Chapter Four).

For that reason, once conflict emerges, it is necessary to acquire a comprehensible analysis of its dynamic and development. In this process “the level of incompatibility is the most important variable that impacts the intensity of the dispute and dynamic of conflict phases” (Axt, Milososky and Schwarz 2006: 4) that could take the conflict from non-violence to violence. Following this pattern, the COSIMO 2.0 conflict categorization developed by the HIIK (2005), divides conflict in two main categories: non-violent and violent, incorporating the five stages of intensity (latent conflict, manifested conflict, crisis, severe crisis, and war) previously classified by Pfetsch (1994). An overview and definition of such a classification is presented in table 3.1.
Table 3.1
Overview and Definitions of the Conflict Intensity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State of Conflict</th>
<th>Intensity Group</th>
<th>Levels of Intensity</th>
<th>Name of Intensity</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non Violent</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Latent Conflict</td>
<td>A positional difference on definable values of national meaning is considered to be a latent conflict if respective demands are articulated by one of the parties and perceived by the other as such.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Manifest Conflict</td>
<td>A manifest conflict includes the use of measures that are located in the preliminary stage to violent force. This includes for example verbal pressure, threatening explicitly with violence, or the imposition of economic sanctions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Crisis</td>
<td>A crisis is a tense situation in which at least one of the parties uses violent force in sporadic incidents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Severe Crisis</td>
<td>A conflict is considered to be a severe crisis if violent force is repeatedly used in an organized way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>War</td>
<td>A war is a type of violent conflict in which violent force is used with certain continuity in an organized and systematic way. The conflict parties exercise extensive measures, depending on the situation. The extent of destruction is massive and of long duration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HIIK (2005: 2).

As was noted, the absence of violence does not mean an absence of conflict. In fact, both latent and manifest conflicts indicate a certain degree of disagreement between two or more actors that could be managed by peaceful means. After all, the human capacity to choose rational decisions in conflicting situations indicates that there is a logical tendency to avoid violent solutions to conflict. In the same sense and contrary to the Realist Theory of conflict causation, this research will follow an optimistic approach searching for conflict management and transformation. However, an analysis of non-violent confrontations goes beyond the aim of this research. This document will focus on conflicts that have turned violent as a manifestation of incommensurabilities among actors.
III. APPROACHING VIOLENT CONFLICT

According to Axt, Milososky and Schwars (2006: 7) conflicts advance to a violent stage when “parties go beyond seeking to attain their goals peacefully, and try to dominate, damage or destroy the opposing parties’ ability to pursue their own interests”. In this case, violence reflects the collapse of any effort to manage the incommensurability between opposing parties, becoming one of the most disturbing aspects for sustainable development. Human history itself tells much about this phenomenon. Without doubt the Twentieth Century was one of the most violent periods in our history, not only for the deplorable events of two World Wars and other specific wars, but also for the potential obliteration that humankind experienced in the Cold War period. Stephanie Lawson (2003: 39) describes the last century as “the bloodiest one-hundred-year period in the history of the human species”, and Zbigniew Brzezinski (1993) terms it “the century of megadeath”.

However, despite the significance of violence as an obstacle to human well-being, “theorists of 'development' have remained remarkably unwilling to incorporate any consideration of warfare into their analytical frameworks” as Tim Unwin (2002: 442) points out. Three reasons support his affirmation: first, the idea of development is related to progress, and warfare is the antithesis of such progress. Second, most academics have no experience (direct or indirect) of the horror of war. Third, war raises ethical questions that are not easy to solve. Thus, although there is a lack of incorporation of warfare into development analysis, the actual situation of a world at war and the suffering of innocent victims that this leads to, demand relevant interpretations and actions. Rather than ignore war we need to face it.

To reiterate, conflict conceptualization is not straightforward. In fact, there is no commonly accepted approach to and definition of the nature of violent conflict. That could be understandable. I have come to realize the difficulty of
conceptualizing something that is catastrophic in essence. Recognizing this problem, John Keegan made the following observation:

“War is a protean activity, by which I mean that it changes form, often unpredictably. It is for this reason that I have avoided attempting to define the nature of war throughout these lectures. Like disease, it exhibits the capacity to mutate, and mutates fastest in the face of efforts to control or eliminate it. War is collective killing for some collective purpose; that is as far as I would go in attempting to describe it” (Keegan 1998: 72, quoted by Allen 2000: 165).

Given the diverse nature of violent conflict, researchers have developed a set of measurable indicators to describe it. Curiously the majority refer to war. Though violent conflict embodies three different types of conflict (crisis, severe crisis and war), the study of war has constituted the larger part of violent conflict research. In this regard, the use of force, physical damage and human casualties are normally used to describe the intensity and nature of a violent conflict.

Perhaps the most established approach to violent conflict is that employed by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) which avoiding the use of the term war in its Year Book 2007, defines major armed conflicts as “the use of armed force between the military forces of two or more governments, or of one government and at least one organized armed group, resulting in the battle-related deaths of at least 1,000 people in any single calendar year and in which the incompatibility concerns control of government and/or territory” (SIPRI 2007: 91).

There is also another approach. The Uppsala Conflict Database (USDP) defines armed conflict “as a contested incompatibility that concerns government or territory or both, where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths. Of these two parties, at least one has to be the government of a State” (USDP 2007). The USDP, adopting a different casualty rate than SIPRI, identifies three kinds of armed conflict:
• Minor Armed Conflict: at least 25 battle-related deaths per year and fewer than 1,000 battle-related deaths during the course of the conflict.

• Intermediate Armed Conflict: at least 25 battle-related deaths per year and an accumulated total of at least 1,000 deaths, but less than 1,000 in any given year.

• War: at least 1,000 battle-related deaths per year.

However, those approaches (based on material destruction and human casualties) have been criticized for their narrow analysis of the complex dynamic of violent conflict. “The concentration on fatalities as the principal measure of the intensity of a conflict is understandable, but there is a risk that it produces an overly narrow view of armed conflict and, as a consequence, a narrow view of peace” (Mac Ginty 2006: 63). There is a need to adopt a broader approach to violent conflict for several reasons:

First, the data sets on armed conflict usually have serious failures such as (Mac Ginty 2006): 1) The criteria for data collection are usually ambiguous; 2) There are difficulties in obtaining information in conflict zones due to the control mechanisms imposed by the groups in conflict; 3) It is difficult to determine whether combat-related casualty figures are accurate; and 4) Sometimes the information can be manipulated and used for political and military purposes.

Second, focusing on conflict casualties does not capture the other consequences of war. As a result, the data sets on violent conflict should be analyzed in conjunction with databases on human rights, development or democratization. Moreover, other kinds of indicators stressing social effects, such as Crude Mortality Rates (CMR) or forced displacement could provide a more integral view of armed conflict.
Third, the causes of armed conflict should also be taken into consideration. These causes include ideology, ethnicity, human needs, territorial conflict and religion, and are commonly identified as sources that determine violent conflict (Singer 1996; Pfetsch and Rohloff 2000).

Fourth, the amorphous and changeable character of violent conflict implies the permanent adaptation of the theoretical framework to the nature of armed conflict. While the traditional interstate conflicts become less prominent, the 1990s were characterized by a substantial increase in the number of civil conflicts within states, the majority of them located in poor countries. Such transformation has promoted a considerable production of studies aiming to conceptualize the new phenomenon of “contemporary wars”, described among others as: “new wars” (Kaldor 1999); “post-modern wars” (Mark Duffield 1998); “complex political emergencies” (Goodhand and Hulme 1999); “degenerate warfare” (Martin Shaw 2000) and “privatized or informal wars” (David Keen 1995).

Rather, more than give a pure definition, some authors have tended to give a characterization of contemporary violent conflicts. Following Mary Kaldor’s (1999) and Tim Allen’s (2000) description, the main features of those wars are as follows:

First, the goals of the new wars tend to be about identity politics rather than ideology or territory, and have to be understood in the context of globalization19. Kaldor’s main argument consists of indicating that globalization has created a new type of organized violence that generates new forms of identity politics making claims to power on the basis of a particular identity (Kaldor 1999: 72). The cultural, economic and political gap between those who participate in the global process and those excluded from it, becomes a key source of discrepancy and conflict. From a rural territorial perspective for example, Bebbington et. al.

19 According to Kaldor (1999: 4) globalization means “the intensification of global interconnectedness – political, economic, military and cultural - and the changing character of political authority”.
(2007) indicate how in the Andean countries the dynamics of Neoliberalism have threatened the viability of traditional agriculture, and created a confrontation between those who promote liberalization and those who resist it.

The changed mode of warfare is a second feature of the new wars. Kaldor (1999) points out how the new wars are fought with new means and strategies. Contrary to the “old wars” and guerrilla warfare (developed specially in the Vietnam War), contemporary wars have adopted new military tactics that particularly affect civilian populations (as is the case in Middle Magdalena). “Effective military strategy depends less on victory in particular battles than on either changing the attitudes and allegiances of a part of the population, or removing it altogether” (Allen 2000: 173). If Mao Tse-Tung’s and Che Guevara’s ideology aimed to capture “hearts and minds”, the new wars use fear as their lethal weapon. Sowing terror and hatred, armed actors seek to control territories and population. Ironically, as Allen points out, to be a combatant could be less dangerous than to be a civilian. If at the beginning of the twentieth century, 90% of the war casualties were military, in the new wars 90% of the victims are civilians (UNDP 1994: 47). In the same sense, the increasing number of refugees and internally displaced people indicates how civilians are the main victims of contemporary wars20 (UNHCR 2000).

Third, there is a kind of “new globalized war economy” (á la Kaldor). New wars are financed from a variety of local and transnational sources and criminal activities, such as plunder, taxation, hostage-taking, or illegal trade in arms, drugs or valuable commodities (oil, diamonds, gold). As a consequence, contemporary armed conflicts involve an ambiguous distinction between crime and acts of political violence (Collier 2000).

---

20 The UNHCR (2000) indicates that at the end of 1999 there were about 11.7 million of refugees worldwide. Of these, 30% were in Africa and 41% in Asia. On the other hand, an estimate of 25 million of “Internally Displaced Persons” (IDP) was calculated at the end of 1999.
Finally, it can be said that most of the international conventions and protocols that govern military action in inter-state war, do not apply to internal violent conflicts. As a result, there is less or even no regulation of the levels of violence within country. Once again, it is not surprising that these kind of armed conflicts are characterized by severe forms and methods of violence against civilian populations.

In sum, the world is facing a “new kind” of violent conflict that could be described as a product of *the modern political economy* (Allen 2000: 173). This leads to perhaps one of the key assumptions of this investigation: armed conflict more than being a political, ideological or territorial dispute among those who are seeking power and honour, as was commonly the case in the past, nowadays can be better described as a product of the globalization process. Seen as such, most contemporary conflicts can be illustrated as an explicit dynamic of disputes among those who believe in the process of liberalization and those who do not believe in it. Such disparities between opposite views of development revolve around the extent to and the means through which neoliberal reforms should be defended or resisted.

### IV. THE CAUSES OF VIOLENT CONFLICT

An examination of the causes and trigger factors that turn conflict into violence can help to provide a more nuanced interpretation of the complex phenomenon of conflict itself. With this proposition in mind, the present section aims to investigate the key aspects of conflict dynamics that create essential conditions for a non-violent conflict to escalate into a violent one.

Though two main themes (greed and grievance\(^\text{21}\)) have recently dominated the academic debate about conflict causation, this section will focus on two major

\(^{21}\)The Greed theory indicates that economic predation is the main cause of an armed conflict. Paul Collier (2000, 2001 and 2003) has been the major proponent of this approach. On the other hand,
infra-theories, namely the Structuralist approach and the theory of Rational Choice. While the Structuralist approach focuses on objective causes (structures) that determine human behaviour, the Subjectivist view determines conflict causation in terms of people’s intentions. The following sections present some of the main arguments and limits of these two approaches, with a special reference to the Colombian case.

A. THE STRUCTURAL APPROACH

Structural approaches find their origins in the legacy of classical theorists like Marx, Durkheim or Kant, who indicate how social, economic and political structures determine people’s actions.

“Structuralists assume that human behavior cannot be understood simply by examining individual motivation and intention because, when aggregated, human behavior precipitates structures of which the individuals may be unaware. By analogy, when people walk across a field, they may unintentionally create a path. Others subsequently follow the path and in doing so “reproduce” the path. The process of reproduction, however, is neither conscious nor intentional” (Little, as quoted in Groom 1990: 80).

Taking into consideration such propositions and extrapolating them to the inquiry into the causes of conflict, structuralist thinkers have identified structural problems such as poverty, inequality, lack of government, exclusion, and injustice as objective causes that turn normal conflicts into violence. Concepts such as “structural victimization” (in the form of economic deprivation) or “structural violence” describe the environment in which violent conflicts take place.

“Structural violence connotes a situation in which overt violence is absent but in which structural factors have virtually the same compelling control over behaviour as the overt threat or use of force. In a society prone to structural violence an actor or group is prevented, by structural constraints, from developing its talents or

the Grievance thesis concentrates on factors such as ideology, ethnicity, human needs and inter-group competition as the main causes of violent conflict.
interests in a normal manner, or even from realizing that such developments are possible” (Gromm 1990: 92).

In this sense, structuralist thinkers argue that conflict is an objective phenomenon, contrary to the subjectivist point of view that places the emphasis on intentional causes. The fight between two or more actors with incommensurable interests over objective and real interests (economic, political and social) could lead to the use of violence to solve such a dispute. Given that the incompatible interests are rooted in a structure, according to the structuralist point of view, conflict confrontation can be solved only by structural or even a revolutionary change. Radical thinkers risk arguing that violence could be a legitimate answer and a means of change in societies with structural violence.

**B. SUBJECTIVE CAUSES OF VIOLENT CONFLICT**

The analysis of violent conflict from the perspective of rational choice goes back to studies in classic criminology and the economic theory of crime elaborated by thinkers like Bentham, Beccaria, Becker, Schelling and Boulding. This approach postulates that individuals seeking to satisfy their individual preferences or to maximize their utility, decide “rationally” either to accept or to work around the established legal system. Such a rational choice is based on the consideration that those perceived benefits would outweigh the costs of rebellion or crime.

From this perspective, Paul Collier (2000, 2001) indicates that groups and individuals seek to maximize economic gain via civil war, and economic predation becomes the maintenance factor of violent conflict. The rent-seeking behaviour of the armed actor leads them to aim to control the geographic areas of any commodity boom (emeralds, petroleum or cocaine) in order to finance their activities. According to Collier the maintenance of civil conflict is explained through a self-sustaining political economy of war in which membership of a militant group becomes the rational means of economic survival.
In the light of all this, Collier advocates a critical and cautious approach to the explanations of violent conflict based on objective causes:

“When the main grievances – inequality, political repression, and ethnic and religious divisions – are measured objectively, they provide no explanatory power in predicting rebellion. These objective grievances and hatreds simply cannot usually be the cause of violent conflict. They may well generate intense political conflict, but such conflict does not usually escalate to violent conflict” (Collier 2000: 21).

Additionally, the subjectivist approach understands violence and armed conflict as one of the major causes of inequality, reversing the direction of causality posited by the Structuralist school. Since violence is an obstacle to development, the subjectivist approach argues for curtailing and eliminating criminal practices (kidnapping, taxing and illegal economic activities) that fuel war. If economic viability becomes one of the major factors maintaining conflict, a set of political, legal and economic policies should be developed to penalize those who profit from warfare.

V. THE CASE OF COLOMBIA

According to international standards, the nature of the Colombian confrontation has been described in different ways: as a “war” (HIIK; SIPRI); as a “civil war” (Ruiz 2001); as a “new war” (Kaldor 2006); or as a “war against society” (González 2004). Moreover, at a national level the political violence in Colombia is interpreted differently according to each actor: it is a “revolutionary fight” (left guerrillas groups); a “war against insurgency” (paramilitary forces); an “anti-terrorist war” (Colombian army and the USA Government); and so on. For good or bad the Colombian conflict would appear to have something of all these elements.
Along these lines, this research argues that monolithic interpretations, notably those based on the subjective-structural dichotomy, seem to afford a restrictive explanation for the Colombian conflict. Part of the argument is that different factors (economic, political, institutional, geographic, demographic, psychological and military) are responsible for the genesis and development of a violent conflict. Despite the diversity of the terminology found in the literature, these factors can be broken down into two main categories: “Objective” and “Subjective”.

A. OBJECTIVE CAUSES

For many years, notably in the 1960’s and 1970’s, poverty and exclusion were catalogued as the main causes of the Colombian armed conflict. Underlying poor quality of life, social and political exclusion and lack of State as the main causes of the political violence in Colombia, the structural approach emphasizes objective causes and thus calls for structural transformations as solutions to violence.

In this sense, the special emphasis that has been put on objective causes explains the emergence of insurgency. Rebellion and violence could be understood as logical answers to the “structural violence” that persists in Colombia. Based on principles of self-defense and just war, left wing guerrillas justify their revolution against the status quo. Following marxist and communist ideals, guerrilla groups stress the exploitation of the peasant and working classes on the part of the government and elites whose political and economic interests are not the interests of the poor. Indeed, guerrillas groups see themselves as a political solution to the problems that affect millions of Colombians who live in poverty and suffer the oppression of an exclusionary system.

However, this approach has been criticized. Some authors question such structural analysis for mainly two reasons: first, for its “tendency” to justify violent options
(just war) as a means of transformation. The second reason is based on statistical data. Some econometric studies have found a weak correlation between poverty, exclusion and violence in Colombia. The pioneer research carried out by Gaitán (1995) concluded that there is no correlation between murder rates, poverty and inequality, when using municipal data. Instead, he found a positive relation between murder rate and economic activity when working with information at the departmental level. Sánchez and Nuñez (2001) analyzing a sample of 769 municipalities in a period from 1991 to 1998, indicate that poverty has a small impact on murder rates (-0.02). According to them, the significant variables explaining violent conflict are the drug trade, presence of guerrillas, inequality and inefficiency of the legal system. In a similar way, Montenegro and Posada (2001) indicate that neither poverty nor exclusion are major causes of conflictive confrontation. According to their statistical study there is no strong correlation between violence, income distribution and drops in public expenditure. Instead, the phenomenon of violence can be explained in terms of lack of justice and the inefficiency of the legal system. For Montenegro and Posada the equation that should explain the Colombian conflict has to be expressed in terms of violence and impunity.

Paradoxically, as González, Bolívar and Vásquez (2003: 33) point out, while econometric research might question the structural approach, the same econometric evidence can lead to explanations of conflict that are grounded in objective causes and structural relations. At the departmental level, Montenegro and Posada (1995) found a positive correlation between economic growth and murder rates questioning the hypothesis that violence is located mainly in the poorest zones of Colombia. Moreover, Sarmiento and Becerra (1998) concluded that the highest figures of homicides are found in those regions of increasing wealth and economic growth. Those inferences led to the conclusion that violent conflict in Colombia is caused not by poverty, but rather by wealth. In that sense, if poverty and exclusion do not appear to be the main causes of violence, it is

---

22 Frederick Douglas (1995), for example, reflected on the propriety of violence in furthering the black cause and the role of violent methods in the struggle for social justice.
possible to identify other "objective" factors, such as economic growth and wealth, as causes of conflict.

B. SUBJECTIVE CAUSES

Recent economic analyses about violent conflict in Colombia have focused on subjective cases. Underlying Greed theory and the Rational Choice approach, explanations of conflict causation emphasize individuals' intentions and the material benefits of violence. In the light of the various activities visible in Colombia - notably the drug trade, illegal taxation, and kidnapping (used by both guerrillas groups and paramilitary forces to finance themselves), some authors have indicated that the violent actors in Colombia are no more than predatory groups. In other words, rather than agents of change, as they claim, those armed groups have become institutions of organized crime acting in accordance with a rent-seeking logic.

“The main rebel groups – and indeed the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) - … draw rents from primary products, mainly but not only illegal crops, linked with international markets. Only very few people with knowledge of the country would describe the guerrillas as altruistic, or as bearers of genuine grievances. Colombian public opinion, for one, sees guerrillas more in terms of banditry than of politics, as opinion polls have systematically shown” (Gutiérrez 2003: 1).

The Colombian conflict seems to be a typical example of a “greedy war” (á la Collier). Economic predation, more than ideological and political conviction, is the chief cause and maintenance factor of an armed conflict.

“The risk of civil war has been systematically related to a few economic conditions, such as dependence upon primary commodity exports and low national income... Conversely, and astonishingly, objective measures of social grievance, such as inequality, a lack of democracy, and ethnic and religious divisions, have had no systematic effect on risk. I argue that this is because civil wars occur where rebel organizations are financially viable” (Collier 2000: 2).
To illustrate this thesis, Collier juxtaposes the example of the Michigan Militia in the USA and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

“The Michigan Militia was unable to grow beyond a handful of part-time volunteers, whereas the FARC in Colombia has grown to employ around 12,000 people. The factors which account for this difference between failure and success are to be found not in the “causes” which these two rebel organizations claim to espouse, but in their radically different opportunities to raise revenue. The FARC earns around $700m per year from drugs and kidnapping, whereas the Michigan Militia is probably broke” (Collier 2000: 2).

In the same vein, Mauricio Rubio (1999) argues for a methodologically individualist approach based on actor’s intentions when analyzing the Colombian case. According to Rubio, the empirical evidence contradicts the hypothesis indicating that armed actors act in ways that are determined by structural conditions and political rationalities. Contrary to such position, he indicates that violent actors behave in a similar way to regular criminals, blurring the distinction between political violence and crime. In fact, the expression narco-terrorista (drug dealer-terrorist) has been used by Colombian people to describe both paramilitary and guerrilla groups.

However, the Greed Theory based on subjective causes has been criticized especially for being a-historical. Focusing on people’s intentions, the greed approach overlooks the socio-political context that shapes the nature of the armed conflict (Francis 2006). Also, this view seems to underestimate the human price to be paid for being a combatant that adversely affects people’s motivation to fight. In fact, for an ordinary combatant, restrictions and risks are enormous while benefits remain small. As a consequence, political motivations supported by norms and a common ideology should still be taken into consideration. Injustice and exclusion are common motivations behind rebellion. Thus, the mere existence of possibilities for predation must not be confused with being a cause of a violent conflict (Ballentine and Nitzxchke 2003; Keen 2002).
VI. OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE APPROACHES REVISITED

The complexity of a violent conflict demands a comprehensive analytical framework to apprehend the wide range of factors contributing to conflict. Rather than favouring Structuralist or Rational Choice explanations or any other theory about conflict causation, a combination of theories is essential to understand conflict dynamics. In this attempt, the different approaches that aim at indentifying the causes of conflict from a monolithic perspective, can be mutually enriched through the mixture of the structural and historical background of the different development views, and the analysis of violent actors’ motivations.

Thus, a combination of both subjective and structural causes led Bejarano to the conclusion that the Colombian conflict is not related to rural poverty, but rather to the growth of wealth and inequality. According to Bejarano (1977 quoted by González et. al. 2003: 33), private economic expansion in Colombia not only surpasses the State’s capacities, but also constitutes a breeding ground for violence. For that reason, it is essential to inquire into the social, political and economic factors that allow the insertion of armed actors in the process of development. At the rural level, for instance, the analysis of conflict dynamics requires the combined analysis of both the planned and voluntary actions of violent actors, and of the agrarian and regional political economies of the regions in conflict.

From this point of view, González, Vásquez and Bolívar (2003: 43) advance the hypothesis that “the Colombian armed conflict is the expression of the economic, social and political dispute between two contradictory and mutually excluding rural development models”. According to them, such confrontation results from the alliance between rural social agents and armed actors, and from the interaction between structural causes and violent collective actions. For these authors, the key factor that makes possible interaction between armed actors and development processes in Colombia is the lack of resolution of the agrarian problem.
In light of all this, the present research goes beyond the dualisms that often pervade conflict causation, focusing instead on what I denominate as “conflict dynamics”, namely the degree of incommensurability among diverse actors and visions of rural development. With this proposition in mind, this study seeks to understand the specific conflict dynamics in the Middle Magdalena Region in a way in which conflict and violent conflict are understood as a set of several conflictive inter-relations between actors that are immersed and involved in the process of development itself.

Contemporary political economy indicates that the process of development has conflict at its core. Gone is the idea of development as a monolithic process of economic improvement. Great social costs are part of the development process. At this stage, Schrijvers’ questions become pertinent:

“Are mounting poverty, environmental destruction, polarization and war consequences of the fact that the envisaged ‘development’ – economic capitalist growth – has not advanced far enough? Or are these phenomena brought about by the development model itself?” (Schrijvers 1993: 21).

From this point of view, many authors advance the notion of development as a means of redressing the ills of capitalist economic growth (Cfr. Hart 2001; Cowen and Shenton 1995).

“By truncating development’s historical domain, we lose the crucial sense in which it emerged in the nineteenth century as a counterpoint to ‘progress’. Development emerged to ameliorate the perceived chaos caused by progress. In many texts, the ideas of development and progress are seamlessly stitched concepts (Harris 1989: 4-11; Thomas 1992: 7)... We argue that the modern idea of development is necessarily Eurocentric because it was in Europe that development was first meant to create order out of the social disorder of rapid urbanization, poverty and unemployment” (Cowen and Shenton 1995: 29).

The basic point here is that capitalist development is inherently conflictual, as this thesis states, and therefore risks of violent conflict must be addressed. Thus,
conflict dynamics and development are two faces of the same coin. To reiterate, this thesis argues that conflict is an expression of the incommensurability between rival paradigms of development in theory and practice, each one with its own view about what development should be. The problem in this conflictive process emerges when conflict turns violent and the parties involved employ violence as a means of solving disputes. In this battlefield the “dominant model” may use aggression to impose its strategies. At the same time, those who oppose the dominant paradigm might also use violence when their opposition is not allowed a legitimate space. Specifically, contemporary conflicts can be interpreted as a set of several disputes among those who are involved in the process of liberalization and those who are excluded from it.

In keeping with the purpose of this research, I argue that in order to understand conflict dynamics between opposite views of rural territorial development in Latin America and Colombia, deep analysis of the political economy is essential. This is because some of the disputes over development within Latin America, derive from far more deeply rooted differences and incommensurabilities among rival theories of development. Therefore, a broader vision and characterization of the different paradigms of development that have been implemented in Latin America is vital in order to understand contemporary conflict dynamics and its effects in specific territories. That is the purpose of the next chapter.

This then leads to the second part of this investigation – namely an analysis of how these incommensurabilities between rival paradigms have turned violent in the specific territory and context of Middle Magdalena (chapters 5, 6 and 7). As I intend to verify, special attention should be paid to the trigger factors that initiate violence in the development process itself.
CHAPTER FOUR

LATIN AMERICAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT:
PARADIGMS, PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief history of the three main paradigms of development (Modernization, Dependency and Neoliberalism) that have been implemented in Latin America and Colombia since the end of the Second World War onwards. It is essential to indicate that though a considerable number of “Alternative Approaches” have emerged in the last decades (some of which might be considered as constitutive of a paradigm), the emphasis of the present chapter will be on the three paradigms specified above, since they have had a more considerable effect and influence on Latin American practices of development. Alternative approaches sometimes are attached to specific contexts, and some of them are in their experimental stage. They still lack their own core set of taken for granted truths.

Four objectives are involved in such analysis: first, to recognize that the history of development in Latin American (in general) and Colombia (in particular) has had as one of its main characteristics the incommensurability – hence conflict – between opposing paradigms and views of development. Second, to present a theoretical and historical framework for assessing the hypothesis addressed in this investigation postulating how conflict dynamics can be interpreted as the confrontation between rival views of rural development. Third, to provide a methodology (rooted mainly in Alasdair MacIntyre’s philosophy), that allows communication and interaction among rival paradigms of development. Fourth, to open the door for new rural development approaches that face the impasse of incommensurability and advance proposals for development agendas based on pragmatic articulations among different paradigms (as the Rural Territorial Development approach seeks to implement).
Following Kay’s (2000a) conceptualization, it is vital to specify that the term *paradigm* will be used in a very general sense designating a set of views, approaches or perspectives on development. In truth, one paradigm can host various theories of development, each with particular implications for rural strategies. In this regard and given the purpose of this research, each paradigm will first be presented in a general way, followed by the analysis of its main contributions to rural development.

I. THE MODERNIZATION PARADIGM

The view of development as Modernization dates in particular from the 1950s and 1960s. According to Hettne (2002: 7), the reconstruction of war-torn Europe under the Marshall Plan “provided the model for State-directed modernization of the new nations”. The “success” of such a model led to the conclusion that it was appropriate to expand modernization to the whole world, especially to underdeveloped countries.

“From the Second World War to about 1970 a dominant line of thought in social sciences was that a single path of development was likely from poor to rich, that it was paralleled by a transition from traditional to modern, from rural to urban and from agricultural to industrial” (Morris 1987: 146).

During this period, dualistic and unilinear models of development were elaborated (Lewis 1954; Rostow 1960) to show how a country can progress through a series of stages based on North America and European experience. The implicit idea of development in those models suggested “the bridging of the gap by means of an imitative process, in which the less developed countries gradually assumed the qualities of the developed” (Hettne 2002: 7). It is a kind of model that was caricatured by Bernstein (1983) “as following in the footsteps of the West”.
The implications of such a model in the rural sector were considerable. The common pattern running through government policies was the idea that agriculture had to be modernized through investment in technology, physical capital, the extension of agricultural services such as credit, irrigation infrastructure and institutions for agricultural research. The so called Green Revolution implied important transformations in the agricultural sector, among them: the change from simple and traditional techniques towards the application of scientific knowledge; the transition from the use of human and animal power to mechanization; the evolution from subsistence farming to a more efficient and productive agriculture through the incorporation of new technologies such as improved crop varieties, fertilizers and pesticides (Schultz 1964; de Janvry 1981).

However, by the 1960s and 1970s criticism of the Green Revolution was gaining momentum. Three main objections can be distinguished: first, as a general trend the benefits of the Green Revolution were mostly enjoyed by larger farmers who had sufficient land and capital to make the necessary investments. The new technology package was inaccessible due to its expensive costs and small farmers’ lack of access to credit. Second, negative environmental impacts generated by the use of agrochemicals were deemed by critics to make the model ecologically unsustainable. Finally, the Green Revolution had a particular impact on employment. Though there is an intensive use of capital, the role of other factors of production, such as labour, was reduced and displaced by machinery. As a consequence, rural employment opportunities were reduced (de Janvry 1981; Bebbington 1996).

Alongside these specific criticisms against the Green Revolution, the more general Modernization paradigm was also subject to criticism. Specifically, Latin American thinkers pointed out three objections. First, there are several paths to development and not just a single one (the western model). Second, development is not a unilinear process; it is instead characterized by structural transitions. Finally, underdevelopment can be better interpreted through categories that emphasize relations of “marginalization”. These critics argued that the analysis of
global relations in terms of “domination and exploitation” provided a more pertinent approach to understand global economy than Modernization analyses based on dichotomies and imitable patterns (Kay 1989, de Janvry 1981).

II. DEPENDENCY THEORY

In the Dependency paradigm two main currents can be distinguished: the Structuralist or Reformist approach pioneered by Fernando Cardoso, Enzo Faletto, Osvaldo Sunkel, Raul Prebisch and Hans Singer; and the Marxist or Radical view pioneered by André Frank and Amir Samin. As a criticism of the Modernization approach, which focused on development within a single country, Dependency theory conceives the world economic system as embedded in and constituted by relations of dependence and domination in which rich countries force poor countries into underdevelopment. Although both approaches have the same characterization of dependence, they differ in their political and economic proposals. While structuralists indicate that the way to overcome the situation of dependency is by reforming the capitalist system, Marxists proclaim the solution to dependency as lying in socialist revolution.

A. STRUCTURALIST DEPENDENCY THEORY

Emerging during the 1950s, Structuralism is perhaps one of the main Latin American contributions to the field of development. Raul Prebisch, Hans Singer and ECLA (the Economic Commission for Latin America) were its mains exponents. As a critique of orthodox economy theory, Structuralism points out that “neoclassical economics had, at best, little to contribute to the understanding of the development problems facing the peripheral countries” (Kay 1989: 25). With this in mind, ECLA aimed to build an autochthonous development analysis rooted on the notion that resources flow from underdeveloped states to wealthy ones, enriching the latter at the expense of the former (ECLA 1950).
Kay (1989: 26) argues that the originality of Structuralist theory lies in the proposition that the disparities between the centre and the periphery are reproduced through international trade. Given the unequal nature of the world economic system, developing countries obtained a diminishing proportion of the potential gains from their trade with industrialized countries (Prebisch-Singer thesis). In fact, the terms of trade declined from 1951 to 1965 by some 25% (Singer 1989: 13), in a period in which 70%-90% of exports from developing countries were primary commodities, and 50%-60% of imports were manufactures (Gwynne 1990: 41).

In such a context and as a consequence of the Second World War, the collapse of export-oriented development was evident. In a situation of “export pessimism”, as Singer denoted it, Latin America was forced to find a new model of development that crystallized in the so called Import-Substitution-Industrialization (ISI) strategy. The implicit idea behind ISI’s model was the following: “if Latin America was not going to be able to export agricultural and other primary products to finance its purchase of manufactured goods, it would have to develop its own manufacturing and industrial base” (Bebbington 1996: 119). In such a process the national government played a leading role through measures such as cheap credit, the building of infrastructure, the establishment of key enterprises, and fundamentally protectionism (high import tariffs, quota restriction on imports, controlled access to foreign exchange, and disincentives to exports).

In this process of “inward-directed development” agriculture should have played an important role. According to ECLA (1963), five major contributions were recognized:

- To support the industrialization process through the provision of foreign exchange to finance the imports of capital equipment.
- To provide a steady supply of cheap labour for industry.
- To produce and satisfy the urban food requirements, avoiding increases in both food prices and food imports.
• To supply the required raw materials to industry.
• To provide a domestic market for the local industrial products.

Although structuralists emphasized the importance of agriculture in development, that role was subordinated to industrialization. Government policies in support of agriculture were modest, centered on the commercial farm sector and clearly biased towards urban areas and industry. Under these circumstances, the agricultural sector did not respond to the demands of ISI. The stagnation of agriculture limited industrial development notably in three aspects (Kay 1989, 2000a): first, agriculture did not succeed in providing sufficient cheap raw materials for the local market; second, the low purchasing power of the rural population limited the internal market for industrial commodities; and third, the agricultural sector also failed to supply urban demand for food.

In this context, structuralists also made explicit that Latin American agrarian structures were a real obstacle to economic development and industrialization, given its dualist (latifundio-minifundio) land tenure system (Barraclough 1973; de Janvry 1981). Thus, by the 1960s some Latin American governments began to recognize the problem of uneven and inefficient agrarian structures and sought to implement land reform. Proponents argued that small farms were more efficient than latifundios. For that reason, the redistribution of land into smaller units not only would increase aggregate productivity, but also would lead to income redistribution to small farmers. Beyond this economic reason, there was a political one. Agrarian reform was conceived as a means of spreading “democracy”. At that time, the USA government was concerned with the Cuban revolution and the Communist threat. Thus, in 1961 the Alliance for Progress started to promote agrarian reforms, as a condition for USA aid, on the stipulation that local governments removed institutional obstacles to liberal democracy.

The impact of agrarian reform on the peasantry has been varied. Some authors concluded that the effect was limited and fruitless. Despite land redistribution, a large part of the countryside remained characterized by an unequal distribution of
land and insecurity of tenure (Zoomers 2000: 5). Other authors emphasize some of the benefits of land reform. Bebbington (1996: 125) indicates that in a general sense the agrarian reform was successful for having addressed the two concerns that originated it: to defuse social protest and to modernize agriculture. Other authors indicate that agrarian reform increased the role of the State in the countryside, bringing an important institutional change in rural areas and communities (Grindle 1986). However, the most important positive effects of reforms were political since they laid the base for profound changes in governance by removing the economic base of prior rural elites.

B. RADICAL DEPENDENCY THEORY

Palma (1981: 42) indicates that “the general field of study of the Dependency analysis is the development of peripheral Capitalism”. Such analysis implies two dimensions: the economic and the political. At the economic level, the Dependency approach typified market based Capitalism as a system of exploitation that creates dependent structures in which poor countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of rich ones. As a consequence, Southern countries are exiled to the periphery of the world in a permanent situation of underdevelopment (Frank 1966, 1972; Cardoso and Faletto 1979).

At the political level, Dependency theory was generally associated with nationalist and revolutionary movements like the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, and left wing leaders, notably Salvador Allende in Chile. Dependency thinkers proposed a political and developmental strategy which would enhance national autonomy and endogenous/autochthonous development to overcome dependence. Through this premise the Dependency paradigm confronted two of the main principles of the Modernization and Neoclassical paradigms: first, the idea that traditional or developing countries would follow the economic pattern mapped by developed countries; second, the conception of free trade that aimed to integrate economies globally. For dependency thinkers, on the contrary, a “de-linking” process was necessary not only to gain self-determination, autonomy and prosperity (Amin
1990), but also to carry out the economic and political transformations that would subsequently lead to Socialism as the only way to eliminate underdevelopment and dependency. In this regard, the Cuban revolution became the ideal. Also the government of Salvador Allende (1971-1973) was exemplary. Under the label *la via chilena al socialismo* (Chilean version of Socialism) bonds with the North were cut by nationalizing foreign industries, such as the US-owned copper industry, and the economy was put under planned control.

1. The contribution of Radical Dependency theory to rural development

The Dependency approach did not have strong influence on government policies. Its contribution to rural development has been mostly theoretical. Topics such as Functional Dualism, Transnational Agribusiness and the future of the peasantry were placed at the centre of the developmental debate by dependency theorists (after Kay 2000a).

“Functional dualism”, a theory postulated by Alain de Janvry (1981), indicates that the Latin America rural labour force is more proletarian than agricultural. This means that for the majority of peasants, employment and wage rates are more important than agricultural production in determining economic wellbeing. Since the greater part of peasants have insufficient land for ensuring a subsistence income, some of them are forced to work in temporary employment, in which landowners and capitalist farmers pay very low wages due to the existence of surplus labor.

The situation became similar when analyzing the globalization of agriculture (Teubal 2001). Scholars such as Burbach and Flynn (1980), Teubal (1987) and Feder (1977) have investigated the impact of transnational agribusiness on Latin America’s rural sector. In particular, Arroyo et. al. (1981) point out how foreign agro-industrial conglomerates were taking control of Latin America’s agricultural sector, turning poor peasant farmers into dependent producers. Feder (1977) denominates this process as a new form of Imperialism in which the new world
agro-food system is eliminating the peasantry. While some authors (*descampesinistas o proletaristas*) argue that globalization marks the end of the peasantry, others (*camoesinistas*) believe in the importance and viability of the peasant economy in the global system (Bryceson et al. 2000; Astori 1981; Feder 1977).

### III. NEOLIBERALISM

According to Neoliberalism the dynamic of economic progress is provided by the immanent development of Capitalism, namely “a system of production of goods and services for market exchange in order to make a profit” (Thomas 2000: 27). The emphasis of neoliberal theory is on the self-regulation of markets (as the most efficient economic regulator), with market competition being considered the most effective path towards economic growth. This leaves no space for State-planning or intervention, with the economic decision making process left to the private sector (Jenkins 1992).

At the end of the 1970s and particularly in the 1980s, both external and internal factors contributed to the rise of “the Neoliberal Order”. At the external level, four factors can be highlighted: first, the increase in oil prices (1973–1979); second, the rapid economic growth of the Asian Tigers; third, the international disillusionment with the Government-Led development approach implemented in the 1950s-1960s; and fourth, the collapse of Socialism. At the internal level, it was clear that the Latin American debt crisis made explicit the economically unsustainable nature of the ISI strategy.

In such a context, neoliberal policies “recommended” by the IMF and the World Bank seemed to be the solution to the severe debt crisis. While the IMF promoted “stabilization measures” such as devaluation, tax increases and restrictive monetary policy, the World Bank sponsored Structural Adjustment Programmes
(SAPs) comprising three kinds of principles and measures (Hewitt 2000; Simon 2002; Mohan et. al. 1999):

- Due to the fact that price distortions produce inefficiencies, it was essential that the free market determine prices. This meant, establishing measures such as financial liberalization, removing price controls, and financial and labour market deregulation.

- Since trade liberalization produces a more efficient economy, the reduction of protective tariffs was deemed necessary.

- It was clear that market forces, instead of government planning, were the efficient channel to economic transformation. This implied privatization and reduction of the size of government.

However, if the 1980s were the golden years for Neoliberalism as an ideology, the same period was also the “Lost Decade” for developing countries, particularly Africa and Latin America. During this time “there was a combination of declining international demand, increasing protectionism in the OECD countries, deteriorating terms of trade, negative capital flows, continuing high interest rates, and unfavourable lending conditions” (Hewitt 2000: 301). It became apparent that SAPs were not the panacea of economic recovery for developing countries for four reasons: first, “conditional aid” seemed to be coercive, at times contravening the principle of sovereignty; second, the uniform application of SAPs in countries with very different contexts was inadequate; third, liberalization alone was an insufficient response to the social and economic complexity of developing countries; and fourth, corruption and bureaucracy became major obstacles for the success of those programmes (as they had for ISI programmes also).

The continuing lack of effectiveness of the SAPs, the “Lost Decade”, and the weak commitment of recipient governments to reform the State, changed the perception of the role of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and
challenged development programmes for overcoming poverty. As a consequence, in the 1990s two important subjects were incorporated into the development agenda: “good governance and pro-poor strategies”.

The first shift in the new neoliberal agenda stated that political conditions would have to be considered in developmental issues (World Bank 1992). With this idea emerged the “governance approach”, qualifying the prevalent neoliberal emphasis on economic development.

“The underlying assumption that runs through the World Bank’s position is that for development to succeed in any country there must be sound development management, a well-run market economy and an effective liberal democratic political regime” (Potter 2000: 381).

The second shift in economic development thinking occurred in the late 1990s when International Agencies increased their commitment to overcome poverty. SAPs were redesigned “taking better account of local circumstances, social development needs, seeking to soften the negative impacts of specific measures, and by supporting continuity of policies and funding” (Simon 2002: 88-89). As a result, Economic Recovery Programmes (ERPs) and Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) became the new strategies of the neoliberal programme.

A. NEOLIBERAL CONTRIBUTION TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT

In theory, Neoliberalism is concerned with universal laws of economic development which encompass an economic framework that applies equally to all sectors, producers and consumers. Based on such universal principles, neoliberals are “against particular sectoral policies as they believe in developing a stable, uniform, general macroeconomic setting in which the same rules apply for everybody and where no sectoral preferences, discriminations or distortions are created” (Kay 2000a: 27).
In the light of all this, the specific neoliberal contribution to rural development that will be presented in this section focuses on its effects and implications in the agricultural sector as a result of the process of liberalization implemented in Latin America since the 1980s.

First, according to neoliberal thinking, the previous government-led approach characterized by public marketing boards, trade restrictions, production quotas, price bands, producer subsidies and restrictions on property rights, led to the stagnation of the agricultural sector. In particular, neoliberals criticized the ISI model for its “urban bias” against agriculture (Gwynne 1996). By contrast, the “neutral character” of liberalization would lead to the development of the countryside.

Second, contrary to Structuralism, which emphasized expropriation and agrarian reforms, Neoliberalism focuses on privatization, decollectivization and land registration. The purpose is to create an active, free and transparent land market that reallocates land in the hands of the most efficient producers. In Latin America, special legislation and policies were introduced to favour land markets, notably in Chile (1970s), Peru (1980), Nicaragua (1990), El Salvador (1992) and Mexico (1992) (Cfr. BID 1998; FAO 1996; Vogelgesang 1996; Dorner 1992).

Third, export-oriented policies promoting trade liberalization and reduction of tariffs and protective measures were implemented. New markets have been opened particularly in North America, Europe and Japan. Also, the signing of regional free-trade agreements, such as the Mercado Común del Sur - MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has favoured international trade.

Fourth, Neoliberalism advocates reduction of government expenditure. In this attempt, the private sector and several NGOs became more active and efficient in supporting rural services. Public development and planning agencies were closed and some of the support structures of the rural sector (credit lines, income support,
subsidies, extension services and price supports) were dismantled. Special funds were created to finance NGOs, private enterprises and grassroots groups involved in the development of the countryside. “The explicit justification for this is that these organizations are more effective, more innovative, closer to the rural poor and therefore better able to address rural poverty than its government” (Bebbington 1996: 141).

In this institutional context, a Latin America wide debate on privatization has emerged (Bebbington 1996). On the one hand, people in favour of privatization indicate that the existence of corruption, inefficiency and bureaucracy in Latin American governments means it is appropriate that the private sector, people’s organizations and different NGOs replace the State in its role of allocating resources and providing services. On the contrary, the reformist side indicates that it is not necessary to reject development planning at all, and that local government can have an important role to play in rural policies.

Fifth and related to the privatization strategy, Neoliberalism assumes that land and other resources such as forests, water, fisheries, etc., are more efficiently managed by private owners than by government institutions (Zoomers 2002). The implicit assumption is that the market will set a price that reflects the value of protecting the environment or using it sustainably. However, the privatization of the water sector, to take one example, has been very controversial in many regions of Latin America. The cases of the "water war" in Cochabamba – Bolivia (Perreault 2006; Olivera and Lewis 2004), and the “Water Code of Chile” of 1981 (Budds 2009; Bauer 2004), have raised criticisms that water is a basic need or public good that should be provided by the community or the public sector without profit.

As a general conclusion of this section, it can be said that while production and exports have increase in the neoliberal era, rural employment and small scale farming have declined, while poverty and inequality have increased in the countryside (Berdegué et. al. 2006; de Janvry 2004; Kay 2000b). Moreover, the
retreat of the State has left considerable gaps that have not been filled by the private sector, with negative consequences in particular for minifundistas.

IV. RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN COLOMBIA

The history of Latin American rural development presented in the previous section contextualises the agricultural policy process in Colombia, which without a doubt, shows that Colombia has followed the same broad development pattern found across most of Latin America. However, despite this similar process, it is necessary to focus specifically on the development of agricultural policy within Colombia in order to establish more details for the case study. To do that, this section describes the rural development programs and policies implemented in Colombia from 1950 onwards. Such a history can be divided into three periods: industrial protectionism, economic liberalization and the period of the current government.

A. INDUSTRIAL PROTECTIONISM

After World War II, Colombia developed an industrialization strategy based on import substitution, as almost all Latin American countries did. During this period the State was charged with the development, management and allocation of public resources and social investment. This model created an institutional system characterized by (Machado 1995; Balcázar et. al. 1998):

First: Industrialization. The protection and promotion of Colombia’s national industry was considered to be essential for economic growth. This process led to the creation of diverse industries such as: food, liquors and beer, textiles, leather, construction material, chemistry, and metal mechanics.

Second: Protectionism. Colombia adopted a commercial protection strategy for imported agricultural crops and commercial modernization policies for cotton,
rice and oil seed crops. These kinds of policies not only guaranteed the supply of basic cereals to the cities, but also established the productive base for the import-substituting food.

**Third: Institutional policies.** To promote the import substitution of agricultural products and price stability for urban consumers, the Colombian government established several policies (Jaramillo 2002: 44): 1) In 1951 it decreed the imposition of high import duties; 2) A subsidized credit system was consolidated for the import-substituting crops; and 3) As a way of stabilizing prices, the government created a “contract system” between the public and private sectors for the promotion of sugar-cane, wheat and oil seeds crops.

**Fourth: Rural development programmes.** From 1975, various rural development programmes were decreed, such as the traditional *Desarrollo Rural Integrado* – DRI (the Integrated Rural Development Program), the *Programa de Desarrollo Integral Campesino* – PDIC in 1988 (The Integrated Peasant Development Program), and the *Sistema Nacional de Cofinanciación* - SNC in 1992 (the Joint Financing National System) (Cfr. Vargas 1997).

- **The DRI (1975-1988):** The main purpose of the DRI was to modernize and make small land owners efficient in such a way that they could be inserted into the market on the basis of their comparative advantage in food production. The “advantage” of this scheme for governments was that it did not require agrarian reform in order to develop the model. Instead, the key strategies focused on the access to technology, credit and the market.

- **The PDIC (1988-1992):** With this programme government transferred the rural development responsibility to the municipalities. The diverse rural projects were framed inside the “joint financing” scheme where the government adds to the resources that the communities and the municipality give.
• **The SNC (1992):** The SNC consists of four funds of joint financing of which the DRI FUND was one. The new function of the DRI FUND was to act as a co-finer of rural investment projects in organised communities, leading to rural modernization and the development of a rural managerial system. As a result of this process, the dynamics of rural development remained subordinated to the management aptitude of every municipality to prepare and present projects to the local government. The role of the State diminished to being a “project bank”.

**B. ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION**

The neoliberal period starts with Cesar Gaviria’s government (1990-1994), who promoted a series of Washington Consensus-based reforms. These kinds of reforms, known as *La Apertura* (the Opening), sought “to establish a model of open and competitive economy with more equity and opportunities for Colombians, creating the bases for a political transformation to be carried out” (Hommes 2002: 255).

The Social and Economic Development Plan 1990-1994, titled “the Pacific Revolution”, presented the main reasons that justified the implementation of the neoliberal policies: 1) The Import Substitution model did not manage to create a dynamic industry or productive sector; 2) Given the protectionist policies, there was little opportunity to diversify the type of products exported as non traditional exports were limited to a small number of products; 3) During the 70s and 80s it was apparent that an economic slowdown had occurred, which demanded much needed reforms; 4) Finally, protectionism created a monopolistic economy which not only benefited some agents, but also encouraged inadequate resource allocation.

---

23 The four rural investment joint financing funds are: DRI FUND, the *Fondo de Inversión Urbana* - FIU (the Urban Investment Fund), the *Fondo de Inversión Social* – FIS (the Social Investment Fund), and the *Fondo de Solidaridad y Emergencia Social* – FSES (the Solidarity and Social Emergency Fund).
Taking this into account, the main neoliberal reforms related to the agricultural sector were (Cfr. DNP 1991; Balcázar et. al. 1998; Jaramillo 2002; Machado 2005):

**Firstly: Reduction of tariff rates.** The average tariff rate diminished from 24% to 22%; and the exports super tax came down to 10% (DNP 1991).

**Secondly: New commercial agreements.** Between 1990-1994 Colombia signed agreements with the Pacto Andino (Andean Pact) member countries. Furthermore, Colombia signed the new agreements enclosed within the GATT, which were agreed in Uruguay. With the United States tariff preferences were obtained according to the Ley de Preferencia Andinas (Andean Preferences Law). In 1992, Andean integration was encouraged with the creation of a free trade area between Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela.

**Thirdly: Reduction of State intervention.** In order to give a leading role to the private sector and diminish State intervention, the regulatory system was dismantled and replaced with internal commercialization. Also, the storage of grains and oil products, a responsibility previously held by the Instituto de Mercadeo Agropecuario – IDEMA (Agricultural Marketing Institute) was transferred to the private sector. In addition, the government allowed the participation of private sector banks in offering agricultural credit (Machado 2005).

**Fourthly: Land adequacy.** In 1991 the Plan Decenal de Adecuación de Tierras, 1990-2000 (10 Year Plan of Land Adequacy) was approved in order to encourage public investment in rural areas, and also to improve the country’s competitiveness and productive potential in territories that are strategic for the external market (CONPES 2538/1991). Simultaneously, incentives were created to capitalize and improve credit conditions to stimulate private investment in land improvement. This decision regulated a 30% subsidy for land improvement
projects using the *Incentivo a la Capitalización Rural* - ICR (Rural Capitalization Incentive).

Carrying out a general evaluation of the model (Jaramillo 2002; Pineda 1997; Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá 1993), some argue that the Opening had a positive impact on the Colombian agricultural sector. The model contributed to a more efficient system of allocating resources, reflected in the increase of permanent crops and the diminishing of transitory ones like cereals. Also, the Opening encouraged exports and raised the Colombian economic level of competitiveness (imports increased from 15.5% of the GDP in 1990 to 46.9% in 1997; exports increased from 20.7% to 32.6% of the GDP during the same period). Defenders of the Economic Opening affirmed how Colombia, for the first time, assumed the challenges of globalization.

However, immediately after the implementation of the neoliberal reforms, the agricultural sector fell apart during the crisis of 1992. The figures demonstrate a general decrease in the Colombian agricultural production (see table 4.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>-0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitory cultures</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>-3.2%</td>
<td>-12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Cultures</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>-0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle farming</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Production</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministerio de Agricultura (1998)

The year 1992 was not only called the *agricultural crisis year*, but also was significant for providing key evidence of liberalization policy failure. In fact, during the 90s the agricultural sector grew at an annual rate of 2.2% - a percentage much lower than the average reflected during the post-war period (3.5%) (Jaramillo 2002: 158). As a consequence, the agricultural contribution to the GDP
diminished: while between 1945-1949 the agricultural sector represented 41% of GDP, this percentage was reduced to 17.5% in 1991, and to 11.5% in 1996 (Perry 2000). This led to a deterioration in the rural population’s standard of living, leading to peasants’ migration to the cities.

C. ALVARO URIBE’s GOVERNMENT

During Álvaro Uribe’s two terms in office (2002-2006 and 2006-2010), the neoliberal policies established by the economic opening have continued. However, due to the increase of the internal armed conflict, the “Democratic Security” policy became the fundamental prop of his administration. For the national government, the violence performed by criminal organizations is the country’s main challenge. The warlike actions of armed illegal groups are not only an obstacle to economic development but a threat to the nation’s viability. For the current government, development and security are two sides of the same coin.

“The operations of the forces of law, order and security must contribute to a climate of confidence and stability which attracts private investment, produces economic and social development and reduces unemployment and poverty. Greater security must generate conditions for adequate performance of the State so that it can benefit those most in need” (Ministerio de Defensa 2007: 30).

In such a context, it is not uncommon for the national government, with policies in which issues of growth and security “walk together”, to view rural sector problems in the following way: “a weak agriculture is equivalent to a strong terrorism” (Arias 2005). Such a statement, made by the former Minister of Agriculture Andrés Felipe Arias, not only identifies the rural crisis as the main cause of the violence, but also justifies the Democratic Security policy aimed at the pacification of Colombia by military means.

“And so, the Government has prioritized as one of its seven tools of equity the “social handling of the countryside”. The guiding
The principle of this tool is to turn the Colombian countryside into a prosperous sector, a wealth creator that is well managed, profitable and highly competitive on the international markets, encouraged by the individual or associative private sector, with employment and well-being for all. What we want is to turn the countryside into a sector where rents are redistributed and to generate a rapid recovery of the “social fabric”, which will legitimize the definitive defeat of the narco-terrorist oligarchy, as well as of rebel groups who do not have any vision or ideals” (Arias: 2005).

This emphasis on democratic security has its supporters and critics. On the one hand, the security strategy has been criticized for its high public expenditure on defence, an exaggerated emphasis on the military, and the dark alliance between military and paramilitary groups. On the other hand, for many people Democratic Security has offered the country a peaceful environment, not only because of the AUC’s demobilization, but also the strong military offensive against the guerrillas, which has managed to weaken their activities. Such "pacification" has rejuvenated the economy and reduced the level of investment risk in the country, facilitating an increase of private investment, as is the case of the Middle Magdalena region.

“[In Middle Magdalena] the political map was re-formed... The guerrillas left and the army entered, and that gives guarantees, so that you could invest as a businessman. You know that in areas where there are guerrillas it is impossible to work. In areas where there is army or another force it is easier to work (...) well, without saying we are paramilitary. But the fact that there is a military base helps a lot” (Staff member of an African palm company. Personal interview. 13 March 2008).

The so called “social handling of the countryside” contains a strong component of security and investment intended to raise the rural sector’s competitiveness. Such a vision of rural development is framed within the new national context characterized by trade liberalization and the globalization of the economy, which demands intensive development of business skills and active participation of the private sector. The objective of such a dynamic economy is a transformation of
the agricultural sector, from one that was previously oriented to an internal market to one that is consolidated and competitive in the external market.

“Since the commercial liberalization at the end of the 80s and start of the 90s, the Colombian State has been making efforts to foster the transition from an agriculture oriented towards import substitution and the internal market, to one oriented to both the domestic and the external markets and underlain by a culture of competitiveness” (Arias 2004).

It is for this reason that during the period 2002-2006, numerous programs advocated by the Ministry of Agriculture granted incentives to exportable goods/crops such as bananas, flowers, timber and bio-fuels based on palm and sugar-cane cultures. This transformation of the agricultural sector is articulated as a part of what the Government’s Agenda has named “use of the soil’s potentialities”. This consists of adapting the Colombian countryside so it becomes the exporter of late yield crops.

“We are putting our money on late yield crops such as African palm, which nowadays is important because of its use in bio-fuel production. Many countries have not agricultural space left, but in Colombia’s case we have almost 32 million hectares of extensive cattle farming. There is no reason why these cattle could not be restricted to 16 million hectares, and we would have another 16 million hectares available for late yield crops such as palm. This way, the bio-fuel generated from palm turns into the country’s best bet with great export potential. In the same way, it has good results because we have already realized that this type of production creates employment, encourages development and finally generates income and economic support for the peasant population” (Staff member of the Ministry of Agriculture. Personal interview. 20 May 2008).

This export emphasis raises two issues: first, such policies exclude those who do not choose to cultivate products prioritized by the government (late yield crops and forest plantations). Second, the government is promoting a land use system governed by ex-post potential.
In sum, the national government’s rural gamble indicates that the growth of the agricultural sector depends exclusively on the increase of agricultural competitiveness. Nevertheless, such an emphasis ignores the fact that food provision is an important priority that cannot be ignored. By having prioritized late yield exportable products, the Uribe government’s policies risk the country’s food security.

V. LATIN AMERICA DEVELOPMENT REVISITED: FROM INCOMMENSURABILITY TO PRAGMATIC ARTICULATIONS

As the foregoing shows, theories, paradigms, economic programmes and policies in rural development have changed dramatically over the course of the last six decades. In part, those transformations indicate changes in the Latin American and Colombian context in general and in rural conditions in particular, which force all actors to modify plans, policies and strategies that do not respond well to new needs and requirements. The lesson is to see theory and action in permanent evolution, not as constants, but adapting and adjusting to current circumstances. Hence, from Modernization, through Dependency to Neoliberal approaches, Latin America has written an original history of development, in which several conflicting programmes and policies have been implemented. The very diversity of actors working to improve well-being suggests that there is no single way to do development. Rather, different agents have had, and continue to have, different conceptions of what Latin American economic and particularly rural development should look like. This is the starting point of “conflict dynamics”.

The fact that such a diversity of approaches to development compete with each other implies not only that rationality is not universal at all, but most significantly that the academic world in Latin America and Colombia (in particular the developmental one), has been facing the challenge of conceptual incommensurability, both in theory and in practice. A word about this impasse of incommensurability is appropriate here, especially in so far as this
incommensurability has become an obstacle in gaining consensus and commitment on developmental issues, notably how to address poverty.

A. A WORD ABOUT INCOMMENSURABILITY

As an expression rooted in the philosophy of science, the concept of “incommensurability” appeared in Thomas Kuhn’s book “the Structure of Scientific Revolutions” (1962). Kuhn indicates that paradigms are incommensurable because each one has its own criteria of demarcating science from non-science. Due to the standards of assessment that are internal to each paradigm, they involve mutually exclusive foundational assumptions, which are expressed in the different vocabularies of each paradigm (Smith 1998: 194).

“In a sense I am unable to explicate further, the proponents of competing paradigms practice their trades in different worlds. One contains constrained bodies that fall slowly, the other pendulums that repeat their motions again and again. In one, solutions are compounds, in the other mixtures. One is embedded in a flat, the other in a curved, matrix of space. Practicing in different worlds, the two groups of scientists see different things when they look from the same point in the same direction” (Kuhn 1962: 150).

As a consequence, the academic world is embedded with a set of different, conflicting paradigms that are mutually exclusive. In such a pluralistic context, the scientists operating within each particular paradigm interpret the world quite differently, making academic debate interminable. Development Studies is witness to that. In fact, the variety of arguments indicates that the main feature of the actual development debate is its conceptual incommensurability.

“[T]here is no[t] a single agreed version of what is meant or implied by “development”. In an area of debate such as development, definitions and explanations are not cut and dried. They carry implications about one’s view of the world that can lead into wide-ranging political, moral and theoretical disputes” (Thomas 2000: 42).
In light of this, it can be said that the Latin American history of rural territorial development can be interpreted as a dispute between models of development. The premises of each view are valid from their own rationality, but are incompatible with the others. For instance, what is rational for Washington might not be rational for Caracas… or what is rational for Neoliberalism may not be rational for Structuralism. The Latin American history of rural development can be interpreted as a sequence of ideologies in confrontation.

“If the 1960s saw the zenith of national planning, the 1970s experienced only a slow decline. In a Fabian tradition, government organization was seen as a principal instrument for action against poverty… To do more for the poor, government must grow. The solution to rural poverty was not less government but more… [In contrast, since the 1980s] the neo-liberal critique of State intervention in the economy has included the size and inefficiency of government bureaucracy and of parastatals, with prescriptions that the State should do less and the market more… The solution to the problems of development was not more government but less” (Chambers 1993: 261-263).

Such a shift from the old paradigm to the new one can be interpreted in different ways. For some, it is a sign of progress and evolution, involving what might be called a “gestalt shift” (á la Kuhn) in Development Studies. Conversely, this can be explained as a result of external forces (political, ideological) forcing change from one paradigm for another.

“There have… been debates across paradigms, although far less than might be considered desirable as authors try to focus on presenting their own ideas without giving always due attention to the ideas of those who disagree with them. If there has been dialogue across paradigms it has often been a dialogue of the deaf, especially when some of the paradigms come with a heavy ideological dose. The shift from one paradigm to the next is not necessarily due to some scientific superiority of the new paradigm, as is often the case in the hard sciences, but often stems from the changing correlation of political and ideological forces nationally and internationally. Thus the rise and demise of development paradigms is often associated with certain economic and political changes in society” (Kay 2000a: 1).
The idea of a real “scientific revolution” (à la Kuhn) in which the prevailing paradigm was replaced by the new one by means of extraordinary research is questioned. More than academic debate, the shift from one paradigm to another in the Latin American history of development has been embedded in disagreements in which contentious positionality and manipulation are all inherent. Examples might include: proposed SAPs promoted through the façade of “aid conditionality”; “democratic” land reforms promoted as instruments of political battle against Communism; Green Revolutions as a new form of Imperialism; “good governance” as a pathway to liberalization, and so on. This is also a dispute between paradigms that has sometimes been pursued through violent means – as in the Chilean shift from Socialism to Neoliberalism.

That level of disagreement and manipulation becomes especially disconcerting when some actors opt to solve conflicts by violent means. Throughout this process, actors largely reject the views of those they disagree with, leaving little scope for debate. As an owner of the whole truth some proponents try to justify the supremacy of their own paradigm over other approaches: “TINA! TINA! There Is No Alternative!” to the free market, state neoliberals. In an opposite sense, structuralists assume their model to be the only feasible and credible alternative to Neoliberalism today (Gwynne and Kay 2000: 155). Others based on a “radical or revolutionary” vision reject free markets as a solution to rural underdevelopment, expressing an alternative preference for the rural poor to adopt a self-governing and independent strategy (Veltmeyer and O’Malley 2001).

In such a context of incommensurability, the dialogue and debate among schools of thought sometimes has been no more than pure assertion and counter-assertion of different points of view in which the developmental debate seems to be futile. As a consequence, there is no consensus about how to do development today in Latin America. Instead, development jargon is littered with expressions denoting a theoretical battle in which dialogue and agreement do not seem to have a common

---

24 The acronym TINA refers to a slogan attributed to Margaret Thatcher, once Prime Minister of Britain. It means: "There Is No Alternative" to global free-market Capitalism.
goal. It is dominated by offensive and reactionary attitudes turning each paradigm into a counter-view of the others. Conflicting papers and issues are common in today’s research: Structuralism versus Neoliberalism; the market versus the State; inward-directed versus outward-directed strategies; South versus North, bottom-up versus bottom-down, Latin Americanism versus Imperialism, and so on.

At this point, an elusive question has to be posed: How to solve conflicts in a rational way despite conceptual incommensurability? This implies a proposed attitudinal-shift: from one of antagonistic confrontation to one of tactful dialogue. It is not against others but with others that development theory and practice should be pursued. If violence promotes exclusion and distinctions between friends and enemies, rational academic debate should seek pragmatic articulations among different points of view. That requires a mutual knowledge that permits an understanding and communication of the other’s postures.

**B. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARADIGMS**

It could be argued that a key challenge for development is to integrate the richness and variety of Latin America Paradigms into an interdisciplinary developmental approach. Nowadays instead of saying TINA! TINA! it can be more appropriate to follow Susan George’s maxim: TATA! TATA! – There Are a Thousand Alternatives! So, instead of getting involved in an eternal confrontation in which each posture tries to establish its legitimacy and authority over against others, the post-developmental scheme stresses the importance of building bridges between the different traditions and schools of though. Gone was the epoch of meta-discourses, or meta-narratives25, as Lyotard called them. The idea that just one paradigm might understand the entire complexity of Development Studies is groundless. On the contrary, knowledge has to be defined in the context in which

25 “Metanarratives is a term developed by Lyotar. It is used to designate theoretical claims which have the audacity to attempt to explain all of social existence… Metanarratives are grand theories with huge ambitions and enormous scope. For Lyotar, they are associated with the Enlightenment, the consolidation of modernity and the belief that human reason could be deployed to understand the human condition in all its complexity” (Smith 1998: 346).
historical and social practices are taking place, as Smith (1988: 197) points out: “the truth of a scientific statement is only relevant to those who share the belief system upon which such “truths” are based”.

One of the main representatives of the idea of “rationalities in context” is Alasdair MacIntyre, a Scottish moral philosopher, who taking into consideration Kuhn’s approach and extrapolating it to moral inquiry, applied the concept of incommensurability to what he called “Tradition- Constituted Enquiry” (MacIntyre 1988). MacIntyre’s hypothesis suggests how despite the fact that there are different and incommensurable moral traditions, communication between them is possible.

“MacIntyre… concludes that each rational tradition draws upon local resources, and is formulated according to a conceptual scheme alien to that informing a competing tradition. Procedures of enquiry will mirror these distinct concepts and beliefs. For MacIntyre, acknowledging this possible incommensurability is a necessary first step towards consensus” (Flett 1999-2000: 3).

Following MacIntyre’s hypothesis it is possible to conclude that despite conflict between rival traditions, progress and development in knowledge might be possible. Two basic requirements are necessary for that. First, MacIntyre rejects any possibility of a universal or “neutral way of characterizing either the subject matter about which [different traditions] gives rival accounts or the standards by which their claims [can] be evaluated. Each account has its own account of truth and knowledge” (MacIntyre 1988: 166). Second, MacIntyre highlights a “rare gift of empathy” or “intellectual insight” that permits an understanding of others’ postures. Put more colloquially, this means having the capacity of walking in someone else’s shoes: “understand the theses, arguments, and concepts of their rival in such a way that they are able to view themselves from such an alien standpoint and to re-characterize their own beliefs in an appropriate manner from the alien perspective” (MacIntyre 1988: 167).
Taking into consideration the previous conditions, MacIntyre indicates that the authentic dialogue and communication between incommensurable traditions might be possible and attainable. Such a process occurs on two levels.

The first is that in which each tradition using its own terms, questions, and standards, characterizes the position of its rival. In this process, it is essential to make “explicit the grounds for rejecting what is incompatible with its own central theses, although sometimes allowing that from its own point of view and in the light of its own standards of judgment its rival has something to teach it on marginal and subordinate questions” (MacIntyre 1988: 166).

The second level is reached when the protagonists of one tradition are compelled to recognize in a rival tradition a conclusive solution to the problem they are facing. “Measured by their own standards, the standpoint of the rival tradition is better able to transcend the limitations confronting their tradition” (Flett 1999-2000: 6). At this point the protagonists could ask “whether the alternative and rival tradition may not [or may] be able to provide resources to characterize and to explain the failings and defects of their own tradition more adequately that they… have been able to do” (MacIntyre 1988: 166-167).

Thus, MacIntyre provides a set of strategies that are useful for Social Sciences when doing social research given the explicit context of paradigms in confrontation. In particular, if Development Studies is to evolve it must look for pragmatic articulations between paradigms in which the main attitude has to be a communicative one, not a totalitarian one (as is often the case). In this effort, MacIntyre (1990) points out that Thomas Aquinas’ methodology of inquiry can be taken as a model when doing research. According to MacIntyre the remarkable contribution of Thomas Aquinas consisted of having merged two incompatible traditions: the Aristotelian and the Augustinian one, which were considered completely antagonist in their time. The Summa Theologica more than being a set of orthodox doctrines is an outstanding synthesis and dialogue between rival traditions in progress.
Other examples of exceptional thinkers who were able to merge rival traditions of thought and practice include: Emmanuel Kant, who carried out a synthesis between Empiricism and Rationalism; Teilhard de Chardin who in his theory of evolution merged Religious (Biblical) and Scientific principles when explaining the creation of humankind; and Walter Benjamin who created a materialistic view of the history of Salvation (Marxism and Judaism). In the same way, the Theology of Liberation brought together Catholic dogmas and Marxist theses. But without doubt, it was Thomas Aquinas who opened the door to the dialogue and communication among rival traditions.

In this regard, in the field of Latin American development an interesting approach is slowly emerging and that also aims to bring together different schools of rural development: the Rural Territorial Development approach. Eugenio Incer (2006: 1) points out that the territorial approach is seductive because of its ambition to become a paradigm that attains the unification of extremely different and opposite logics such as the ecological and the capitalist. Thus, RTD is a dialogic approach to rural development. Its main exponents, Berdegué and Schejtman, provide an interpretative synthesis of the principal economic and political views of rural development with a distinctive territorial perspective. Such “pragmatic articulation” is based on the analyses of industrial agglomeration (Marshall 1954; Krugman 1995); clusters (Porter 1991); industrial districts (Camagni 2000; Bagnasco 1998; Saraceno 2000); learning regions or milieu (Maillat 1995; Maskell and Malmberg 1999); and Neoinstitutionalism (North 1990).

RTD emerges as a theory and practice that interconnects and communicates different paradigms and practices of development searching for solutions to poverty. Unpretentiously, RTD does not claim to be a unique, pure or alternative paradigm. The RTD focuses on the interrelation and dialogue between different schools of thought, in which rival strategies overlap with just one purpose: overcoming poverty in a rural territory, understood as a social construct in which a “plurality of actors with different and sometimes conflicting interests and values
influence the dynamics and interrelationships within the same space” (FAO 2005: 2).

In light of this, the present study conceives of territory as an arena for dialogue and negotiation, in which the development of methodologies that can be applied to solve conflicts among actors and visions of rural development are essential. In the specific case of Latin America, FAO (2005) has developed a set of strategies which help to manage conflicts over territorial resources through the execution of a negotiation process that leads rival actors towards what FAO calls Social Territorial Agreement (STA).

“The Social Territorial Agreement is the result of a participatory process which includes plans of activities or initiatives for local development, and institutional arrangements or distribution of resources (in short, medium, and long term) defined through negotiation among the different actors in a given territory” (FAO 2005: 13).

In order to reach an agreement a phased approach is required: “[first], the views of different actors need to be understood (this is a diagnostic phase which should involve open dialogue among the actors)… [Second], actors are supported to set out coherent and feasible perspectives for the future development of the territory and to formulate proposals for later negotiation… [Third], the negotiation process should aggregate the diversity of interests in a given territory in order to formulate rural development proposals as a common ground for negotiation. It should follow procedures and rules that the actors must agree upon in advance and are enforced by a credible and legitimised third party” (FAO 2005).

What emerges from MacIntyre’s and FAO’s point of view is the need for an inclusive language in the Rural Development field that interconnects divergent views and agents of development. This implies dialogic and interdisciplinary work between rival paradigms that eliminates totalitarianisms. It is the time to shift from exclusive postures to dialogic ones, as Parnwell made explicit:
“A **pragmatic articulation** of orthodox and alternative development, with strengthening linkages between the governmental and non-governmental sectors, would appear to be the most realistic way forward” (Parnwell 2002: 116; emphasis added).

If conflict dynamics in specific territories are understood as an expression of a dispute between opposing views of rural territorial development, it can be said that a *pragmatic articulation* of traditional and alternative development, strengthening the linkages between productive transformation and institutional change (in the sense promulgated by Berdegué and Schejtman) might be the most feasible means of fostering peaceful interactions among rival views of rural development in specific territories.
CHAPTER FIVE

VISIONS AND ACTORS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
IN MIDDLE MAGDALENA

The description of the rural development paradigms in Latin America given in the previous chapter showed how the clash of interests between visions and actors is inherent to the dynamics of development itself. As a way of demonstrating such a statement in a specific situation and context, this chapter is aimed to describe the notion of rural development that the leading visions and actors of Middle Magdalena promote, in order to present the theoretical and practical incommensurability that prevails among them. In this way, five views will be presented: the approach of the rural communities, the capitalist vision, the territorial view promoted by the PDPMM, the military and strategic vision proposed by the irregular armed groups (FARC, ELN and AUC), and the coca-leaf “model”.

Though there are other actors in the territory who will not be presented, the selection of these five points of view was the result of analytical work based on interviews, direct observation and the analysis of secondary information. Two criteria stand out in this selection: first, the agents and visions with the greatest influence in the region were taken into account (see Chapter Two for some figures and arguments related to the relevance of the five actors chosen). Second, the visions selected also converge with those of other actors. Thus, the position of the Catholic Church is expressed through the position of the territorial view proposed by the PDPMM; the proposals of the fishermen and small miners are connected to the view of the rural communities; and the discourse of many politicians in the region promotes the capitalist model.
There is internal variation within these visions. For example, when I speak about the "vision of the rural communities", I also recognize both theoretical and practical differences among the peasant farmers of southern Bolívar, Carare-Opón, the Vélez region and the River Cimitarra Valley. Nonetheless and despite this internal plurality, it is possible to identify a series of common factors which define the essence of each particular vision. These common characteristics make possible I construct an "average vision", which can be perceived in each one of the texts, documents, practices, discourses and opinions of the actors involved.

For instance, most of the rural communities of Middle Magdalena take as their theoretical and practical reference-point the "Plan for the Development and Integral Protection of Human Rights" (PDPIDH). This Plan expands the rural development approach that 25 different peasant-farming communities of Middle Magdalena share. Similar examples can be found in relation to the other actors.

The presentation of each of these visions is based on the information compiled from interviews, texts and key documents published by the actors involved, recognizing the difficulties concerned with gaining access to sources of information about the insurgency, the paramilitary, and coca-leaf “models”. Moreover, many of the sources of information are not cited for security reasons. In fact, many of those interviewed have asked to remain anonymous to protect their personal safety. For that reason, instead of citing the name of the person interviewed when referring to empirical information (e.g. quotes from interviews), I cited their profession or occupation.

Finally, the description of each vision quotes paragraphs or sentences that condense the main proposals of each actor. In order to avoid imposing my interpretation of the proposals, opinions and textual quotations will appear in the characterisation of each vision.
I. THE RURAL COMMUNITIES’ VIEW

The first and original rural development proposal that operates in Middle Magdalena is *the vision of the rural communities* that promotes a sovereign proposal of development to be implemented by the settlers. In methodological terms, the expression "rural communities" refers to four groups of actors who share a "peasant-farmer” view of development:

Firstly, there are *small producers* (traditionally called *peasant-farmers*), whose form of traditional production is basically oriented to self-consumption. Their model of production is characterised by small parcels of land in which much of the soil is not very fertile and cannot be mechanised. Basic technologies are used with intensive manual labour, low availability of capital and few inputs. These peasant farmers are the best organised of the four groups which form part of this view.

Secondly, there are the subsistence oriented *fishing communities* along the river banks. Their economic activity is seasonal and marked by the biological cycle of the fish. During the dry seasons, many fishermen work as day-labourers in the agricultural and livestock sector.

Thirdly, there are *small miners* in southern Bolívar that use artisanal techniques to exploit gold deposits. Their living conditions are the lowest in the region, since the mines where they work are in remote places, where access roads are deficient and there are no nearby sources of food.

Finally, there are *displaced* who live in marginal districts of towns and cities. In general, the displaced have formerly been part of the rural population, but they have had to flee to urban centres due to the armed conflict. Their situation is quite critical because they have to adapt to urban conditions which are alien to their origin occupations.
These four actors share the same peasant vision of development which has been characterised by constant social struggle in the face of the regional economy dynamics that generates conflict over the productive occupation of the territory. Explicitly, peasant struggles in Middle Magdalena are defined as an expression of resistance and sovereignty faced with the capitalist proposals induced by external agents (Duque 1996).

Thus, a presentation of the historical background of peasant struggles in Middle Magdalena will be a guide to identify the way in which the development proposal of the rural communities has evolved throughout time. After a period of social resistance, focused on the struggle for land in the 1970s and 1980s, the rural communities advanced towards the preparation of a proposal for integral development.

A. PEASANT STRUGGLES IN MIDDLE MAGDALENA: 1975-2006

During 1975-2006, the rural communities in Middle Magdalena organised 279 protests (an average of 8.7 per year). According to Esmeralda Prada, there were three conflict dynamics that caused these protests:

"[First,] the dispute for territory reflected on the tensions over the control of natural resources and the appropriation of the space made by peasant-farmers and private investors who had different visions and mindsets in relation to rural development... [Second,] the dispute for land, as a source of local power, in which political tensions, the rural economy and violence were all entangled... [Third,] the tensions produced by the economic deterioration of peasant farming in the context of the economic crisis, in places where the stability of rural societies had been achieved in the previous decade" (Prada 2006: 195).

26 This qualitative leap forward will be presented on the basis of the figures and indicators supplied by CINEP’s database on "social struggles in Colombia" for the period 1975-2006.
This situation of conflict led to marches and protests of different kinds. In order of importance, the reasons for protesting were: land demands (36%); respect for human rights (27%); government policies (15%); unfulfilled commitments (7%); demands for infrastructure (7%); and other causes (8%). Graph 5.1 presents the evolution of the three major themes in peasant struggle from 1975 to 2006.

**Figure 5.1**

Major Peasant Struggles in Middle Magdalena: 1975-2006

The graph shows how 1990 (the year of the "liberalisation of the economy"), is the watershed for peasant protest in Middle Magdalena. Prior to that date, the demand for land was the main reason for struggle. However, after 1990, protests against government policies, and claims for the respect for human rights became much more important, while struggles for land declined. A more detailed analysis of these dynamics will be presented below, based on the two principal periods: 1975-1990 and 1991-2006 (see graphs 5.2 and 5.3).
1. The fight for land

During the period from 1975 to 1990, the main reason for the struggle of rural communities was the demand for land (55% of all protests; 94 actions in total).
The dynamics reflected the strong peasant organisations formed around ANUC\textsuperscript{27} and the influence of some left-wing organizations. In that period, land invasions were used to pressure the government in order to implement an agrarian reform and undertake changes in the rural development policies (Duque 1996).

Nonetheless, the struggle for land became less prominent after 1991. In fact, only 7 of such claims were organized between 1991 and 2006, so it represented 7% of total protests. There were three main reasons for this (Prada 206): firstly, the government issued a decree penalizing land invasion (Law 30/1988); secondly, the army and paramilitary forces strongly pressured peasant leaders, which eventually led to the disappearance of ANUC; and thirdly, peasant protest took a major qualitative step forward with the "peasant exodus" of 1998. Instead of marching for traditional petitions (land, hospitals, schools, roads, etc.), communities started to prepare an integral development plan. The peasants of Middle Magdalena understood that the solution to the agrarian problem would not come solely from property rights, but rather from the creation of territories in which fundamental rights were respected.

"In the 1998 marches (the so-called "Peasant Exodus"), something very important happened, which I think had no precedent in other parts of the country... Before that, the peasants asked for a health post, some drains in the town centre, or water supplies, and this was a permanent process, with no response... If we look at the history of mobilisations, we can see that people came with a shopping list... But in 1998, something very important happened because the demands were also conditioned... This is when the discourse of human rights and integral development began to appear" (ACVC’s staff member. Personal interview. 08 November 2007).

The qualitative leap forward made by the rural communities of Middle Magdalena is condensed in the PDPIDH, which presents the demands of the rural population of 25 municipalities in Middle Magdalena. The Plan was agreed in February 1999,\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{27} The Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos (ANUC) was created in 1967 by Decree 755, which ordered all peasant-farmers who used State services in their lands to register. Their main intention was to create a social base to discuss and draw up agrarian policies.
as part of the discussions between the *Mesa Regional* and the Government after 103 days of the Peasant Exodus in Barrancabermeja. The Plan reflects the shift from a reactive posture based on the demands for land and infrastructure, to a proactive attitude expressed by the capacity to create a territory in which fundamental rights were respected.

2. **Human rights**

Between 1975 and 1990, demands for human rights underlay 26% of protests (44 actions in total). Between 1991 and 2006, they represented 29% (31 actions). In the 1980s, the demand on respect of human rights was focused on two points: the first one was the misconduct of the armed forces in their struggle against the guerrillas; and the second one was the fact that they were against alliances made by certain actors in the region with paramilitary groups. In the 1990s, these protests were centred on the denunciation of a range of violations of human rights committed by the paramilitaries (AUC).

3. **Government policies**

Prior to 1990, protests against government policy were insignificant. They only represented 5% of protests (9 actions in total). But in the period 1991-2006, demands for changes in agrarian policy became the main reason for peasant struggles (32 demonstrations; 29% of all protests). There were two reasons for this: first, the economic opening promoted by President Cesar Gaviria and the agricultural crisis that raised the level of peasant discontent considerably. Second, the thrust of peasant protests changed and no longer focused on land-holding and the solution of the agrarian problem. The rural population came forward with a new discourse, advocating integral development in which government policy would have to be reformed. In this way, the rural communities of Middle Magdalena proposed their own plan for integral development.
B. PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRAL PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (PDPIDH)

The PDPIDH is above all, a proposal for the integral development of Middle Magdalena executed by the local population themselves. The Plan begins with the following notion of territory:

"The concept of region is assumed from the standpoint of the community, in which there are mindsets, realities, identities and political proposals claimed by the population that is settled in the 25 municipalities covered by the Plan. Here, there is a process of construction embodied in a common political project, which would also culminate in a legal, political and administrative expression, such as, "the region of Middle Magdalena", or "a regional province of Middle Magdalena", defined by patterns of land use, public control of space, and social and political relationships" (Mesa Regional 1999: 60).

For the Mesa Regional, the construction of the region would take form through execution of a development model based on the respect for fundamental rights:

"We propose a regional development model, which seeks to defend life and establish dignified conditions for it; we believe development cannot be defined only by economic growth, or by insertion of the region into regional, national or foreign markets, but rather by the level of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights enjoyed by the local population. That is to say, development must be measured by the quality of life of the population, and must start by recognizing that human rights are being violated. This we intend to correct" (Mesa Regional 1999: 8).

According to the rural communities, the capitalist proposal runs counter to development based on human dignity, because not only has it left poverty and inequity in the region; it has also encouraged a deepening of the structural causes that generate the armed conflict. "Under such conditions, it is unthinkable that one might propose such a [capitalist] model in the context of Middle Magdalena", the Mesa Regional affirms emphatically (1999: 11). For rural communities, the aim of development is not reduced to the maximisation of profit, but to the consolidation
of infrastructure at the service of a dignified life and food security. According to the PDPIDH, two fundamental economic aspects determine the consolidation of the peasant economy in the region: first, the strengthening of social organisations in production activities which would achieve food security for the local population; and second, the construction of economic networks which will make production and marketing of products more dynamic (Mesa Regional 1999).

Four strategies were established in the PDPIDH to lay the bases for this regional development: 1) Legalisation and deeding of land; 2) Changes in land-use regulation; 3) Integration of roads; 4) Participatory planning. The Mesa Regional asked the State to establish protectionist social investment measures for this, in order to make the process of productive and institutional development endogenous and more dynamic.

"We are demanding the State to be present in economic and social matters... that means, that the State does not simply bring in a military presence, because we want to promote this region based on an endogenous and non-violent proposal for development" (ACVC’s staff member. Personal interview. 08 November 2007).

In synthesis, the prospects for integral development in the rural communities of Middle Magdalena are based on the theory of human rights, in which the solution to the land-ownership problems, food security and participatory planning become the fundamental strategies in rural development.

II. THE CAPITALIST VISION

The second development model in the region is the capitalist vision promoted particularly by industrialists, livestock farmers, many local politicians and the government. This vision embraces the oil industry, mining, cattle ranching and

---

28 For the rural population of Middle Magdalena the nature of food security refers to the availability of food and one's access to it. Thus, a household is considered food secure when its occupants do not live in hunger or fear of starvation.
agribusiness (oil, cocoa and rubber). It is a model for extraction that prioritises the investment and modernisation and has the prerequisite of the "Democratic Security” policy. De Roux characterises this vision as follows:

"Vertical Modernisation... aims to use civil and military power to conquer the territory, overcome the guerrillas and enable Colombian and foreign investors to enter the region within the parameters of the peace process, careful control of the population, and the development of major agribusiness crops with plantations of African palm, rubber and cocoa, high-technology mining, and oil by-products. At the same time, it consolidates the region as a link for markets with Venezuela and the rest of the world. This aspiration gathered strength in the mid-1990s" (de Roux 1999: 29).

As can be inferred, the plurality of capitalist experiences in the Middle Magdalena region is evident. Nonetheless, a detailed study of these expressions goes beyond the scope of this research. For the purposes of this section, I will present the two capitalist experiences which have contributed most to the regional GDP: the oil industry and African palm production. The aim of these examples is to characterise the specific capitalist approach that has been promoted in the region (I will return to these two examples in subsequent chapters).

A. ECOPETROL

Colombia's oil industry is in the hands of the Empresa Colombiana de Petróleos (ECOPETROL), created in August 25, 1951. In 1970, a general law was promulgated to ratify its nature as a State industrial and commercial company. In 2003, the Colombian government restructured the company to make it more competitive in the context of the world oil market. As part of this restructuring, ECOPETROL changed its corporate nature to become a shareholder corporation, but it remains bound to the Ministry of Mines and Energy (ECOPETROL web page).

In 2006, in an unprecedented move, the Colombian government approved the sale of 20% of the shares of ECOPETROL to the solidarity sector, in order to bring in
Some US$2,800 million to finance ECOPETROL operations. Those who objected to this measure saw it as one more act of “privatisation” of State property into the hands of a privileged few. The defenders of the policy preferred to see it as a “participation and democratisation” process, in which business decisions are not solely the business of the government, but a matter for some 482,000 shareholders who will define the future of the oil industry in Colombia. (Cfr. Staff member of ECOPETROL. Personal interview. 27 February 2008).

Nowadays, ECOPETROL is the largest corporation in Colombia and one of the 40 largest oil companies in the world. Its activities and mission are defined as follows:

"Since 1951, ECOPETROL has been securing supplies of crude and gas, and at the same time, adapting infrastructure for refining and general operations. It is responsible for the handling, transport and storage of oil and gas and it has taken action to secure the most convenient patterns of consumption among different sources of energy. Besides, ECOPETROL has contributed to the industrial progress in activities related to the industry; it has modernised and adapted its business structure and it has also increased production and sustained profitability. On the basis of these administrative principles, ECOPETROL is maximizing economic benefits which are then invested in social development programmes" (Carta Petrolera No. 49, as quoted in Acosta 1995: 143).

This vision of development seeks to give the oil industry a competitive position in the international market by contributing to welfare in areas where ECOPETROL operates, such as the case of Barrancabermeja.

"The emphasis of ECOPETROL’s actions is focused on Barrancabermeja, because this is where their largest investments are. Barrancabermeja is home to Colombia’s largest oil refineries. We want to make the refinery (it is number 39 in the world at the present time) into number 27... However, I must say that ECOPETROL is not a social enterprise, it is an industrial one. That is clear to us. So, ECOPETROL is interested in its surroundings, as they are relevant to its operations (staff member of ECOPETROL. Personal interview. 05 April 2008)."
From this business-oriented view, ECOPETROL’s social responsibility actions in and around Barrancabermeja have centred on the generation of jobs, the payment of royalties, and the execution of social and economic projects (Cfr. Staff member of ECOPETROL. Personal interview. 27 February 2008):

**First: Jobs.** For the oil-producing municipalities (particularly Barrancabermeja) the job market depends greatly on the demand for labour in the oil wells and the refinery. According to ECOPETROL (2008: 1), between January and August 2008 a total of 55,466 jobs were created in Middle Magdalena. This means that 6.8% of the population of the region is employed by ECOPETROL.

**Second: Royalties.** The payment of royalties is one of the main sources of revenue in Barrancabermeja. In 2005, transfers from ECOPETROL to the municipality totalled US$33,306,320 (Cfr. OIM-CDPMM 2006: 36).

**Third: Projects.** In the last 10 years, ECOPETROL has changed its policy of social responsibility. After a long period of "ECOPETROL-based" action, due to the weak presence of the State in the region, ECOPETROL began a new approach of accompaniment to the community. In this way, the joint work with some municipal administrations has contributed to the consolidation of high-impact social and economic projects (Cfr. Staff member of ECOPETROL. Personal interview. 27 February 2008).

**B. AFRICAN PALM**

In general, the palm oil industry has been the rural sector with the greatest growth in Middle Magdalena (see Chapter Two²⁹). Since its early days, this sector has had strong support from the State. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, government policy was marked by strong commercial protection, based on the import substitution model. Subsequently, with the liberalisation of the economy in the

---

²⁹ For a more detailed explanation of the growth of the African palm sector at the national level see the CONPES document No. 3477.
1990s, the State elaborated a palm oil development policy with a view to penetrating foreign markets. The Government’s Economic and Social Planning Council (CONPES), in its document No. 3477 entitled "Strategy for the Competitive Development of the Colombian Palm-Oil Sector," has expressed the principal objective of this policy as follows:

"To increase the competitiveness and productivity of the palm oil industry sustainably by making use of Colombia's advantages and the potential of a growing market, in order to offer new opportunities for development, employment and welfare in rural areas" (CONPES 2007: 13).

The government has proposed the following targets:

"[The Colombian State aims] to increase competitive production of palm oil through productive business nuclei, in order to: a) Increase exports of palm oil; b) Attend to the domestic market for palm oil; c) Attend to net the domestic demand for biodiesel; d) Win a share of the international market for biodiesel" (CONPES 2007: 13-14).

It can be inferred that the government’s efforts to strengthen the palm oil sector are focused on two activities: the production of palm oil and the production of biodiesel.

1. Oil palm production

The economic activity generated around palm oil is organised as a production chain with three stages: the palm oil agribusiness, the transformation industries, and the refining and distribution of palm oil by-products to the consumer. In the first stage of the chain, Middle Magdalena has 64,630 ha. planted with palm (40,557 ha. of which are in production30). In the second stage, the region has eight industrial plants engaged solely in oil extraction with the purpose of selling the oil palm in the domestic oils and fats markets, or exporting it unrefined. The third

30 Data for 2005 (see Chapter 2, Section D-2).
stage of the process takes place outside the region in 19 refining companies, which transform and commercialise palm oil by-products.

In this productive process, the way in which Middle Magdalena makes its decisions (a process mainly managed by the owners of businesses) has to be separated from the productive processes, due to the violence in the region. As a consequence, businessmen carry out their activities in urban centres outside the region, while the palm plantations and extraction plants are in the rural areas of Middle Magdalena. This situation has led to hiring local administrators, as a bridge between the two structures. A staff member of INDUPALMA states (personal interview. 14 march 2008) that this type of vertical integration has brought substantial benefits for the region: it has created direct and indirect jobs, it has increased the participation of local people in the productive process through the consolidation of alliances with settlers, and it has contributed to the economic development of the territory.

“\textit{I believe that the main contribution of the strategic alliances [made between the palm companies and local people], has been the capacity to reactivate the economy... I believe that the recovery of the economy depends on the improvement of agro-industry... and that is our contribution to solve poverty}” (staff member of an African palm company. Personal interview. 13 March 2008).

2. Palm for biodiesel

The former government has given great encouragement to the growing of palm for biodiesel, as a means of converting Colombia into a bio-fuels bank for the world. In such an effort, it has created a legal framework specified in the CONPES Document 3510 entitled: "Policy Guidelines to Promote Sustainable Production of Bio-fuels in Colombia". Four reasons are given in this document to justify the creation of this programme: first, it contributes to Colombia's energy security; second, there is an environmental benefit due to the fact that biofuels are less contaminating; third, the development of the biodiesel industry helps to sustain
the agricultural sector in Colombia, so the latter is linked to the industrial sector; and fourth, it generates jobs.

As a part of this policy, the palm industry is receiving a number of benefits from the central government, such as the Rural Capitalization Incentive (ICR), the formation of tax free zones, tax benefits for late-yield crops, and exemption from the global fuel tax in the case of biodiesel.\footnote{31}

In Middle Magdalena, the production of bio-fuels has attracted major investors who seek to consolidate the entire agro-industrial chain: palm plantations, the extraction of fruit, oil production, and distribution of biodiesel in association with ECOPETROL (Cfr. Staff member of ECOPETROL. Personal interview. 27 February 2008). In April 2007, ECOPETROL, in association with seven extractors of the region, created ECODIESEL COLOMBIA S.A. to serve as a biodiesel plant operator for Middle Magdalena. Investment for the construction of the plant totals US$23 million (ECOPETROL supplied 50% and the regional extraction companies the remaining 50%) (Cfr. ECOPETROL’s web page). With this project, Barrancabermeja will continue to be the home base for energy development in Colombia.

C. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE CAPITALIST VISION

The presentation of the two most important industries in Middle Magdalena is the epitome of the rent-seeking position that both government and private investors wish to consolidate in the territory. In this proposal, State policies are designed to stimulate projects in which the accumulation of capital will be effective and Democratic Security a reality.

Thus, the capitalist vision of the development of Middle Magdalena is aimed to the production of goods and services to accumulate profit through free market forces, turning the territory into a platform for the exploitation of tradables. The exploitation of natural resources in the region has been planned according to a competitive perspective, that is to say, on the basis of a development model founded on strategic projects to generate the greatest possible output at the lowest possible cost. The implementation of these megaprojects will create the conditions required for the local population to have access to quality employment and enable them to earn sustainable income (Cfr. Economist. Personal interview. 15 April 2008).

One of the fundamental pillars of the model in Middle Magdalena is to lower the level of risk due to the situation of the internal conflict. The government is committed to creating security for investors and the local population, so that they can engage in their economic projects in peaceful conditions.

"This program is proposed to use the competitive advantages of the Colombian rural sector through processes designed to add value and develop more competitive forms of production. This will bring progress towards more efficient, equitable and sustainable agriculture, with greater possibilities of successful access to foreign markets. Therefore, the ability to improve the welfare population generates new opportunities for the lawful occupation of the territory, and contributes to the consolidation of security in Colombia" (DNP 2007b: 149).

III. THE TERRITORIAL APPROACH

The third rural development proposal in Middle Magdalena is the territorial vision promoted by the PDPMM. Its development focus is aimed to produce dignified life conditions from a territorial perspective, in which economic and social projects entail the elimination of poverty and armed conflict in the region. It should be noted that this development proposal is shared by the Catholic Church,
several social organisations, human rights defenders and some NGOs working locally.

A. PDPMM’s PROPOSAL

According to the PDPMM, the final purpose of development is the protection of human dignity. The PDPMM “defines development as women and men from here that live their lives in dignity as they wish and decide to live it; and to construct conditions of non-exclusion so that all may live the life that they would like to have” (de Roux 2006b: 1).

At the heart of this development process is the notion of sovereignty. Increasing the capacity of individuals and communities to take charge of their own development implies for the PDPMM a process in which people define for themselves a common life project (PNUD-PDPMM 2008). According to de Roux, this notion of development implies a conceptual distinction between *desarrollo sustentable* (justifiable development) and *desarrollo sostenible* (sustainable development).

“*Desarrollo sustentable* (justifiable development) is that of a group which achieves the capacity to construct its project on its own, and to enrich it in cultural, environmental and economic terms with relationships with other groups, without losing control and capacity to build their own destinies. This is different from *desarrollo sostenible* (sustainable development), which may mean that the process is maintained by external and internal agents that sustain it, without necessarily being the local group itself which does it" (de Roux 2006a: 6; emphasis added).

Based on these assumptions, the PDPMM conceives integral development as a productive process: "this means producing (building) together the justifiable set of conditions which are necessary and sufficiently equitable for participants in the regional society to live in dignity" (de Roux 2006a: 7). As a result, the notion of

---

32 The PDPMM uses “Life with Dignity”, “Life Chosen by the Local Population” and “Project for Life” as synonyms.
development that the PDPMM stresses is one that focuses on the involvement of the local people, as agents, within the regional productive process.

In this regard, what would be produced is a set of final products that embody cultural, political and social values and the kind of goods and services that are essential to improve the quality of life that people would like to have. For that reason, final products are expressions of the distinctive way in which people want to develop their own existence and relations with humankind and nature.

According to the PDPMM, three basic elements have to be carried out in order to construct this integral productive process (Cfr. Founder of the PDPMM. Personal interview. 01 February 2008): 1) Defining the kind of life people would like to live, 2) Producing it, 3) Interconnecting the local economy with national and international markets.

Regarding the first element, the inhabitants of the Magdalena Medio are able to define collectively the quality of life that they would like to live in their territory. As it was explained in the First Chapter, the Municipal Proposal for Development and Peace is the methodological instrument used by the PDPMM’s citizen network to characterize this common project (Katz 1999).

The second element corresponds to the production of the specific kind of life that people would like to live in their territory by intensifying the productive process. This implies a sustaining activity in all three stages of the process of production: production, transformation, and management and marketing. The relevance of such a process of acceleration is obvious given the current predominance of an enclave economy in Middle Magdalena (Peña 1996).

The third element is the interconnection among the different sectors of the local economy, and these with those at the national and international level. Rural development becomes a reality through the interconnection of urban and rural areas that link the territory to dynamic markets. In this regard, the PDPMM’s approach defined a two-fold strategy (Briceño 2008b; de Roux 2004):
First, a modern rural economy composed of peasant farms and agro-industrial municipalities (CID 2004), in which production is based on those products that are typical of the region. *The peasant farm* is defined as a productive unit which has products for food security and a lead-product with a possibility of going to market. The peasant farm for palm, fruit trees, rubber and cocoa are the main reference-points which the PDPMM has promoted in the region as alternative proposals for production. *The agro-industrial municipalities* (which focus on the production from peasant farms) become providers of information, technology, goods and services, education, health and institutional structure in order to position local markets in regional, national and foreign markets.

Second, this strategy of a modern rural economy is complemented by an economy of *urban development poles* which promotes the articulation of the region into national and international markets (CID 2004). These poles include the regional markets and financial flows, and produce goods of the family shopping basket that require industrial transformation.

In conclusion, the PDPMM’s proposal aims to bring about a regional economy which combines rural production (peasant farms) with agro-industry and urban development poles in such a way that the production of final products will also materialise the life of dignity that the members of the community want to live. In this case, the strategy for the sustainability is the productive occupation of the territory by its own inhabitants legally, with inclusion, and open to the challenges of globalisation.

---

33 In this aspect, the PDPMM’s proposal is in harmony with the RTD approach, in the sense that territorial development is necessarily an “urban-rural” project.
IV. THE STRATEGIC AND MILITARY APPROACH

The fourth rural development proposal that operates in Middle Magdalena is the strategic and military vision implemented by the illegal armed actors, based on the control of the territory through violent methods in order to advance in the consolidation of a revolutionary or counter-revolutionary project. However, beyond the military aspect, this section will focus on specifying the rural development concept that the illegal groups promote in their struggle. Unfortunately, the dynamics of the armed conflict itself has prevented the development of substantial proposals on rural development by the armed actors.

This section will present the principal ideas and concepts which the FARC, the ELN and the AUC have expressed on agrarian matters, citing basic documents of each group, and the thoughts of some of their members, as one way of filling that gap and approaching the ideology that the political and military actions of the armed groups have claimed. There is not much public documentation on the proposals or positions of the armed actors in relation to the issues of rural development. In general, the texts are short and expound a series of points and positions with no rigorous technical structure (this lack of rigorousness was also present in the interviews). It would seem that military confrontation gives little time or opportunity for the methodical and analytical construction of economic thinking in any of the armed organisations.

A. ELN

Since its formation in the 1960s, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) has promoted the consolidation of the peasant economy. Nonetheless, the preparation of a systematic proposal on this issue was not possible in this first stage, due to the absence of analytical tools and methods of an economic nature.

“In this initial phase... the ELN dedicated itself to consolidating its armed, political and social project, but it did not expound the
economic project... It was a guerrilla army fighting not only to change structures, but also to build a new economic, social and political development model, but as a global concept... The guerrilla’s armies never thought in terms of an economic model for their regions, but in a very abstract, not very concrete economic model for society” (ELN’s ex-militia. Personal interview. 07 February 2008).

This first phase is characterised by the tactic of denunciation. For example, The Simacota Manifesto (ELN's first political document written in 1965) is a declaration of war against the bourgeoisie, who were the reason for the revolutionary struggle. In this document the ELN refers to the peasant problem in the following terms:

“Land is exploited by peasants who do not even have a place to drop dead, and who spend all their energies and those of their families, benefiting the oligarchs, who live in the cities as kings… The small and medium producers, both from the countryside and the cities, see how their economies are ruined in the face of the cruel competition and hoarding of credit by foreign capital and its nation-selling henchmen” (ELN 1965a).

Two months after the publication of the Simacota Manifesto, the ELN presented its "Platform Declaration", expressing the twelve objectives of its revolutionary struggle. The policy for rural areas appears as follows:

“An authentic agrarian revolution which includes the elimination of a system based on large estates, smallholding and mono-culture; which implements a technical and just fair distribution of land to the peasants who work on it; which gives credit, fertilizers, agricultural equipment, seeds and tools to farmers; which promotes the mechanization and technification of agriculture and the creation of adequate means of distribution; which eliminates intermediaries, speculators and hoarders; which assures medical and educational assistance to peasants, as well as irrigation systems, electrification, housing and adequate communications ways. Large estates owned by big landlords shall be confiscated and properties which benefit the national economy shall be respected; the creation of production, distribution and consumption cooperatives and State owned farms shall be promoted; there will be planning of productive agriculture to foster a diverse agriculture and livestock system” (ELN 1965b).
Towards the end of the 1980s, the ELN started out on a process of building an alternative model of development by setting up cooperatives. The strategy was designed to develop an independent and a sovereign economy, in which food security is the key factor in rural development. The process for achieving the consolidation of this proposal was summarised by one ELN militant in the following terms:

“First, a war economy is developed as an economy of survival, in which minimum production of food must be guaranteed for the subsistence of rural communities and the ELN... Once the survival economy is consolidated, the transition is made to a regional productive economy in which each community constructs its own model of alternative development. The cooperative movement is the leading organisation in this scheme... The final stage is the consolidation of a development economy, in which food security and sovereignty are the pillars. For the ELN, production factors must be deployed at the service of what the country needs, in order to avoid dependence on foreign countries for food. Therefore, this vision is different from Neoliberalism, as the latter does not consider food security to be a priority and it focuses on large-scale production for export, as happens with single crops such as oil palm and rubber production” (ELN militiaman. Personal interview. 20 March 2008).

In the 1990s, the ELN published a rather more detailed vision of its approach to agrarian matters in the "Minimum Programme" (1996). Basically, they maintain the same proposals as before, with the inclusion of some new elements such as the displaced, the arrangement of regional development plans and the establishment of a national food industry. The policy for rural areas proposed in the "Minimum Programme" contains the following points:

"The introduction of an agrarian reform that distributes the properties of the large landowners, drug traffickers and absent landlords among the peasant farmers who have no land of their own. The development of a new credit policy that particularly concerns with the poor and medium-poor peasant farmers, stimulating cooperative structures, community associations and profitability. The organisation of marketing systems that suppresses intermediaries, reduces costs and prices, and brings in technical assistance to help improve productivity and efficiency.
Encouragement will be given to a national food industry, which will satisfy the needs of internal consumption, and at the same time, seek to establish commercial relations in the international market.

Support will be given to small and medium agricultural and agro-industrial businesses, and non-monopoly enterprises in general. Besides, these enterprises must contribute to the economic purposes of the New Government. They should be understood in the context of a renewal in salary levels and concerted regional development plans, redistribution of profits, and in new features in relationships between workers and employers.

The families who have suffered forced displacement because of the war will be guaranteed a return to their lands, and efforts will be made to improve their situation as far as possible” (ELN 1996)

Thus, the ELN's position in agrarian matters focuses on the implementation of a sovereign economy, in which food security is the key factor in rural development.

B. FARC

The political ideology of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) for rural areas is contained in its "Agrarian Programme" (proclaimed on July 20, 1964, and then corrected and expanded for the Eighth National Conference of the FARC on April 2, 1993). According to a member of FARC’s militia, (personal interview. 21 March 2008) “this historical document is the FARC's political and economical proposal for the rural sector today”.

The programme starts with a preamble that justifies the FARC’s armed struggle. Then, seven points are proposed in a summary of their agrarian policy. This part of the document, which deals with programmes and proposals, exposes the following argument: "we struggle for agrarian policy which will deliver the latifundios\(^{34}\) to the peasants” (FARC 1964). For that, the FARC set up a revolutionary agrarian policy that "changes the social structure of Colombian rural areas from the roots upwards, delivering completely free land to the peasants who

\(^{34}\) According to FARC, the latifundio has an area of more than 10,000 hectares.
work it, or who wish to work it, on the basis of confiscation of the *latifundios* to benefit the entire working people" (FARC 1964: Point 1 of the Programme). This process has to become complementary to the deeding of land:

"Settlers, occupiers, tenants, sharecroppers, those in service in the lands of the *latifundios* and of the State, will receive deeds of title for ownership of the lands they exploit" (FARC 1964: Programme Point 2).

However, the revolutionary agrarian policy goes beyond the simple distribution and deeding of land. According to FARC, there must be a comprehensively developed rural infrastructure, so that the socio-economic conditions of the local population improve. In that effort, the peasants will be provided with the elements they need to exploit the land:

"The Revolutionary Government will establish a wide-ranging system of credit, with payment facilities, the supply of seeds, technical assistance, tools, animals, equipment, machinery, etc., for both individual peasant farmers and food production cooperatives that come together in the process. A planned system of irrigation and electrification will be created, along with a network of official centres for agricultural technical experimentation. More adequate health services will be organised to provide complete public health care in rural areas. The problem of peasant education will be addressed, and illiteracy will be eradicated. A system of scholarships will be established for technical and higher studies by the sons of those who work the land. A vast plan for peasant housing will be implemented, along with the construction of roads from rural production centres to consumption centres" (FARC 1964: Programme Point 4).

Later, on April 3, 1993, the FARC presented their "Platform for a Government of Reconstruction and Reconciliation", in which they expounded eleven proposals for the construction of a pluralist, patriotic and democratic national government. Point 8 of the Platform refers specifically to agrarian matters, with five proposals:

inequitable international competition. [4] Each region will have its own development plan, prepared together with community organisations, liquidating the *latifundios* on which they obtain their subsistence, redistributing the land, defining an agricultural frontier to rationalise settlement, and to protect the destruction of our reserves. [5] Permanent aid for domestic and international marketing" (FARC 1993: 41-42).

Based on these proposals, the "Platform" offers some important changes in comparison to the "Agrarian Programme" exposed in 1964. First of all, there is a change in the political language used. Now, the FARC does not refer to a "revolutionary agrarian policy" but a "democratic agrarian policy", which gives equal opportunity in matters of marketing, credit and technical assistance to peasant-farmers. Besides, a protectionist State is announced. Finally, the FARC proposes a process of regionalisation, in which local development plans are drawn up with an emphasis on the elimination of the *latifundios* (the flagship programme of the FARC’s agrarian struggle) (FARC’s militia. Personal interview. 21 March 2008).

This proposal of eliminating the *latifundios* is reinforced in 1999 by Alfonso Cano (currently FARC’s senior commander). In his article entitled "the Agrarian Question and Peace", Cano proposes the elimination of the *latifundios* as the only way to solve the agrarian problem in Colombia. He offers the following criteria to do so:

"[There will be] redistribution of land, placing limits on the size of property depending on quality, crop, region, roads, and marketing, within the limits of the current agricultural frontier, preventing it from expanding, and ensuring that the new ownership rights will avoid a new process of conversion into large landholdings again” (Cano 1999).

Cano indicates that the redistribution of land requires the deeding program, which should be complemented by a technical assistance programme for production, administration and marketing.
"The objective is to place production and rural life at the forefront of challenges for the construction of a new, just, democratic and tolerant society, in which the human being and not capital will be the focal point of national development, where land will be equitably distributed, and techniques and knowledge will be available for use, so that we can be sure of dignity in employment and necessary levels of food production" (Cano 1999).

In conclusion, the emphasis of the FARC's rural proposals lies in the elimination of large landholdings, a condition without which any attempt to reform Colombian agriculture (they hold) is impossible. So, the appropriate distribution of land will allow the development of a peasant economy's self-subsistence, which will improve the standard of living of the rural population.

C. AUC

Most documents and pronouncements of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) refer basically to their social, political and military proposals. However, there is very scanty information in economic matters and particularly matters of rural development. Perhaps the only text which presents an agrarian development proposal by them is a document written by Carlos Castaño (AUC’s founder), presented to the National Reconciliation Commission in 1998. In the section on the Colombian rural sector, he proposes ten criteria to introduce a new and fair agrarian regime:

"[1] The programme for the provision of land must overcome both the model of simple delivery to individuals and the arrangement of credit to encourage production.
[2] The model for the new agrarian reform for the allocation of land should preferably include a scheme for a solidarity economy.
[3] The agrarian reform should be integral and concerted, and contain a substantial modification of the regime of land ownership, holding and administration, and entail technological and industrial modernisation of farming.
[4] The reform must guarantee community landowners special assistance in social organisation and training to manage credits. It must facilitate the establishment of lines of production and
marketing, and implement technical innovation in production and the efficient management of post-harvest activities.

[5] Credit for the farming sector must be subject to the guidelines of a social and equitable economy, which must be an effective instrument of democracy and development.

[6] Agrarian reforms should be focused on idle, unused, or other lands that are given the State ownership rights by the courts, and land purchased by the government.

[7] The agrarian reform may not affect property which, complying with the social functions of ownership is highly productive.

[8] Agrarian reform may not extend the agricultural frontier of the country into natural reserves.

[9] It is imperative to modernise and restructure the Caja Agraria\textsuperscript{35}, and, at the same time, replace or thoroughly overhaul the Agrarian Reform Institute (INCORA).

[10] The agrarian reform must generate a process of national solidarity and detachment, in order to ensure that the peasant farmers enjoy social justice, in the form of an equitable distribution of wealth" (Castaño 1998, as quoted in Salgado 2002: 20-21).

There are two particular rural strategies to be noted in these criteria: first, a programme to provide land which goes beyond the delivery of property and access to credit, seeking to gain insertion into the solidarity economy. In this scheme, the modernisation of rural areas through technological innovation is central. Second, a comprehensive agrarian reform, which does not expand the agricultural frontier and whose purpose is the equitable distribution of wealth. Paradoxically, these positions are not very far from those expressed by the FARC, except that Castaño affirms that productive farms must be respected.

That said, and regardless of claims in the document, in practice the AUC’s political and military strategy has constituted the “model” of development that the paramilitaries want to impose. Carlos Castaño describes the consolidation of this strategy in three stages:

"In the first phase of the paramilitary model... the intention is to use war as a means of freeing large areas of land from the guerrillas and their grass roots bases of support, and then impose concentration of

\textsuperscript{35} The Caja Agraria was created in 1951 to provide access to credit for peasants; its liquidation was completed in 2008.
land, the modernisation of roads, services and infrastructure, the development of capitalist forms of livestock production, and the establishment of a new hierarchical structure of authority in regional society and politics.

The second phase of the model, involves "bringing wealth to the region", through the subsidised delivery of land, generation of jobs, the concentration of people in population centres, the building of health centres and schools, free electricity, the construction of dams to supply water, the restoration of land, along with technical assistance and loans for production. These actions should be taken with the knowledge of government institutions... It is a phase that aims to forge social and political legitimacy for the project.

The third phase of the model is consolidation and legitimisation. Once the model of security has been consolidated in the "liberated regions" (regions without guerrillas and without their grass roots bases of support), the paramilitaries consider that they will cease to be "a freewheeling structure for the State". This would be the current phase of legitimisation and consolidation of the project. New structures will have been built for the victorious expansion of multinational and national capitalism, and the modernising State will be able to set itself up to work concurrently and in association with the private sector, NGOs and organised communities" (Loingsigh 2002: 5-6).

This development model through military means, in which the guerrillas are the main obstacle to economic growth, seeks the pacification of areas dominated by revolutionary groups, so that they will become centres of public and private investment.

"We were rooting the guerrillas out of the country, so that progress could be seen. The blowing up of pipelines, the kidnapping, we were putting an end to all that... Well, we as an organisation created work, employment... Yes, that is what we wanted. We wanted to create jobs, and not to make people afraid of investing in Colombia, because as you know, big business was going elsewhere. They were afraid of investing in a place full of violence. So, when we controlled almost all Colombia, we began to see investment" (AUC militiaman. Personal interview. 25 January 2008).

This development strategy, very close to the position of the former President Alvaro Uribe with his Democratic Security policy, hypothesizes that it is
impossible to achieve development in the midst of conflict. For the paramilitaries, and to those who finance them, "security and pacification" are essential conditions for the generation of economic growth and social profitability, as the paramilitaries have demonstrated in some parts of the country.

"The economic and social ‘rebirth’ of regions such as Sinú, Urabá, Bajo Cauca, Middle Magdalena, Valle, Meta, among others, is a phenomenon that must be linked to the strategic role played by the peasant self-defence organisations. This is a truth that nobody could reasonably dispute" (Montañez, Bolívar, Sevillano and Baéz 2005: 163-164).

In sum, the paramilitaries seek the promotion of national and international investment in frontier areas which require military and political control to eradicate the guerrillas.

V. THE COCAINE “MODEL”

Rather than being a vision or proposal for rural development, the coca-leaf economy can be defined as a mode of illegal production which has succeeded in permeating the economy and the social fabric of the Middle Magdalena region. Since it is an illegal business, there are no written documents produced by drug-traffickers to expound their vision of development. Indeed, when I tried to interview one of the drug barons, he totally denied his links with drug trafficking. Armed actors also deny any part in the drugs business.

Therefore, the information obtained for preparing this section is based on visits to coca-growing villages, interviews with coca-growers and secondary sources. The quality of information obtained, therefore, leads to a description of the coca-leaf economy from the point of view of the inhabitant of Middle Magdalena. This shows how the drugs business has become an important source of income for many peasant farmers and for the armed groups in the region.

36 Political commanders of the AUC.
A. THE COCAINE ECONOMY

The phenomenon of the illegal cocaine economy in Middle Magdalena began in the early 1980s when the Medellín and Cali drug cartels arrived to the region. The reasons for the boom in this business are associated with socio-economic factors such as poverty, inequality, the crisis of the agricultural sector and the absence of the State (Machado and Briceño 1996). Hypothetically, it can be said that the consolidation of the coca crop in the region is due to the following factors (Briceño 2008a; Castro 2008: field notes):

First, the coca plantations are located in zones where a traditional form of production prevails, where high levels of disparity in the distribution of land are found, and where geographical and climatic conditions are favourable to the crop. In these zones, the coca-leaf becomes an alternative means of sustenance and a source of income for poor peasant farmers.

“As Cocaine is synonymous with ‘easy money’. This illegal mode of production has become one of the means of sustenance for the poor farmers of the region because the State does not offer other alternatives for survival” (staff member of the ACVC. Personal interview. 08 November 2007).

Second, external factors such as strong international demand and good international prices make the product even more profitable.

Finally, the political economy of the armed conflict has consolidated the drugs business as a principal source of financing for the armed groups. As a consequence, the traditional political and ideological conflict between guerrillas and paramilitaries evolved into a highly sophisticated battle to control the entire circuit of production, transformation and marketing of cocaine base37 (Member of

37 As Fonseca, Gutierrez and Rudqvist (2005: 24) state, the cocaine economy has the distinctive feature of being “duopsonic” - formed by two armed groups: guerrillas and paramilitaries, who use drug-trafficking to fund their activities.
The development process of the cocaine economy has also made it possible to integrate and modernise the peasant economy. The wealth generated by the drugs business has allowed both the accumulation of capital in depressed areas, and the engagement of this type of territory with national and international markets. In this process, the coca growers have combined business practices with their traditional peasant customs. An adaptation of the comparative chart elaborated by Fonseca, Gutierrez and Rudqvist (2005: 89-90), shows the aspects in which the peasant economy, the market economy and the cocaine economy differ and coincide.

Table 5.1
Agrarian Economies: Comparative Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PEASANT-FARMERS</th>
<th>MARKET ECONOMY</th>
<th>COCAINE ECONOMY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subsistence crops.</td>
<td>Capitalist economy.</td>
<td>Illegal economy requiring violence to develop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family is the production unit.</td>
<td>Production units separate from consumer units.</td>
<td>Business practices built into the family production unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food security.</td>
<td>Satisfaction of domestic and international demand.</td>
<td>Satisfaction of external demand for unlawful products, weakening of food security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-supply.</td>
<td>Maximum profit.</td>
<td>Maximum profits within the illegal context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly labour intensive.</td>
<td>Highly capital intensive.</td>
<td>Highly labour intensive with informal capital flows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low technology levels, associated with traditional knowledge.</td>
<td>High technology levels associated with R&amp;D.</td>
<td>Artisan adaptation to production techniques and technologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low capital accumulation.</td>
<td>High capital accumulation.</td>
<td>High income generation; low capital accumulation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is interesting to see the way in which the cocaine model succeeded in combining characteristics of the two forms of production in the farming sector: the peasant farming economy and the market economy. However, the cocaine model is different from these two forms of production in several ways. On the one hand, many of the practices in the cocaine economy do not match the traditional peasant farming model: 1) It is illegal, 2) It looks for maximum profits rather than self consumption, 3) There is specialised production, and 4) There is rapid short term access to cash. On the other hand, many of the practices of the peasant cocaine economy are not capitalist: 1) Capital is not accumulated, 2) There is not sustained investment in the means of production (technology), and 3) There is no integration into formal capital markets.

In this context, peasants have to form alliances with drug leaders and with the armed actors, providing land and labour for the drugs production. Also, they commit themselves to sell the coca paste to the illegal groups. In this situation, the peasant farmers are commercially passive producers, who take no active part in the market. As a consequence, they accept prices given to them, with no production agreements. In addition, processing, transport costs, and sales of the product in Colombia or abroad are all a matter for the drug traffickers, the guerrillas and the paramilitaries. The extractive nature of the cocaine economy means that any surplus from the business stays in the hands of the drug lords and the armed groups (Cfr. Economist. Personal interview. 15 April 2008). As a consequence, “the majority of the peasants who cultivate coca as salaried workers stay in poverty, while the drug barons became rich” (peasant of Vélez. Personal interview. 27 March 2008).

In conclusion, the coca economy can be defined as an illicit mode of production that generates profits used to finance armed confrontation, and as a mean of subsistence for many peasants of the region.
VI. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to sketch the five main approaches to rural development in Middle Magdalena in order to consider the theoretical and practical incommensurability that exists among them, and to explore the different views regarding the main purpose of development. A parable of Anthony de Mello in his book “the Song of the Bird” reflects this matter:

“A rich industrialist from the North was horrified to find the Southern fisherman lying lazily beside his boat, smoking a pipe.

- Why aren’t you fishing?
- Because I have caught enough fish for the day.
- Why don’t you catch some more?
- What would I do with it?
- You could earn more money, was the reply. You could put a motor on your boat and go into deeper waters and catch more fish. Then you would make enough to buy nylon nets, which would bring you more fish and more money. Soon you’d have enough money to own two boats… maybe even a fleet of boats. Then you’d be a rich man like me.
- What would I do then?
- Then you would enjoy life.
- What do you think I’m doing right now?” (de Mello 1984: 132-133).

Taking into account this parable as a means of illustration, it is possible to introduce the final conclusions of this chapter.

Firstly, the story depicts a clear divergence of perspectives about how life is enjoyed by the rich industrialist and the poor fisherman. Similarly, the present chapter has elucidated the way in which each actor of rural development in the
Middle Magdalena region not only has its own interpretation about what development is, but also about the way to improve the quality of life. These views are incommensurable in both theoretical and practical terms. It can be stated that the practical and theoretical incommensurability between actors and views of development are at the core of the development process. An analysis of this correlation will be presented in the next chapter.

Secondly, in a world where poverty is one of the major problems, some people like the rich industrialist are interested in solving it. In the same spirit as the industrialist, some economists indicate that the way to eradicate poverty is to increase income. However, according to the poor fisherman, money is not enough. Non-economic aspects, such as the capacity to enjoy life, are also essential to human development.

This second point poses the dilemma between the means and ends of development. It can be stated that the ultimate end of each model of development, and the way in which it is reached, is the basis of the most important differences between the various visions of development. The next Chapter will describe not only this teleological incommensurability, but also the forms of conflict that have emerged from the territorial and productive dimension of development when facing the challenge of reaching that telos.

Finally, it is possible to say, that despite the fact there are two different views about how to live life (the industrialist’s and the fisherman one), they can cooperate in order to improve life conditions. The industrialist can teach the fisherman how to increase income through industrialization and technology, and the fisherman can teach the industrialist how to enjoy life by focusing on its non-economic aspects. It could be argued that both the rich industrialist and the poor fisherman can together build an integrated notion of development. As argued in Chapter Four, when analyzing the communication between paradigms, pragmatic articulations between opposing models of rural development might be the most
realistic way to move the countryside forward. Chapter Seven will address this issue.
CHAPTER SIX

INCOMMENSURABILITIES AND CONFLICTS AMONG VIEWS

This chapter will analyse the incommensurability between the main visions and actors of development in the Middle Magdalena region in order to determine how some of their differences lead to conflict. Specifically, this chapter intends to demonstrate the following premise: "conflicts between social actors are to a great extent conflicts between different visions of rural development". In methodological terms, the confirmation of this proposition implies the identification of the trigger-factors which turn contradictions into conflict and violence. I will do this through the presentation of a sub-case study related to the cultivation of African palm in Middle Magdalena, as it enables the main factors that generate conflicts to be characterised. It should be noted that the presentation of this sub-case study is not a historical sketch on the way in which the crop arrived to the region, nor is it a detailed exposition of its economic dynamics. Rather the purpose of the case is to show the conflictive dynamics generated around the way in which the various models and actors of development understand the purpose of palm.

The presentation of this sub-case study falls into two parts. First, I describe the principal economic models used for growing palm in Middle Magdalena, in order to illustrate the differences among the different actors’ conceptions of the purpose of production. Second, I will discuss African palm production in the municipality of Regidor to explore the factors that can trigger conflict.

The sub-case study of African palm illustrates two dimensions of incommensurability and conflict proneness in Middle Magdalena: the teleological dimension, in which discrepancies exist regarding the purpose and function of the
development process, and the dispute over the control of territory and production, in which disputes emerge from divergences about the use of means and resources. The second part of the chapter will analyse these two dimensions.

I. MIDDLE MAGDALENA:
DEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDST OF THE CONFLICT

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Middle Magdalena region drew in peasant-farmers who had been expelled from other parts of the country due to demographic pressures and the structure of land-ownership. The colonisation of the territory increased with the establishment of enclave economies (oil, cattle-breeding and palm) that enlarged the demand for labour. This simultaneous process of peasant colonisation and capitalist expansion ended up generating conflicts in the region (González 2006; Duque 1996), to such an extent that a new dynamic of resistance in the rural communities emerged to counter the investments and development of private investors. The peasant movements of Middle Magdalena began to denounce the consequences of the implementation of the capitalist model:

"In “developing” countries, we can see how the opening up of their markets meant the destruction of their productive systems, the bankruptcy of small and medium enterprise, the impoverishment of farmers, the wholesale destruction of natural resources, the concentration of wealth and the decline in real salaries for most workers, [and] the spread of poverty and misery in unprecedented proportions. This model is unthinkable in the context of Middle Magdalena” (Mesa Regional 1999: 11).

In those circumstances, the process of resistance and opposition to the prevailing model became a fundamental factor in the emergence of anti-imperialist guerrilla groups, who proposed a radical change in the capital system by force of arms. In the 1960s, the FARC and the ELN launched a revolutionary project designed to seize power based on the control of territory. In order to finance its armed
struggle, the guerrilla groups used kidnapping, extortion and murder of cattle-breeders, industrialists and merchants.

"In about 1975, [the guerrillas] kidnapped the first cattle-breeder. Ransom was paid. At that time, kidnapping was nothing significant. But it was also the time when the major economic groups were arriving in the area. The Colombia group, the Santa Fe group, and the palm-planters arrived. The situation [of insecurity] began to become more acute, and investment was halted. Farms were abandoned. Those with the means to do so left the region. The guerrillas practised extortion. They killed those who did not pay. Unfortunately, in the former government, this area was full of guerrillas, so we were unable to work, because we were being threatened by extortion" (cattle-breeder. Personal interview. 20 February 2008).

The direct effect of guerrilla actions on the regional economy was devastating (Castro 2008: field notes): there was a high level of economic inefficiency caused by uncertainty and risk; investment was considered unsafe; several cattle-farmers, industrialists and merchants abandoned their properties and businesses to seek safety; human and material losses began to rise with the intensity of the attacks; and security costs increased.

Due to the abuses of guerrillas, the process of counter-insurgency began in the 1980s with the creation of the paramilitary forces financed by some cattle-breeders, coca-growers, and merchandisers of the region. The self-defence groups emerged as a reaction to the gap left by the State, which was incapable of controlling the zone.

"Paramilitarism is not a one-sided thing, a project in itself, and its existence was in no way homogeneous in Middle Magdalena or anywhere else in Colombia. It can be seen as a kind of “private justice and security” and functional for other projects at an instrumental level. In the case of Middle Magdalena, there are at least three projects that it served: the expansion of cattle-breeding, drug trafficking, and the security of the traditional landowners of the area” (Cadavid 1996: 38).
Thus, paramilitarism represented a private-justice system that created the conditions for a model of development which was functional to the interests of private investors (economist. Personal interview. 15 April 2008). Under this militarised scheme, the guerrillas were displaced to marginal areas and private investment returned to Middle Magdalena, so the real economy began to grow again. Nonetheless, the costs of counter-insurgency were ruinous, since it considerably increased human rights violations, murders for political reasons, and the number of internally displaced people.

During the 1990s, the panorama of the armed conflict changed with the incursion of the armed groups into the business of drug trafficking as their source of funds for the war. The traditional "political and military conflict" became an "economic conflict", in which paramilitaries and the guerrilla groups began to contest control of the cocaine chain (member of the Ombudsman office in Middle Magdalena. Personal interview. 03 March 2008). The effects of the cocaine economy on the social fabric and on economic conditions of Middle Magdalena have been most evident (Castro 2008: field notes):

**First: Detriment to human dignity.** The criminal character of drug trafficking leads to the loss of the value and meaning of life.

"The problem of drug trafficking is that people do not think about life. The coca leaf-grower is a poor thinker, because he thinks of this: either I have got a lot of money, or they [the police] will throw me in jail, or they [the drug barons] will kill me. He has only three options in life" (peasant of Vélez. Personal interview. 27 March 2008).

**Second: Strengthening of the enclave economies.** The coca business is external to the region to the extent that the profits remain in the hands of the drug barons and the armed groups (de Roux 2004).
Third: Consolidation of a culture of illegality. Drug-trafficking is characterised by a total lack of respect for rules and laws, and creates an institutional system which is parallel to the Constitutional State.

Fourth: Detriment to the regional economy. Drug-trafficking is an obstacle to economic growth in Middle Magdalena for two reasons: first, the cocaine economy specialises in a single product limiting any agricultural diversification and endangering food security. Second, coca-leaf growing areas suffer inflation due to an excess of cash in people's pockets (economist. Personal interview. 15 April 2008)

The magnitude of the coca-leaf problem has been described by de Roux in the following terms.

"If we do not face up to the illegal economy (totally dependent on coca-leaf), it will not be possible to establish a viable regional economy. The State and Colombian society are responsible for having led the peasant farmer to plant coca-leaf for survival. The local mafia is responsible for having promoted the unlawful mode of production over immense areas of land and in immense volumes, to the point that Colombia has become the world's foremost producer. And one day, the guerrillas and the paramilitaries will have to answer for the immense damage they have done to the sovereignty of the peoples of southern Bolívar and Opón, for having forced them into the growing of coca-leaf and having kept them in the cocaine business. The perverse domination of the multinationals is bad enough, but it is worse to have fallen under the domination of the cocaine economy, which means to have surrendered the economic sovereignty of the region... to international criminal gangs, to whom [the peasants] pay with their lives; and who know no law other than violence; who appear with 80% of the value generated in Colombia abroad from the drugs, and who have undermined any process of liberation and national sovereignty" (de Roux 2004: 8).

In this context of illegality, poverty and internal armed conflict, a proposal for territorial development began to take hold in Middle Magdalena in the 1990s, supported by the Catholic Church, human rights defenders and certain sectors of
the civil society. This proposal found its material expression in the creation of a development and peace programme (the PDPMM) that seeks to create conditions for a dignified life in the region.

The PDPMM's strategy is characterised by being a non-violent, legal and endogenous proposal, which seeks the active participation of local communities in the productive process. These principles are incompatible with those of some of the actors in the region. In fact, both the guerrillas and the drug barons will not be a party to the use of peaceful and legal means for the development of their modes of production. For their part, the enclave and single crop economies have consolidated schemes of production which are entirely disconnected from the local economic context. Indeed, some of the rural communities do not take part in the implementation of specific PDPMM economic projects which also focus on mono-cropping (such as the palm project), since they argue that this goes against the sovereignty and autonomy of the regional economy. As can be inferred, these differences have become effective causes of conflict in the region.

Therefore, a wide range of actors and visions of rural development converge in the Middle Magdalena region, where confrontation pervades the dynamics of the regional development itself. In order to gain understanding of the nature of such conflict dynamics, the next section will present a specific sub-case study related to the production of African palm. Such study will illustrate the dimensions and factors in which the agents of development in Middle Magdalena present a high degree of difference, and indeed, of conflict.
II. THE CULTIVATION OF AFRICAN PALM IN MIDDLE MAGDALENA: VISIONS AND ACTORS

A. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The growing of African palm has certain characteristics that define its mode of production (Cfr. Ortiz 2001: 4-5): first, it is a tropical crop that requires temperatures not lower than 21°C and no higher than 30°C; second, it is a long-term crop (the production period is estimated over 25 or 30 years); third, the production of the fruit starts four years after planting; fourth, the growing of African palm requires permanent maintenance with specially-trained labour; fifth, oil extraction involves a complex industrial process, which in turn requires that any extraction plant must be close to the growing areas; and finally, if the crop and the plant are to be profitable, the minimum planted area must be 500 hectares.

Some of the reasons that made this business significant for the territory are (FEDEPALMA 2006; CONPES 2007): 1) The African palm is a source which generates employment and income for farmers; 2) It is a product that enables a link between farming and industry; 3) It has been shown that palm is a profitable crop due to the stability of prices of raw oil; and 4) African palm is one of the best quality raw materials to produce bio-fuels.

In this effort, the Middle Magdalena region has been characterised by the rapid growth of agro-industry around African palm in recent decades. Nevertheless, in Middle Magdalena there are different approaches and opinions about palm cultivation depending on the vision of rural development which each actor promotes. There are actors, such as the guerrillas and some peasant communities, which are opposed to the growing of African palm. Other actors indicate that this crop is an opportunity to promote the economic growth of Colombia and the region. Nonetheless, there are marked differences in this second group: while the

38 Some figures and data of the African palm project in Middle Magdalena can be seen in Chapter Two (section III-D2).
major industrialists work with large plantations, the PDPMM promotes the cultivation of palm as part of a peasant-farming operation. The presentation of these perspectives is found in the next section.

B. MODES OF PALM PRODUCTION

1. The Capitalist Model

In Middle Magdalena, the capitalist model for business in the consolidation of African palm has developed in two modes: large-scale plantations and the strategic alliance model.

a. Single-Crop Industrial Farming

In municipalities such as San Alberto, Regidor, Puerto Wilches, Sabana de Torres, San Martin and Puerto Parra, there are large tracts of African palm. This mode of single-crop industrial farming attracts economies of scale bringing the economic profitability which the market demands. In such crops, the companies own the plantations and control the process in the productive chain from the planting of palm to the extraction of the oil. The companies purchase the land (at least 500 ha.) and create the conditions for crop to be profitable, covering the expenses of production, transport, processing and sale. At the same time, the companies hire skilled labour for the maintenance of the plantations, and are directly responsible for the working conditions on the plantations (Cfr. Villegas 2008).

The plantations are large scale operations and require substantial investments to address the following restrictions: 1) All costs must be covered (land, inputs, technical assistance, labour, etc.); 2) Medium–term investments are required, since the palm takes three years to reach its productive age; 3) Possible fluctuations in the price of oil and exchange rates variations must be covered; 4) There must be solid economic backing to have access to bank credit; and 5) Support policies must be negotiated with the government.
On this last point, the African palm business could not have started without the financial collaboration of the government since the 1950s. In fact, the former government chose African palm as one of the Colombia’s strategic products. In that effort, the government arranged a series of financial incentives described by ex-president Alvaro Uribe Vélez, as follows, at the 33rd National Palm Growers’ Congress:

“[Palm] is a product that should redeem many parts of this country that have no other alternative... If we had not seen this, we would not have put through these tax incentives... It is not easy in Colombian tax discourse... to have achieved what the government has achieved in approvals for fiscal incentives specific to the sector. Let me mention two direct and one indirect incentive of great importance... the direct aspects are the tax relief for late-yield crops, including the palm, cocoa, fruit and rubber. Also, there is the exemption from sales tax (IVA) and the global fuel tax for biodiesel. The indirect incentive is the tax deduction of 30% for income-generating investments” (Uribe 2005: 2).

b. Strategic Alliances

Strategic alliances are formed by contracts between major agro-industrial enterprises and small producers. In this model, the company is no longer directly responsible for producing, but it buys the fruit from growers in the region following the parameters of commercial practice established by contracts. This creates a monopoly, because the producers can only sell to the company with which they have a contract, and indeed, they can only accept the prices established by those businesses.

In Middle Magdalena, the leading companies in strategic alliances are: FUNDEWILCHES, INDUPALMA, Palmas Monterrey, Palmas Yarima, Promotora Hacienda Las Flores, Grupo Daabon and the Barrancabermeja’s regional technical service unit (UMATA). Each one of these set up different models of strategic alliances in order to expand the zones of cultivation, generate stable employment, avoid peasant migration, and in some cases, facilitate small
producers’ access to land. In the Middle Magdalena region there are three models which are most generally used (Cfr. IICA 2006; Castro 2008: field notes):

**First: Associative Work Enterprises.** This model began to be implemented in the 1970s in the municipality of San Alberto. After liquidating part of the payrolls, the palm-growers began to subcontract labour to maintain their crops from the Associative Work Enterprises formed by their former employees. Under this scheme, the company secured the services to maintain a crop without the need to contract any employees or to be responsible for the costs of employment. In this model, the companies make a commercial offer to the enterprises, which are free to accept it or not, depending on the remuneration offered by the company for the workforce (Cfr. Villegas 2008).

**Second: Cooperative of Associated Labour.** INDUPALMA is a model based on the hiring of Cooperatives of Associated Labour, in order to subcontract skilled labour. Unlike the previous model, the cooperatives and their members are able to become the owners of the crops. Under this scheme, INDUPALMA buys the land and provides materials and technical assistance required for production. The members of the cooperatives offer themselves as the workforce, and undertake to sell the fruit solely to INDUPALMA (Cfr. Ortíz 2001).

The stages of this associative scheme are explained by one of the managers of a cooperative in the following terms: "the first stage of the project consists of defining the work which will be done by the cooperatives and the processes which will regulate the relationship between the company and the cooperative. In the second stage, the capitalisation of the cooperatives began through the acquisition of machinery, which was formerly owned by the company. In the last stage, it begins the process of land acquisition" (staff member of a Cooperative of Associated Work. Personal interview. 14 March 2008).

**Third: The Integrating Partner.** This scheme allows for the presence of a private investor who acts as the project guarantor. According to Villegas (2008)
this “integrating partner” is usually the owner of 50%, and the Association of peasant-farmers has the other 50%, giving them the chance to access the rural capitalisation incentive (ICR)\(^{39}\) provided by the government. With this model, the integrating partner receives the disbursements, manages them and charges a commission for its work.

2. The PDPMM’s Peasant Palm Project

According to the PDPMM scheme, the peasant palm project is part of a regional development strategy in which the inhabitants of the region occupy their territory productively.

"The fundamental objective of this project is not the profitable production of African palm in Middle Magdalena in order to raise regional or national GDP. Nor is it the intention to cover the entire territory with a single crop - palm - nor is it designed to promote micro-projects for export. This project is the result of the productive occupation of the territory of Middle Magdalena by its own communities, who maintain their peasant-farming identity and articulate themselves with the domestic and international markets in conditions of symmetry with other actors, so that the peasant is not displaced or impoverished. In synthesis, it is a people’s project which is implemented to achieve integral human development" (CDPMM 2001: 68).

The major challenge of the project consists of showing how the cultivation of African palm can be implemented and can be successful in a scheme of peasant production:

"The fundamental premise of the project consists of showing (unlike what many people and even the government may think) that not only private investors can bring development. I do not agree with that. I relate this to what happened in ‘Carimagua’\(^{40}\). In ‘Carimagua’, the president said that in the Orinoco basin "we have to work with foreign investment or investment from outside,"

\(^{39}\) The Rural Capitalisation Incentive (ICR) is a cash contribution made by the Development Fund (FINAGRO) to farmers engaged in new investment projects. ICR condones 40% of the debt of small producers, and 20% of that of medium and large producers.

\(^{40}\) Carimagua is a zone located in the Orinoquía region of Colombia.
because it is very expensive to work there, because there is no infrastructure, there are no roads, and the land is not good. So, only private investors can reach there and bring about development. And to that we say: we have made development without infrastructure, without good land, and without roads... and we have done it well” (founder of the PDPMM’s palm project. Personal interview. 29 April 2008).

According to a staff member of the PDPMM’s peasant palm project (personal interview. 14 December 2007), the project is being developed in eight municipalities of Middle Magdalena, with grass-roots organisations formed by 50 families in each municipality (benefiting some 390 families in the region). In this project, the farms planted up to 8-10 ha. (the rest of the land is assigned to other crops). In each one of the municipalities, the PDPMM used the model of the productive alliances to secure access to credit and the ICR subsidy. Under this scheme the peasant farmer signed an agreement for a loan-use operation, in which he accepts his association would plant the palm on his lot. As the project progresses, the obligations individualise and the lines are individualised, such that each of the associates becomes responsible for his/her own debts in a period which coincides with the palm crop starting to produce. The fundamental difference with the model of the strategic alliances consists in the fact that the PDPMM is not involved in the business and has no economic interest in the project.

“The PDPMM project is different from other projects. For example, there is COOPSABANA\footnote{COOPSABANA is one of the companies that is implementing an African palm project in the municipality of Sabana de Torres.}: they mortgage the land. Also, they require a percentage of the production to be paid to them. Moreover, growers have to sell them the fruit for 20 years. [On the contrary] this is a project which administers the palm enterprise. Here, we are the owners and lords of the land. Our business is more autonomous. [In other projects,] the small producers do not handle resources” (beneficiary of the PDPMM’s peasant palm project. Personal interview. 30 April 2008).
Probably, the main failure of the PDPMM’s peasant palm model is that the project only takes part in the first stage of the productive process: planting, maintenance, collection and sale of the fruit. In fact, a 10-year commercial agreement was signed between the peasant associations and some local extraction plants; it means that any surplus from the palm business stays in the hands of the industrialists. That is why Loingsigh (2005) indicates that the peasant associations that cultivate African palm in Middle Magdalena do not manage the entire productive process, as the PDPMM had initially hoped.

“[Even] in a best case scenario, it is naive to think of the peasant control over the chain of production. There is absolutely no possibility that the peasants gain control over other stages in the chain of production… In the case of palm (and to a lesser degree cocoa and rubber) the peasants continue to be direct producers of primary materials and they have no autonomous control over the technological packages needed to begin planting the crops. At the same time, they lack any control over other key stages which create a higher value added such as the processing chain (extraction, refining) and the commercialization of the final product, oil” (Loingsigh 2005).

C. THE CULTIVATION OF AFRICAN PALM FROM OTHER VISIONS

The previous section presented the capitalist proposal and the PDPMM’s approach, which define the African palm cultivation as an economic mean of development for the region and the country as a whole. Nonetheless, actors such as the ACVC and the FARC guerrillas see the crop as a threat to the peasant economy. This section presents their point of view.

1. ACVC

Based on a proposal for integrated and sovereign development, the greatest criticism that the Peasant Farmer Association of the Cimitarra River Valley (ACVC) makes of the African palm crop is summarized by one of its members in the following terms:
"The efficiency of the palm-growing model rests on three pillars: first, cooperation; second, the lack of organisation of the workers and competition between them; and third, and yet to be consolidated, the armed coercion by the paramilitaries which control the quality of work and care for the tools... On that basis, the model allows profits to grow, since the inequitable contracts with the associations can be extended without any rebellious action from the workers. [Further], because the associations play the role of the employer, the big companies gain not only an administrative advantage, but also a political one: the worker assumes the transaction costs of the employer, and with that, the possibility of exercising class solidarity is distorted" (Loingsigh 2002: 91).

From that point of view, criticism of the palm-model implemented by the PDPMM has become more vocal.

"We have disagreed with the PDPMM... We have a very special relationship with it, but politically we have different views of what the region should be... The example that has divided us most strongly is the African palm. The PDPMM built up the present palm-growing model, and at first, we said that scheme was in line with the agro-industrial model, so that the beneficiaries would be the paramilitary groups and the big landowners, and I think this has happened” (staff member of the ACVC. Personal interview. 08 November 2007).

According to the ACVC (2005: 2), the PDPMM has implemented development initiatives which are harmful to the peasant farmers, such as the palm project. For the ACVC, the project has been imposed by powerful industrialists, landowners and drug-traffickers with links to paramilitaries, so it has increased the proletarization of peasant farmers, who risk losing their land under violent pressure from major investors.

2. The Approach of FARC

The FARC promote a "peasant-centred" development model in the context of a war economy that seeks food sovereignty and the control of strategic areas where peasant farmers may supply their own needs, and protect themselves from the free
market and from State aggression. In this scheme, the growing of African palm is irrelevant.

"Palm, cocoa and rubber are products which our people do not need, but they are needed in other countries. Therefore, while the insurgents exist, there will be food security in the area. We do not want everything to be brought from outside. For that, we have set up "farming corridors". The idea is to associate ourselves with people in order to put them in the corridors, so that they will be able to produce for themselves. We seek to repopulate and provide security" (FARC militiaman. Personal interview. 21 March 2008).

Besides, FARC are taking a radical view of the connection of the palm growing project with paramilitaries as a strategy of the agrarian counter-reform: "we can see that displacement is a means of taking peasant-farmers away from fertile land... African palm and cattle are the justification for landholding" (FARC militiaman. Personal interview. 21 March 2008).

D. THE CASE OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF REGIDOR: DEVELOPMENT FOR WHOM?

The incommensurability between visions and strategies of development described in the previous section requires the presentation of a specific case which will illustrate how the clash of interests between development actors generates conflict. The expansion of the palm-growing project in the Municipality of Regidor is an example of the way in which the capitalist development model contributes to the weakening of the peasant-based model.

1. African Palm Arrives at Regidor

Regidor is a municipality in southern Bolívar with a population of 8,796\(^{42}\), and an area of 396 sq. km. Traditionally, the economy of the town has been based on artisan fishing, cattle ranching, and small-scale agriculture (rice, sorghum and

\(^{42}\) 2005 Census.
However, in the last five years, there have been extensive developments in the cultivation of African palm. Estimates made by the local inhabitants suggest that around 12,000 ha. of palm have been planted so far. The projection, according to Mayoress Sandra Urrego, is to plant 16,000-17,000 ha. in a municipality where a total of 27,000 ha. are suitable for agriculture (member of the PDPMM’s land project. Personal interview. 11 June 2008). This means that 62% of the available land for agriculture will be planted with palm.

The palm growing began in the municipality of Regidor in 2004, as a result of the activities of the mayor Hector Urrego, who claims that economic development in the town lies in the palm plantations. In this context, the palm-growing companies such as San Lucas, Puerto Rico, and Puerto Libre came to the area to buy land and plant oil palm, so it created a particular form of inflation.

"[The palm planters] started to move the land market. Before 2002, a hectare in Regidor, and in general, in southern Bolívar, was not worth much more than COP$50,000–COP$100,000 (US$25–US$5043). When [the palm planters] began to arrive, they bought land at higher prices. I have heard that land is now being sold at COP$10, COP$15 or even COP$20 million per hectare (US$5,000, US$7,500 or even US$10,000). Part of the population is pleased, because their land is worth more. But with these higher prices, the only people who can buy land are the palm planters (member of the PDPMM’s land project. Personal interview. 11 June 2008).

However, the purchase of land has not been evenly spread. According to Argüello (2007), there were four distinct processes in the town:

First, there is the case of the Isla de Papayal and the rural district of Santa Teresa, where the inhabitants have been the beneficiaries of a process of an agrarian reform. There, the peasant farmers obtained the land, but could not consolidate profitable productive projects given the lack of financial and technical resources. As a consequence, the peasants were forced to sell their land to the palm-planters.

So, the families moved to the town, where they quickly spent the money received for the sale of their land.

Second, there is the case of the Mangos sector, where most of the inhabitants were peasant farmers with no land, who worked as day-labourers on the crops or with the cattle in the area. However, the crisis in sorghum and maize prices and the debts with the banks led the owners of the crops and the cattlemen to sell their lands to the palm planters. As a result, the peasant farmers were left without any sort of work and forced to move to other places.

Third, there is the most critical case of San Cayetano, where there were some small holders with holdings of 3-10 ha. that lived from subsistence crops. Curiously, this group of peasant farmers was not willing to sell its land, so some of the palm planters resorted to paramilitaries to force them to sell. In the words of one of the local inhabitants, the paramilitaries made death threats in the following terms: "either you sell, or we will buy by force. Then, they would call us to a meeting of peasant farmers in a place where there were armed men" (member of the Landless Peasants’ Association of the Municipality of Regidor. Personal interview. 08 May 2008).

The palm growers deny this. At a meeting of February 15, 2007 between the government’s control agencies and Regidor communities, one of the delegates from the planters’ association (FEDEPALMA) said the following: "it is not the policy of this association to resort to organizations beyond the margins of the law to access the land required to develop the crop".

Fourth, there is a case of Villa Elvira, where the palm planters changed their strategy. There, the companies made proposals to the smallholders for a model of a strategic alliance in which they would become the integrating partners. In this case, although the peasants retained their land, they have constantly denounced the unfair terms of contract and the failure by the companies to arrange for the Rural Capitalization Incentive (ICR).
"They invited the peasant-farmers to grow palm through a loan with the Agrarian Bank (Banco Agrario). The offer was: if the smallholders allied themselves to the large ones, they would have the possibility of planting, and having access to credit. The large supported the small. Then, the ICR subsidy was arranged for 40%. The remaining 60% was the debt to the bank. This failed because... the palm growers were not able to arrange for the ICR" (communitarian leader of Regidor. Personal interview. 25 April 2008).

Although there are no official figures for the amount of land that was sold in Regidor in the last few years, there are some intelligent guesses.

"We have no exact figures. If we look at the amount of land planted and the use of the soil, we can make some estimates. We made an analysis by land use. Until last year [2007], we calculated that some 8,000 ha. had been sold. Now, I should explain that this calculation was not made by taking Regidor as the unit of measurement on its own, but we included the Isla de Papayal, which comprises more than Regidor itself. The definition was made in this way, because we have no market information for land in Regidor" (lawyer of the PDPMM’s land project. Personal interview. 10 June 2008).

When asked about the percentage of palm crops planted as a single crop and as part of the scheme of productive alliances, the PDPMM’s officer said: "there are only alliances in Villa Elvira. There, there must be some 800-1,000 ha. [So,] 90%-80% are single crop units. Only 10% have an alliance scheme plantation. But these are purely intuitive calculations" (lawyer of the PDPMM’s land project. Personal interview. 10 June 2008).

2. The Conflict Came to Light

In 2006, the Landless Peasants’ Association of the Municipality of Regidor (ACASITIMUR) made up of two groups of peasant farmers: those who never had land and those who sold their land, voluntarily or otherwise, to the palm planters. The mission and objective of the association is the following:
"We are a group of peasant farmers who are struggling to defend our territory, so that it can be exploited and used by our people of Regidor, by working amicably with nature, and hence forging sustainable development in our town. In accordance with our peasant and fishing vocation, we hope to construct a dignified project of life for ourselves and our children, under the banner of permanence and autonomy in our municipality, and the consolidation of the social and political subjects committed to human rights (ACASIMITUR, presentation leaflet).

Under the leadership of the Landless Peasants’ Association and the Nucleus of the PDPMM population, the community began to express its discontent with the palm project. Some of the complaints made to the Ombudsman and recorded in the minutes of the meeting between the "control institutions and communities affected by the palm growers" (15 February 2007) were as follows:

"The communities say that the problem is not the cultivation of palm. We respect the decision of those who have chosen to plant that product, and in the long term, we see it as something that may be of benefit to the town and its population; although so far, none has been seen...

The communities express their disagreement based on the way the palm-planters will come to implement their projects. Basically we refer to the following points:

- Ditches and drains that end up channelling water to the community use areas and other plots of land, flooding crops and small cattle-breeding operations.
- Slash and burn practices that indiscriminately destroy woodland with eventual impact on the local environment and ecosystem.
- Verbal aggression with the inhabitants and physical aggression against animals.
- Problems of food security, due to the lack of diversification of crops, which has meant that Regidor does not produce the volumes it needs; as a consequence of the fact that only palm is being planted and the subsistence crops are not.
- Pressuring the local inhabitants to make them sell their lands to the palm planters.
- All the foregoing has set up a pressure mechanism against the community that seeks people abandon the region".
In addition to those denunciations, the social and economic problems set off by the sale of land had become evident (Castro 2008: field notes): first, there was a situation of overcrowding in the town due to the absence of infrastructure required to receive the new population. Second, since most of the peasant-farmers who sold their land spent the money quickly on household appliances, alcohol and gambling, there was an increase in poverty. Third, there was a crisis of food security, since the single crop became the only economic alternative for the town. Finally, the sale of land - whether voluntary or not - due to the palm project, caused a major migration of peasant farmers that could be classed as forced internal displacement as it is established in the UNHCR Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement:

“1) Every human being shall have the right to be protected against being arbitrarily displaced from his or her home or place of habitual residence. 2) The prohibition of arbitrary displacement includes displacement: (c) In cases of large-scale development projects, which are not justified by compelling and overriding public interests” (UNHCR. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Principle Six number 2c).

In this situation in August 18, 2006 under the slogan “without land there is no future” the landless peasants issued a “Joint Declaration of Community Organisations of Regidor to Combat the Economic and Social Crisis”. The Declaration asked the government to declare the town as a place of imminent risk of displacement due to the pressures of the armed actors forcing the peasant-farmers to sell their land. The text ends with this unanimous declaration: “no to farm sales, as a means of protection”.

Since August 18, 2006, the Regidor communities declared themselves to be in permanent session to debate three proposals: first, to look for donations to buy land; second, to look for advice as to how to recover the lost land; and third, to prevent others from selling their land: “people saw the consequences of selling up... We want to set an example so that others will not suffer the same fate”
The viability of these three proposals was discussed with organisations such as the town administration, the government agricultural development agency (INCODER), the PDPMM and the Ombudsman. The conclusion was that the first two proposals were not viable because neither the government nor the PDPMM have projects to buy land, or indeed to recover the land that had already been sold. The third proposal was adopted through a “Declaration of Risk of Displacement” issued by the “Municipal Committee for Integral Attention to the Displaced” on February 16, 2007. The main reason for this was based on the “mediation of the armed actors in the purchase and sale of land in the town”. The purpose of such a declaration was explained in these terms by one of the PDPMM lawyers.

“The measure is essentially designed to protect the rural properties of the displaced, or those who are in danger of displacement. How does it protect them? By freezing the land market. It does not mean that the market is totally frozen, but that it has made the purchase of land subject to a permit to be approved by the Municipal Committee for Integral Attention to the Displaced, or its delegated commission. This permission is granted based on a study which determines that the sale is made free of the vices of violence” (lawyer of the PDPMM’s land project. Personal interview. 10 June 2008).

Although this "Declaration of Risk" did not solve the problem of landholding, it succeeded in stemming the market for land in the town. The palm companies became discouraged, and the peasant farmers who still possessed land felt protected. However, Mrs. Sandra Urrego, the Mayoress and Humberto Urrego’s daughter (the man who in his administration first contacted the palm-planters), in her inaugural speech on January 01, 2008, expressed her intent to remove the "Declaration of Risk". This was not possible, however, because the restructuring of the "Municipal Committee for Attention to the Displaced" was undertaken irregularly and there was no quorum for the meeting.
There were related events in April and May 2008. Two electronic mails were sent to the media by the Black Eagles (Águilas Negras), a paramilitary group that threatened to kill a number of people in southern Bolívar. Among those threatened were two social organisation leaders in the town of Regidor: the parish priest and the coordinator of the PDPMM population nucleus unit. The threat caused these two people to leave the town. Also, the population were terrified and the PDPMM technical team ceased to operate in the area. A few months later, the Mayoress removed the measure of protection of land. The palm-planting project now has no obstacles or opponents to its continued progress in Regidor.

III. INCOMMENSURABILITY BETWEEN VISIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

The systematisation and presentation of the sub-case of African palm allows the conclusion that incommensurability between the actors in the development of Middle Magdalena focused on three fundamental aspects: first, the purpose and meaning of the development process (What is the goal of development?); second, the relationship between production and the occupation of territory (Who occupies the territory?); and third, the ownership of the means of production (Who controls production?). A quotation from Francisco de Roux synthesises the essence of this debate:

"I believe that the economy loses much of the meaning of why we are producing... The debate is not whether we should make a market economy or not... Of course, we should... The debate is not whether we should export... Of course, we should... The point is: What is being produced, and what is the place of the individuals who take part in production? (Francisco de Roux. Personal interview. 01 February 2008; emphasis added).

De Roux mentions the two levels of analysis which allow us to determine the points of greatest incommensurability between the visions of development. The first has to do with the purpose and object of development (the “why” of
production). The second refers to the production and occupation of the territory (What is being produced? Who is producing it?). For the purposes of this work, the first of these levels is called **teleological incommensurability**, while the second is defined as **territorial and productive incommensurability**. The analysis of these two dimensions is the principal objective of the following sections.

**A. TELEOLOGICAL INCOMMENSURABILITY**

1. The Different Aims of Development

Teleological incommensurability refers to the differing approaches in relation to the goal (*telos*) and purpose of the development process. The emphasis, whether on the maximisation of profit, the elimination of poverty, or the solution of conflict, demarcates not only the various aims and intentions which drive the productive process, but also the choice of the best means or strategies to achieve those purposes. In Middle Magdalena, two teleological concepts about development prevail in the region: the capitalist vision and the territorial view.

On one hand, the capitalist view defines development as a process of technical progress that improves the capacity to increase incomes and wealth. Economic growth and maximization of profits become the main focus of development, which aims at developing an efficient production and distribution system for goods and services through a process of industrialization and capital accumulation. In the same vein, the cocaine model implemented by drug dealers, guerrilla groups and paramilitary forces follows the logic of profit-making based on producing and selling one good (cocaine).

Nevertheless, for both the rural communities and the PDPMM, the growth of incomes is necessary but not sufficient in the process of development. Economic development is not an end itself; it is a means that helps people to attain the type of life they want to have and enjoy. An integrated process of development focuses
on human dignity rather than on the provision of goods and services for people, as the Peasant Farmer Association of the Cimitarra River Valley indicates.

"Here, there is a fundamental contradiction which shows the anti-ethical position of the development philosophy of capitalism; it is the contradiction of the capacity to accumulate money in opposition to human dignity... the peasant economy is not only viable, but is also one of the important factors for a new potential development model, which will take the country out of its class, social and armed confrontation, and from the dark and barbarous age in which it lives" (ACVC 2001: 1).

Such confrontation between the capitalist and the territorial view is proposed by one of the peasants of Middle Magdalena in the following terms:

"What do we gain from major projects, major roads, etc., if they [the investors] do not guarantee our lives? Why are they making these huge investments if we do not have life? I believe that the first thing is life. If they will guarantee us our life, everything else comes after it. And that is what we have defended: the right to life, the right to stay where we are and to defend our territory" (peasant leader of Micoahumado. Personal interview. 25 December 2008).

Without a doubt, the context of war imposes significant conditions and restrictions to the development process itself. As this research has stated, type 4 territories (à la Berdegué and Schejtman) demand specific strategies that will be appropriate to their context. Territories in dispute, such as Middle Magdalena, require development and peace processes which are correlated. However, the way in which each of the actors has approached the "causal" relationship between development and peace in a territory in conflict has been heterogeneous and diverse. This is a matter to be approached in the next section.

2. Development in a Post-Conflict Situation versus Development in the Midst of the Conflict

Middle Magdalena is a territory in dispute, where economic and military interests have made the region a place where development and conflict are constantly
correlated. This particular context of Middle Magdalena confronts us with the "causal paradox" between development and peace. While for some actors, peace is a dependent variable of the development process, for others, development is not possible in war conditions. The debate has focused on the determination as to whether violence is cause or consequence of under-development. In this sense, the emphasis placed on objective or subjective causes which generate violence and/or poverty, to a great extent determine the starting point of the development strategies to be implemented.

In Middle Magdalena, the guerrillas, based on objective and/or structural conditions, have decided to rise up in arms against the State, since the State’s project is running counter to the people’s interests. As there is no way of persuading the State to change the capitalist structures which generate poverty, the guerrilla groups use force. Starting with their armed revolutionary struggle, they will create the conditions for the introduction of a socialist development model.

The government and big business consider that the capitalist model is convenient for Colombia. In such logic, one of the greatest obstacles to development is the presence of the illegal armed groups. Government and big business alike promote a model in which security and development go hand in hand. With the slogan "make peace first, so that there may be development next", they have set out on a policy of Democratic Security (a pre-requisite for the investment of capital). In such an effort, intentionally or unintentionally, the paramilitarism phenomenon has been concomitant to this scheme.

Quite contrary to the proposals for revolutionary action and the Democratic Security policy of the government, the PDPMM and several rural communities of Middle Magdalena are proposing a model of "development in the midst of the conflict", which consists of creating objective and subjective conditions that might lead the development process to peace. The proposal of "pacification" of the country (either by overthrowing the government, or by eliminating the guerrillas), leads to the continuation of the war, putting in second place the structural changes
that the economic model requires. The argument here is that, the development process itself should lead towards the transformation of the structures that generate violence and inequality.

Thus, the way in which we approach the transformation of the causes of the conflict in Colombia (analysed above in Chapter Three), determines the orientation and meaning of the development process in a territory in dispute. In the face of the scheme of "elimination of the enemy so that there may be development", the proposal of the PDPMM and the peasant communities consists of developing economic processes that will generate peace. There is a clear divergence here between the logic of the warmongers and the logic of active non violence that reflects the existence of different visions about the final purpose of rural development.

**B. TERRITORIAL AND PRODUCTIVE INCOMMENSURABILITY**

The discrepancies in relation to the purpose and meaning of the development process (teleological incommensurability) trigger conflicts regarding the productive occupation of territory, the ownership of the means of production, and the use of land. This is the subject to be discussed in this section.

**1. Middle Magdalena: Region in Construction or Territory in Dispute?**

Middle Magdalena could be defined either as a territory in dispute or as a region under construction - it depends on one's point of view and on the actor concerned. From a political and military logic, the territory is conceived by the FARC, the ELN and the AUC as a strategic area to advance their revolutionary or counter-revolutionary struggle. In that scheme, geography is a weapon of war, as Yves Lacoste states (1990).

The link between the military logic and the drug-trafficking logic led to the characterization of the territory based on variables such as: the control and dispute
of strategic zones and corridors; the installation of military bases and minefields; checkpoints; coca-leaf export routes; routes for gun-running; plantations of coca-leaf; the vacuum left by the State; institutional weakness; and the networks of alliances with the communities. Territory, far from being a kind of a space for social or political construction, has become a matter marked by military and economic interests in dispute. Under this scheme, the armed actors conceive Middle Magdalena as a platform for exploiting a single tradable (cocaine), in order to finance their armed struggle.

Now, given the negative impact on the local economy of this model of territorial occupation based on unlawful and military control, Middle Magdalena has also witnessed two other forms of territorial occupation which claim to consolidate peace and eradicate poverty. On the one hand, there is the capitalist proposal lead by government and industrialists of the region that seeks the establishment of macro-projects which they claim will increase economic growth, competitiveness and employment. On the other hand, there is the peasant smallholding approach that seeks to consolidate a model of territorial development based on the active participation of the local population in the productive process.

a. Pacifying and Lawful Occupation of the Territory vs. Productive Occupation of the Territory by Settlers

In order to counter the unlawful and violent occupation of the territory in different regions in Colombia, the government has implemented a policy of "peaceful and lawful occupation of the territory", based on an aggressive military and economic strategy.

“Our Democratic Security Policy, the progress made in the war against the narco-terrorist threat, and the entire range of support and incentives which we have injected into rural zones throughout the country... has allowed the farming sector to be reactivated... This recovery in the farming sector, and the consequent increase in production of food and other products represents more employment in the field, more welfare, and greater prosperity in rural areas of
our country, and, of course, more lawful and peaceful occupation of the national territories" (Arias 2006: 1; emphasis added).

In the words of the former Minister of Agriculture, the recovery of the rural sector was the most important achievement of his administration.

"The most important thing is that we have recovered the importance of the farming sector for Colombians. Today, we are aware of its economic weight, not only because it is responsible for a very important part of the GDP, but also because it is vital for lawful and peaceful occupation of the territory, and indeed, for the final overthrow of the narco-terrorist threat and the cultivation of coca. The country has come to see that the countryside is a strategic and vital resource. This is our greatest achievement" (Arias 2007: 1; emphasis added).

As an ideal, "peaceful and lawful occupation" of the territory is a view shared by both the peasant communities of Middle Magdalena and the PDPMM. However, there are two fundamental differences which need to be explained.

First, the government considers that the “peaceful and lawful occupation of the territory” is a task executed primarily by businessmen, but the PDPMM and the rural communities of Middle Magdalena believe that the productive occupation of the territory is a task of the local population itself.

"We invited [to Middle Magdalena] the President of the Republic. I said to him in front of the television cameras: "do not invite your rich friends [here]"... He came out with his thing of "come along now, and invest in Middle Magdalena where the land is very good"... But, I said to him: "Do not invite your rich friends to buy the land in Middle Magdalena now that there is more peace... because the lands of Middle Magdalena belong to the people who come from here" (founder of the PDPMM. Personal interview. 01 February 2008).

Second, if the businessmen see Middle Magdalena as a platform for the exploitation of tradables, the territorial vision of the PDPMM and the rural
communities conceives the region as a space to implement a productive process which responds to local needs.

"So Yanovich44 said to me: "that is nonsense. Why do you try to produce food for people here, or materials to build their houses?... You should rather focus on removing oil and mining coal and biodiesel from this region... People who are going to do that will make a mint of money, and with that, they will be able to have everything". This is the difference between their standpoint and ours. Evidently, this [the capital vision] is a conception in which the development objective is to accelerate the sale of some products which will bring major profits for shareholders. In the case of the mining industries, which use a high capital ratio, and generate higher salaries for those who take part during the time the industry is around, they claim that with these high salaries people access the goods which the region has to import" (founder of the PDPMM. Personal interview. 01 February 2008).

For this reason, the PDPMM is against the implementation of external and exogenous projects which do not promote the productive occupation of the territory by its own inhabitants. Experiences such as the palm project in Regidor should not be repeated. There, the expansion of African palm plantations finished with the traditional forms of peasant life. As a result, much of the rural population migrated to the cities where they increased the levels of poverty. Some of them stayed in rural areas as salaried workers for the palm plantations. Others, under the scheme of productive alliances, appear as partners in a business in which they do not share in the profits. Most of them are registered as "landless peasants".

2. An Agro-Industry without Peasants versus Peasants in Agro-Industry

The challenge for a territorial development model consists of the need to ensure that peasants, through their own forms of organisation, can form links with a market economy “participating” actively in the development process itself. For that reason, if the capitalist model promotes salaried work in large enterprises, the PDPMM and the rural communities propose the management of the agro-industry

44 Former manager of the ECOPETROL industrial complex in Barrancabermeja.
by the local people themselves. The dilemma is evident: an agro-industry without peasants versus peasants within the agro-industry. This predicament summarizes the incommensurability between the capitalist and the territorial approach in relation to the role that the individuals who take part in the productive process have to play.

“A comparative analysis” based on the sub-case of African palm, allows us to characterise the likelihood of conflict over the control and ownership of the means of production within these two different visions.

**First: Production.** The industrialists consider that in order to be competitive in the market, there must be economies of scale which will ensure that production will be efficient at the lowest possible cost. In the case of palm oil, there is a minimum area of plantation required (500 ha.), so that the plantation and the operation of the extraction plant will both be profitable. In contrast, the farms of the PDPMM palm project were planted under just 8-10 ha. of palm, so it allows a kind of "quilt-farming" with small productive units, in contrast to the "green desert" created by mono-cultivation. The key point in this process is that there would be association among peasants (10 ha. of plantation per farm, giving a total of 500 ha. between all the associates).

**Second: Capital.** From the capitalist point of view, a palm plantation requires a strong injection of capital, which only entrepreneurs can provide and manage. The PDPMM was aware of this problem, so it arranged loans with private banks to cover 60% of the project, and the ICR subsidy to cover the remaining 40% of the investment\(^{45}\). The bank loans were collective, with individual responsibility, and it was not necessary to mortgage the land as security for a loan (Villegas 2008).

\(^{45}\) The financing was arranged through a collective loan with individual responsibility. Each partner needed COP$37.4 million to plant 10 hectares of palm. The State put up COP$14.5 million (40%) through the ICR subsidies and the remaining 60% (COP$22.9 million) came from private bank loans. This enabled each partner to plant 1,430 palms in 10 ha.
Third: Knowledge. The exploitation of land requires knowledge which only professionals and skilled labour possess. Therefore, the entrepreneurs of the palm business hired help from outside the region in order to ensure that the crop would be a success. In turn, the PDPMM has shown in its palm project that a peasant farmer can learn if he/she is given training and guidance. Peasant farmers quickly absorbed all matters regarding the technical management of the palm crop. Fishermen, maize-growers and coca-farmers are today excellent palm-planters.

Fourth: Credit. In Colombia, access to credit requires not only a reliable source of payment, but also collateral to guarantee recovery of the money. So, priority is given to loans for major investors because it was the default in payment by peasant borrowers which led to the collapse of the Caja Agraria. As a way to overcome this constraint, the PDPMM provided training and guidance to the peasants in the management of loans, most of them taken in 2000-2001 for 12 years. By May, 2008, 15 of the 250 beneficiaries of the PDPMM palm project had repaid in full, 227 were paying punctually, and 8 were in arrears (staff member of the PDPMM’s peasant palm project. Personal interview. 14 December 2007).

Fifth: Ownership. For the owners of businesses, the consolidation of African palm megaprojects is an essential source which generates employment and income for farmers. Under this scheme, the elimination of the peasant farmer is fairly evident. Instead of strengthening their modes of production, the peasants are forced to become well-paid labourers. Thus, the PDPMM is consolidating a model of a peasant farm, in which the local population manage their own holdings and projects. From the entrepreneurial point of view developed by the PDPMM, the peasant farmers are qualified to administer their own businesses, stay rooted in

---

46 Another example of the capacity to acquire knowledge which the peasant-farmers of Middle Magdalena have shown refers to the coca-leaf farmers. In only a short time, with little capital and no specialised technical training, peasant farmers have learned how to grow the crop efficiently, and have even invented novel forms of repairing the damage caused to the crops by aerial fumigation.

47 The Caja Agraria existed to support small farmers, miners and industries. Its liquidation started in 1999.
their land, and produce the dividends required to improve their quality of life. This destroys the myth that palm plantations are only for the rich, while the poor are destined to be day-labourers.

In sum, facing the capitalist proposals for macro-projects whose objective is the generation of employment and economic growth for the country, the PDPMM and the peasant farmers propose to pursue development projects for local associations, directly managed by the local people themselves.

3. The Conflict over Land

The productive occupation of territory by local population brings up the issue of land ownership. On the one hand, thousands of peasants have been displaced from their farms by armed or market violence, because they do not have the legal means to protect their rights over their smallholdings. On the other hand, hundreds of thousands have not had access to credit, because they lack title to their smallholdings. The precarious title that the majority of the rural population have over the land has prevented more stable proposals for development from taking root. By contrast, the entrepreneurs and the coca-leaf growers, who arrive from elsewhere to buy or "conquer" land, have facilities not only to acquire title, but also to finance and request legal or illegal security for their properties.

This conflict for land can be analysed from two points of view: one is historical and the other one is circumstantial. Historically, the problem of land ownership has not been solved by any effective agrarian reform (Berry 2004; Machado and Suárez 1999; Fals Borda 1975). According to Benitez (2005), although the agrarian reform agency (INCORA) was created 42 years ago, and the first "Land Law" was approved 70 years ago, the results in terms of agrarian reform have become pitiful. Benitez (2005), who made an evaluation of the activities of INCORA for the period 1962-2004, concludes that during its lifetime, the

---

48 Day-labourers in the palm plantations receive a salary of US$240, while the PDPMM project partner earns an average of US$1,300 a month.
ownership of land and the major efforts of the State have been focused on the deeding of unregistered land in ecologically fragile areas outside the agricultural frontier (this shows a result that is contrary to the objectives sought).

From a circumstantial point of view, the conflict over land in Middle Magdalena has become more acute in the last 25 years, due to the mass purchases of land by drug traffickers and big business. In the 1980s, as a consequence of the repression of illegal crops in Bolivia and Peru, the coca-leaf plantations spread to Colombia causing a process of mass purchase by drug traffickers who needed the land to plant the drug crops. Subsequently, towards the end of the 1990s, with the "pacification" of Middle Magdalena by the forces of law and order and paramilitary groups, and the encouragement given by the government to the rural sector, private investment returned to the area to set up large-scale industrial projects, in which the purchaser of land (by legal or illegal means) was essential.

Based on this, many authors and inhabitants of the zone indicate that the “historical and circumstantial” conflict over land in the region has been the main cause of rural violence in Colombia (Berry 2004; González et. al. 2003; Richani 2002).

“Like most Latin American countries, Colombia has been characterized by extreme inequality in the distribution of access to agricultural land (CIDA 1965) and very serious ambiguities around property rights; these related problems have contributed to many other social and economic ills, including most notably the waves of violence which have swept the country periodically during this century and part of the last one” (Berry 2004: 1).

The land where people live is a cause of dispute. Military and economic strategies have been deployed to despoil the peasant of his property. Unfortunately, land has become one of the spoils of war: the coca-leaf growers have acquired land to launder money; guerrillas and paramilitaries have forced the peasant-farmers to plant coca-leaf on their territory; industrialists and cattle-breeders have bought
land for their megaprojects; and peasants have invaded land and defended their smallholdings simply to survive.

a. The Right "Of" the Land, and the Right "To" Land

In western legal tradition, the regulation and nature of the right to/of land has mainly been approached from two standpoints: Germanic Roman Law (GRL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL). These approaches have differing theoretical bases and ambit of action (Cfr. Argüello 2008):

- According to the Germanic Roman Law, the regulation of legal acts among individuals (and between them and the land) is a matter for the State. On the contrary, International Human Rights Law states that the relationship between State and the citizen is regulated by the signature of international human rights treaties.
- While the Germanic Roman law establishes that the principal goods protected by law are the individual, the family and obligations; the International Human Rights Law states that human dignity is the supreme good.

These distinctions show two different visions of the land. On the one hand, Germanic Roman Law refers to the right "of" the land, that is, the ways of being related to the land and to third parties, and of juridical acts which may be performed with regard to it (for example, deeds). On the other hand, International Human Rights Law refers to the right "to" the land, that is, as a requirement which is necessary for the satisfaction of other rights.

This juridical context states two approaches to the conflict over land. In the Germanic Roman system, conflict regarding land is established as a dispute between private interests and rights of ownership. In the context of the International Human Rights Law, the dispute for land is expressed in terms of the violation of human rights. In the specific case of Middle Magdalena, a
combination of these theories appears to be the most useful way to understand the main reasons that generate the conflict over the land. These include:

**First: The precarious nature of landholding relations.** Middle Magdalena is defined as a late-settlement territory, in which about 70% of the peasant farmers are "possessors" or "occupiers" of their land (Machado and Briceño 1995: 84). This situation has led them to establish relations that are protected by "custom", in which commercial transactions for land are made on the basis of a verbal agreement or witnesses. Thus, lack of title, however, left the peasant in a situation of legal vulnerability.

Aware of this situation, the present government, in the Rural Development Statute (Article 177) has set up a procedure whereby the occupant of land can become its owner. The primary requirement for this consists of showing that there had been previous occupation of the land for at least five years. However, three main obstacles have prevented this policy from becoming effective (Castro 2008: field notes): first, peasant occupiers are ignorant of their right to land; second, tenure regulating institutions are ineffective, due to bureaucracy and corruption; and third, guerrillas groups and drug traffickers oppose the process of titling. The insurgency indicates that peasants should not have title, because it increases the probability that investors will buy their land (FARC’s militia. Personal interview. 21 March 2008). The drug traffickers do not want legal deeding because this implies the eradication of the coca-leaf crops, which the government also demands as a condition of giving tenure (staff member of INCODER. Personal interview. 17 March 2008).

**Second: Access by violent means.** The sentence "you sell, or your widow sells" has become a regional reference point to describe the way the armed groups force the civil population to sell their lands. In Middle Magdalena, there has been an agrarian counter-reform, with considerable bloodshed, which has left thousands of

---

49 A possessor is the individual who exploits land which has no owner – virgin territory for which nobody has a deed.
internally displaced people. In cases such as of Regidor, for example, after the legal mechanisms for acquiring the land had been exhausted, some palm-growers resorted to violent means to lay their hands on it.

**Third: Incommensurability with regard to land-use.** In Middle Magdalena, the approach in which people take on land-use is a decisive factor in the conflict. It is almost a caricature to say that the industrialists do not understand why the peasant farmers, who live on land which is potentially excellent for producing bio-diesel, use it only to plant plantain and to string up a hammock. The parable of the rich industrialist and the satisfied fishermen comes to mind again, reflecting the tension between development as an initiative of the local people, and economic growth as an initiative of external investment. We can speak of discord between an “extractive” and a "planting" view of the economy, as described by de Roux (2006b: 2):

The "**extractive**" position takes more out of the region than it puts in. Its emphasis is on the short and medium term (5-10 years), and there is no interest in the sustainability of the region for more than two or three generations. The use of the soil is transitory (until the exploitation of the resource is exhausted). Then, land is conceived as a resource to be "exploited", which makes possible to generate income. By contrast, the peasant farmers consider the land is life itself, a source of identity and sustenance. For that reason, the peasant farmers seek and claim title to his land in order to secure their permanence in that vital niche. The use they give to the land is defined by the "**planting**" logic, which shows an attitude of permanence and affection for the territory.

In sum, the problem of access to land should perhaps not be resolved by the simple implementation of agrarian reforms. For the PDPMM and the peasant farmers of Middle Magdalena, beyond the proposals that emphasise the application of the right "of" the land, what should be taken in the first place is a concept of integral development, where it might be possible to enjoy the territory
as a space in which fundamental rights are respected, that is to say, where the right "to" land would be a reality.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has shown the way in which the process of development in Middle Magdalena has been concomitant with the situation of conflict between actors and visions of development who struggle for hegemony over territory. Thus, the 

**capitalist model** fosters a process of extractive development that requires major capital investments, a large workforce, and enormous areas of land for the execution of macro-projects. In the face of these dynamics, **peasant farmers** have engaged in processes of social struggle and resistance with a focus on the demand for land and the defence of human rights. The **guerrillas** have started a revolutionary armed struggle, which was originally intended to modify the unjust structures of the capitalist system. The **paramilitaries**, as private armies, have played their part in the dynamics of the free market, imposing security and protection for large investors. The **drug-lords**, who control a product with international demand, have been able to acquire capital rapidly and control a great part of the workforce and of the productive land of the region, and the **PDPMM** has been proposing an endogenous process of development which questions the execution of regional development by external agents.

The dynamics of conflict described should be understood as an expression of a dispute between opposed versions of rural development. Theoretical and practical incommensurabilities between the various actors generate conflict around the type of development which should prevail in the region. The sub-case of African palm gives us an idea of the two dimensions in which the agents of development present a high degree of difference: the teleological dimension and the territorial and productive one. These dimensions emphasise the two central issues in the developmental debate, and in the conflict dynamics in Middle Magdalena: firstly, there is divergence as to the “whys and wherefores” of the development process
and secondly, there is a discrepancy generated regarding relevant strategies to be executed in order to occupy the territory productively. The analysis made of these two dimensions has highlighted the three factors of greatest discrepancy, and thus, conflict among these actors and visions.

**First: Divergences with regard to the purpose of the productive process.** The teleological aspect establishes the essence of the productive process, determining the central objective which governs production. In the case of Middle Magdalena, pride of place has been given to a development model of a capitalist nature (whether legal or not), which argues for the accumulation of capital and the maximisation of profit. This scheme of production has unleashed forces of social resistance that range from armed struggle to peaceful protest, demanding structural changes for the prevailing economic model.

For the rural communities of Middle Magdalena and for the PDPMM, the capitalist model of accumulation makes the region and its inhabitants a functional variable for the market. Big business believes that what is good for business is good for the region. In that sense, the territory becomes a platform for tradables. The agro-industrial macro-project for African palm in Regidor is one example of this: it is a municipality with a varied potential for agriculture, in which 62% of suitable farmland will be planted with African palm in order to satisfy the external demand for palm oil and biodiesel.

The proposals of the rural communities and of the PDPMM are opposed to this prevailing economic model. In the face of an extractive model of development, these two regional actors promote the active participation of local people in the productive process, such that the peasant farmer arranges, finances and supplies the capital required to produce the dignified life which he deserves. The peasant-farmer model of African palm proposed by the PDPMM is one example of the way in which peasant associations can link up with dynamic markets without losing their identity and their land.
Second: Landholding as a cause of armed conflict. The conflict over land refers to the dynamics of concentration and competitive relationships for this natural resource, which are expressed in antagonisms such as: latifundio versus peasant-smallholding; or the large plantation versus the peasant plot. Analyzing the access to land from an "historical point of view", it could be found that the lack of an effective agrarian reform has prevented equitable distribution, and has become one of the greatest structural causes of the conflict in Colombia. A number of testimonies from social actors in Middle Magdalena illustrate this matter:

"The problem of land in the region is the basic problem... We call it here, "the genesis of the conflict", not only in the region, but throughout the country... We are convinced that this is the cause of the greatest part of conflictive situations, and of the confrontation which we now have between sectors of society in Colombia" (staff member of ACVC. Personal interview. 08 November 2007).

"The poor distribution of land, particularly of fertile land, is the major thesis of the conflict. The best land is in the hands of the rich... In synthesis, poor distribution of land is the generator of conflict" (FARC militiaman. Personal interview. 21 March 2008).

"The conflict in Colombia has always been mediated by land holding. This is the reason and cause of the conflict" (ELN militiaman. Personal interview. 20 March 2008).

"The hypothesis I put forward is the following: it has not been possible to solve the agrarian conflict, and therefore, there is conflict in Colombia (member of an African palm company. Personal interview. 13 March 2008).

From the "circumstantial point of view", the new economic and social situation of Middle Magdalena has made land one of the spoils of war. The drug barons and the armed groups struggle to control the territory in order to plant their coca-leaf crops. As a consequence, an agrarian counter-reform has taken place and has led to internal displacement and forced migration. For their part, businessmen and investors have arrived to the region to purchase the best land for industrial macro-projects. In this open market for land, many peasant farmers sell, attracted by the
large amounts of money they are offered, as happened in the case of Regidor described above:

"We say that we (the poor) have had to leave our land to the rich, because we had to get out. One example, I had to return to work as a day labourer on the farm which was once ours" (communitarian leader of the Cimitarra Valley. Personal interview. 09 March 2008).

Third: Dilemmas regarding productive occupation of the land, and the role to be played by the local population in the local productive process. Land-use is another of the factors underlying conflict in the region. The industrialists do not understand how a territory with such an enormous potential to produce bio-diesel is planted with traditional crops for the sustenance of the peasant families. The capitalist model promotes the productive occupation of the territory based on industrial macro-projects, which allow final goods to be produced for sale. This dynamic increases the demand for labour and creates new jobs in which the local population may earn salaries, giving them access to the goods and services they deserve.

In contrast to the proposal to establish an "agro-industry without peasants" (fruit of the proletarianisation of the rural population), the PDPMM and the Middle Magdalena communities have been promoting a process of productive occupation of land, where the local people themselves are the principal agents of development. Beyond the simple creation of employment, the PDPMM proposes a model in which agro-industry is managed by settlers.

In synthesis, the coexistence of different models and visions of rural development in the same territory has caused a series of conflicts to break out, in which the relationship between violence and development has been concomitant. The situation, therefore, requires development strategies which seek dialogue and peaceful coexistence between contending visions of development. The PDPMM is aware of this situation and has proposed the implementation of a human
development model that would reduce the level of confrontation. The next chapter will describe how the productive and institutional transformations promoted by the PDPMM converge towards the purpose of creating conditions for dialogue and concertation among opposing actors in the development process.
CHAPTER SEVEN

DEALING WITH CONFLICT

I. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter allowed us to conclude how conflicts among social actors are, to a great extent conflicts between rival visions of rural development. In the specific case of the Middle Magdalena region, such conflict dynamics can be interpreted as a cause of violence and armed confrontation. For that reason, if rural strategies aim at fostering progressive change in the countryside, it is essential for an RTD intervention to generate conditions that foster the solution of disparities among social actors through non-violent and legal methods.

In the light of all this, this chapter will focus on the Programme for Development and Peace in Middle Magdalena (PDPMM). It will examine the implications of pursuing Rural Territorial Development in a territory in dispute. The proposed chapter will then analyse particularly the specific contribution of the PDPMM in the domains of conflict resolution.

The chapter is divided into two parts: the first one, including sections II to V, presents the PDPMM’s axiological and theoretical framework for peace, which is based on two principles: first, the respect and defence of life as the main goal of the development process; and second, the participation of local people in the regional productive process as a way to eliminate one of the main causes of conflict in the territory: exclusion.

The second part of the chapter, presented in section VI, illustrates the general implications of implementing a territorial approach for peace in a context of conflict dynamics. It analyses how far an RTD intervention is able to mediate
between differences and build broader coalitions around a negotiated view of development in a context where there are different political and economic actors disputing the territory. This deals with the study’s greatest concern of understanding whether and under what conditions – in the language of RTD – such an intervention can foster institutional and productive transformations that allow for the mediation of conflict dynamics arising from the co-existence of radically opposing views of rural development within the same territory. To some extent, what is at stake here is the question of whether the PDPMM proposes an alternative form of conflict resolution or not.

II. DEVELOPMENT IS THE NEW NAME FOR PEACE

In 1967, Pope Paul VI, in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (n. 76), declared “development is the new name for peace”. In a similar vein, the PDPMM believes that the process of peace building depends on and is essentially related to integral human development. That is precisely what its name stands for: a project in continuous construction, in which development and peace are mutually determined.

“The name of the Program has its origin in an effort to link the notion of integral human development and the subjective, objective, and territorial elements of peace. For that reason, it is called the Programme for Development and Peace in Middle Magdalena” (PDPMM 2007: 19).

The PDPMM does not explicitly follow any specific model of peacebuilding to achieve its goal. Indeed, it could be said that the complexity of the conflict in Middle Magdalena makes it unclear since any single theoretical model could be applicable. The PDPMM is more inductive, drawing inspiration from certain theoretical concepts and methodological assumptions, but in the final instance being built in the same field.
The PDPMM’s formula is based on the basic principle of human dignity as part of a broader ethical framework that underlies its practices and strategies. In this attempt, the defence of life becomes the absolute principle that guides the developmental process of pursuing peace.

“When we started the Program, it was clear that development meant, first of all, to think of settlers and quality of life […]; and given that the intensity of violence and the level of unmet basic needs are high in the territory, we elaborated the slogan “Life First”…. We wanted to say that people must be killed neither by hunger nor by bullets” (founder of the PDPMM. Personal interview. 01 February 2008).

In a situation of conflict and poverty like the one of Middle Magdalena, what really matters in the development process is the protection of human dignity. Having said that, this initiative is not purely a statement of ethics for the PDPMM. These ethics and their axiological principles must rather be transformed into actions and projects (González, Castilla and Merchán 2003).

In that effort, the PDPMM works with the ethical commitment to elaborate a methodological process that identifies the causes of the conflict. On that basis, it proposes an alternative and participatory development process seeking peace. Such a methodology is explained by Francisco de Roux (Personal interview. 01 February 2008) in the following terms: first, the communities commence with the implementation of a participative diagnosis determining the “perverse dynamics”, which causes violence and exclusion. After that, conceptual hypotheses are formulated as to how to confront the “perverse dynamics” identified in the diagnosis. These hypotheses then, take form in practical economic and social projects that seek to change these “perverse dynamics”. After that, the population evaluates whether or not the outcomes of the projects have transformed the “perverse dynamics”, as proposed in the hypothesis. Finally, a synthesis of the best practices and principal mistakes during the process is undertaken, and both hypotheses and projects are adjusted accordingly. The result of this method is the construction of a conceptual framework that is always evolving and reflecting the
adjustment and reframing that is necessary in face of the emerging needs of the region.

In such process, and given the complexity of the conflict dynamics in Middle Magdalena, the PDPMM applies a comprehensive analytical framework to apprehend the wide range of factors contributing to violence. Rather than favouring structuralist justifications, i.e. objective causes, or rational choice explanations, i.e. behavioural causes, the PDPMM believes in a combination of these theories to understand the prevailing violent conflict of the region.

“The PDPMM’s method unifies the subjective and objective factors to confront the perverse dynamics of the internal armed conflict. The expression “Programme for Development and Peace” was established to emphasize that these two variables are determined by each other. “Development” was first placed, and then “Peace” in order to highlight the structural factors that not only embrace human dignity, but at the same time, determine - and will be determined - by the subjective factors. If one does not choose from the outset to make structural changes, no movement for any discourse about peace will reach its objective” (PDPMM 2007: 20).

However, different actors of the Middle Magdalena region question the PDPMM’s approach due to the impossibility of being neutral in a conflict situation. According to them, each actor has to take part in the confrontation of a territory in dispute. That is what happens with the PDPMM’s proposal for development, which far from being an alternative option for peace executes the social component of the State’s strategy to gain control over guerrilla-controlled territories. In this way, “development” and “peace” are mutually correlated but in a different sense: “development” becomes a vital component of the military strategy encouraged by the government to overcome insurgency.

“[The Programs for Development and Peace] mostly accomplish a complementarity function... The [State’s] control and/or territorial recovery strategy is not only a military one, but it also has an important social component. This social component includes a population control, and becomes especially important in strategic regions given their geopolitical and economic factors and the
wealth of their natural resources, such as the regions where the Laboratories of Peace and the [Programs for Development and Peace] are located” (Reis 2004: 15).

In this sense, the Programs for Development and Peace are part of the integral approach of war encouraged by the government, seeking to implement social strategies with one objective: to execute a territorial counter-insurgent model of development.

“The contributions for a “socially, politically and financially sustainable democratic security policy” – which includes foreign political support and the international cooperation funds – are considered a key factor in this military approach, which after all, seeks to gain the unconditional support of the people in order for the FARC to come to the negotiating table completely weakened” (Reis 2004: 16).

Such criticism demands a deep explanation about the specific aim of the territorial approach to peace and development implemented by the PDPMM. Why do territories become the starting point for a peaceful construction? What is the add value and specificity of the PDPMM’s proposal, in comparison to other visions established in Middle Magdalena? These are some of the questions to address in the following sections.

**III. A TERRITORIAL APPROACH TO PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT**

According to the PDPMM, the Colombian conflict has a territorial dimension. There are regionally differentiated expressions of the conflict. The different social, political and economic actors in confrontation seek to control specific areas and territories in which their rivals do not have space.

“Violence covers the Colombian territory neither homogeneously nor with the same intensity. The armed confrontation is highly differentiated, reflecting the internal dynamics of the regions in which it is embedded: their forms of social cohesion, economic
organization, linkages to the national and global economy, relations with the state and the political regime, and consequently with the differentiated and unequal presence of institutions and the State” (González Fernán, as quoted in Saavedra and Ojeda, 2006: 11).

The PDPMM’s perspective is that conflict resolution in Colombia must necessarily start at a local level. Civil society can start to build peace in the regions in conflict since those affected by violence are likely to be best placed to find the most appropriate solutions to conflict. Thus, an effective and sustainable peacemaking process must be based not merely on the management of peace agreements made by the national government, but more importantly, on the empowerment and participation of the communities torn apart by the internal armed conflict. According to de Roux (1999), this alternative view of development emerged from the academic debate between the PDPMM’s vision and the other two traditional models that have been applied in the social process in Colombia: development as a State-led intervention and development as a popular demand.

On the one hand, the development as a State-led intervention model emphasises the role of the State as central planner. The government adjusts investment policies according to sectoral plans that will be implemented in the whole country as a general policy. Looking at the implementation of this model, de Roux (1999) raises several criticisms: first, the decision making process is top-down, i.e. it is not participatory; second, people who lack political influence and contacts cannot access institutional offers; third, in general, this model increases bureaucracy; fourth, some of the policies of the central government succeed in certain places, but fail in others; fifth, investment policies are short term reflecting the presidential period; and finally, the implementation of the Democratic Security Policy, encouraged by the actual government, reinforces conflict.

On the other hand, development as a popular demand, the second traditional model, implies a notion of development as an institutional answer to citizens’ demands. People “know” what they need and they ask the State for solutions. In
this model, public expenditure should be defined following popular needs. Traditionally, marches, strikes and protests have been the common form of expression in this model. However, this approach also fails in its application (de Roux 1999): first, some of the popular demands might be unjustified; second, the government budget may not be enough to solve all the requests; third, this model might create a “beggar culture”; and fourth, most agreements between government and rural communities generally remain unfulfilled.

The PDPMM follows neither of the two traditional development models. The PDPMM’s proposal differs from the central government offer because the National Development Plan does not necessarily include the specific needs of each region. It also differs because it is independent of the State and it does not have a national scope. Moreover, the PDPMM considers that Democratic Security Policies increase the level of confrontation. More than the implementation of military strategies, a development process, in which life is respected, is what contributes to a real peacebuilding.

At the same time, the PDPMM’s approach differs from the traditional model of popular demand because it states that people should commit themselves to their own development project and implementation. Citizens should assume their rights and responsibilities through participation, instead of focusing on demanding governmental solutions\textsuperscript{50}.

In consequence, the failure of these two approaches leads the PDPMM to create an alternative approach to peace and development based on the execution of productive projects that allows the active participation of settlers in that process.

\textsuperscript{50} Chapter Five presented the statistics of the major peasant struggles in Middle Magdalena, and the way in which those rural communities evolved with a reactive model of development based on a protest against the establishment to central plans of development.
IV. THE PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL PEOPLE IN THE PRODUCTIVE PROCESS

As stated in Chapter V, it is important to emphasize that the PDPMM’s concept of participation differs from a more conventional view which believes that economic participation basically means access to resources and services as declared by the “State-led intervention” and “popular demand” models. The PDPMM states instead that an inclusive process of development requires the participation of the popular and peasant communities in the sphere of production, and not only distribution.

“For us, the entire economy revolves around production. This is something very important to note. Even redistribution revolves around production. We do not believe in producing first and then redistributing the goods in such a way as to reach everyone. Instead, everyone participates in the productive process, and by participating in the productive process, everyone acquires capacities and rights” (founder of the PDPMM. Personal interview. 1 February 2008).

This proposal establishes that the axis to overcome exclusion is not the acquisition of essential goods, but the participation in the production of such goods by means of one’s own work and with the autonomy to decide on the use of productive assets.

“Basically, [the coefficient of] GINI is transformed by the participation of the settlers in the productive process […], and they participate in the productive process because they have legitimate access to the means of production; […] they are entitled to; or […] they are companies’ shareholders; or […] they are employed by their own companies; or […] they are members of the business association; or […] they own land and access to the capital there is in the region; or […] they participate in the technology creation; or they are owners of the technology; or […] they participate in the decision-making process; or because they have employment, which is one of the essential things that dignifies people, and one of the first things that the productive process has to generate” (ex-director of the PDPMM. Personal interview. 22 February 2008).
The purpose of the PDPMM is to transform poor communities into communities with economic and political power that are able to participate in the market and in the democratic process. The axis of such action is a regional economy controlled by local people.

“The experience of the PDPMM in the region, and the diagnosis made by the local population in the planning workshops of the “Peace Laboratory” allow to conclude that today it is possible neither to propose the elimination of the social conflict and its armed expressions nor the eradication of unlawful cultivation and the elimination of exclusion and poverty without a strategy for productive and sustainable occupation of the territory. At the same time, it is not possible to propose such strategy without identifying, constructing and consolidating subregional and regional economic circuits which can incorporate all the participants in the stages of formation of the added value, the distribution and the marketing of products with a market option and comparative or competitive advantages” (Briceño 2007: 4).

V. MAKING PEACE THROUGH PRODUCTIVE AND SOCIAL PROJECTS

Through the implementation of productive projects, the PDPMM seeks the inhabitants of Middle Magdalena to not only occupy its territory effectively, but also to create the conditions for peace (González, Castilla and Merchán 2003).

"All the PDPMM projects are designed to resolve expressions of the structural and subjective conflict. In each project, the PDPMM prioritizes one expression of the conflict. Based on that expression, it sets in motion a sustainable strategy to overcome the conflict in that specific case. By confronting the conflict with projects, [the PDPMM] provides, in each case, a partial response to the violent armed conflict in the region because the total response to the Colombian conflict cannot be given at once. [The PDPMM] acts on the supposition that it is possible to produce a dynamic accumulation of sustainable processes based on concrete solutions with specific empowered people who take part in the solution of the conflict in each project. Thus, these people bring all the projects
together into a regional process which shows the way to obtain a total response in Colombia" (de Roux, 2006c: 1-2).

The PDPMM acts under the hypothesis that it is possible, and indeed necessary, to produce clear solutions to the conflict through the execution of social and productive projects. It has, consequently, set up a series of measurable results for each of its action lines in order to show the contribution that each specific project has made to the solution of the conflict.

The next section will clarify this method by presenting some achievements and successes concerning peace and development in one of the flagship projects of the PDPMM: the project of the peasant farm with cocoa as a lead product. This example illustrates how the PDPMM has established a viable and productive alternative in the region to combat the war economy and the extractive economic model developed in Middle Magdalena.

A. THE REGIONAL COCOA PROJECT

The "Regional Cocoa Project" started in 2000 based on a proposal from Landázuri, El Carmen and San Vicente municipalities’ people. The initial aim of the project was to plant up 800 cocoa hectares. To that effect, the farmers received a subsidy for planting 2 or 3 hectares in each smallholding. In exchange, each beneficiary provided the labour required to establish and maintain the crop.

In 2002, the cooperative ECOCACAO was formed. It associates both the producer organizations and the individuals engaged in the Regional Cocoa Project led by the PDPMM. Some projects executed by ECOCACAO include: the planting of 1,500 cocoa hectares in the Serranía de Yariguíes; the planting of 930 cocoa hectares in Landázuri; the planting of 750 hectares in Middle Magdalena areas of Antioquia; and the project "Cocoa for Peace". In order to finance these projects, ECOCACAO formed an alliance with the European Union, the Fondo de
Inversiones para la Paz, (an investment funds), REDPRODEPAZ and the Antioquia and Cesar governorships (Cfr. ECOCACAO web page).

In a systematisation study of the economic and social development processes carried out by the PDPMM between 1996 and 2006, Luis H. Briceño (2007) describes the best experiences and achievements of the cocoa project.

In the first place, Briceño (2007: 7) affirms that “the cocoa project has set itself up as a viable and sustainable smallholding paradigm that demonstrates the productive occupation of the territory”. Six indicators support such an affirmation:

- **Coverage.** A total of 1,830 hectares of cocoa have been planted. This number exceeds the initial aim of 800 hectares. In geographical terms, the coverage of the project extended from 3 to 17 municipalities.

- **Productivity.** The use of high yield clones and the improvements in technical assistance raised the initial productivity of the project from 400 kilograms per hectare per year to 600 kilograms per hectare per year.

- **Quality.** The improvement of the product quality earned a 5% increase over the normal price of the product.

- **Marketing.** Cocoa marketing activities have been intensified. Between November 2004 and April 2005, ECOCACAO sold 60 tonnes per month. In 2007, the sold average was 150 tonnes per month.

- **Family incomes.** Families that started planting cocoa between 2001 and 2003 obtained an average income of 5-6 minimum monthly salaries in 2007. This is significant if it is noted that the total income average per hectare of cocoa is 2,8 minimum salaries, according to the National Cocoa Growers Federation (FEDECACAO).
• **A productive alternative to coca leaf.** Although the PDPMM has never presented the cocoa project as a project to substitute unlawful crops, it is possible to conclude that this project is a viable alternative for the peasant economy, based on the evidence presented previously.

The second important achievement of the project consists of "having consolidated an organisational and associated process among producers" (Briceño 2007: 9). In this context, ECOCACAO has set up three participation spaces: the Integral Productive Units (IPU) formed by 1,800 families and associated peasant farms; the Rural Development Nuclei (RDN) formed by neighbouring families who share common services; and the Local Integrative Associations (LIA), which as non-profit organisations, represent the associations involved in the project.

The third achievement presented by Briceño (2007: 11) indicates that the cocoa project “has succeeded in the farms associated with the project because they now gain real access to credit, and obtain the ICR subsidy, which was previously available only to the major producers”. In this process, there is the outstanding case of 310 producers of the municipality of Landázuri, who obtained the first “associative credit” to plant cocoa from the Agricultural Development Financing Agency (FINAGRO).

The fourth achievement of the cocoa project consists of having generated a productive system which is agroecologically managed (Briceño 2007: 12). Traditionally, cocoa had been cultivated as monoculture, using agricultural chemicals that caused a clear marked ecological damage. In response to that technological pattern, the cocoa-growers of the area of Yariguíes and Vélez implemented a system of "clean" organic production, based on the production of natural materials and a major use of labour.

The systematisation of the best experiences of the cocoa project has allowed the PDPMM to demonstrate how the generation of surpluses is only possible if peasant production follows entrepreneurial criteria. For the PDPMM, the peaceful
productive occupation of territory is reinforced by consolidating this type of experience or “productive reference point”, in which an entrepreneurial model for the peasant farmers enables them to form links with the market, through the strengthening of peasant associations and a range of alliances established with national and international aid.

However, while the PDPMM openly affirms that such economic strategy challenges the capitalist model of agro-industry, many social actors of the region consider that the PDPMM’s model of intervention reinforces an “imperialist approach”. In the case of the cocoa project, for instance, “the European Union, through its foreign aid budget, gives money to peasants to cheaply produce cocoa for European companies that later sell it to a high price when they turn it into chocolate. A square deal, where the beneficiary is the European company” (Loingsigh 2009). Loingsigh explains this statement in the following terms:

“Let’s take cocoa as an example […] The EU has promoted cocoa amongst the peasants […] with funds from the Peace Laboratory. It works in the following way: the EU donates the money to the Colombian government which loans it to the peasants to grow cocoa. In order to receive the money, the peasants sign an agreement with a company in the sector that has the capacity to market the product. In the case of cocoa, there are only two main companies, Empresa Nacional de Chocolates (National Chocolates Company) and the Casa Luker S.A. (House of Luker Plc). Both are companies of the Colombian oligarchy and represent 87% of the national market for cocoa. The peasant is obliged to sell to the company with which he signed the contract. He cannot change to another company (neither is it the case that he has much choice). The company gives him technical advice for the crop to meet the needs of agribusiness in terms of quality, pest control and other phitosanitary aspects i.e. the necessary conditions to place the product in a foreign market. The company charges the peasant for this technical aid. This means that the peasant carries the weight of all expenses associated with producing a crop in such conditions as allow its exportation to Europe […] What is blindingly obvious is that Colombia’s exports to the EU are primary products without any major ‘value added’, an economists term to tell us that the money is made outside Colombia” (Loingsigh 2009).
In such a context, many other academic and social agents of the Middle Magdalena region question the PDPMM’s proposal of building peace through productive projects since that economic strategy reproduces the capitalist model: “the PDPMM articulates initiatives of different States, the United Nations, and multilateral and cooperation agencies, which promote an extractive and dependent model of development that perpetuate regional and social-class inequalities” (ACVC 2005). Therefore, if the implementation of the prevailing model of development has caused poverty and conflict in Middle Magdalena: why does the PDPMM follow and propose the same entrepreneurial practices? – the ACVC organization questions.

Critics argue, on the other hand, that what the PDPMM really does is to attract large amounts of capital to the region, instead of promoting the peasant economy. “The European Union and its member States wish to achieve a lasting peace that serves development. [The EU] does not explain what [it] means by development, but it is obvious: free trade, foreign investment, etc., and we all know that the EU is not just concerned about development in Colombia but also in Iraq and Afghanistan (Loingsigh 2009). In Loingsigh words, the PDPMM’s productive approach aims at extending the economic power of international States.

According to Loingsigh (2005, 2009) and the ACVC (2005), a genuine alternative model of development – as the PDPMM “intends” to establish - should consolidate a new economic system in which not only the capitalist and neoliberal policies have to be refused, but also, in which the peasant economy ought to be autonomous, self-sufficient and should reduce its connections with external markets which exploit it. Thus, the PDPMM might recognize that there are problems with its productive strategy since peasant communities are vulnerable in the face of the market, particularly in the case of African palm and cocoa projects because they are monocultures.
“In relation to the market and marketing processes, peasant production is characterised by the following traits, amongst others: it is weak and vulnerable in the market because it offers small quantities; it has little storage capacity; restricted access to credit; frequent indebtedness; peripheral geographic location; it depends on the immediate sale to intermediaries in relation to the harvest, which results in low prices. All of these factors represent risks for the productive projects of the [Peace] Laboratory with a leader crop” (Loingsigh 2005).

In a similar vein, Escobar (2000) states that the participation of the peasant economy in the market is not ideal at all:

“When one [of the PDPMM’s projects] has been successful and has entered the market with a competitive product, it may happen that the particular group begins to dream about having found the door to paradise. Perhaps, they see the Messiah in their dreams, but in the end, they fail the test of market competency. Hence, they maybe understand that the problem is not to enter the market, but to stay in it” (Escobar 2000: 6).

However, and according to the PDPMM, more than thinking of the market in a negative way, what we should do is to focus on the advantages and benefits of a market economy. After all, it is not possible to build an economy outside the market in a globalized world. In consequence, what the PDPMM proposes is to not isolate the peasant economy from the global market economy. The key issue is to make the pertinent productive transformations that link the territorial economy with dynamic markets, and to encourage institutional changes promoting the concerted actions of local agents with the purpose of eliminating exclusion as the RTD approach states. Eventually, territories are defined as social constructs conceived as a set of social relations that create and express a particular identity and a common purpose shared by multiple public and private agents (Berdegué and Schejtman 2004).

The PDPMM’s goal consists, therefore, of consolidating a territory in the Middle Magdalena region, in which conflict dynamics can be reduced through the implementation of a collective project of development. In such an effort, the
PDPMM applies a form of dialogue that seeks to bring all the actors together in order to create what the PDPMM calls a common **Regional Proposal for Peace and Development**. That is the added value of the PDPMM’s approach seeking to solve the regional conflict in Middle Magdalena. The investigator now addresses to the implications of pursuing such proposal.

**VI. TOWARDS A REGIONAL PROPOSAL**

One of the main objectives of the PDPMM’s Regional Proposal consists of building a territory in which the most important actors share a common project (de Roux 1999). The main vehicle for achieving this objective is the promotion of dialogue and communication among agents. However, the goal of establishing a **Regional Agreement** is over-ambitious in a territory in dispute, where different actors and views of development clash. The greatest obstacle is the tendency of each agent to monopolize socio-political and economic spaces through violent and nonviolent means. Each party is determined to impose its position and to make it the only one applicable in the territory. This intransigence has turned the Middle Magdalena region into a territory in conflict where the distinction between friends and enemies prevails. Especially, such conflict dynamics tends to divide the inhabitants between those who support the guerrilla groups – the “left” - and those who support the paramilitary forces – the “right” -.

"During a meeting in the Ministry of Agriculture, which the Vice-Minister attended […] the Mayor of Cantagallo stood up and the first thing he said to me was: "you are a guerrilla", and I said to him: "well, what you are proposing is pretty damned stupid because with that logic, I can say to you that you are a paramilitary, but that is not the point" (staff member of the ACVC. Personal interview. 08 November 2007).

This stigmatisation makes it impossible to start a dialogue between the parties, as the following example shows:
"We have never been in agreement with the idea of direct conversations with the paramilitaries because we understand paramilitarism as a phenomenon of the State. So, in our view, when we are conversing with the State, we are conversing with the paramilitaries" (staff member of the ACVC. Personal interview. 08 November 2007).

In this context of war and intimidation, the PDPMM has also been stigmatised (Castro 2008: field notes). Each of the armed groups has pointed to it as an enemy of its cause. On the one hand, the guerrillas consider that the PDPMM strategy follows a paramilitary logic which seeks to establish the capitalist model. Furthermore, the guerrillas accused the PDPMM of having encouraged the arrival of paramilitaries in Middle Magdalena due to the "coincidence" of the paramilitary project’s advance and the PDPMM’s implementation in the area.

"Here, the paramilitaries started to play a role. The paramilitaries are not counter-insurgents, and they do not grow coca-leaf. Their objective is to establish the conditions to set up megaprojects for the Americans and the Europeans. The Peace Laboratories are part of this proposal" (ELN militiaman. Personal interview. 20 March 2008).

On the other hand, the paramilitaries and several right sectors affirm that some of the projects financed by the PDPMM help to strengthen the social base of the insurgency. Some paramilitaries also indicate that the guerrillas have not been dislodged from some parts of Middle Magdalena due to the presence of the PDPMM there.

"He [the director of the PDPMM] has been accused of being a guerrilla... [And they even say] that all the money we have in our projects is for the guerrillas, and that he allows it. That is very complicated because a proposal that is institutional, and even supported by international cooperation, has been accused in such a way" (staff member of the ACVC. Personal interview. 08 November 2007).
Additionally, academics and some Middle Magdalena communities indicate that the PDPMM is acting contrary to the local development proposal by imposing exogenous-type projects, which do not start from the needs of the community.

"The fact is that the PDPMM tries to take the place of organisations that are already established, in order to move forward with its own policies that are different from those of these organisations [...] One example of this fact is the forum organised in Yondó, in which the PDPMM proposed the African palm as the crop for development. This proposal clashes with the declared position that the proposals come from the communities or nuclei, but the reality is that the PDPMM takes the proposals to the communities" (Loingsigh 2002: 85).

This stigmatisation is, without a doubt, an obstacle to the regional plan for peace. Despite the non-violent proposal and the inclusive language used by the PDPMM to explain it, its performance is seen as suspect. In consequence, one of the most important challenges in the construction of the territory is to overcome the mistrust generated in a situation of armed conflict. The PDPMM, therefore, favours spaces and opportunities for dialogue, in which the opposite parties stop thinking of each other as enemies, and come to respect each other as political and social opponents. According to a PDPMM’s staff member (personal interview. 17 May 2008), the two basic principles of overriding importance for this dialogue are: the principle of sensitivity and the principle of non-neutrality.

**The principle of sensitivity** - to put oneself in another’s shoes - refers to the one’s inner capacity to understand the reality from the another’s perspective. Nevertheless, in a situation of conflict such as that experienced in Middle Magdalena, there is a prevailing political/military view, which entails the stigmatisation of the opponent as friend or enemy without any close examination of his or her philosophy or doctrine. For example, the guerrilla automatically rejects any industrial project because it is capitalist; and at the same time, industrialists disregard structural changes promoted by the guerrillas because of their communist background.
Contrary to this perspective, the principle of sensitivity leads to the recognition and respect of the motives that take people to act as they do. This implies, for example, respect for those who take up arms as a choice of conscience; respect for the decision of those who buy land from peasants as an option for economic efficiency; and respect for the intention to plant coca-leaf as a form of subsistence.

Nevertheless, respect for the options of others does not necessarily lead to a neutral attitude. The fact of being sensitive to an opponent’s discourse does not imply an attitude of indifference or unresponsiveness. On the contrary and for the PDPMM, the principle of non-neutrality demands to speak from a defined posture of development that proposes the defence of life. In consequence, the PDPMM cannot be neutral "because in the face of war or violence, or the violation of human rights, displacement, etc., [the PDPMM] expresses its disagreement, and it undertakes to build a society, in which this would not happen" (PDPMM’s staff member. Personal interview. 17 May 2008).

The application of this principle of non-neutrality leads to the realisation of a dialogue constructed in "confrontation". Using the fundamental principle of "Life First", the PDPMM confronts the other actors of the territory by disclosing the existing "inconsistencies" between their discourse and their practice.

"Based on this mark of respect, we enter into the in-depth discussion about the inconsistencies of claiming to work for peace and, at the same time, producing real acts of violence; about the inconsistency between presenting oneself as a defender of the common good and the appalling violations of human rights; about the inconsistency between the discourse of democracy and the real magnitude of exclusion; about the inconsistency between the struggle for liberty and the commitment to kidnapping; about the contradiction between claiming to be defenders of institutions and forming alliances with paramilitaries; and about pretending to give security to people while also uprooting them from their territory. This scenario of respect for the individual conscience leads to a serious open and strong criticism of actions and concepts, which are inconsistent with the individual’s own conscience... [Based on these matters] we create a scenario for an in-depth dialogue, which will
allow us to provide elements for a negotiated solution and a political way out of the conflict” (PDPMM 2007: 15).

In this open dialogue, the other actors can also highlight the PDPMM’s own contradictions. Some of them, for example, do not understand how the PDPMM can promote the sovereign occupation of territory with funds that come from abroad; or how it implements capitalist projects such as the African palm project, when it goes counter to the peasant economy; or how the PDPMM can encourage the consolidation of democracy and civil society from an institutional context that is parallel to the State.

For the PDPMM, the objective of this kind of confrontation and dialogue has twin purposes (de Roux 2006c): in the first place, to encourage opportunities for interlocution, so that actors who think of each other as enemies, can come to see each other as political or economic opponents. In the second place, to help instil protection for human dignity as the basic parameter that permits to evaluate the effectiveness of the development process in the region. Furthermore, this process of concertation must take account of the particular nature and diversity of agents which are present in the region. It is not the same thing to talk to a guerrilla than to talk to a palm-planter. The heterogeneity of visions of development in Middle Magdalena implies that each actor must be approached from a different point of view, in order to determine common points and obstacles existing in the construction of the Regional Proposal. The next section will exemplify this point by describing the way in which some communities of Middle Magdalena and the PDPMM have approached regional dialogue with the armed actors and the businessmen.

A. THE DIALOGUE WITH ARMED ACTORS

The dialogue that the PDPMM has established with the armed actors has four principal objectives. First and foremost, it sets out to avoid military actions against the civil population such as kidnap, displacements, murders and
disappearances. Second, it aims to demand autonomy and respect for the establishment of productive projects, so that they can be executed without being under pressure from the gun and obliged to pay "war taxes". Third, it attempts to encourage non-aggression pacts. Fourth, it intends to discuss development and peace proposals for the region.

"We have used the only non-violent weapon that people have: the weapon of dialogue and negotiation. This has been moving forward. We have talked and talked because if [the armed actors] are not entirely in agreement [with our proposal], at least they should not put as many obstacles as they can in the way. And so, we can prove with facts that what is being proposed is beneficial for the town" (staff member of the PDPMM. Personal interview. 17 May 2008).

In this effort, the PDPMM has succeeded in consolidating a pilot experience for civil resistance, under the title "Humanitarian Spaces", in zones of major armed conflict. These spaces are defined as "social processes, in which the community declares its autonomy from the actors in the armed conflict, with a decision to remain in the territory to which they belong" (Páez, 2007: 2).

So far, the PDPMM has formed 13 Humanitarian Spaces in Middle Magdalena, in which not only negotiated solutions for the conflict are encouraged, but also decisions on the strengthening of the peasant and popular economies are discussed. One leader of “the Sovereign Community Process for Life, Justice and Peace of Micoahumado” explains the strategy for dialogue that was undertaken with the armed groups in order for the economic projects for development to be carried out.

"The first strategy we made up was to hold a dialogue with the actors. When one says "actors", this means any of the actors involved in the conflict including the State, the paramilitaries and the guerrillas. When we went to talk to them, we explained that we wanted to form a life and development process for the region, and that we expected their respect. We wanted projects based on the peasant-farming. Their response was very positive. They thought it was a good idea because they said that was the way in which
peasant farmers sustain themselves. [Moreover, they said it] was a good idea since there was someone who could put up the money for the peasant farmer to become stronger. [They said:] “if the State itself wants to invest, and if there are other countries which want to invest in those little projects, we will respect it, and we promise that we will not demand any taxes from those projects”. Previously, the projects which came to the region were taxed at 10%. We said to them that COP$900 million would be coming in. We explained that we were not willing to give them a single peso for anything. So far, we have not given a single peso of the projects set up by the European Union to the armed groups” (leader of the Humanitarian Space of Micoahumado. Personal interview. 25 December 2007).

For the PDPMM, experiences such as the Humanitarian Spaces evidence the execution of a "staggered peace process", in which local practices are arranged "step by step”. In the long term, these practices will set up the Regional Proposal for Peace. This is a matter of solving conflict in small doses. The sum of these partial experiences will, therefore, help the overall consolidation of regional peace. The PDPMM acts on the assumption that "a young peasant farmer who plants maize is one man less to fire the guns", or "a hectare planted with palm is a hectare less with coca-leaf" (staff member of the PDPMM. Personal interview. 17 May 2008).

"From 1995 to 1998 - when the war was at its most intense point -, up to today, the situation has changed a great deal. The most recent incursion by the paramilitaries came without massacres. And the army has respected much more the human rights and the international humanitarian law... This territory has been snatched back from the guerrillas. We said to them: "there is room for all of us here, but as civilians. Let us make war, but without guns". Then, what we said is: "a field that is taken out of the war is a field that can be used for peace", and that is what we have been doing" (leader of the Humanitarian Space of the Micoahumado. Personal interview. 25 December 2007).

This process of inductive development, built step by step, must be drawn up and executed with a medium and long time horizon. The achievements of the PDPMM in solving armed conflict must be understood as experiences of peace “from the bottom up”, which are consolidated over time, based on the peaceful
empowerment of small local communities. As a result, these specific achievements allow people to glimpse an alternative way to the solution of the conflict different from the military actions. From this point of view, the Regional Proposal for Peace promoted by the PDPMM can be defined as a proposal for "Peace under Construction", "Unfinished Peace", or "Unconcluded Peace" that poses two main dilemmas, which need to be taken into account.

The first dilemma is determined by the lack of alignment between the expectations of a peace process at national level, and the need to construct conditions of peace on the basis of local community empowerment. With regard to this matter, the PDPMM indicates that "it is not convenient to wait for the conclusion of peace negotiations between the government and the guerrillas in order to start up solutions [to the conflict]" (de Roux 2006c: 1). However, as it is evident from the situation of violence in the region, the consolidation of the regional and national peace has to be defined, to a great extent, by the materialisation of a national peace process. It is over-ambitious to try to achieve a territorial peace agreement without the consolidation of a political resolution to the conflict agreed between the government and the armed groups. The elimination of conflict requires solutions at micro and macro levels. Consequently, the consolidation of the PDPMM’s peace proposal should be articulated with the national peace process promoted by the government.

The second dilemma is defined by the role the PDPMM should play in dialogues with the armed actors. Should the PDPMM be a participant, mediator or guarantor of the national or regional peace process? Is the PDPMM a representative of the State, civil society or international cooperation? Should the PDPMM protect the lives and honour of the local population? What has been perceived in the course of this research indicates that the reply to those questions is not clearly defined. In practice, most of the encounters that the PDPMM members have had with the armed actors have been focused on the humanitarian approach, seeking to clarify differences, defend someone’s life in danger, avoid warlike actions against the civilian population, or free a kidnap victim. In a high-pressure dynamics of war
such as the one in Middle Magdalena, the PDPMM has usually acted as an advocate for the poor communities that struggle for the defence of life and permanence in the region in the face of the force of arms. On many occasions and due to the capacity for dialogue and action that the PDPMM personnel have, this work has borne fruit. However, in other circumstances, the power of the word has had to give way to the force of arms.

“Here, any armed actor, whether legal or not, is a threat because you cannot say that the gun is the solution. We want nothing to do with guns. But yes, we are convinced of one thing: the man with the gun calls the tune. If an armed actor gives you an order, you simply do what he says” (community leader of the Cimitarra River Valley. Personal interview. 09 March 2008).

Looking at the regional context, it is possible to indicate that despite the heroic efforts for peace made by the PDPMM and the civil society of Middle Magdalena, the armed conflict is very much alive. In Chapter Two, figures showed how homicide and forced displacement in the region have not fallen in the last 10 years - period in which the PDPMM has been active -. During that time, 4 staff members have been kidnapped, 26 people of the PDPMM population network have been killed and several have been threatened. The territory continues to be one of dispute and war. It can be said that despite the successful local experiences in peace –such as the Humanitarian Spaces - instituted by the PDPMM, the cessation of armed conflict in the region is still far from becoming a reality.

**B. THE DIALOGUE WITH ENTREPRENEURS AND INVESTORS**

The strengthening of the extractive economic model, brought by the entrepreneurs and investors of the region, has prevented the consolidation of an integral development model which could generate life conditions of dignity for the entire population of Middle Magdalena. Thus, the need to either re-orientate the current development model, or consolidate a new one has generated five proposals in the region:
First, there is the proposal for *armed resistance* encouraged by the guerrillas, who base themselves on the principle of popular autonomy and attempt to expel capitalist macro-projects from the area. This is an anti-imperialist project, which seeks a sovereign model of development. The second approach is that of the peasant movement. As such, this is a proposal of *reactive coexistence*, in which social resistance movements have been consolidated against the capitalist model. However, the peasant economy has not exceeded the subsistence level and continues to coexist alongside the dynamics of large scale capitalists. Third, there is the *hegemonic nature* proposal promoted by the government, businesspeople and paramilitaries, who consider capitalism to be the only viable proposal for development. Fourth, there is the *illegal capitalist model*, based on the production and sale of cocaine, which aims to generate rapid cash dividends to finance the war economy, and to sustain peasant farmers. Fifth and last, there are those who promote productive and institutional transformations that bring the diverse actors of the region together in order to construct a common proposal of development. The PDPMM is located in this last perspective of *pragmatic articulation*, which seeks to implement a regional and collective economy.

The dialogue that the PDPMM sets up with entrepreneurs and investors of the zone takes place in this context. Its objective is to promote the "joint" construction of an endogenous development model encouraging an agreement between those who give priority to the *production for export*, and those who consider that the objective of the productive process is the creation of *final goods for a life of dignity*. However, such agreement demands two requirements (de Roux 2006a): first, settlers committed to life with dignity cannot responsibly accept in their territory companies which have destroyed human dignity or the environment in other parts of the world. Second, the local population must express their disagreement with companies and economic projects which do not prioritise the productive occupation of the territory by the local population themselves and their incorporation into the process of regional development.
The proposal that the PDPMM makes to the entrepreneurs and investors seeks to establish *a regional economy*, which combines peasant production with the local transformation of products. This is a form of territorial development that incorporates the peasant smallholding and the urban economy with the regional development poles responsible for providing the technical and institutional services that the production process needs (CID 2004). The final result must be a development model which interconnects all forms of production, in order to generate goods and services in accordance with the kind of life people would like to live.

In order to develop this dialogue and economic debate, The PDPMM has created two types of scenarios for negotiation: the first are the *Mesas Regionales* (Regional Working Tables), which deal with general matters in order to influence public policy. Today, there are five of these tables: the Working Table for the Displaced, the Working Table for Interlocution in Southern Bolívar; Oil, Region and Peace Working Table; the Land Working Table, and the Intersectorial Committee for Life. The *Mesas Sectoriales* (Sector Working Tables) are the second scenario, which analyse specific and circumstantial issues in relation to a given place. For instance, the Working Table of El Carmen and Landázuri discusses matters of coal extraction; the Working Table for the Mining Area of Southern Bolívar analyzes the gold production project; and the Working Table of El Centro discusses the exploitation of the Cira and Infantas oil wells located in the municipality of Barrancabermeja.

The next section will present the genesis and evolution of the Working Table concerning the *Cira-Infantas Project* in order to exemplify the development of one of the scenarios for negotiation created by the PDPMM. The systematisation of this sub-case will help to demonstrate the practical implications that entrepreneurs, investors, settlers and PDPMM members had to face, in order to achieve an agreement about the start-up of an oil production project.
C. THE CIRA–INFANTAS PROJECT: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH

The Cira and Infantas oil wells are located in the rural zone of the municipality of Barrancabermeja, specifically in a village called El Centro. Production levels peaked in the 1940s, at 62,000 BOPD; however, due to the depletion of those fields, petroleum activity in the Cira-Infantas wells has declined such that in 2005 oil production was only 5,500 BOPD (Cfr. ECOPETROL web page).

In the light of this situation, ECOPETROL started a plan to reactivate production from both wells. In July 2003, it presented a project to eight foreign companies for them to study its viability. The companies chosen were: BP, Total, Chevron-Texaco, Nexen, China National Oil Corporation and Occidental de Colombia (OXY). However, only OXYANDINA presented a formal response. According to an OXY officer (personal interview. 24 April 2008), there were two basic reasons why the other companies did not respond: first, the project presented a high economic risk since the reactivation of a mature field requires preliminary investments that may not be recovered later; and second, the project had a high social risk given the presence of armed actors in the area, strong union activity and the squatter settlements in the lands of the oilfield.

In September 2005, a management collaboration contract was signed between ECOPETROL and OXY for the exploration and development of the Cira-Infantas wells. Curiously, there were dissimilar understandings of "industrial safety" standards in this agreement. While OXY does not undertake operations in places where there are houses close to the wells (as is the case in the district of El Centro), ECOPETROL, for historical reasons, has operated in fields where there are human populations close by. Subsequently, at the specific request of OXY, ECOPETROL undertook to hand over the oilfield free of inhabitants for safe exploitation. This commitment signified the relocation of at least 1,500 families. For that purpose, a plan to purchase land and housing was arranged.

51 This is the slogan of the project.
1. The right to remain in the territory

During 2005, the community of El Centro began to express its concern about the project since there were "unofficial" rumours which spoke of "mass evictions" of the inhabitants of the area.

"ECOPETROL never presented the project to the community... They had, from the start of the project, decided to take the entire population out of the area. They requested a modification to the “Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial” - POT (Land-Use Plan) in 2005... [In fact,] Resolution 38/2005 was published which delivered 17,200 hectares to ECOPETROL. As of that moment, the conflict between the community and the company began because people did not want to be evicted" (community leader of El Centro. Personal interview. 10 May 2008).

As one way of facing this problem, the community organised the Working Table of El Centro Communities in March 2006 – formed by a representative of each sector of the community, the Mayor of Barrancabermeja, the Foro Social, the parish priest of Nuestra Señora del Carmen, the PDPMM and the ECOPETROL Union (USO). At a meeting held on the 9 June 2006, the Working Table approved its "base document", which explained the postulates and the minimum requirements to be discussed with those responsible for the Cira-Infantas project. The two most important of these requirements set by the community were:

"[1] Given the uncertainty regarding the dynamics of the reactivation of the Cira-Infantas wells, we identified the situation of the local population as one of displacement forced by the interests of the State. We demand the stability of the population of the district of El Centro to be maintained by guaranteeing the continuity and improvement of the sustainable projects for life, which each family is currently developing in the area.

[2] The reactivation of the Cira-Infantas wells must guarantee the contracting of goods and services, and skilled and unskilled labour, with priority to the inhabitants of the district of El Centro" (Working Table - Base Document 2006).
A second working table, the *Mesa Ampliada* (Extended Table), was set up to discuss these points. It was formed by members of the original Working Table, and representatives of the Presidency, ECOPETROL, OXY, INCODER, the Ministry of Mines and Energy and the governorship of Santander. The Extended Table met during the months of November and December 2006 with the coordination of the mayor’s office of Barrancabermeja. The creation of the Extended Table made it possible to open up a dialogue between the parties, in which the community of El Centro expressed its decision to “remain” in the territory.

As a result of this process of concertation in December 2006, the families of El Centro received a Christmas card from ECOPETROL and OXY announcing that the project would start without evicting everyone in the district. Strictly, only the families for whom the risk factor was high would be relocated. It was estimated that only 300 families would be relocated out of a possible total of 1,500.

"The learning process showed us that it was definitely better to follow a “Coexistence Model” rather than to forge ahead blinkered with industrial safety standards. We, therefore, created a completely special and new model for this type of case known as the Close Proximity Operation (CIPROX). This is a model that allows operations to be pursued safely, using an alarm system, which permits the exploitation of the field alongside the local population. The previous model indicated that there should be no housing within a wide radius around operations for reasons of industrial safety. Given the difficulty of moving people, we saw the need to create and implement this new model. Today, we see that it is not viable to try to move people. That is not sustainable, and it goes against the company’s image (staff member of OXY. Personal interview. 24 April 2008).

2. The conflict emerges

During 2007, the course of the two working tables began to decline because the main demand of the communities – that of eviction - had been resolved. Only 18 out of the original 33 representatives of the communities remained. In terms of
institutions, only the Catholic Church and the PDPMM stayed on accompanying the process. Despite the efforts of the leaders of the working tables, the process of dialogue was suspended.

During this period, the oil workers of the Cira-Infantas project were discontented with salary policies and contract terms. In consequence, they started to organise an indefinite strike. Taking advantage of the general situation of unrest in relation to the project, the community of El Centro and around 1,500 workers of the OXY-ECOPETROL consortium joined forces to declare a joint strike on November 14 2007. The strike lasted until November 5, leading to production losses of at least US$8 million\textsuperscript{52}. During the strike, there were riots and confrontations with the police, which left 10 injured people\textsuperscript{53}.

As a result of mediation by the Catholic Church and the PDPMM, on November 22 2007 an "Act of Commitment" was signed among the communities of El Centro district, the workers of the Cira-Infantas project and the OXY-ECOPETROL consortium. The most important points of the agreement were:

- Members from the contract companies of the project received a salary increase of 62\% as of 1 January 2009. Moreover, all workers directly engaged on the Cira-Infantas project had an increase of 64\% that became effective immediately.

- With regard to the local communities, and as a way of approaching the impact of the project, four working tables were formed jointly to draw up a local development plan. The subjects to be discussed in the four tables were: 1) Land and housing; 2) Social and productive projects; 3) Employment and training; and 4) Environment. The land and housing working table met during 2008.

\textsuperscript{52} Vanguardia Liberal: page 2E. 23 November 2007.
\textsuperscript{53} Vanguardia Liberal: page 2E. 17 November 2007.
D. SOME OBSERVATIONS AROUND THE CIRA-INFANTAS PROJECT

The sub-case of the Cira-Infantas project is an example of dialogue and agreement between actors, which reduced the negative impact of an industrial development project on the way of life of rural communities of the district of El Centro. Specifically, results included: the peaceful solution to a conflict, which was becoming violent; the decision not to relocate the greater part of the local population; the restructuring of the oil exploitation model; and the formation of four working tables to construct a local development proposal.

In the same way, the sub-case of the Cira-Infantas project aided in explaining the practical implications that the PDPMM faced in the dialogue with entrepreneurs and local inhabitants for implementing its Regional Proposal for Development and Peace. In this regard, the opinion of each of the two main actors regarding the role of the PDPMM during the negotiation process was relevant.

For the rural communities of El Centro, the PDPMM provided strong accompaniment when acting as a guarantor of the rights of the local population.

"The PDPMM has been the only organisation which has agreed to accompany us for better or worse. Beyond them, no organisation other than the local [district] organisations has been accompanying us. The PDPMM is the only one which has stayed with us; the only one which has put up with all the hassle" (community leader of El Centro. Personal interview. 10 May 2008).

The businessmen perspective is different. For them, the PDPMM did not succeed in defining its role.

"Personally, I think that the PDPMM has not defined its position. We know that it is a key actor in the region, and we recognize its role. But in this process, it has come and gone like a chameleon. The PDPMM started being a guarantor. It came in as an active participant, and now it is a kind of adviser of one of the parties. It presents itself as neutral, but we can see that it has taken a
position” (staff member of OXY. Personal interview. 24 April 2008).

This criticism comes coupled with another fact: when the conflict between the community and the Cira-Infantas project was brewing, the ECOPETROL and OXY entrepreneurs proposed that the PDPMM should be responsible for executing the social plan of the project, as a way of lessening tension. But the PDPMM did not accept the offer.

"We proposed that the PDPMM should be the executing agent of the social component. In essence, we just drill wells... We know nothing about social matters. Therefore, we looked for somebody who could collaborate with us on social affairs. But the PDPMM said that it could not do that because the Cira-Infantas project, at the moment we made the proposal, had a terrible image... My personal view is that the PDPMM assumes a critical position vis-à-vis the project, but it does not take part in the process. It is not correct to simply say that the [industrial] model is wrong... What we have to establish is a common space to jointly construct development policies” (staff member of OXY. Personal interview. 24 April 2008).

The PDPMM defended its refusal as follows:

"One day, the ECOPETROL and OXY entrepreneurs called me and said: "we want you to be responsible for the social management of the project". I received a proposal, and I said that I would consult with my team... We realised that we could not accept because our role has to be more than that of mediators... If we agreed to go along with ECOPETROL, people would lose confidence in us. One of the things we have as the dynamic force in development is a mutual agreement of trust. This is something we must protect strongly. This is something very important to take into account in a region in conflict" (founder of the PDPMM. Personal interview. 05 May 2008).

The position taken by the PDPMM raises two questions: How incommensurable were the Regional Development and Peace Proposal promoted by the PDPMM, and the Social Plan of the Cira-Infantas Project, such that the PDPMM could not accept the responsibility for executing the Social Plan proposed by OXY and
ECOPETROL? How did the PDPMM face that incommensurability? In the first stage of the Cira-Infantas project, the purpose of the Social Plan was, indeed, to relocate all the inhabitants of the district. Clearly, such a proposal could be accepted, neither by the PDPMM nor by the rural communities, which defend the permanence of settlers in their territory. After a long process of negotiation, it was agreed that the population would not be relocated.

After this agreement between the parties, the process of dialogue began a second stage with the creation of four working tables on various issues, designed to draw up a common development proposal. A working space was formed in order for each of the parties to present its development proposal with the aim of setting up an institutional and productive framework to foster the economic and social growth of the district. This was the moment at which the Social Plan of the business faction, the Regional Proposal of the PDPMM and the Local Development Proposal of the rural communities of El Centro could provide mutual feedback in order to implement a Collective Development Proposal.

These considerations suggest a practical path to follow in the negotiation and solution of a conflict situation. It could be stated that the elimination of a confrontation demands a first instance of mediation to pass to a second instance of pragmatic articulation. The first moment or instance requests an immediate solution to a circumstantial conflict or problem through the signature of some act or agreement. However, the problem with that solution is that such agreements are generally based on specific, precise and short term solutions, in which the parties assume concrete responsibilities and tasks. Therefore, each of the opposing visions of development continues executing its own model of development simultaneously, without either affecting or modifying the other. The possibility that new conflicts will arise in the future, and that commitments already acquired will be broken, has been one of the characteristics of this type of solution.

As a consequence, the institutional transformation, namely a change in the rules of the game to reduce levels of incompatibility is required. Institutional
development, as the process in which groups and individuals are bound together by some common objectives, has the purpose of promoting the concerted action of local agents, both among themselves and with external agents (Berdegué and Schejtmam 2004); and of changing the formal and informal rules that perpetuate incommensurability. With the creation of new rules, an articulated institutional system can structure and limit the behaviour of the social actors, and establish the mechanisms to enforce these new rules.

This is the reason why the second instance of "pragmatic articulation" is essential: the parties in conflict provide mutual feedback, in order to create a productive and institutional structure which reduces the level of incommensurability and confrontation between the agents of development. Rather than a pact between actors, the solution of discrepancies requires a "merger" of rival positions, which will make it possible to create a participatory model of development, in which the common good is feasible. The creation of this "common model" of development is defined as an exercise of "synthesis", which brings together incommensurable proposals regarding the theory and practice of development. Ideally, the intention is not to have two or more development models in conflict existing or coexisting "peacefully" without affecting each other. The goal is, rather, to articulate two or more visions, consolidating common policies and strategies for development.

Analyzing the PDPMM’s role from this interpretative scheme, it is important to highlight its role as mediator in the conflict between the rural community of El Centro and the Consortium OXY-ECOPETROL. However, the extent to which the PDPMM has emphasized its role as a neutral agent – mediator - influences the degree to which it can promote its own regional proposal for peace and development. Beyond neutral intermediary roles, a concerted regional development plan demands the participation of each agent as an actor in the negotiation process with the purpose of contrasting and confronting their specific

\[\text{54 For communication and synthesis of rival traditions, this study (see Chapter Four) takes up the dialectic method of Thomas Aquinas recommended by Alasdair MacIntyre (1988).}\]
proposals. Thus, the PDPMM’s strategy should foster pragmatic articulations among rival models of development including its own, instead of bringing about accords and agreements between the parties in confrontation. Otherwise, the PDPMM will be relegated to playing an eternal role of mediator in the labour and social conflicts of the region without eliminating the structural cause of conflict dynamics, i.e. the theoretical and practical incommensurability between actors and their views of rural development.

To summarise, if conflict dynamics in specific territories are understood as an expression of dispute between opposing views of territorial rural development, it can be said that a pragmatic articulation between them appears to be the most feasible means of promoting peaceful and non-violent interactions among those actors of rural development in conflict. In the language of the RTD approach, such pragmatic articulation seeks to produce both productive and institutional transformations of a specific territory. Its aim is the reduction of poverty and conflict. The PDPMM’s productive transformation proposal consists of changing the prevailing production patterns through productive projects in order to articulate the area’s economy with dynamic markets. The institutional transformation promoted by the PDPMM rather seeks to modify those structures that cause exclusion thereby allowing the execution of the PDPMM’s Regional Proposal.

Nevertheless, the PDPMM has focused its action at the productive level, doing much less to foster the transformation of the rules of the game in a territory in dispute. In this context, the PDPMM has mainly played a mediator’s role between rival actors. The post-conflict accords do not amount to institutional transformations as they do not change the rules of the game; they merely pursue a certain change of behaviour in specific domains. Conflict dynamics will only translate into positive change when it leads to such institutional changes. A failing of the PDPMM model may be its emphasis on productive projects, which seek productive transformation as a basis for peace while some of its interventions seek
change in behaviour. Unfortunately, such a production-focused strategy has not yet induced deeper institutional changes.

VII. CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS

The present chapter has focused on the PDPMM in order to examine its potential in terms of conflict resolution within the regional framework. The analysis presented throughout the chapter indicated that the PDPMM acts under the assumption that it is possible and necessary to promote solutions to the internal conflict through the execution of social and productive projects for two main reasons: first, social and productive projects permit the participation of local people in the regional development process as a way to reduce exclusion (one of the main causes of the internal conflict). The sovereign participation of the peasant-farmer in an open play of market forces is the utopia of the PDPMM's vision of the consolidation of development and peace in Middle Magdalena. Hence the importance to the PDPMM of establishing productive and social "reference points" (such as the cocoa project described in this chapter). They are evidence of the inclusion of the excluded in the stages of production, distribution and marketing of products. According to the PDPMM, this is a staggered process of development, in which step-by-step and with the multiplication of these types of experiences, the whole region will be covered thus making the Regional Proposal of Peace and Development a reality.

Second, development projects with a territorial approach and directed to quite narrow economic goals may be instruments for building shared agendas between parties in conflict, rather than having to wait for a “national peace process” or a “general consensus” to arise in some general forum on rural development. Thus, the PDPMM suggests that the key of territorial development is to bring about the empowerment of local communities to manage their own futures and to link stakeholders with a “common purpose”. The final goal of this “Regional Proposal” is to form links between public, private and local communities unifying
objectives for the economy and social development as a tool for awareness-raising, consensus building, and mutual learning and communication between conflicting agents and visions of rural development.

Nonetheless, this aspiration may be seen as an over-ambitious and abstract ideal due to its dualist nature: "the PDPMM promotes a poor and peasant economic sector, side by side with the capitalist giant, without touching the status quo. Its model is "dual" because it promotes a popular and peasant economy, which can move at certain levels and survive; however, it runs parallel to a scenario in which the capitalism is dominant" (economist. Personal interview. 15 April 2008). Furthermore, some authors such as Reis (2004), Loingsigh (2002, 2005, 2009) and the ACVC (2005), have accused the PDPMM’s strategy of establishing a new kind of imperialism that not only undermines local and traditional economies, but also runs counter its proposal of building a region in which all agents share a common proposal of development.

Moreover, the duality expressed in the economic field is equally evident at the political and military level. The PDPMM’s model can also be considered to be dual since it promotes local experiences for peace, which survive in the midst of a regional dynamics of war. Despite the peace expressions achieved in the Humanitarian Spaces, the figures on forced displacement and murder continue to be high in the region (see Chapter Two).

The economic and political duality described above is characterised by the fact that opposed visions of development coexist in the same space without providing mutual feedback, and without articulating with each other. On the contrary, they coexist in conflict seeking to eliminate rival positions. If the impasse of dualism faced by the PDPMM is to be overcome, this will require the Regional Development and Peace Proposal to be materialised. It must be a proposal which should not be limited to the short-term solution of circumstantial conflicts, nor to the introduction of peaceful coexistence between the parties through pacts or treaties (the evident sign of pragmatic dualism). The PDPMM’s Regional Peace
Proposal consists of consolidating a synthesis of incommensurable positions, in which the elements of Capitalism, peasant-farming and territorial considerations merge and form a common regional economy based on the respect and defence of life.

In summary, it might be said that the PDPMM has succeeded, during its 13 years of intervention, in consolidating its proposal of sustainable human development through the establishment of productive and social projects that evidence the productive occupation of the territory by local populations. During that time, the PDPMM has defended, discussed and confronted its proposal of rural development with four other visions of development, in order to create a collective economic model which will reduce the levels of violence and poverty in the region. The PDPMM has worked for the establishment of this Regional Development and Peace Proposal by promoting spaces of interlocution and dialogue with a range of agents in the region. An important point here worth mentioning is the fact that the PDPMM has played a key role as a mediator making it possible the solution of specific and circumstantial conflicts. Nonetheless, the elimination of the structural causes of conflict dynamics, i.e. the theoretical and practical incommensurability between actors and visions of rural development, demands a productive and institutional articulation seeking to modify the rules of the game that today cause exclusion. The fact that this objective has not been achieved has marked Middle Magdalena as a region still in dispute, in which different visions of rural development continue to coexist simultaneously, each one seeking to eliminate its adversary without looking for articulation or mutual reconciliation.
GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

This academic journey through the highways and byways of Rural Territorial Development, immersing myself in the knowledge and practice of a group of people seeking sustainable development and lasting peace, has been a remarkable experience. It has also entailed an exceptional physical journey through the Middle Magdalena region in Colombia - from the Northern point in the municipality of Regidor to the Southern end in the municipality of Landázuri; a journey made by jeep and canoe amidst the constant sight of cacao being planted and of African palm growing along the Magdalena river and its valley. These experiences were made more memorable by my dialogues and interviews with industrialists, farmers, guerrillas, paramilitaries and people of the civil society in the heart of the conflict; each group forever hoping for a better form of development in a region where contradiction is the norm. It is from here that this reflection was born.

These journeys were guided by an inspiring epistemological question: How does a rural territorial strategy shape conflict dynamics in a territory characterized by high levels of violence and poverty? This vital point led me to search the academic and real world for the essential elements to analyze how the PDPMM seeks to foster positive change in Middle Magdalena. This concluding section presents the main findings that have emerged over the course of this academic journey aimed at systematizing the ways in which the PDPMM implements a territorial approach towards conflict solution and poverty reduction in a territory in dispute. Such conclusions will be presented in three parts, beginning with some theoretical and methodological findings based on the Introduction and the First Chapter, and followed by an attempt to elucidate the implications of doing development in the midst of the conflict based on the evidence presented in Chapters Two to Seven. Finally, some propositions will be identified in order to offer some theoretical and practical insights to rural actors working in territories embedded in a conflict dynamic.
I. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FINDINGS

In light of the analysis developed so far, RTD programs are exactly the type of rural strategy needed in these times in which conventional approaches to rural development have been questioned, and contemporary changes affecting rural economies – that is, the globalization process, economic liberalization and the new decentralization process - have happened. Given this new context, this research has stated the need to reformulate rural development strategies from a territorial perspective, due to the depth of urban-rural articulation. The widespread significance of non-farm activities together with the gathering pace of urbanization, has led to a growing recognition of urban–rural linkages for development strategies. In this perspective, the RTD approach has incorporated a focus on territorial transformation (urban-rural change) as opposed to an earlier sectoral emphasis on rural livelihoods and urban development.

Assuming the theoretical and practical framework specified by RIMISP (2007), the present study is rooted in Berdegué’s and Schejtmans’s (2004) approach, which characterizes Rural Territorial Development as a process of simultaneous productive transformation and institutional change with the aim of reducing poverty in rural territories.

Despite the growing experience of RTD programs in Latin America, the collective understanding of the explicit dynamics of rural territorial development is still in its infancy. This research has been an attempt to make some contributions that help to improve RTD’s theoretical and practical basis, notably in the domains of development and peace. Specifically, the present study has focused on analyzing the relative failure of RTD to conceptualize the relation between development and conflict. The study has gone beyond RTD’s principal goal of eliminating poverty, suggesting that the resolution of conflict dynamics should be a crucial objective of the development process itself.
In addition to the issues regarding the nature and purpose of rural territorial development, the preceding topic raised questions about the most suitable research method to approach the complex relation between development and conflict. The thesis has shown that the case-study method became the most suitable form of interpretative investigation into the relationship between violence and rural development. The PDPMM, as the case-study selected, offered considerable insights to the development field given its double purpose of overcoming poverty and encouraging peaceful coexistence through sustainable human development.

II. RURAL TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT
IN THE MIDST OF THE CONFLICT

The theoretical and methodological findings presented above contextualize the empirical findings of this research. In this sense, the practical and theoretical implications of pursuing rural territorial development in a territory in dispute will be explained in this section. First however, I will summarize the arguments made by the different chapters of this thesis.

Chapter Two presented the specific territorial and geographical conditions in which the PDPMM implements its proposal of development and peace. This provided a view of the historical and socio-economic circumstances in which the PDPMM’s strategy seeks to promote productive and institutional transformations that overcome poverty and conflict in a territory where contradiction is not only evident but also prevalent (such a Middle Magdalena). The PDPMM expresses that situation through two related questions: Why is there poverty and misery in a bountiful region? Why is there so much violence and strife in a region where there is much love for life? Such parameters determined what Berdegué and Schejtmman (2004) call a type 4 territory - a territory in a process of outright societal breakdown resulting from its economic stagnation and its distorted institutional development.
To a great extent, the situation of economic depression in Middle Magdalena is the result of an enclave economy established in the region in the 19th Century. This deepened throughout the 20th century with the exploitation of oil, African palm and cattle farming. As a result, even though the region’s rich natural resources generate approximately US$2.6 billion annually, only 21% of the revenue generated remains there. Moreover, 88.8% of the Annual Gross Production Value corresponds to the oil industry, signifying the strong dependency that the region has on the petroleum sector. It can be stated that the regional economy of Middle Magdalena revolves around petroleum. The remaining economic activities (11.2% of the regional GDP) correspond first, to two other extractive modes of production (African palm and cattle farming), and second, to a small peasant economy of traditional products (cocoa, fruits, fish, cotton, vegetables). In this scenario, despite the fact the coca production plays an important role as a source of income that funds the armed conflict, it did not contribute significantly to the regional GDP (0.21%). As a result, whilst the dominant model of development applied in Middle Magdalena contributed significantly to the national GDP, 51.3% of its population still had their basic needs unmet.

Apart from this contrast between wealth and poverty, there is also incongruity between the region's existing violent milieu and the population's love for life. The region is a microcosm of the same violent situation presently affecting the whole country: an ongoing internal armed conflict lasting nearly fifty years; a human rights violations record which remains among the worst in America; and a drug trade that ranks first on the planet. The main actors of this internal confrontation (guerrillas and paramilitary forces) have fought to control the territory and the drug business through threats, selective assassinations and forced displacements against civilians, turning them into the principal victims of the war. Regional statistics have indicated that between 1997 and 2007 the murder rate registered was 26 civilian dead for every 100,000 inhabitants; and at least 116,453 people were displaced between 1994-2007.
The preceding characterization of the Middle Magdalena region demonstrates that it is a territory with poor institutional structure and a lack of serious endogenous economic alternatives – a condition that can be interpreted either from a negative point of view (as a region immersed in a real process of social disarticulation), or from a positive one (as a territory to be built). Far from it being considered a pessimistic perspective, this study - rooted in RTD principles -, established the possibility of generating territories through the creation of a common development project aimed at helping enhance the region's territorial identity.

The next methodological step consisted of defining a specific theoretical framework that guided the analysis of the situation affecting territories embedded in a conflict dynamic. Far from military or dualistic interpretations (violence as a cause or consequence of underdevelopment), this study understands conflict as a product of contradictory relations among actors who are immersed and involved in the developmental process itself. From this perspective, the research assumed a distinctive interpretation of conflict dynamics, namely “a dispute between incommensurable views of rural territorial development. As they interact with each other and are influenced by specific economic, political and social arguments, the opposition among these views can generate conditions that foster the solution of disparities through coercive, illegal or violent methods in the absence or weakness of institutions that might otherwise have fostered non-violent and legal means of negotiating the conflict” (Cfr. Chapter Three).

Having established a working definition of conflict dynamics, a third methodological step was to assess this working definition in the light of other theoretical and practical data. To do this, the proposed concept of conflict dynamics was broken down into two parts. First, it was necessary to elaborate on the practical and theoretical incommensurability among rival views of rural development in the context of Latin America, Colombia and Middle Magdalena (Chapters Four and Five). Second, it was imperative to identify the most relevant factors that intensify contradictions and generate conflicts between those incommensurable visions (Chapter Six).
Focusing on the Latin American history of development, the analysis presented in Chapter Four allowed me to conclude how such a history had been characterized by conflicts and disputes among rival views of development. In particular, the developmental paradigms of Modernization, Dependency and Neoliberalism, interact with each other as they seek to impose their own respective economic model. The programmes, strategies and policies derived from each vision contrast with the objectives and means of its opponents. In that sense, the Modernization Paradigm conceives of development as a State-led intervention in which industrialization is the key factor to economic growth. It is a form of evolutionary theory that states how “poor” countries could develop in the same way as “rich” countries did. In contrast, the Dependency Theory is based on the notion that resources flow from "peripheral" countries to a "core" of wealthy states, enriching the latter at the expense of the former. As a result, an Import Substitution Industrialization strategy was implemented to reduce the foreign dependency of Latin America through the local production of industrialized products. In turn, Neoliberalism emerged as a theory based on the self-regulation of markets as the most effective path to economic growth. Free trade policies and privatization are considered the key means to economic transformation.

Looking at the case of Colombia, after 1950 the country’s developmental history shifted from Industrial Protectionism to Economic Liberalization. While the former aimed to restrain trade between states through tariff rates and restrictive quotas on imported goods; the latter advocated fewer government regulations in the economy in exchange for greater participation of private entities. The incommensurability between those two models is evident since not only is Protectionism aligned with anti-globalization, but it also contrasts with free trade, where government barriers to trade are kept to a minimum.

Turning to the Middle Magdalena region, five main visions and actors of rural development were identified. These are presented, along with their notion of rural development in the following table.
Table No. 8.1
Principal Views and Actors of Rural Development in Middle Magdalena

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VIEWS</th>
<th>ACTORS</th>
<th>NOTION OF DEVELOPMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Communities’ View</td>
<td>Peasants, Fishermen and Miners.</td>
<td>Sovereign proposal of development to be implemented by the inhabitants of Middle Magdalena seeking respect for and defence of fundamental rights, notably the right over the territory and the right to food (food security).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalist Vision</td>
<td>Government, industrialists and Livestock Farmers.</td>
<td>Production of goods and services through the market leading to profit. It proposes the development of mega-agroindustrial projects. Democratic Security is an essential condition for development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial Approach</td>
<td>PDPMM, Catholic Church and some sectors of the Civil Society.</td>
<td>Economic and social process of territorial development supporting the production of life with dignity, the productive occupation of the territory by settlers, and the participation of local people in the productive process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic and Military Approach</td>
<td>ELN</td>
<td>Establishment of an autonomous mode of production in which food security is the main aim of the development process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FARC</td>
<td>Peasant war economy in which the eradication of the latifundio is the key factor in rural development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AUC</td>
<td>Regional development based on the promotion of industrial and agro-industrial projects, in which military and political control is necessary to create ideal conditions for international and national investment. As a prerequisite for such development, guerrilla movements must be eradicated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cocaine “Model”</td>
<td>Drug Dealers, armed groups and peasant farmers.</td>
<td>Illicit mode of production that generates profits used to finance armed confrontation (armed groups), or as a means of subsistence for many peasants of the region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this point, it is important to emphasize how the three different levels of analysis (macro, meso and micro) about notions of rural development presented in this research relate to each other. Such statement draws attention to the theoretical and practical links that exist between the five main views of rural development.
pursued in Middle Magdalena (micro level), and the three main theories (Modernization, Dependency and Neoliberalism) that have pervaded development issues in Latin America and Colombia (macro and meso levels). That is the case of industrialists and businessmen of the Middle Magdalena region who promote neoliberal strategies in a context of free trade and privatization encouraged by the Colombian government and different international economic organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF.

In this neoliberal process, the establishment of macro-projects, hand-in-hand with the accomplishment of the Democratic Security policy, will further the process of globalization in Colombia and open the market for the development of big enterprises and profit in a more stable and secure economy. Contrary to this approach, guerrillas and left wing movements attempt to establish Marxist and Socialist models of development rooted in conceptions of Dependency. According to those groups, the existing dependent situation of Colombia, derived from the internal class conflict, claims social change by military means. The establishment of a revolutionary government would eliminate social injustice and inequality generated by the execution of the prevalent economic model. Regarding the territorial approaches (promoted by the PDPMM and the rural communities of Middle Magdalena), these proposals seek to establish an alternative model of development that goes beyond neoliberal and socialist strategies.

Based on the former statements, the coexistence of several views of development in one territory determines what in this research has been called territorial conflict dynamics - a conflictive situation where each actor attempts to impose its own interpretation of development, and the respective strategies required within a given territory to improve living conditions. The analysis offered in Chapter Six (focused on the Middle Magdalena region), and the systematization of the specific sub-case of African palm, allowed me to identify the two major dimensions of incommensurability that contribute to increase conflict dynamics in the development process: the teleological dimension, where discrepancies are associated with the purpose and function of the development process; and the
Looking at the teleological dimension, the discrepancies among actors are principally divided among those who consider that the main purpose of development is economic growth and maximization of profits either by legal or illegal means (capitalists, drug dealers and armed groups), and those who propose an integrated process of development focused on human dignity (rural communities and the PDPMM). As a result of this divergence, the Middle Magdalena has become a territory in dispute in which, *grosso modo*: industrialists visualize the region as a platform for the production of export goods and services; drug dealers and armed groups intend to found an empire in which drugs are produced and order enforced through murder and threat; and rural communities and the PDPMM’s agents aim at establishing an endogenous proposal of development to be implemented by settlers.

In this context of competition and rivalry, such teleological discrepancies have evolved into violent disputes over the control and productive occupation of the territory (second dimension). This is hardly surprising, as the notions that underlie development lead to rival views of how land should be used and controlled.

In the specific case of Middle Magdalena, three strategies to control the territory prevail. First, armed groups use military tactics to rule important zones. Second, the PDPMM and the peasant communities execute productive and social projects as a means of remaining in the territory and launching a social process in which fundamental rights are preserved. Finally, the government and industrialists implement a “pacifying and licit” occupation of the territory based on an aggressive military and economic strategy. In this effort, the Democratic Security policy has not only guaranteed national and foreign investment, but has also contributed to the end of the guerrilla’s control over several areas of the country.
The different systems for controlling the territory also reflect conflicting modes of production. Both the capitalist and the cocaine models implement an export-orientated strategy. However, there are some differences between them: while coca is cultivated by poor peasants on plots of land less than three hectares in size, the agro-industrialists executed mega-projects in large-scale farms mostly owned by people living outside the region. At the other extreme, the PDPMM and rural communities deduce that these modes of production turn the peasant farmers into a new proletarian class. They, therefore, promote a different type of productive occupation of the territory through the establishment of “peasant farms” in which settlers participate actively in the regional productive process.

Such incommensurability reflects what can be characterized as the crucial impasse of the rural development process today: “agro-industry without peasants versus peasants integrated into agro-industrial chains”. Approaches to rural development diverge between those who affirm that liberalization is the only feasible option for rural development, and those who believe in the viability of alternative models, as well as, the potential viability of the peasant economy in the international economic system. In this debate, while some indicate that neoliberal policies are the most suitable strategies to foster rural improvement, others argue that neoliberalization turns poor peasant farmers into dependent producers, and steadily contributes to their elimination. Conscious of these debates, the PDPMM believes that the traditional peasant economy can be integrated into the global system and compete successfully in dynamic markets. Playing on Hamlet’s dilemma one could phrase the issue as follows: “to strengthen rurality with the peasantry or to strengthen rurality without the peasantry: that is the question.”

A. FACING CONFLICT DYNAMICS

Having specified the two major dimensions of incommensurability that contribute to the increase of conflict, a final methodological step was taken in order to achieve the main objective of this study: to provide a critical understanding of a Rural Territorial Development intervention in a context of conflict dynamics, so
that the PDPMM’s Regional Proposal of Development and Peace can be examined.

According to the PDPMM, the first and vital step towards building a participative model of development is to include the excluded in the regional productive process. PDPMM’s premise is that the main problem of rural inequality is not the exploitation of people by markets, but the exclusion of the poor from the productive process. Therefore, in the debates over adverse incorporation (du Toit 2004) and social exclusion (de Haan 2003), the PDPMM adopts the latter framework as the most adequate for understanding the sources of poverty. For that reason, the purpose of the PDPMM consists of transforming peasant and popular communities into societies with political and economic power able to participate in the market and in the public institutional architecture. The argument is that it is through the participation of settlers in the productive process that the transformation of the extractive and exogenous model of development is possible and attainable.

In the specific case of the PDPMM, the main strategy for incorporating local people into the regional productive process is the implementation of social and productive projects that not only increase people’s capacities to manage their own development, but also put into practice an integral approach to solving conflict dynamics. The PDPMM projects are conceptualised as a means of consolidating the peasant and popular economy through its incorporation in the different stages of production, distribution and marketing of regional products. Those projects are aimed at solving the structural and subjective causes of the internal conflict.

“The focus on Sustainable Development means that within the country’s peace process, the PDPMM stands out because it has established, with facts, that peace can be built around productive projects of an economy for life that is non-neoliberal and vigorous, that is strong enough that it will not be excluded from the region by other economies, and that guarantees that this region will be occupied by local men and women who know how to use this
environment’s own natural resources in a way that is productive, humane and in harmony with nature” (de Roux 1999: 34).

The importance of combining development with the establishment of peaceful coexistence is evident if one considers the perverse outcomes of the prevailing economic model. In contrast, the PDPMM’s productive projects – i.e those promoting Africa palm and cocoa - achieved their specific benchmarks: 1) A productive occupation of the territory by local people; 2) Tangible social and economic benefits; 3) An alternative mode of production to that of coca cultivation; 4) Innovation in forms of production and management that connect the peasant and popular economy to dynamic markets; 5) Concerted actions of internal and external agents to obtain credit, land titles, financial support, technical assistance, certification of quality products and marketing; 6) The institution of a mode of production that articulates capitalist, territorial and peasant dimensions as an example of a productive articulation that merges elements of dissimilar models of development.

PDPMM’s aim consists of establishing specific “reference points” to demonstrate the success of a strategy that is contrary to those plans and economic projects implemented by the armed actors and the industrialists. According to the PDPMM, the expansion and greater coverage of such “productive benchmarks” would produce a “gradual and stepped” process of development and peace in which the productive and institutional transformation of the territory would be possible in the long run.

In this sense, the PDPMM implements a form of “partial peace”, a “peace in progress”, an “incomplete peace” that demands more efforts, further aggressive strategies, and more than ever, a concerted regional plan for development and peace. However, the PDPMM’s regional impact on the internal conflict is marginal. It may have influenced some of Middle Magdalena’s indicators and events; played a very important role in the region; and may have had a visible impact within some local communities. But its effects are limited. Despite the
remarkable micro success, notably in the domains of agricultural production, the situation of violence and inequality prevails in the territory. Although there are clear signs of a productive transformation at a local level, what still prevails in Middle Magdalena is an extractive economic model that deepens the structural problems of the territory. In such a context, the PDPMM has also been accused of being part of an imperialist policy implemented by foreign states.

For this reason, the PDPMM has been questioned for its “dualism” - that is, its perpetuation of the simultaneous coexistence of two or more economic processes within a territory. The PDPMM implements a human sustainable development model without transforming the status quo.

“The repressive policies embodied in the words and actions of ‘democratic security,’ necessarily have to be complemented, from the State’s point of view, with the implementation of development programs which give some appearance of morality to the status quo and to the imposed development model. This explains why the entire PDPMM’s philosophy is based on the alleged ‘reestablishment of the legitimacy of the State’, a contradiction in ethical terms, if one takes into account the recent history of political violence and systematic violations of human rights of the people of Middle Magdalena performed by the Colombian State” (ACVC 2005).

In this sense, the establishment of the PDPMM’s Regional Proposal of development and peace is questioned. Although there are positive outcomes at the productive and economic level, it has not delivered the much needed institutional transformation that changes the formal and informal rules which perpetuate exclusion and conflict in the Middle Magdalena region.
III. PRINCIPLES AND ASSUMPTIONS FOR DOING
RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN A TERRITORY IN DISPUTE

The elucidation of the main conclusions of this investigation allows me to infer some practical and theoretical propositions that can be taken into consideration in the execution of rural strategies in contexts of conflict dynamics. These propositions, I believe, can also enrich the Rural Territorial Development approach itself.

Proposition 1: Poverty reduction and conflict resolution: a conjoint objective of the RTD approach.

As presented in the Second Chapter, the Middle Magdalena region is a kind of territory in a real process of social disarticulation and conflict dynamics resulting from its economic stagnation and its low institutional development. To a great extent, the existence of this type of territory is a consequence of the ineffectiveness of rural development policies that have been applied during the last four decades in Latin America (Escobar 1995).

The desire to change this pattern of development generated social movements and guerrilla groups seeking the transformation of the capitalist structures that cause exclusion. As a result, the Middle Magdalena region has become immersed in a contemporary internal confrontation among those who are involved in the process of industrialization and those who are against it. This has created a territory characterized by complex conflict dynamics among opposing actors seeking variously to implement, adapt or overthrow the capitalist model.

In such a situation, the use of coercive and violent methods as a way to solve disparities, and the absence and weakness of the State institutions that foster legal means of negotiating the conflict, -among other economic, political and social factors-, generated a violent confrontation in which each actor is fighting to establish its hegemony over the territory. As a consequence, Middle Magdalena
became a territory characterized, among other conditions, by armed conflict, land concentration, rural poverty, illegal economies (cocaine), forced migration and protest.

Changing this complex situation requires the execution of more effective policies and strategies that will stimulate territorial dynamics which lead to economic growth, poverty reduction and peaceful coexistence. This thesis has argued that the specific conditions and requirements of a territory in dispute demand a particular and special approach, one that addresses conflict dynamics head on. For this reason, a “re-definition” of the explicit objective of the RTD approach is in order, due to the need to consider conflict dynamics as endogenous to the development process itself. Given this, the objective of RTD should be to pursue both poverty eradication and conflict resolution. Indeed, rural territories can be defined as spaces in which different development actors interact in relations of mutual confrontations. Beyond the hypothetical heterogeneity of Latin America’s rural territories, they all share a particular feature – they are characterized by the coexistence of incommensurable visions of development each with its own economic and social rationality.

Proposition 2: Territory is a social construction built through the intrinsic coexistence and confrontation between different actors and visions of rural development.

As the introductory chapter of this dissertation discussed, the RTD approach conceives of territory as a social construct, understood as a set of social relations that create and express a particular identity and a common purpose shared by multiple public and private agents (Berdegué and Schejtmán 2004: 32). Such a description implies that a territory has to be built. The establishment of the proposed “common purpose” demands a wide range of strategies that bring together all actors in order to strengthen the local alliances and links that make possible a collective proposal for development with identity.
This research has drawn attention to the need to identify "territory" as a dynamic space in which there are a variety of actors and visions of rural development in confrontation. That is the starting point of the social construction of a territory. “Internally homogeneous territories” are nothing more than a hypothetical construct. Instead, rural territories are inherently characterized by “conflict dynamics” that express the incommensurability between rival paradigms of development in theory and practice and between rival strategies of territorial occupation. What is evident in a specific territory is the absence of a consensus about the aim of the development process, as well as, the means by which the rural areas are to develop. In this sense, this research emphasizes the importance of understanding how conflicts and disagreements among social actors are, to a great extent, conflicts among rival territorialized visions of rural development.

In such conflict situation, it is important to highlight the asymmetry of power that pervades territorial dynamics, to the extent that one party to the conflict believes it can “eliminate” its opponents (e.g. through violence). In that case, the role of the State at the moment of fostering or reducing such asymmetry seems critical. In the specific case of Middle Magdalena, this research proposes that the State should act as an enabler of conflict resolution by establishing “rules of the game” that promote mutual agreement among the parties in disagreement. The institutional architecture built by the State should bring together all the economic and socio-political forces and interests of development agents and encourage agreement on the rules of the game by prevailing the common good at the core of the development process.

**Proposition 3: The theoretical and practical incommensurability among actors and their views of rural development is the main cause of conflict dynamics in a specific territory.**

This research understands conflict as an expression of the incommensurability between rival paradigms of development in theory and practice, each one with its own view about rural development. Under certain conditions, such disagreement
and incompatibility between actors with opposite interests and goals can be solved constructively. However, in specific cases, conflict turns to violence as an expression of the inability to manage discrepancies. That is the case of the Middle Magdalena region - a territory in dispute where needs, frustrations, protests and disagreements among agents of development have been mainly resolved through illegal and violent methods.

In this sense it is evident that the existing process of development in Middle Magdalena is intrinsically conflictive. The notion of development as a linear and stable process of economic improvement does not apply here (if anywhere). In Middle Magdalena, human and social costs have been part of the development process. The expansion of the capitalist model, the consolidation of cocaine production, and the implementation of a war economy by guerrillas and paramilitary groups, have each been executed through violent means. Some actors (notably the armed groups) have used coercive rules, militarization, and displacement as a strategy\textsuperscript{55} to gain control over the territory and expand their economic interests – for example, the phenomenon of paramilitarism has clearly been functional to capitalist practices -. As a result, rather than being a means of improving living conditions, the developmental process has itself been a source of protracted conflict dynamics that have generated many social and human costs. These costs, then, should not be seen as a consequence of the lack of development processes but rather as facts brought about “by” the development process itself (Escobar 1995).

\textbf{Proposition 4: Pragmatic articulations (both at the theoretical and practical level) are the most feasible means to face and deal with conflict dynamics.}

I have already concluded that conflict resolution must be one of the main objectives of RTD programmes. Since the execution of the actual process of development in Middle Magdalena is embedded in conflict dynamics, it follows

\textsuperscript{55} It is worth noting that these practices are conscious \textit{strategies}, and are \textit{not} best understood as mere results of the conflict.
that RTD strategies should seek the implementation of pragmatic articulations among different points of view to seek common ground among disagreements and conflicts. Such articulation implies two related challenges: first, the theoretical challenge of seeking communication and interaction between rival development paradigms and schools of thought; and second, the practical challenge of establishing a “Common Purpose” (à la Berdegué and Schejtman), a “Social Territorial Agreement” (à la FAO), or a “Regional Proposal” (à la PDPMM) that lays the basis for a concerted development project shared by multiple actors of the territory.

**First: The RTD’s theoretical challenge: Communication and interaction between different schools of thought and views of rural development.** This research argues that one of the main objectives of Rural Territorial Development strategies must be to integrate the richness and variety of views about rural development into a common approach. Instead of getting involved in an endless confrontation in which each agent tries to establish the primacy of its vision over others, the RTD approach should stress the importance of building bridges between different paradigms and views of rural development.

Based on Alasdair MacIntyre’s proposal (see Chapter Four), it is possible to demonstrate that notwithstanding the existence of different and incommensurable paradigms, communication among them is possible. In this effort, MacIntyre recommends following Thomas Aquinas’ method of doing research as a model of reconciling rival theories (referring to the way in which Aquinas merged Aristotelian and Augustinian traditions).

In the same sense, the RTD approach is an example of such a theoretical articulation. In its conceptualization, it fosters a sort of interdisciplinary dialogue and set of criteria that seek to unify different schools of thought and conceptual traditions such as: economic geographic, industrial agglomeration, clusters, industrial districts, learning regions, geographic determinism, neo-institutionalism, actor-centered institutionalism, economic sociology and
environmental governance (RIMISP 2007). In this sense, we can think of Rural Territorial Development as a dialogic approach that provides an interpretative synthesis of the principal economic and political views of rural development with a distinctive territorial perspective.

Looking at the specific study-case documented in this research, the PDPMM’s strategy also links views and models of rural development. One of its original features is its peculiar way of combining peasant economy and capitalism. Between the extremes of an exclusionary globalization in which multinational enterprises dominate development trajectories, and a traditional peasant economy, the PDPMM searches for an alternative model in which rural communities implement their own development proposals, but with business criteria. Instead of denying the legitimacy of pursuing profit, the PDPMM recognizes the potential ways in which markets might make traditional economies profitable and competitive (examples being the cacao and African palm projects presented in this research).

The more difficult question is whether theoretical articulation is possible in a context of conflict dynamics, like Middle Magdalena, where five main visions of rural development exist in confrontation with one another. How far is it possible to integrate the capitalist model, the territorial vision, the peasants’ view, the cocaine model and the armed groups’ rural approach? Given the very real difficulties involved, this implies that the RTD’s practical challenge of building a territory through a concerted development plan shared by the main actors of a territory takes on singular importance.

Second: The practical challenge of RTD: promoting collective action among the different actors operating within the territory. The practical task of the RTD approach consists of bringing together actors and agents of development with a view to establishing a concerted development project. The relevance of such a challenge is obvious since the RTD approach emphasizes that both identity and a common purpose are the two pillars that define a specific rural territory as a
social construct. In a general sense, it can be stated that the RTD approach arises as a kind of “linear formulation” in which “consensus” is considered as precondition: “a territory is an area with identity and a development project that has been arrived at through a process of social consensus” (Berdegué and Schejtman 2004).

According to the previous definition, building a territory demands a dialogic posture. It is not against others but rather with others that the development process has to be pursued. Francisco de Roux expresses such aspiration in the following terms: “Middle Magdalena should be built by everyone, with no exceptions; under any other scenario it will be destroyed”. In that sense, the construction of a territory, in which nobody is excluded, requires both the change of the rules that perpetuate exclusion, and a degree of mutual knowledge among actors that allows them to communicate and interact with each other.

Based on MacIntyre’s theory (see Chapter Four), authentic dialogue and communication between parties require two related conditions: first, it is necessary to refuse any possibility of a universal or “neutral” way of characterizing and understanding the entire complexity of views and paradigms. Second, when communicating with others, it is necessary to have a “rare gift of empathy” or “intellectual insight” that permits the knowledge of and interaction with external agents.

In the same vein, the PDPMM applies two principles in its dialogues with the different actors of Middle Magdalena. The first one refers to a kind of “sensitive principle” that allows understanding others' postures by walking in someone else’s shoes. The second one is a “principle of non-neutrality” that insists on the importance of arguing from a specific point of view. Neutral postures do not take part in confrontations, and instead manifest apathy and indifference when in the face of problems, debates and disputes. Beyond neutrality, the PDPMM emphasizes the importance of taking sides for a development process based on the respect of the fundamental rights.
Such principles are essential for any dialogue that might promote collective action in a territory in confrontation. It was on the basis of this argument that, in the face of the polarized atmosphere and absence of communication that were impeding any accord among actors in Middle Magdalena, the PDPMM and civil society sought to promote a shared Regional Proposal in which life would be paramount - even above the development process itself. “We do not want development if we are going to be killed”, is the general claim of the rural communities that summarizes the need to re-define the purpose and function of the development process if rural strategies aim at eliminating poverty and violence.

**Proposition 5: Facing and dealing with conflict requires a two-fold strategy:** 
*a moment of conciliation to solve casual and contingent discrepancies; and a moment to implement pragmatic articulations among actors and views of rural development to establish a common development proposal.*

Dealing with conflict implies an attitudinal shift from a self-sufficient coexistence among views, to a pragmatic articulation among them. In this sense, an RTD intervention should be able to *mediate* between differences (first step) and *build broader coalitions* (second step) around a negotiated view of development.

The first moment of conciliation seeks the establishment of a peace accord, a mutual agreement, or a political pact, which resolves disagreements over specific problems such as disputes over land, labor conflicts, armed confrontation, or political opposition. At this stage, the parties in conflict (with the mediation of a third one, expert and neutral), generally elaborate a set of mutual commitments that fulfil the demands and requirements of each. The drawback of this kind of solution is that it focuses on trigger factors rather than on structural ones. In general, the agreements tend to transform practices and strategies, without changing conceptual and practical frameworks. It is an arrangement around means, but not about ends in which the teleological incommensurabilities among the different actors’ views of development are not taken into consideration. In such a scenario, the different actors and views continue developing their own
proposals simultaneously without any interconnection and communication among them.

For that reason, an authentic articulation among rival views occurs when opposing development actors share a united telos (second step). More than obtaining a contingent consensus around means, rural territorial strategies have to promote collective action that merges rival postures into one, and provides direction for the further elaboration and institutionalization of a unified development plan. This is the challenge to RTD: to offer the possibility of narrowing the distance between rival views of rural development. It is also the challenge to – as well as the goal of - the PDPMM: to bring serious rapprochement between armed groups, capitalists and settlers of Middle Magdalena in which life will be above all.

**Proposition 6: Pragmatic articulations among rival views should foster productive and institutional transformations to overcome poverty and conflict dynamics in a territory in dispute.**

Pragmatic articulations among different agents of development should foster rural territorial strategies that simultaneously address productive transformation and institutional change. Nowadays, given the globalization process and the new trends in rural development, it is impossible to conceive the productive process without formal and informal institutions such as contracts, property rights, alliances among actors, and so on, that structure economic interaction and provide the incentives and disincentives for development agents to behave in specific ways.

This co-constitution of productive and institutional change became apparent when analyzing the situation of a territory in dispute, which suffers from a number of disadvantages, primarily related to its marginality, land concentration, internal armed conflict, illegal economies and forced migration. Although the change in productive patterns is a necessary condition for economic growth and an enhanced
living standard, this is not sufficient. The development of local institutions that facilitate economic development with peace is essential, as well.

According to North (1990), institutions are defined as being “rules of the game”, such as formal rules (constitutions, laws and regulations), informal constraints (behavioural norms, codes of conduct and routines), or individuals bound to a “common purpose” or aiming to achieve common objectives. Such a common project becomes crucial in territories in conflict where there is a lack of trust among rival actors and agents of development, who try to impose their own vision of development on others. This situation results in individualism and makes it difficult to enhance cooperation and pragmatic articulations among actors.

Therefore, it is important to establish a proper set of rules and principles that guide and organize collective actions stimulating interest, trust, and collaboration among developmental actors that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. In the specific case of a territory in dispute, such as Middle Magdalena, the achievement of such an ideal would be possible if each actor were committed to the accomplishment of a set of non-negotiable conditions such as: the protection and defence of human life; the integral respect of human rights; the implementation of non-violent means to solve disputes; the protection of the environment; the execution of a regional productive process producing goods and services that dignifies human life and increases living standards; and the reinforcement of State and formal institutions.

Such principles must be adoptable by all actors in common. Furthermore, and particularly in a context of conflict dynamics, such actors would have to develop an institutional architecture that not only preserves these conditions as non-negotiable, but also improves living standards within a peaceful environment. In this effort, and in relation to the basic “institutional challenges” that the development of a territory in dispute poses to peace and economic growth, it seems pertinent to highlight the following three conditions:
First: A Regional Proposal for Development and Peace. In order to advance in the establishment of a joint vision of development for a territory in conflict, a “working group”, which includes the main leaders of each vision of development, has to be created to discuss the benefits of intra-territorial collaboration. The main purpose of such a space would be to share and confront the specific development plans that each actor promotes, seeking to set up a concerted territorial proposal that overcomes poverty and violence. Such continued and enhanced dialogue among the regional agents is vital not only to better understand each others’ views, but also to design the specific regional proposal for development and peace that the territory demands.

In this effort, the territory must develop a shared vision of its particular identity and of the role it can play both in the global economy and in the national peace process. The particular attributes and comparative advantages of the territory should be fully discussed and analyzed in order to understand their possible contributions. This analysis aims at constituting the groundwork for designing social and economic projects to be undertaken, preferably by coalitions and alliances between the main regional actors assembled into the proposed “working group”. It can be highlighted how in the Middle Magdalena region, alliances between the government, civil society and NGOs have demonstrated better efficacy since this “institutional triad” promotes participation and facilitates interaction among public and private stakeholders, in order to share risks (notably those related to armed conflict), promote investment, and ensure the benefits of development would be distributed equally.

Second: Productive and institutional change facing conflict dynamics. The implementation of the “regional proposal for development and peace” and the execution of the different social and economic projects, involved a specific analytical framework that takes into account the demands of a territory immersed in a specific conflict dynamic. For that reason, the Centro de Estudios Regionales (Centre for Regional Studies) that operates in the Middle Magdalena region should analyze the main topics and areas in which regional actors differ, and the
challenges that the specific rural territorial development approach implies. In this effort, one of the main objectives that such a centre would establish consist of identifying the productive and institutional arrangements that might enable concerted action among rival actors with the aim of solving poverty and violence. The following might be among the productive and institutional subjects that need to be considered when drafting rural development strategies in a context of conflict dynamics:

- The elaboration of a “humanitarian code of ethics” that guides the territorial process of development. Through aligning with such a code, the main actors would be saying that they are willing to work according to the non-negotiable conditions and principles that a peaceful development process requires, such as: the protection and defence of human rights (notably the right to life); the implementation of non-violent means to solve conflicts; and the execution of a productive process that improves the quality of life and places the human being as a primary axis.

- To implement a peaceful productive process requires the analysis of the most important dilemmas and discrepancies raised by the implementation of various modes of production within a given territory - i.e. monoculture plantations versus polyculture; agro-industry without peasants versus peasants in agro-industry; productive occupation of the territory by settlers versus agro-industrial projects managed by outsiders; latifundio versus minifundio; illegal products versus licit goods; organic production versus conventional farming; peasants working for industrial projects in cooperatives of associated labour versus peasants administering their own agro-business, and so on -.

Such dilemmas indicate how a key question in the development field does not refer to “what” should be produced, but “how” to produce it. For that reason, the proposed “Centre for Rural Development Studies” ought to promote an integral and human development process, which more than focusing on the provision of goods and services demanded by markets, should engage the
different types of agents through contracts, alliances, coalitions, or sectoral associations that promote the participation of the majority of the actors in the development process. The initiative would be based on the principle that economic participation goes beyond the production of and access to goods and services, revolving also around the ways in which production is organized: namely, when local actors produce goods by means of their own work and capital, i.e., peasants managing their own companies; settlers being members of their business association; rural communities contributing to the creation of new technology, etc.

- The dilemma between “what” and “how” to produce, brings us to the debate about the ownership of the means of production. Among several productive factors that need to be considered in a territory of dispute, the conflict over land is central. Given the higher indices of land concentration in rural areas and the severe ambiguities around property rights, it is imperative to improve access to land. Thus, the development of land management laws and programs that solidify ownership rights (a land registry, titling systems and a cadastre) should be reinforced. In addition, the taxation of land values should be modified and taxable value should be based on the size and especially use of the land. The importance of such a system is that it would encourage the productive use of land rather than its simple maintenance as a reserve of value.

**Third: Formal and informal institutions seeking peace and reconciliation.**

The resolution of the internal armed conflict requires the reinforcement of both the national peace process led by the government, and the establishment of alternative conflict resolution mechanisms carried out by civil society. This kind of peace strategy executed at two levels (the national and the local), was apparent when it became clear that managing the peace agreements made by the government demanded the empowerment and participation of the communities affected by the armed confrontation. In the specific case of Middle Magdalena, rural communities have created informal mechanisms for conflict management and resolution. In some cases, they are preferable to formal institutions, partly
because they are administered by local leaders who not only know how to approach armed actors, but also share the values, interests and needs of their communities more than outsiders. Such local conflict resolution arrangements (instituted in the different “humanitarian spaces” established in Middle Magdalena), are founded in dialogue and discussions with legal and illegal forces, in order to ensure the respect of fundamental rights and freedoms.
APPENDIX 1

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

The interviews were conducted following a semi-structured format and involved a series of open-ended questions organized in three related sections:

I. FIRST SECTION: ACTORS AND VIEWS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONFRONTED

A. GENERAL TOPICS

1. What are the major views of rural development among different actors in the Middle Magdalena Region?
2. What institutions and forms of production does each approach to rural development seek to build and how?

B. SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

1. Vision and role of development

   • How do you characterize rural development?
   • What kind of rural development does your project or institution promote?
   • In your opinion, what is the main aim of the development process?
   • Who and what are the main actors of the development process?
   • What is the role of the inhabitants of Middle Magdalena in the regional productive process?
   • In which way do you promote the productive occupation of the territory and the use of land?
2. **Productive Process**

- Could you describe the developmental process of your economic activity?
- Could you describe the forms of production of your developmental activity?
- What are the main productive activities that your company executes in the region?
- What is the role of the market?
- Do you have local, regional, national or international market relations?
- What are the economic benefits for the region of your activity?
- Do you promote or have alliances with other actors?

3. **Institutional Architecture and Governance of the Territory**

- In your opinion, what is the role of the State in Middle Magdalena?
- What is the relationship of your project with the State institutions?
- How do you promote the local governance?
- What kind of norms and rules does your project or institution promote?
- Has your project received any kind of support from: a) The State; b) Private sector; c) International organizations; or d) NGOs?
- How do you deal with armed actors?

4. **Effects**

- What are the main effects and results of your project or institution at the regional and local level?
- What kind of indicators do you use to assess the impact of your project or institution?
- What is the main contribution of your project or institution to the conflict resolution?
- How does your project or institution try to overcome poverty?
5. Other actors and views in Middle Magdalena

- Who and What are the main actors of development in Middle Magdalena?
- ¿How do other actors deal with poverty?
- ¿How do they deal with violent conflict?
- What actors encourage the armed conflict?
- Where are they (geographical location)?
- What kind of development projects are the armed actors implementing?

II. SECOND SECTION: INCOMMENSURABILITIES AND CONTRADICTIONS AMONG VIEWS OF DEVELOPMENT

A. GENERAL TOPICS

1. In what ways are these different views of development mutually incommensurate?
2. To what extent are latent conflicts among these views of rural development prevalent?
3. What and why do specific socio-economic and political factors contribute to the incorporation of violence into the development process?

B. SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

1. Does your Project or institution have conflicts with other actors? Could you describe them?
2. What are the main discrepancies of your project or institution with other projects or institutions?
3. What are the trigger factors that maintain conflict dynamics in Middle Magdalena?
4. Does the State institutions increase or mitigate internal conflicts?
5. What is the main cause of the internal armed conflict in Middle Magdalena?
6. What is the objective of the internal armed conflict in Middle Magdalena?
7. What is the purpose of the drug business?
8. Some authors affirm that the Colombian conflict has its main cause in the unequal distribution of land. What do you think about this affirmation? What is your opinion on this?

III. THIRD SECTION: DEALING WITH CONFLICT

A. GENERAL TOPICS

1. What are the main implications of pursuing a RTD strategy in a territory in dispute?
2. What are the theoretical and practical contributions of the PDPMM in the domains of conflict resolution and poverty eradication in its zone of influence?
3. In which ways have the productive and institutional strategies implemented by the PDPMM facilitate pragmatic articulations among the opposing views of rural development to transform such conflict dynamics?

B. SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

1. What are the endogenous and exogenous conditions or factors that does the PDPMM implements to reduce armed conflict and poverty in the Middle Magdalena region?
2. Under what conditions does the PDPMM’s strategy reduce conflict and rivalry?
3. How does the PDPMM shape local conflicts with other actors?
4. What specific model of peacebuilding does the PDPMM implement?
# APPENDIX 2

## LISTS OF INTERVIEWEES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEWEE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Director of the PDPMM.</td>
<td>07 November 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member of the ACVC.</td>
<td>08 November 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher of CINEP.</td>
<td>15 November 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasant of the municipality of Cantagallo.</td>
<td>10 December 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer of the PDPMM’s land project.</td>
<td>12 December 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member of the PDPMM’s peasant palm project.</td>
<td>14 December 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasant of the Municipality of Simití.</td>
<td>15 December 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasant leader of Micoahumado.</td>
<td>25 December 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader of the Humanitarian Space of Micoahumado.</td>
<td>25 December 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELN’s, FARC’s and AUC’s ex-militia.</td>
<td>20 January 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUC’s militias (3 people).</td>
<td>20 January 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member of the oil workers union.</td>
<td>24 January 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUC’s militia.</td>
<td>25 January 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founder of the PDPMM</td>
<td>01 February 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member of the PDPMM.</td>
<td>02 February 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELN’s ex-militia.</td>
<td>07 February 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member of the OPI.</td>
<td>10 February 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle owner.</td>
<td>20 February 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monsignor of Barrancabermeja.</td>
<td>20 February 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Director of the PDPMM</td>
<td>22 February 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police lieutenant.</td>
<td>24 February 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-staff member of ECOPETROL.</td>
<td>27 February 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of the Ombudsman office in Middle Magdalena.</td>
<td>03 March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communitarian leader of the Cimitarra River Valley.</td>
<td>09 March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member of an African palm company.</td>
<td>13 March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff members (3 people) of a Cooperative of Associated Labour of African palm- INDUPALMA.</td>
<td>14 March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member of INDUPALMA</td>
<td>14 March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member of INCODER.</td>
<td>17 March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELN’s militia.</td>
<td>20 March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARC’s militia.</td>
<td>21 March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographist.</td>
<td>25 March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member of the National Planning Department.</td>
<td>25 March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasant of the municipality of Vélez.</td>
<td>27 March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member of ECOPETROL.</td>
<td>05 April 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economist.</td>
<td>15 April 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member of the Ministry of Agriculture.</td>
<td>22 April 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member of OXY.</td>
<td>24 April 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communitarian Leader of Regidor.</td>
<td>25 April 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founder of the PDPMM’s palm project.</td>
<td>29 April 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiary of the PDPMM’s palm peasant project in Sabana de Torres.</td>
<td>30 April 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiaries (2 people) of the PDPMM’s Peasant Palm Project.</td>
<td>30 April 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founder of the PDPMM</td>
<td>05 May 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members (3 people) of Landless Peasants’ Association of the Municipality of Regidor.</td>
<td>08 May 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communitarian leader of El Centro.</td>
<td>10 May 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member of the PDPMM.</td>
<td>17 May 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member of CINEP.</td>
<td>19 May 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff member of the Ministry of Agriculture.</td>
<td>20 May 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer of the PDPMM’s land project.</td>
<td>20 May 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker of the african palm project in Puerto Wilches.</td>
<td>05 June 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer of the PDPMM’s land project.</td>
<td>10 June 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of the PDPMM’s land project.</td>
<td>11 June 2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES

BOOKS, ARTICLES AND BOOKLETS


FAO - RLAC (2000). “Reforma de las Instituciones para el Desarrollo Rural”. XXVI Conferencia Regional para América Latina y el Caribe LARC/00/5.


316


NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

El Colombiano: www.elcolombiano.com/

El Espectador: www.elespectador.com/

El Tiempo: www.eltiempo.com/

Revista Semana: www.semana.com/

Vanguardia Liberal: www.vanguardia.com/

WEB LINKS

ACCION SOCIAL: www.accionsocial.gov.co/

AUC: www.colombialibre.net
CER:  www.uis.edu.co/portal/investigacion/centros/cer/index.html

CINEP:  www.cinep.org.co

DANE:  www.dane.gov.co/

DNP:  www.dnp.gov.co/

ECOCACAO:  www.ecocacao.com/

ECOPETROL:  www.ecopetrol.com.co/

ELN:  www.eln-voces.com

FARC:  www.farcp.org

FEDEPALMA:  www.fedepalma.org/

OPI:  www opi.org.co/

OXY:  www.oxy.com/

PDPMM:  www.pdpmm.org.co/

POLICIA NACIONAL:  www.policia.gov.co/

PRESIDENCIA DE LA REPUBLICA:  www.presidencia.gov.co

REDPRODEPAZ:  www.redprodepaz.org.co/

RIMISP:  www.rimisp.org/

UNHCR:  www.unhcr.org/

WORL BANK:  www.worldbank.org/