

# **COLOMBIA'S RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONUNDRUM: HOW STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT CAN PRODUCE REAL ALTERNATIVES FOR THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY**

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## **Abstract**

A Colombian president stated one time that the rural sector is more than only agriculture, peace resides there. The urban-rural dialectic is alive in Colombia. The establishment continues to believe that through “modernizing” activities, solutions will come, which means that an efficient urbanization and industrialization will provide the necessary taxes for the future rural sector development. Colombia’s rural sector subsists in a double jeopardy situation. On one hand, is seeing as a violent space in Colombia, as a threat. On the other side, is looked upon, left aside to only some traditional hacendados and some oil companies. The Agricultural Ministry is a typical bureaucratic position, “una corbata”. The rural sector is nor relevant when dealing with Colombia’s crisis solutions. Do not seeing the rural sector weight in Colombia’s situation is also a threat, another one. Because in the long-run the threat is real, and consequently, the alternatives for solutions are not taken seriously or seen as irrelevant—the transmlenio is more important, of course!. This “Rural Development Conundrum” is analyzed in this paper, looking for the structural and cultural “causes”. Pierre Bourdieu’s cultural-structuralism is used, showing that past structures, natural or artificial, as well as culture—pattern of behavior—present in 19th century Colombia, are strongly relevant in order to understand contemporary Colombia, to say, institutions and the State. Aware of this cultural-structuralism, some alternatives are proposed with some illustrative examples, using not only the same methodological approach but also giving similar weight to cultural and/or economic alternatives, in order to avoid repeating the same mistake: a unilinear view of development that would add more momentum to the double jeopardy and the conundrum.

## **Key words**

Regional/Rural Management, Colombia, Strategic Thinking.

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## **Resumen**

Un presidente colombiano dijo alguna vez que el sector rural es más que sólo la agricultura y que la paz reside allí. La dialéctica urbano-rural está viva en Colombia. El Estado sigue creyendo que al “modernizar” las actividades, las soluciones vendrán, lo que significa que la urbanización y la industrialización eficiente proporcionarán los impuestos necesarios para el futuro desarrollo del sector rural. El sector rural en Colombia, subsiste en una situación de doble riesgo; por un lado, es ver como un espacio violento en el país, es una amenaza y por otro, como este dejó de lado a algunos hacendados tradicionales y algunas compañías petroleras.

El Ministerio de Agricultura es una típica posición burocrática, “una corbata”. El sector rural es irrelevante cuando se trata de plantear soluciones ante la crisis de Colombia. No ver el peso del sector rural en la situación colombiana es también una amenaza, debido a que a largo plazo será real. En consecuencia, las alternativas de solución no son tomadas en serio o son vistas como irrelevantes (por supuesto, ¡Transmilenio es más importante!). Aquí se analiza este “enigmático desarrollo rural”, en busca de las causas estructurales y culturales.

Se emplea el estructuralismo cultural de Pierre Bourdieu, para demostrar que las estructuras anteriores, naturales o artificiales, así como la cultura de patrones de comportamiento presentes en el Siglo XIX de Colombia, son muy relevantes para entender a esta nación contemporánea, es decir, las instituciones y el Estado. Conscientes de este estructuralismo cultural, se proponen algunas alternativas con ejemplos ilustrativos, utilizando no sólo el mismo enfoque metodológico sino también, dando un peso similar a las alternativas culturales y/o económicas con el fin de evitar que se repita el mismo error: una visión unilineal del desarrollo que impulsa tanto a lo juzgado como al enigma.

## **Palabras clave**

Sector rural, urbano-rural, estructuralismo cultural.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Colombia, the southwestern country of South America, the corner, is one of the biggest countries in Latin America in both terms of geographical extension and population. Its geographical extension has potentialities in terms of biodiversity, climates, and fertility. However, even though it is one of the more advanced Latin American countries in terms of technological developments-banking, media-, of urban geographical and inhabitant dispersion, and of civil rights' constitution, it has a rural sector highly stratified-social and economical-and far from being connected to the country as a whole, and to the urban 21st century's stance.

The rural sector in Colombia-one of the highest in terms of percentage population at the beginning of the 20th century in Latin America and now one of the smallest at the beginning of the 21st century-mirrors Colombia's history, culturally, socially, economically, and structurally. Its disconnection from the country as a whole can be seen in the contrasting rates of violence, security, health, education, population growth, legal system, and "development"-among others- a disconnection between the urban and the rural sectors. It is the same country but with several nations inside. Nonetheless, patriotismo is very high, an ambivalence proper of Colombians and highly relevant to understand the rural sector in contemporary terms.

Within this introductory framework is that the rural development in Colombia has been experienced: stratification and discreteness. As if it was part of a different reality, in a different dimension. A part of the whole but not immanent to it. Stratification, therefore, has to be understood in a broader sense, it is immersed in a regional stratification within the urban-rural stratification. The problem of the rural development in Colombia starts here, or it is affected by these forces, in which regionalism is an outcome. This paper deals with the Rural Development Conundrum (RDC) in Colombia. Also, part of the goal of this paper is to disentangle the present urban-rural dialectic in Colombia, in analytical terms, though.

The unbalanced outcome of Colombia's reality, reaching anarchy proportions, is obviously shaping, with social scars, the rural daily lives. Some scholars believe that this is 'the end of history' for the RDC, that there is no 'light at the end of the tunnel'. The purpose of this paper is, after acknowledging, analyzing and understanding the RDC, to show some alternatives to the rural development for Colombia. The alternatives are shown in both analytical and illustrative terms, so both the causes of the RDC are unveiled and examples drawn are in consonance with the factors. The illustrative examples, stated briefly, should respond to the RDC in a convincing way.

This paper contains three parts. The first deals with the key features to understand the RDC, showing the background and historical context of those facets. It shows the contemporary outcomes produced by this past upbringing, being highly aware of the relevance of depicting an internal logic between the former and the latter links of this part. In the second part, the alternatives are presented within strategic management approaches (Senge, 2005), where the framework of analysis is explained as well as the main strategy on which the alternatives are based and that correspond to the analytical tools applied in this paper. The last and third part is a conclusion, where everything portrayed here flows into an ending. Before presenting the parts of the document, it is important to present a brief sketch of Colombia's key history events and to emphasize the methodological approach developed in this paper.

## **1. Methodological Approach**

Historical approaches make present the past. How much weight must be stressed in a methodological analysis is an unanswerable question. Nonetheless, being aware of historical forces is a must, in any analytical study of Colombia. There are different possibilities to assess reality, and today there exist several debates between them, as much in the epistemological realm as in the methodological one. In

the former, some scholars believe that the dualistic debate is over, because of today's acceptance and reliance on disciplines as neo-positivism (Popper), post-modernism (Lyotard, Foucault), and/or quantum (Heelan, Morales), among others. However, as is summarized later, the debate is over only in the analytical or idealized realm, not in the experienced and real world. In the latter, among the several currents to study the world, four are considered relevant here: the structuralist, Institutionalist, cultural-ideological, and patterns of war. In one way or the other, all are inter-related and no one by itself can explain the 'big-picture' of Colombia's RDC. However, if the approach is a historical one, it must be chosen one that is consequent to this framework. Two things have existed always in any society: natural structures and culture. When culture evolved, some 'artificial structures' were created, as the market, the legal system, and social stratification. Some scholars believed that institutional arrangements can be classified as bureaucratized structures. For this paper, the approach is a cultural-structuralist, since they are immanent to human development and societies. All other approaches start from here. There can be no way to study a social group without taking into account both sources of reality-making-only if analytical / ideological constructs are set.

There is a scholar that has been able to harmonize or synthesize both

approaches in one, the structural and the cultural. Actually, Pierre Bourdieu is related as a cultural structuralist. A revision of his ideas are relevant at this juncture. These structures generate certain habits, preferences, which are socially constructed (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1994:126), which have their own inertia (130), which can't be limited. The temporary dialectic that Bourdieu & Wacquant present is between the structures and the collective and individual history of the agent that they create, recreate and help to auto-generate (123). Social reality exists, therefore, in what Bourdieu & Wacquant call fields and habits, to say in the field of reference of which is being talked about (culture or fields) and where the intentionality, praxis, or contextualized agency ( habits or way of being) (127) react or act. On the other hand, Bourdieu & Wacquant argue that "the individual is always, whether he likes it or not, trapped-save the extent that he becomes aware of it- 'within the limits of his brain,' as Marx said, that is, within the limits of the system of categories he owes to his upbringing and training" (126). These mental structures should become a starting point to reach the multiple Colombian realities.

It must be understood that the idea of habit opens the structures, to say, it liberates human beings of their oppression, but not of the conscience of their existence. It is very important to be able to distinguish between the

closed and the open when analyzing the acts and history of Colombia. It must be done within the fields of each one of its' countries, its' regions, its' cultures, its' realities, never with borrowed models. A definite structural element in the method of analysis is clearly depicted in the following phrase of Bourdieu & Wacquant: "Habitus is what you have to posit to account for the fact that, without being rational, social agents are reasonable—and this is what make sociology possible." (129) "The structure of the field ... can produce diametrically opposed conducts due to the transformation of the situation in which they operate" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 135), which indicates that in the field, the context, the culture, must be understood as a mean and not an end in itself, where past and present interact and become one. Each mean, each reality will produce different results depending on the when, since when and until when. In other words "social agents are the product of history" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 136). But historical facts are not merely the result of other facts which cause them, but the singular will, capable of governing their fatality inside certain limits" (Paz, 2000,79).

In a culture like Colombia's, which passionately lives a dialectic between the material (modernism) and the anti-material (tradition and transcendences) it is not easy, impossible to say the least, to find the essence. It can be known with certainty in what way culture

(field), identity, way of being (habits) and intentionality (interest) respond and interact to modernizing forces. It is not feasible either, to establish the limits of action of past inertias and the force that history has on Colombia's present.

Two annotations are relevant at this juncture. First, that the core of the paper is focused on showing the realities of the RDC in both areas, the natural/

artificial structures and the cultural/ ideological. Likewise, the alternatives drawn are focused to solve, attack, and/or disseminate the cultural-structural forces. Second, that the framework in which the alternatives are theoretically-empirically posed rejects the unilinear evolutionary 'western' view, by which the metaphysics of the market -an artificial structure- is possible. Therefore, economic and cultural realities are equally weighted, and any type of hierarchy among them is left aside.

## 2. BACKGROUND AND OUTCOMES OF THE RDC IN COLOMBIA

Before looking in detail at the structural and cultural forces that affected Colombia's reality, it is important to introduce the main concepts/elements that are considered relevant in each category. Structural conditionings can start with geography—climate, borders, sea access, latitudinal and longitudinal position, and mountainous system. Besides this natural structure, there are some socially constructed elements such as the insertion into the world market, global stratification, and commercialization patterns. Within each country could be found patterns of land tenure, frontier lands circumstances, social stratification, and patterns of income redistribution. Cultural conditionings can start with race and ethnic relations—white majority, miscegenation occurrence,

elite labeling, and ethnic population's percentage. Obviously, values, attitudes, and beliefs of the dominant class or group are paramount in this approach. Besides, inherited hatreds, *abolengo*, form of governance, status quo maintenance, religious presence, and cultural/ educational isolation. The inability of the state, a weak state, is part of the ideological forces because factions within political parties are analyzed. Finally, it is important to highlight that "any theory that tells us that what we have is what we must have is ideological" (Poster, 1986). The next paragraphs detail those present in Colombia's history that help explain, from a cultural structuralist approach, the RDC.

## 2.1 Structural Background

The correlation between a loosely cultural Colombia and geography is not fiction, and it is worth exploring. Throughout this study, geography is a structural variable highly relevant in explaining the Colombian reality, even culture. This is a thesis that has been exposed by other scholars (Zamosc, 1986,7; Bushnell, 1993,1; Safford & Palacios, 2002,ix). Analyzing Colombia without taking into account its regionalism and its impact on rural development is mistaken, since “regions developed distinct racial and cultural profiles” (Safford & Palacios, 2002,7), and “no one geographic feature has so molded the history of Colombia as the Andes” (Bushnell, 1993,1). It seems that the Andes and Colombian culture are immanent to what we are, therefore we would be able to explain why we are at this juncture today. This is the main thesis of this paper, as was argued before, that the cultural structuralism present in Colombia is strong enough to explain several behaviors, attitudes, and correlations that shaped and are shaping Colombia’s anarchy.

In order to show the natural and artificial structures present in Colombia, a review of some scholars will be done in the next lines, portraying each one’s ideas at a time. The logic of their arguments will be depicted in a causal way, searching for sequenciality of occurrence. Safford & Palacios (2002), for example, argue that geography

created physical barriers between towns, which were extremely difficult to surpass only until roads, trains and navigability through the Magdalena river was viable. All these meant that the whole 19th century, Colombia was a loosely country, and in a way each region was looking for their own ‘development’. This produced, Safford and Palacios (2002) state, an ‘economic determinism’ in each one of the regions in Colombia, that would start becoming less loose because of coffee and communications. Existing for more than 100 years with this reality created deep cultural roots of regionalism and the idea that the benefits of a centralized power did not outweigh the present status quo. The result, according to S&P, is that different idiosyncratic cultural and political worldviews were created, or were made part of each region’s culture. A regionalist behavior was present at the beginning of the 20th century. Colombia, therefore, was not only fighting for being ‘developed’, it was also struggling to break away from this regionalist attitude. Almost 100 years later, the geographical structuralism of S&P is still alive when Colombia’s reality is analyzed: no long-term solutions, and everyone thinks that they hold the ‘right’ solution, to say, anarchy. Bourdieu is suitable here, therefore. A clear link from structures -big (geography) or small (attitudes)- can be made to understand today Colombia’s institutions: army, trade, judicial system. Maybe the Church is, on the surface, the only institution that is united.

From the geographic structuralism of S&P it is possible to jump to a sequel: pattern of land tenure. This idea is argued by Kalmanovitz, Fals-Borda, Zamosc, Molano, among others. Similarly to the last paragraph, land tenure patterns have a structural side -latifundios and market exploitation- and a cultural side- power abuse, wealth maintenance, social stratification, and repressive attitude. Colombia is among the Latin American countries that belong to 'late developers', which means that Colombia 'enters' the global market later than, to say, Argentina, Chile, or Mexico. S&P argue that because of transportation costs and the Spaniards imagery of Colombia as mainly a gold-producer, trade regulations were narrowed. Later on, only until coffee production sprouts, is that 'development' appears in Colombian economic history, roughly 1920's (Kalmanovitz, 1994). Then, from independence until coffee 'industrialization', land tenure was almost the only and the most respected sign of wealth. This was the critical factor in the social stratification present in that longer period of history, reinforced by a regionalist world-view. Also, since banking did not exist until the 20th century (Ibid.), land was perceived and 'used' as a parallel banking system, reinforcing the already big-states pattern-latifundio (Fals-Borda, 1968). The vicious circle grew until coffee expansion, since the only existing investment was 'land', which slowed even more the capital

accumulation needed to Colombia's development (Ibid.).

A rigid land tenure pattern was the outcome in the 20th century, and became a cultural trait, the landowner and the peon, dominance and submission. Hacendado-lifestyle was part of the cultural-structuralism that Bourdieu refers to. Breaking away more than a century of that reality was a hard task, and Colombians did not pass that exam. La Violencia is the outcome of that historical test. Within this reality and the population growth experienced at the beginning of the 20th century, the land tenure pattern received more pressure: agricultural saturation (Fals-Borda, 1968), and frontier lands / colonization (Zamosc, 1986; Molano, 1994). The dichotomy was borne, landlord path and peasant path (Zamosc, 1986), and the "sub-state" as well. The "sub-state" are those regions where colonization occurs and there is no landlord re-colonization (Molano, 1994), therefore the State, as introduced in the abstract of this paper, does not exist in those regions, what is called "el abandono del estado". Structural conditionings pave the way to the dichotomy and the sub-states. Today's Colombia is embedded in this conundrum, the rural development that struggles with the minifundio, the forgotten villages-as Bojayá, and the desplazados. Where there is a sub-state, a vacuum is produced and is easily filled with anarchical sub-states, to say, mafias, guerrillas, or paramilitaries.



As is shown later, rural development projects in the last 50 years in Colombia have been unable to foresee this outcome, neither been able to break the structural conditionings. Therefore, their programs were “pañi-tos de agua tibia”. INCORA, IDEMA, ICA, INAT, HIMAT, INDERENA, and all the Agricultural Secretaries were fighting against a big evil, the dialectic of landowners vs. smallholders. Landowners did not want to industrialize their wealth -a cultural inherited trait, as just explained- therefore rural development was only focus on smallholders. Loss of time. De-linked from market channels.

## 2.2 Cultural/Ideological Background

In order to have a logical explanation of the “causes” of RDC in Colombia, structural and cultural conditionings have been analytically separated, knowing that this is impossible, as stated before, and that are immanent to understand any society’s growth. Some cultural conditionings were sketched in the last part, however in the next paragraphs emphasis on other cultural traits is presented. Ideas are the seed for innovations. Once ideas are broadly held they become part of the culture, and if those ideas support some kind of domination, then they are ideologies. Therefore, ideologies are part of cultural conditionings. Similarly to the latter part, some scholar’s arguments are shown here to highlight some relevant

cultural-ideological conditionings of the RDC in Colombia.

Where to start analyzing our culture? Where to end and jump to Institutional/structuralist approaches only? Difficult task. Nonetheless, one can start acknowledging that we have a mestizo culture, which by the way is a self-perpetuating one because of the regionalism, already explained. Carlos Fuentes’s (2000) arguments in his book “El Espejo Enterrado” are valid. He states that “España nos abraza a todos [los latinoamericanos]. ... La España que llegó al Nuevo Mundo en los barcos de los descubridores y conquistadores nos dio, por lo menos, la mitad de nuestro ser” (21-22). One of the traits inherited from Spain was their Catholicism and their catechesis, which was based on faith, “lo cual significa que debemos creer, aunque no comprendamos” (Fuentes, 2000,35). The reverence to the faith, to the Catholic, is part of our culture, and it melted with the mythical and mystic indigenous beliefs in order to produce an acceptance of the supernatural and an adoration to the rituals. Another americanist, Germán Arciniégas (1989), states in his book “El Continente de Siete Colores” that “El bautismo, la misa, la iglesia, las imágenes, las campanas, las fiestas, las oraciones, los nuevos principios sobre el bien y el mal, el cielo y el infierno, la idea del crucificado, la Virgen y los santos, la constitución de la familia, cambiaron la base y el tono general de la vida. ... Del indio que hallaron en

América los misioneros se han dejado noticias muy elogiosas en cuanto a su honradez, su limpieza, su inocencia.” (43-44).

This is extremely relevant. In all the sources cited in this paper there is not one that doesn't posit a lot of influence in the Roman Catholic Church and their backwardness. Some scholars disagree with this idea with the argument that France is catholic, or that Antioqueños are extremely catholic and today have the biggest corporate emporium. This position rejects Bourdieu's cultural-structuralist approach. The past becomes part of the present. Colombia's Church influence of today is totally different from the one of the colonial or the 19th century, but that does not mean that is not relevant to understand Colombia's reality and the RDC. As stated, what is its actual weight is the key question. However, it is near the unanswerable area. A simple question to “end” this debate: should the boyacos be as traditional, conservative, and catholic if in Boyacá there had been found huge quantities of gold as in Antioquia? The dialectic of structural and cultural forces is a fact.

Passivity and resignation is an outcome of church backwardness and Indian humility (S&P, 2002). The message is not that all Colombians are passive, but that this attitude interacts with structural forces, and helps to explain Colombia's late development because of landlord commercial passivity. Nothing more

traditional than a milkman from the Sabana de Bogotá, model 2002. The alternatives part must take this into account, must be able to unveil cultural traits of peasants, landowner, cattlemen, guilds, and so forth, to have legitimacy. Complementing these ideas, Bushnell (1993) argues that church presence is vital to understand Colombia, and also the ethnic and regional flux and the mixture that produced ideological forces in each region. Therefore, today Colombia has different cultures and each are part of the RDC. Developing a rural project in the Atlantic coast would be totally different than doing so in Nariño. This is the point.

Kalmanovitz (1994) on the other hand, sees the Church and the Conservatives as an alliance for social control that want to maintain a status quo highly profitable for them in several aspects -gender, social, and institutional stratification. Similarly, Fals-Borda (1968) states that a recurrent cultural and educational isolation by the dominant forces in Colombia, besides a non-secularization church catechesis stances produced a strongly held machismo, all of these leading to passivity and resignation as a way of life. Just until liberals in the 1920's started showing different paths of development, helped by a crude industrialization, urbanization and the influence of the radio, was that Colombia's culture started to change. However, we still seeing the lack of 100 years of cultural repression. Moral of the story: Colombians are homos-

rationalis, which means that are driven by opportunities, real ones, but are cautious, which means that before starting something they have already thought what would happen to them or their family, or if this does not work. Education and cosmopolitization of life are changing the world-view of Colombians. That explained why Mockus got elected the first time. That would never had happened in Medellín, Barranquilla, or Pasto -that after taking off his pants in front of an audience, he became the mayor of Bogotá. All these traits are captured by Alfredo Molano's (1994) arguments in which he states that peasant cultural traits and land fertility help explain the rate of collective action.

More than 100 years of cultural hibernation help explain two things in Colombia, and hopefully, in the RDC. First, the deep traits and their difficulty to be changed. Second, a contrasting one, that after the valve was loosened the reaction was harder. Is like a paradox, actually is an ambivalence, typical of Colombia's reality, where coexistence of two opposed feelings<sup>1</sup> is immanent to Colombians. Octavio Paz states that "proyecto y utopía son inseparables del pensamiento hispanoamericano" (2000,130). The Celtiberian Spain was the existence of two currents, almost of two worlds in a single region. On

one hand the Iberian, workers of the soil, villagers, lovers of the nature, but "back to the sea" (Fuentes, 2000: 44), tradicionalistas and regionalistas. On the other side, the Mediterranean, prone to the risk, searchers of extremes, passionate for the stranger, for the Mare Ignotum, by transcending the "end of the world" that Spain represented. Both tendencies melted, and they fused again with the natives of Colombia. We are of contrasts.

That is why this week a massacre occurred in the same region that our beauty queen was borne. This ought to be part of the alternative projects' strategies. However, how structures and culture fused together—above all the examples showed before? In ideologies. First, that the wealthy have the right to do what they want. Both parties are rightwing-led. Concomitantly, that the *leva* deserves what they have. A welfare redistributive state is out of the question. Second, anything near leftist ideology is seen as threatening. Third, regionalism and regional solidarity developed by the geographic-structuralism created an idea that all regions are equally important and relevant, which impedes develop only one project at a time-fashion way. Long-term planning is almost impossible, therefore, in a country with more than 10 regions and 40

<sup>1</sup> Apartes de la definición de ambivalencia (Diccionario de la Lengua Española. Real Academia de la Lengua. XXI Edición. 1992).

million people<sup>2</sup>. Fourth, the uselessness of a centralized state is changing after the National Front, but this cultural hibernation has been extremely long, more than 150 years. Results are clear: a weak army, a weak state, several sub-states, entrenched landowner path with an endless frontier land invasions, elitism backed up by *abolengo* and *gamonales* which received legitimation because of the passivity/humility attitude. Consequently, the family, the *gamonal*, and the town were above the state. Rules coming from the “state” are not seen as valid or ‘fair’. The credibility of the state was eroded and is part of our ideologies: corruption is the outcome. Last, but not least, the tacit assumption and acceptance of difference ‘stages of development’ correlated to different regions, without any sense of social responsibility or personal relevance.

Several examples of the reality of the cultural-structuralism present in Colombia were drawn. Their context, background, and some ‘inherited problems’ were highlighted as well. Within this panorama the RDC outcome can be understood better. The link between Bolívar giving huge extension of lands to military men, Church backwardness, land tenure pattern, elitism, and the myopic analysis of the rural dilemma and dichotomy -as part of the weak and “urbanized” state -should

be clear at this juncture. The conundrum is no joke. The next paragraphs show how rural development, and specifically agrarian reform, were conceived, structured, and developed in the last 50 years, and how they interacted with the structural and cultural conditionings presented.

### **2.3 RDC's Outcome: Strategic Thinking applied to Regional Management**

At the beginning of the year 2002, the institution in charge of agrarian reform in Colombia INCORA (Instituto Colombiano de Reforma Agraria, Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform) presented a book with some essays and history of its first 40 years of work. Making an oversimplification of all the relevant information and analysis provided in this book, it is important to highlight several things that serve as the start of this section. First, that the agrarian reform (AR) only redistributed less than 5% of the private-own lands (Balcázar, 2002:74), which in an international comparison appears as a failure (see Groppo, 2002). Second, a recurrent lack of political will in order to promote and develop a fully redistribution of big states (Mondragón, 2002: 55), since landlord elite has been always been present, and continues to

<sup>2</sup> I personally experienced this attitude when FEDEGAN-FNG started implementing slaughterhouses as a strategy of reducing intermediary costs. Once Jorge Visual talked about Villavicencio as the first Project, the other regions “screamed” about what they wanted. They couldn’t see in a 25 year fashion. Result: less profits than expected, more troubles than expected.

be, in lobbying the consecutive AR's laws. Third, a lack of creativity in how to implement an AR in Colombia that is reflected in the misunderstanding of the problem (see INCORA, 2002)—mistake vis-à-vis real needs: property vis-à-vis opportunities, manual labor vis-à-vis peasant empowerment, credit lines vis-à-vis long-term sustainability, market metaphysics vis-à-vis net present value (NPV) per hectare, punctual analysis vis-à-vis systemic analysis, and so forth—, and in the negative economic outcome of the *incorados* (peasants that actually received land from the INCORA) that on average received land at a US\$ 2,450 per redistributed hectare's government investment (Balcázar, 2002,75).

Agrarian Reform is not a long-term policy. Thus, “an agrarian issue exists when the economic, social, political, and cultural countryside relations are an impediment for development” (Groppo, 2002,79, f.t.). Similarly, for Leon Zamosc (1986,7) the outcome of the socioeconomic countryside structure—the landlord path vis-à-vis the peasant path or family agriculture—defines the agrarian issue, and “the way in which the agrarian question is resolved depends, in turn, upon a complex mix of historical, socioeconomic, and political factors unique to each country”.

This dichotomy is taken into account throughout this analysis, either as a landlord “re-colonization” vs. peasant “rights”, or as landlord path vis-à-vis

peasant path. Alfredo Molano (1994,28) points out the importance of this dichotomy, but stressing more another variable, time, correlated with land's quality and peasant organization—collective action. Molano (*ibid*) states that invariably this “re-colonization” will appear, but the pace of occurrence is what should be analyzed primarily. Other variables could be important, as roads and services, nonetheless, Molano (*ibid*) argues, the two mentioned are extremely salient. Therefore, in order to develop a systemic analysis it is important to have the quality of the land, and the cultural traits of the peasant as important variables. Colonization and re-colonization are important, not only because they give a hint in how structural barriers have grown historically and entrenched in Colombian society, but also because they have a high correlation with violence. As Catherine Legrand states, “the areas of recent colonization where viable commercial products are profitable and where property rights are not clearly defined, there are the more violent rural zones in today's Colombia” (1994,4).

At this point all the elements are at stage. Structural barriers, cultural behavioral patterns, and outcomes of both. In acknowledging these three elements a scholar could feel more comfortable to present alternatives for the RDC. The next paragraphs have the laudable task of presenting some ideas that can fit with Colombia's reality and solutions.

### 3. CONTEXTUALIZED ALTERNATIVES AND ILLUSTRATIVE PROJECTS

It is not part of this paper, to highlight and explain the epistemological debate of how knowledge is acquired. Nonetheless, as was stated at the beginning, a postmodern or humanistic stance is highly relevant when considering any type of social project, whether urban, rural, big, or small. Regional management requires this type of framework. Reality is today a globalized one, which means that the market and its invisible hand runs everything, even human lives. Some people do not agree with this vision, and Colombia's future should acknowledge this. To say, alternatives that give hope and light to the rural development conundrum should be alert of this. On one side, solving the immediate problem, or giving some light, and on the other, making spaces to solve the global problem: alienation. Both are present in this paper in a separate manner. Some projects should focus on the economic side, and others in the cultural one. The ultimate goal is to have both mixed in rural development alternatives.

Another foundation of the alternatives' approach is that cultural-structuralism is something that has to be seen in a positive way, that the strengths have to be exalted. Also, the weakness should be eroded, but without the idealistic hope of changing them in one day, as the Modernization Theory argues. If

“social agents are the product of history” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1994:136), then alternatives should be also the product of concurrent events, not of a miraculous one.

The cultural vis-à-vis economic stance plus the awareness of cultural and structural—artificial—traits and their inertia are both the pillars of this part. This means that the alternatives will not pursue to stop, by a drastic reform for example, the land structure, the desplazados, corruption, or helping the millions of poor people that live in the countryside. Besides idealistic, it will be contrary to Bourdieu's (1994) cultural-structuralism that states the cumulative process of learning and behavior. Therefore, the alternatives that are presented in the following paragraphs have a basic and big strategy: to act as a “cultural seed” that will change the RDC in 50 to 100 years. That does not mean that nothing palpable would be made in the next years. As one cooperated from Indupalma said: “to paint a house you have to start from one wall.” Also, alternatives must adapt to the culture and structures present, rejecting some a-priori changes.

RDC is part of a bigger problem: contemporary Colombia. Even though this paper does not deal with the big-picture of Colombia's riddle, it is

important to highlight briefly some major changes with which the alternatives portrayed in this paper would have a better terrain, a higher probability of success. All these alternatives, as stated, emerged after using strategic thinking (Senge, 2005) and standard regional/rural management approaches. These are:

- ◆ **Transitory Army Strengthening:** it means transitory because it will have to be paid by new taxes. It also means professionalization of the military men and a higher morale. This does not mean to put civilians as part of the monopoly of the use of force, which is a state function—although not in Colombia’s reality. Neither means that war is the solution to Colombia’s violence, and that peace process should end.
- ◆ **Transitory Land Reform:** even though today usefulness of an agrarian reform will not be as profitable, socially and structurally, there is a moral debt that Colombia has with its rural sector. It ought to be transitory and overarching. Transitoriness will not be stated in years but in percent of land expropriated and being part of a National Land Bank (NLB). The fastest is done, the quicker it ends.
- ◆ **Slow-down of the “abandonment of the state”:** particularly of the rural ‘state’. International cooperation funds plus a re-structuring of the oil royalties, and other sources, should become part of the NLB. The prioritization of these funds should be decided in a plebiscite, being aware of the regionalist cultural trait. A lot of leadership is needed in this idea.
- ◆ **Drug Legalization:** maybe the most utopian of these four changes. However it must be referred, at least. It will not be a global legalization, rather a link between medical and drug addiction centers throughout the world-California & Netherlands-to start developing the idea in Colombia and other producing countries that this lash can have an end.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The basic foundation of all these projects is to make regions aware of the importance of ending the present urban-rural unbalance, the so-called double jeopardy. Also, that Colombians understand and value cultural differences and that each region can have a particular and idiosyncratic handling. Also, some colonos should have a new opportunity to be linked to national or international markets. If s(he) or them decide not to do it, a cultural approach has to be structured for them. However, the 'presence of the state' in these regions has also to be redefined and rethought, and expectations ought to be different. Colombia's rural sector must be a priority for all Colombians, because even though less than 30% of the population lives there, more than 70% of the soil is part of it as well as more than 50% of poverty is present. Moreover, the crude civil-rural conflict

is happening in these regions. Only through social, cultural, and economic development, made by time-designed RDP this reality can start to change. Today there are some lands that do not have high presence of landowners, neither high presence of anarchy, to say guerrillas, paramilitaries, or mafias. Those are the lands that should be part of the Land Stocks to start thinking in new social and rural projects.

Any project that take an a-priori stance of cultural change is condemned to failure. From a cultural-structuralist position, natural and artificial structures are taken into account, as well as cultural patterns, in order to develop RDP that interact with these realities and have positive outcomes. This paper has shown some theoretical, methodological, and practical stances that should be followed if the RDC in Colombia wants to present a different face for new generations to come.



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