Development for whom? An analysis of a rural intervention and
its interaction with agricultural policies.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the means and ends of development by addressing two main questions: 1) How does the Colombian state’s neoliberal understanding of development affect the socio economic conditions of small farmers? And 2) How do nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that embrace the neoliberal approach to development interact with local communities in their land struggles? To explore these questions, this thesis focuses on a rural intervention by the organization Entrepreneurial Rural Development (ERD), in the Afro-Colombian corregimiento of Las Marias (pseudonyms). I focus on this area because it embodies the contradictions in Colombia’s agricultural policies: while government-supported programs such as ERD aim to ignite the social and economic development of small farmers, operating concurrently neoliberal policies curtail it. I first analyze how the ERD depoliticized its intervention, and how at the same time its activities have led to the emergence of new leadership in the community. Moreover, I investigate how socio political conditions within the community have significantly limited the success of the ERD’s intended process of shaping the peasants with whom they work as small entrepreneurs. I also consider the extent to which the technologically and culturally oriented approach to the community’s issues espoused by many of the organization’s workers limited their understanding of the farmers’ (already) entrepreneurial behavior.

Micro-level interventions such as ERD cannot be studied in isolation. Rather, they need to be set in the context of the macro policies that either hinder or encourage the development of small farmers. In a country such as Colombia, which exhibits highly concentrated land ownership and wealth, I argue that neoliberal restructuring and the forms it has taken in the government’s agricultural policies have shown a class bias toward large farmers. This bias has led to exclusionary growth, which undercut both access to land and employment for small farmers. The thesis concludes by outlining reforms to address these structural challenges.

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Annex 1: Methodology
Chapter 1

I. Introduction

Development is a disputed concept. Some interpret it as process of transformation of society to achieve what are identified as better living standards. Others perceive it as an imposition of an unwelcome modernity that dominates our imagination, not allowing for other alternatives to flourish (Escobar, 1995). Just as the understanding of development is contested, so is the role of the state in this process. Early development economics considered that the state should have an interventionist role in amending the failures of the market and in granting economic efficiency, growth, and social development (Mohan & Stokke, 2000). In the 1980s, however, with the rise of neoliberalism, the opposite understanding became the norm: state intervention was perceived as a barrier to development. The market came to be perceived as the mechanism that could deliver economic and social development.

The concept of development is central to this thesis. It is particularly relevant to two of its central questions: 1) How does the Colombian state’s neoliberal understanding of development affect the socio economic conditions of small farmers? And 2) How do NGOs that embrace the neoliberal approach to development interact with local communities in their land struggles? In answering these questions, I hope to shed light on the implications of the continuation of the neoliberal model of development for small farmers; and to provide a resource for organizations and communities as they collectively advocate for improved public policies that recognize and grant the legal rights of rural communities to their land.

This thesis focuses on a rural intervention by the organization Entrepreneurial Rural Development (ERD)¹, in the corregimiento² of Las Marias. I focus on this corregimiento,

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¹ Due to the sensitivity of some of the information shared during interviews, I have changed the names of the organization, of the corregimiento, and of all interviewees from the community and the organization. I have
because it embodies the contradictions existing in Colombia’s agricultural policies—while government supported programs such as ERD aim to ignite the social and economic development of small farmers, parallel neoliberal policies curtail it. This thesis explores the extreme marginalization of the Pacific Coast population as reflected by their dispossession, resulting from violence in the region and illicit crop production and mining. Moreover, it assesses the agency of peasant communities in engaging with ERD’s intervention. Finally, it evaluates how the political economy of Las Marias limited the impact of the intervention itself. Micro interventions such as ERD cannot be studied in isolation. Rather, they need to be set in the context of the macro policies that either hinder or encourage the development of small farmers. To explore the aforementioned, I begin with a review of the relevant scholarship in the areas of violence and development, neoliberal approaches to agriculture, and the role that NGOs play in such a context.

II. Literature Review

The power imbalance at play in the development world means that the acceptance of a discourse by one of its key institutions, such as the World Bank, gives the discourse in question traction and enforces consent among other development actors (Cooper & Packard, 1997). For example, the idea that development and conflict are oppositional forces and that development is a key mechanism for preventing conflict in society is accepted by the World Bank and is generally adopted by mainstream development agencies. In their World Bank policy research report, Collier et al. point out that “civil war … reflects… a failure of development” (2003, ix).

renamed the organization Entrepreneurial Rural Development (ERD), and the corregimiento Corregimiento Las Marias. I have also removed geographical and historical information that could potentially render the organization identifiable. I have, however, kept the names of the scholars I interviewed, since the information they provided me was more general.

2 A Corregimiento is a division of the rural area of a municipality that includes a nuclei of population, which is taken into account in the plans of territorial organization (National Administrative Department of Statistics, DANE, 2007).
They further argue that it is crucial to bring countries that are facing violence into the “mainstream of development,” as development is a key instrument in preventing conflict. In this line of thought, violence in low-income countries emerges as a result of a lack of development. Its root causes are weak institutions, inequality, low social cohesion, and poverty (Barron, Diprose, & Woolcock, 2011). Though not explicitly stated in official World Bank publications, such as the aforementioned text by Collier et.al, “mainstream development” (Collier et al., 2003, 101) refers to capitalist development since “successful developers” (ibid) are defined as those that have implemented and sustained policy reforms that lead to fast growth and to global market integration (Thomson, 2011). Furthermore, the transition to capitalist development is perceived as a linear process that can be fast-tracked through the implementation of deregulatory and liberalizing market policies (Elhawary, 2008).

Despite the general acceptance in the development world of the nexus between development and peace, history has shown that there is not a direct correlation between the two. In fact, in many instances, development seems to be highly correlated with violence. Cramer (2006), for instance, points out that the understanding of war and capitalist development as oppositional forces “can only be sustained by a form of historical amnesia,” since “Western and more or less liberal civilization has violence in its foundation, in war, slavery, imperial adventure and primitive accumulation” (p.9 and p. 43). This view echoes Marx’s “primitive accumulation” concept, which refers to the violent process of dispossession of the masses from the means of production (land) that created the capital and the labor force underlying capitalism (Marx, 1978, p. 431). The state, with its monopoly on legitimate violence, plays an essential role in this process.
Drawing from both Marx and Luxemburg, Harvey argues that the processes of primitive accumulation are not one-time events but rather, constitute ongoing processes in capitalism (2003). While expanded reproduction is running smoothly, accumulation by dispossession remains in the background, but it becomes more salient when a crisis of over-accumulation occurs. The surplus capital must constantly be invested in profitable outlets. Therefore, one of the core objectives of what Harvey calls accumulation by dispossession has been to overcome the structural problems of over-accumulation inherent to the capitalist system. Thus, the perpetual need to find profitable terrains for absorbing surplus capital shapes the politics of capitalism (Harvey, 2008, p. 24). Harvey goes on to note that the state, “with its monopoly of violence and definitions of legality”, plays a key role in determining whether accumulation by dispossession takes place (Harvey, 2003, p.145). He further asserts that in the neoliberal era accumulation by dispossession has moved from the background to become the dominant form of accumulation, as a wave of new regions is incorporated into the capitalist market. (2003). Thus many regions of the global south have experienced new rounds of dispossession resulting in commodification and privatization of land, displacement of peasants, transition from collective property to private, privatization of natural and public resources (Harvey, 2003).

Lodhi, Kay and Borras (2009) point out that neoliberal restructuring in countries in the global south has had negative consequences in the agricultural sector, particularly for small farmers. Among those consequences, the authors highlight rising inequality in access to land, leading to rural accumulation in the hands of a few and increased semi-proleterianization of peasants. Carter and Barham (1996) further explain that Latin American agro-export booms did not have uniform consequences for small farmers; rather, outcomes varied depending on underlying microeconomic factors. In some instances these factors have led to increased wealth,
while in others they have threatened farmers’ access to land and employment. To evaluate if agro-export growth has inclusive outcomes for the rural poor, Carter and Barham (1996) assess three elements: 1) the level of participation of small farmers in the production of the export crop, and their access to higher income as a result of increased participation, 2) the creation of structural changes leading to an increase or decrease in land access for the rural poor in a systematic way, and 3) the level of labor absorption emerging from the export boom. These elements provide us with concrete aspects to evaluate the consequences of agro-export booms on peasant farmers.

In addition to the political economy of peasant farmers, this thesis is also concerned with the role that rural development programs might play in supporting the development of rural communities. In considering this relationship, the distinction between what Hart coined as “little d” and “big D” (d/D) development (2001, 650) is especially pertinent. Hart defines ‘big D’ Development “as a post-second world war project of intervention in the ‘third world’ that emerged in the context of decolonization and the Cold War” (2001). She describes ‘little-d’ development—or the development of capitalism—as a geographically uneven, profoundly contradictory set of historical processes” (650). In this framework there exists a clear distinction between the development of capitalism and that of “intentional development” (Mitlin, Hickey, & Bebbington, 2007). Through development interventions, NGOs either try to modify the effects of little-d development or to create deeper changes in the practice, even as they are embedded in it themselves (Mitlin et al., 2007). In other words, as part of big-D development, some NGOs create “development alternatives” as a means of ameliorating the effects of little-d development without engaging in structural changes. Others are engaged in creating alternatives to “capitalist development” and engaging in political actions that could create deeper change in little-d
Discussions concerning NGOs in much academic scholarship are framed within a perceived oppositional dichotomy between state and civil society. While “Left democrats” perceive the increasingly significant role of NGOs as an expression of the erosion of state power, neoliberals frame it as a move towards improving democracy (Kamat, 2004) through decentralization. It is in this process of decentralization, that NGOs are considered as one of the main actors able to foster the development of social capital in the communities in which they work. In the neoliberal era, social capital is perceived as a key element that could ignite community development. The concept of social capital, promoted by Robert Putnam, has been appropriated and transformed by the global development discourse through neoliberal projects and organizations like the World Bank, and has taken a central stage in development practices. Putnam defines social capital as “features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (1995). In the context of a market society, social capital is envisioned as counterweighting “the unfettered individualism of the market and, simultaneously, as a means to gain advantages in it” (Portes & Landlot, 2000). Social capital is situated at the regional or community level, and explains different levels of success in relation to macro-policies (Putnam as cited in Mohan & Stokke, 2000). According the World Bank, the measure is strongly correlated with the economic development of a community; it is identified as the “sociocultural ‘glue’ that binds communities together and ensures both political and economic progress” (Mohan & Stokke, 2000). The development apparatus perceives social capital as key to achieving development. By extension, lack of development success implies a deficiency in social capital and as a result, programmatic and policy prescriptions should aim to address this shortcoming.
However, this understanding of social capital fails to recognize that “social capital does not exist in a political vacuum, and that the nature and extent of the interactions between communities and institutions hold the key to understanding the prospects for development in a given society” (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000, p. 243). Furthermore, this understanding of social capital fails to conceptualize the role that the state plays in its development. Those who aim to build social capital should not only focus on building it within the targeted group. They should also consider “the choice of players (people and institutions) to connect; and the way connections among those players are made” (Briggs, 1997, p.3).

The development apparatus’ utilization of the concept of social capital is divorced from history, geography and power relations. It holds responsible, for its emergence or lack thereof, the community without making connections to the broader social and political economy in which a community is immersed. As such, it is part of the process of depoliticization to which local communities’ realities are subjected. Ferguson argues that the “development apparatus” has generally depoliticized development, treating local conditions as “problems” that can be solved through technical rather than structural or political solutions: “‘Development’ institutions generate their own form of discourse, simultaneously construct...[the place of intervention] as a particular kind of object of knowledge, and create a structure of knowledge around the object” (Ferguson, 1994, p. xiv). Interventions are then planned according to that structure of knowledge, in which the issues that concern the community are depoliticized and reframed in technical and cultural ways (Ferguson, 1994). This generates two types of unintentional consequences: one, the ‘institutional’ effect of expanding bureaucratic state power, and two, the ‘ideological’ effect of depoliticizing both poverty and the state (ibid).
Furthermore, with the privatization of the state’s responsibilities that is part of neoliberalism, NGOs take a preeminent role in assuming the “discourses and goals of the state and state formation,” acting as a mechanism of governance without apparent links with the state” (Postero, 2007, p. 166). Governance, the effort to shape the conduct of a population through calculated means, is not limited to institutions, but rather, permeates society as whole (Li, 2007; Postero, 2007). The goal of neoliberal regimes, achieved through both public (state) and private mechanisms (such as NGOs), is to rationalize and regulate conduct in society (Postero, 2007).

Hale (2004) explains that neoliberalism cannot only be understood in economic terms, but it has to be seen as a cultural project as well. NGOs carrying out development interventions aim to shape the marginalized communities where they intervene by disciplining them through a series of participatory exercises, trainings, and interactions in order to imbue them with entrepreneurial attitudes and values (Ferguson, 1994; Li, 2007; Williams, 2004). The NGOs have as a goal to create subjects who see themselves as self-reliant, liberal individuals who are independent from government support (Hale, 2004). The development apparatus aims to change people’s conduct. These NGOs present this technical approach to development as apolitical, however, “the very claim to technical knowledge is itself a political act” (Cooper & Packard, 1997, p.19).

The neo-Foucauldian approach to development, put forward by Escobar and Ferguson, allows us to understand the unintended consequences of neoliberal development interventions, and how this discourse is being deployed as a tool of governance, with the goal of regulating populations’ conduct. Yet, as Postero (2007) explains, the neo-Foucauldian emphasis on the internalization of development discourse might veil other relevant discourses interacting with it. As per Cooper and Packard (1997), it is important to take into account:

“how such [development] projects …[can be] contested within their own terms and through efforts to redefine the terrain of debate, and how one can find where the room to
maneuver remains in international institutions and in the numerous sites where development initiatives encounter the complexity of particular social struggles” (p. 13).

Participants’ agency, for instance, can both modify the process of little-d and big-D development. The structural conditions in which the interventions develop play an important role in determining the extent to which these interventions succeed. But although neoliberal discourse might be hegemonic, it is not all encompassing.

III. Methodology³ and Thesis Structure

By focusing on the case study of Corregimiento Las Marias and the Entrepreneurial Rural Development’s intervention, I aim to evaluate the tension that exists between neoliberal discourse and various powerful forces that might interfere with it. Moreover, Colombia’s history also shows that the conflict-development nexus approach to understanding development is ahistorical, as it decontextualizes the effects of (capitalist) development. The experience that Corregimiento Las Marias has gone through, further exemplifies this fact.

To understand the conditions in this Corregimiento, I carried out field research between June and August, 2011 and December, 2011 to January, 2012. Overall, I conducted 30 semi-structured interviews with community members participating in ERD’s project, NGO workers, Afro Colombian activists, and government officials. Following the fieldwork, I transcribed, coded, and analyzed the interviews, a process through which the themes shaping this thesis’s narrative emerged. This provided me with the material to understand how ERD aimed to carry out its intervention, and how it interacted with the political and economic conditions the community faced. Moreover, it allowed me to understand how the participants interacted with ERD’s intervention.

³ For an extended version of the methodology and its limitations, please see Annex 1.
Finally, though the interviews allowed me to comprehend, to a certain extent, how agricultural policies impact development initiatives, such as the one put forward by ERD, the bulk of my analysis on the subject resulted from an inductive approach to analyzing primary data (official documents and interviews) and secondary data collected by a number of experts in the field of rural development in Colombia.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Following this introduction and literature review, in Chapter 2, I provide the historical background of development in the Colombian Pacific, and a description of the agricultural policies set in place during Álvaro Uribe Velez’s government, the time during which most of Entrepreneurial Rural Development’s (ERD) intervention occurred. In Chapter 3, I focus specifically ERD, which fits within the intentional development effort being carried out in the context of neoliberal structural adjustment in the Colombian Pacific. The organization offers communities “development alternatives” (Escobar, 1995) that aim to deal with some of the market imperfections that small farmers face, such as access to credit, high transaction costs, and volume demand among others, through the creation of associations that facilitate the farmers’ entry into the formal market. I explain in detail ERD’s intervention, as well as the challenges it faced. Finally in the first section of Chapter 4, I analyze how the ERD depoliticized its intervention, and how at the same time its activities have led to the emergence of new leadership in the community. Moreover, I investigate how existing social conditions within the community have highly limited the success of the ERD’s intended process of shaping the peasants with whom they work into small entrepreneurs. I also consider the extent to which the technically and culturally oriented approach to the community’s issues espoused by many of the organization’s workers limited their understanding of the farmers’ entrepreneurial behavior—which, as I will show, already existed in the community. In the second part of Chapter 4, I situate
micro-interventions such as ERD in the context of the macro-policies that hindered the development of small farmers. In a country like Colombia, which presents high land and wealth concentration, neoliberal restructuring and the forms it has taken in the government’s agricultural policies have shown a class bias toward large farmers. This bias has led to exclusionary growth, as a result of which small farmers saw both their access to land and employment diminish (Machado, 2006). I conclude Chapter 4 by briefly discussing the ways in which the current government’s policies in agriculture are a continuation of Uribe’s development plan. The thesis concludes by outlining reforms to address these structural challenges, and the political limitations in achieving these reforms.
Chapter 2

Historical Context

In this chapter, I aim to recount the history of the Colombian Pacific, particularly in relationship to Colombia’s overall development. With a particular focus on Afro Colombian settlements, I discuss the changing of the property rights system in the region, the inflow of capitalist development and the violence associated with it. Following this discussion, I present the agricultural policies developed during President Álvaro Uribe Velez’s government (2002-2010) the period during which the intervention this thesis focuses on took place. First, I begin by focusing on the Regional Programs of Peace and Development (RPPD) aimed at the social and economic development of small farmers. The organization that this thesis focuses on, the ERD organization, qualifies as such a program. Second, I present the broader agricultural policies that led to the liberalization of the agricultural sector, which contradict the goals of the RPPD.

I. Development in the Pacific

The Colombian Pacific, like other peripheral regions of Colombia, has been at the margin of the nation’s development. Until the 1990s, its population claimed that the “Colombian Pacific had been so forgotten by the rest of the country that not even the violence [that has reached great dimensions due to land acquisition and capitalist accumulation in other regions of the country] had extended to it” (Agudelo, 2001, p.10). However, this does not mean that the history of the Colombian Pacific occurred in complete isolation from Colombia and the world’s economy.

Since colonial times, the Pacific region was integrated into the global economy. It became a center for mining and forestry resources, as forced labor was brought into the area. The Colombian Pacific region includes the departments4 (departamentos) of Choco, Valle del Cauca,

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4 A Department (Departamento) is a territorial entity that has autonomy regarding the administration, promotion, and planning of social and economic development within its territory under the terms established by the Colombian...
Cauca, and Nariño, and is comprised of 10 million hectares that extend from Panama to the north to Ecuador to the south. It is situated between the Andes and the Pacific Ocean. Considered one of the world richest areas in terms of biodiversity, the Colombian Pacific is currently one of the poorest regions in Colombia, according to conventional poverty indicators (Escobar, 2001).

This region was marginally integrated into the modernization process of the nation through the establishment of an extractive economy. The region is a supplier of natural resources such as timber, ivory-nut palm (*tagua*), gold, platinum, silver, oil, and natural gas (Agudelo, 2001; Asher, 2009). Afro Colombians, who were brought to the region as slave labor for the mining enclaves in the sixteenth century, and indigenous residents cohabit the rural regions. During the territory settlement process, the colonial government was largely absent. This legacy has continued to the present and the State’s presence in the region continues to be precarious. Moreover, the municipal and departmental administrations that were established in the central cities to govern the region, in places such as Buenaventura and Tumaco, have rarely reached beyond their localities (Hoffmann, 2007).

Socio-racial segregation has been a constant issue in the Pacific since the beginning of the nineteenth century (Agudelo, 2001). This segregation, in addition to the absence of the State, resulted in Afro Colombian communities developing their own political, social and cultural organizations. They formed their own material practices that differed from the colonial society and, after independence, from the center of power (Hoffmann, 2007). Afro Colombian socio-political organizations and practices emerged from a blend of the influences from their African origins and their new circumstances (Asher, 2009). Though physical isolation and structural

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Constitution and laws. Moreover, the departments exercise administrative functions of coordination and intermediation between the Nation and the municipalities. Finally, they are also responsible for providing certain services to its population that are determined in the Colombian Constitution and laws (DANE, 2000).
abandonment from the Center contributed to the emergence of a different Afro culture, these communities also chose to remain isolated from the nation’s influence for a number of other reasons: as a form of resistance, to maintain their own beliefs (Agudelo, 2001; Asher, 2009), and to avoid discrimination (Asher, 2009).

The leadership structures that emerged in these communities also differed from the Western way of organizing society. Historically, in Afro Colombian settlements, there was not institutionalized leadership over the land: The authority was “diffused and constantly negotiated” (Hoffmann, 2007, p. 24). Land appropriation was carried out without legal titles and, due to the abundance of land, without conflict among neighbors. Individual appropriation of parcelas (land for production), usually located by a river, occurred. Parallel to this practice, portions of land not appropriate for farming, were collectively used to complement agricultural production for activities such as hunting and gathering, and wood extraction (Agudelo 2001; Hoffmann, 2007; Interview with Colombian Anthropologist William Villa, August 10, 2011). Individual land holdings could be inherited, donated or sold. Any person could take control of an unoccupied parcel of land, without need for formal consent. Disagreements were settled through the intervention of “compadres,” friends, or the elders in the hamlet (Hoffman, 2007, p. 87). The amount of land owned did not necessarily lead to a stratification of society. Land appropriation had to do more with the needs of a family and its capacity to work the land (Hoffman, 2007).

With seasonal activities as diverse as fishing, agriculture and mining, the productive activities of these Black communities involved high mobility (Agudelo, 2001; Interview with William Villa, August 10, 2011). These patterns would change with the new logic of accumulation that came to prevail.
In 1959, the Colombian government passed a law that established the areas historically settled by Afro Colombians as empty lands (baldios) available for colonization, making Afro Colombian inhabitants de facto squatters (Asher, 2009). The passing of this law directly impacted land accessibility in this region. Large logging and gold mining companies were able to exploit these lands freely through permits granted by the State (Agudelo, 2005, p.13; Oslander, 2007). Land availability was further impacted by a series of occurrences that began to unfold at the beginning of the 1970s. During this period, the entrance of large capital, in the form of shrimp farms, palm oil plantations, and mining and fishing enterprises was initiated. This further dispossessed Afro Colombian communities and led to an over exploitation of land in the region (Agudelo, 2001; Escobar, 1996). Moreover, during this decade, the government granted indigenous communities land rights over their homelands. Historically, both indigenous and Black communities had jointly inhabited this land. The new rights granted to indigenous communities raised tensions between these two ethnic groups (Agudelo, 2005). It is important to highlight that while indigenous groups have been considered an ethnic group since colonial times (though remaining a subaltern group), Black communities were not identified as such. They were not legally considered to be a culturally distinctive group, nor did they have legal rights to the lands they inhabited (Asher, 2009; Hoffmann, 2002).

By the 1980s, the Colombian state and development agencies, embracing the neoliberal global agenda, identified the peripheral regions as a new frontier for capitalist development. The Pacific was chosen due to its natural resources and genetic diversity (Agudelo, 2005; Asher, 2009). With capitalist development having arrived full force into the region, a resistance movement emerged in the 1980s. With the support of the pastoral Afro Colombian and indigenous organizations, Black peasant communities in the Pacific began to organize to resist
the displacement that they were facing (Agudelo, 200; Hoffmann, 2002). The resistance movement\textsuperscript{5} originated in the Chocó region, and later extended to the rest of the Pacific (Hoffmann, 2002; Interview with Villa, August 10, 2011). The organizations that emerged across the region were constituted of individuals living around particular river basins in the region (Interview with Villa, August 10, 2011), such as Atrato, and San Juan.\textsuperscript{6}

A key goal of this movement was State recognition of Black peasants as an ethnic group with a shared culture and ownership rights over the land where they live and engage in productive activities (Hoffmann, 2007). The movement was framed around cultural rights and sustainable production, which paralleled the broader development discourse in which both minority cultural rights and environmental protection were becoming central and intertwined (Agudelo, 2001; Asher, 2009).

Underlying the movement was a new understanding of territory that moved away from an idea of an open territoriality to one that established clear limits in order to end the dispossession of Afro Colombian land (Agudelo, 2001; Hoffmann, 2002). Following the indigenous model for organizing, ethnic identity, an environmental discourse (Asher, 2009), and a link to the territory “where they could ‘be black and live as a community’” became the basis for the Afro Colombian struggle (Asher, 2009, p. 49; Hoffmann, 2002).

\textsuperscript{5} Within the Afro Colombian movement there are several factions that present different claims ranging from opposing collective land titles, and embracing legal approaches that will benefit rural and urban Afro Colombians, to one that aimed to make the Pacific territory an autonomous collective ethnic territory where indigenous and Afro Colombian groups can determine the future of development. However, due to the scope of this thesis, these differences cannot be explored here. For further reading, please see Asher, 2009.

\textsuperscript{6} However, for the most part, the black peasants whose family economies were based on agriculture tended to be the sector most involved, while the basin’s population that worked in illegal mining and fishing were less involved. This difference is in part explained by the high mobility that the latter’s practices required. Also, the agricultural development projects promoted by international technical cooperation have influenced the peasant communities in the different river basins, since the 1980s and have sparked a culture of working in association to carry out proposed agricultural projects (Interview with Villa, August 10, 2011).
All across Latin America, transnational indigenous federations were organizing and building alliances with organizations such as the United Nations and human rights and environmental movements, which helped to legitimize their demands to their respective States. This push for recognition also called for a broader understanding of citizenship and included demands for territorial autonomy (Asher, 2009; Postero, 2007). In 1989, the International Labor Organization (ILO) enacted an accord that demanded the recognition of ethnic and cultural rights of minority groups within nations (Asher, 2009; Postero, 2007). The ILO’s accord gave legitimacy to the Afro Colombians’ claims for rights over the lands they used and occupied (Asher, 2009).

In the 1980s, with the Colombian police and military linked to human rights violations, and the State connected to drug trafficking, the Colombian State was lacking legitimacy internally and internationally (Hoffmann, 2007). A variety of distinct movements—of guerrillas, urban squatters, union workers, peasants and indigenous groups—that had been building up since the 1970s, had been putting pressure on the Colombian State to change the unequal distribution of land and income, and expand the space for democratic political participation. Black communities had been involved in this struggle as well. However, they didn’t organize around their ethnic identity until the 1980s, as mentioned above (Asher, 2009).

In 1990, the national government called for a constitutional reform process with the supposed goal of redefining the relationship between the State and civil society (Hoffmann, 2007). In the new constitution that emerged from this process, the Colombian state embraced the discourse of multiculturalism and the concept of sustainable development, which were supported in the international arena, and gave particular attention to the plight of “Black communities.” The state aimed to recover legitimacy by improving the conditions of the minorities within the nation (Agudelo, 2001; Asher, 2009), and strengthening the State’s connection to sustainable
development practices (Agudelo, 2001; Asher, 2009; Hoffmann, 2007). Given the Afro Colombian movement’s framing of its members’ productive practices as sustainable and environmentally-friendly, its push to gain rights over community’s land was in line with the State’s goal of achieving sustainable development (Asher, 2009). The traditional knowledge systems of Black (and indigenous) populations were regarded as having preserved this rich and fragile tropical ecosystem to date.

The New Political Constitution included transitional Article 55, which gave way to Article 70, the Ley de Negritudes, in 1993. This latter law granted collective property rights over the land they inhabited to rural Black populations that live in the Pacific river basin. It also recognized their right to develop their own culture and continue with their traditional production practices (Oslender, 2007; Interview with William Villa, August 11, 2011). Finally, Law 70 also established the creation of a new administrative form, the community councils (consejos comunitarios), for political and territorial governance. Each community that aimed to access collective land rights would have to develop such a council to first make the claim over the collective territory, and later to administer it (Agudelo, 2005; Offen, 2003). The community councils oversee land claims, access, and resource administration. Also within their jurisdiction is the establishment of contracts with third parties for natural resource exploitation—though these agreements depend upon ministerial approval (Offen, 2003). Nevertheless, these councils, which are supposed to be the highest authority in the territory, do not receive monetary transfers from either the municipality or the national government.

7 Though the Black rural population of the Pacific benefited from this law, it excludes most of the Black population of Colombia, who live in urban settings. The latter comprise 70% of Colombia’s total Black population. For them race remains a core element that leads to segregation and social exclusion (Agudelo, 2005; Hoffmann, 2002).
Law 70 assumes that collective territory and community councils are ancestral practices for Afro Colombian communities, as was true for indigenous communities. However, this is not the case. As explained above, the leadership of the former was dynamic. There existed a mix of private property and shared non-agricultural land to extract resources for subsistence (Hoffmann, 2007). With the emergence of Law 70, the State created new structures that were legible and extended its control over the Black communities. Access to the territory is now subject to new forms of legitimacy, and those who know how to engage with the new codes brought by this formal reorganization are more likely to take leadership positions (Hoffmann, 2002).

Embedded in the reformulation of a political pact, signified by the enactment of a new constitution, were hopes for a new national democratic project. This project was to lead the country towards a more inclusionary democracy. Paradoxically, the new Constitution also institutionalized the neoliberal project (Hoffmann, 2007; Martin, 2006). Following neoliberal principles, the new Constitution reduced the social functions that Congress and the different state agencies exercise, such as social security provision, and access to low-cost credit.

In the 1990s and 2000s, as in other Latin American countries, Colombia further embraced neoliberal policies, including the adoption of free markets and market competition as keys to economic growth and development. During this period, Colombia received US$1.9 billion a year from foreign direct investment (Avilés, 2008, p. 417). As mentioned above, through Law 70, the State was able to regulate property rights over territories that were catalogued since 1959 as empty lands. With the opening of the Colombian economy and the arrival of international capital, the State sought to avoid conflict by legally establishing private property that could facilitate contractual relations (Hoffmann, 2007; Interview with Professor Claudia Mosquera Rosero-Labbe, August 10, 2011). Finally, also in line with the neoliberal approach, through recognizing
the autonomy of Black and indigenous communities, the State was able to follow through with a
decentralization agenda (Hoffmann, 2007). Recognizing Black communities’ rights over their
land not only enabled the State to regain some of its lost legitimacy, but also helped it to further
implement neoliberal policies.

Parallel to the process of National political restructuring and the emergence of Black
collective territories in the Pacific, State and non-state armed actors increased their presence in
the Pacific due to geostrategic interests (Hoffmann, 2007; Interview with William Villa, August
10, 2011). In the 1990s, the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)\(^8\) identified this
region as a “transit corridor” that could facilitate access to the interior of the country and serve as
a point of control for the port of Buenaventura for drug and arms trafficking. Moreover, the high
concentration of hydroelectric production provided the FARC with an important target to
sabotage (Agudelo, 2005; Oficina de Gestión y Paz, 2004). During this time the FARC
heightened its control over the population and coca cultivation practices in the river region of the
rural Pacific.

The FARC’s expansion was followed by a new military and paramilitary\(^9\) presence in the
region, leading to armed confrontations and violence against the civilian population (Agudelo,
2005). Transitional article 55, and Law 70, created a sense that there was an agreement between
the State and the Black communities on the vision of development for the Pacific: an economic

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\(^8\) The FARC emerged from the peasant self-defense groups in the 1960s. Its origins though go father in history, to the
1920s and 1930s. During this time, poor agricultural workers confronted the large landed elite. The FARC has begun as a
local peasant movement and it became a national revolutionary one located both in the rural and the urban areas. Emerging
from the rural areas, the FARC first demand was for land reform. Later it added demands to end corruption and anti
capitalist and US imperialist concerns. In the present, some scholars argue that the guerrilla movement has lost its
ideological roots and has become more bureaucratized (Holmes, 2007).

\(^9\) The paramilitary are illegal, right wing armed forces that gained full force during the period of “La Violencia,” which
spanned from 1948 to about 1958. During this period, the national elite, sought to “modernize” the Colombian economy
and to control the process of capital accumulation within the country. The role of the paramilitary forces, initially funded
by the national conservative land owning elite and later by large commercial enterprises and narco-traffickers, was to
protect their interests against the guerrillas, or any other social uprising (Ross, 2007).
project that would lead to sustainability. However, while in rhetoric, ethnic rights and environmental conservation remained linked, the State was following a macroeconomic approach with a neoliberal orientation (Asher, 2009).

**Uribe’s Agricultural Policies**

Following the neoliberal framework embraced by Colombia in the 1990s, one of the Uribe government’s main goals was to increase foreign investment by opening up the economy. His government argued that an increase in foreign investment would strengthen Colombia’s productive economy, increase employment, and eradicate poverty (CINEP, 2011; Machado, 2006). With 75 percent of Colombian territory under the control or contestation of non-state armed actors (Gottwald, 2004, p. 525), the Colombian government needed to reclaim power and ensure security in order to regain investor’s confidence and attract foreign investment (CINEP, 2011). In the National Development Plan 2002-2006 (NDP), it was established that in order to fight the insurgency, the eradication of illicit crops was key. The latter had become an important financing source for the insurgency. Solving the socio-economic issues of rural communities was perceived as a way to decrease illicit crop production and to help solve part of the security problem in rural areas (Meza, 2010; Vargas, 2006). To this end, the government committed to promoting the development of projects focused on increasing agricultural productivity that would counteract the growth of illegal crops. Moreover, these projects were to be environmentally sustainable and linked to increased state presence (NDP, 2002).

In line with this goal, the NDP supports the development and continuation of RPPD, with financing from the European Union and the World Bank. ERD is one of these programs, and has been funded by the European Union; although some of its funding also comes from national foundations and businesses. The main goal of these programs is to create positive changes in the
socio-economic, political and cultural realms through initiatives that focus on agricultural development, strengthening the state’s presence, achieving sustainable development, and creating a culture of peace, while rebuilding or maintaining a sense of belonging to the land. Through the creation of economic opportunities for the population and efforts to strengthen their participation in the public sphere, the programs aim to help regain conditions of governability and democracy in zones that have encountered violence (NDP, 2002). Through these elements, the government expects to prevent displacement (CONPES 3278, 2004) and to provide an alternative to illicit crop production. The forced eradication of illicit crops is not a component of RPPD. Instead, the programs expect to reduce illicit crop production by providing assistance for growing alternative crops and getting them to markets (Interview with Carlos Alberto Muñoz, July 13, 2011). By 2009, RPPD projects were present in 127 municipalities in 9 departments, serving about 500,000 inhabitants (Department of National Planning, 2008).

While these programs aimed to provide small farmers with economic opportunities, the agricultural policies pursued by the National government negatively impact the same small farmers. The central tenet of agricultural policy, developed by the NDP and the National Council of Economic and Social Policy (CONPES, the organism that coordinates economic policy in Colombia), is to increase the competitiveness and growth of the agricultural sector as a key to Colombia’s development (CONPES 3527, 2008; NDP, 2002). A key component of the policy was strengthening entrepreneurs and integrating them into international markets. Ten products were identified as having great competitive advantage and of being capable of facilitating Colombia’s integration into international markets; these included: tropical fruits (bananas), African palm (for bio fuels, such as ethanol and diesel), and cacao (NDP, 2002, p. 335). The NDP echoes mainstream development understandings of the relationship between conflict and
development, which posit a positive link between peace-building and development. In light of this economic understanding, the Ministry of Agriculture, which administers subsidies, gave funding priority to projects with higher productivity and profit margins, as they were thought to have a greater potential of providing employment—though, as I will later discuss, this job creation did not take place (Machado, 2006; Thomson, 2011). Agribusinesses were particularly favored, receiving 85 percent of the ministry’s budget, which strengthened their competitiveness. Uribe’s policies towards the agricultural sector favored mechanized, commercial agriculture, export production, and livestock. The explicit neglect of small farmers and their domestically oriented production lead to a decrease in production among them as well as a decline in employment opportunities for them (Goebertus, 2008; Thomson, 2011).

Moreover, with the opening of the economy, not only was access to capital limited for the peasant economy, but most of the state-sponsored programs that provided non-capital support, such as integrated rural development, were also removed. Furthermore, state-sponsored access to technical assistance for small farmers, and national programs that supported technological transfers were heavily curtailed (UNDP, 2011; UNHR, 2006). At the same time as public subsidies were being denied to small farmers the process of bank privatization greatly limited their access to credit (Hristov, 2005). In 2006, it was estimated that only about 10 percent of small farmers had access to formal credit (Meza, 2010, p. 76). In addition, even as small farmers struggled to access credit and technical support, price guarantees for agricultural commodities were removed, and the importation of subsidized agricultural products from the US, such as wheat, cotton (Thomson, 2011), corn, and soy, which were grown with subsidies, greatly increased (Meza, 2010). This led many small, domestic producers into bankruptcy.
As part of efforts to increase international exports and reach new markets, the government moved to establish free trade agreements with several countries and strategic regions, such as the USA, MERCOSUR, and the European Union. Small farmers, who were already facing extreme market competition due to significant disparities in resources, subsidies, technology and production capacity, opposed these agreements (particularly the one with the US). The Colombian government reached an agreement with farmers’ organizations to put in place a policy that would help ease the effect of free trade agreements and help the sector to become more competitive (Arguello, 2011; NDP, 2002). This policy became the program *Agro Ingreso Seguro* (Agro Income Insurance, AIS). Though the free trade agreement with the US did not come into effect until 2010, AIS was established in 2006 in anticipation of the agreement. Unfortunately, AIS failed to sufficiently support small farmers through this period of neoliberalization. The program was developed as a demand-side subsidy, rather than one targeted at suppliers. This type of subsidy tends to benefit large firms that are already more competitive and able to respond more dynamically to changes in demand. As such, the distribution of subsidies under AIS was ultimately concentrated in a relatively small group of wealthier farmers. Since the subsidies were not distributed to those who could have benefitted the most, they did not achieve the greatest possible impact for the Colombian population. Between 2007 and 2009, the resources of this program were distributed as follows: 46.1 percent went to midsize producers, 34.1 percent to small producers, and 19.8 percent to large producers (PNUD, 2011, p. 329). Furthermore, given how the categories were defined, many of those classified as midsize producers were actually large producers—midsize producers were defined as businesses with assets between USD 29,700 ($54 million COP) and USD 2,732,950 ($4.9 billion COP). This breakdown disproportionately favored large producers (Montaño, 2009, p. 24). Due to the lack of
distributional equity, the benefits of the AIS ended up being appropriated by a few private individuals rather than benefiting society as a whole (UNDP, 2011). Palm growers benefited the most from credits and subsidies provided by the AIS program (UNDP, 2011).

The negative effect of Uribe’s agricultural policies extended beyond the peasant economy. These policies also put Colombia’s food sovereignty at risk. The policy’s emphasis on investment in agricultural commodities for export (including crops for biofuel) meant vast tracks of lands were removed from producing food for domestic consumption (Suarez, 2007). This, combined with the increase of subsidized agricultural products flooding the Colombian market, has led to an increase in dependency on food imports from 4 percent in 1990 to 14 percent in 2004 (Meza, 2010, p. 77).

The massive agricultural reform that took place under Uribe’s leadership did not positively affect the historical issue of who has access to land that has marked Colombian history since colonial times. Colombia has one of Latin America’s highest levels of inequality in land distribution: 0.06 percent of the landed elite owns 51.51 percent of rural property, while 78.76 percent of landowners own 5.27 percent of the land (Montaño, 2009, p.13)—the Gini coefficient for land ownership is 0.85 (ibid).¹³ Uribe’s 2003 decision to dismantle the Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform (INCORA) and replace it with the Colombian Institute for Rural Development (INCODER) actually served to exacerbate inequality in land access (Thomson, 2011; UNHCR, 2006). INCODER had a considerably lower budget than INCORA and 50 percent fewer staff (UNHCR, 2006, p. 29). According to the Colombian Attorney General, “the elimination of INCORA was not a mere act of administrative reform […] the message that seemed to underline the decision was the indefinite postponement of the primary aim of

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¹³ Colombia’s government attempted to carry out agrarian reforms on several occasions between 1961 and 1988. However, it was unable to execute them as the landed political elite has resisted it. And the Market Led Agrarian Reform (willing seller, willing buyer) that was adopted in 1990 has failed to redistribute land among the poor.
implementing a genuine and just agrarian reform in Colombia” (As cited in Thomson, 2011, p. 345). At the end of Uribe’s presidency, rural poverty was 64.3 percent, compared to 40 percent in urban areas (Perfetti, 2009; Vazques, 2010). The opening of the economy, ending support for small farmers, and administrative transformations resulted in the expulsion of a great number of small farmers from the legal market, pushing them to produce illegal crops (UNDP, 2011). Moreover, these agricultural development policies have contributed to massive violence and displacement of small farmers. The next section explores this relationship in more depth.

The relationship between displacement, violence and development

Colombia has been characterized by a civil conflict for over fifty years, in which controlling land resources has always meant access to power. Leftist guerrillas, such as the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), confront the state and illegal right-wing paramilitary organizations, the latter of which often collaborate with sectors of the Colombian army (Amnesty International, 2008). All of the armed actors in the conflict are responsible for human rights violations, and civilian communities withstand the worst of the conflict (Amnesty International, 2008). Direct violence against rural populations has had the dual purpose of controlling both the civilian population and valuable land. Both of these goals are achieved through the forced displacement of communities residing in rural areas. Forced displacement aims to break any existing social networks in order to make the civilian population more vulnerable and easier to control (Ibáñez, 2005). As of January 2011, forced displacement has resulted in over 3,672,000 internally displaced persons in the country (UNHCR, 2010, p. 82). This established Colombia as the country with the third-highest number of internal refugees in the global south, after Angola and Sudan (Gottwald, 2004).

Guerrilla and paramilitary forces continually expand their control over territories that are
rich in natural resources, or that are the site of planned large-scale development projects (Escobar, 2004). In different regions of the country, megaprojects, mining and oil extraction, and the cultivation of African palm, has led to forcible displacement of peasant, afro-Colombian and indigenous populations. Both national and international companies involved in these projects have paid paramilitary forces to displace the residents in order to expand their operations into those areas (Goebertus, 2008; Thomson, 2011; Escobar 2004; Meerten, 2012). In other instances, the displaced have been forced to sell their land at an absurdly low price, allowing large national or multinational enterprises to accumulate vast amounts of land for megaprojects, agro-industrial projects, or subsoil exploration for gas and oil.

Government support for projects that promoted large-scale development in certain commodities (African palm, bananas, etc.) through big commercial farms, “have implicitly encouraged the expropriation of land...as they required an increase in the amount of land dedicated to such resources” (Elhawary, 2007, p. 10; Goebertus, 2008). In providing this support, the Government was complicit in the displacement of farming communities. From 1994 onwards, the production of palm oil was an important aspect of the opening up of Colombia’s market. It was supported through various laws and agreements. For example Law 138, passed in 1994, established a fund for the cultivation of African palm oil. During President Pastrana’s tenure (from 1998 to 2002), through Plan Colombia, African palm oil was championed as an alternative to illegal crops. Finally, under President Uribe, the massive cultivation of African palm oil became part of the national development plan (Oslender, 2007).

The connection between violence and development projects was exemplified by what has been taking place in the Colombian Pacific Region, where violence and displacement, “have often resulted in the expansion of African Palm plantations by rich growers” (Escobar, 2008, p.
19). In the southernmost area of the Pacific, paramilitary groups associated with African palm oil capitalists engaged in massive displacement of the population for the expansion of palm oil production. “This [displacement] has been done in the name of development” (Escobar, 2004, p. 9). Yet we can observe that this particular form of development is clearly linked to violence (Escobar, 2003; Oslender, 2007).

The massive displacement in the region began concurrently with the process, established by law 70, which granted collective land titles to the Afro Colombian communities. In fact, the first community that was granted land titles, through law 70, had already been displaced by the time they were granted their titles (Asher, 2009; Oslender, 2007). By 2006, 6.8 million hectares had been appropriated by powerful landholding companies and individuals through the use of paramilitary forces. Most of this land had been previously occupied by indigenous and Afro Colombian communities (Thomson, 2011, p.344). The violence exercised against Afro Colombian communities has shown a complete disregard for the ethnic-territorial processes and political gains that this group achieved at the beginning of the 1990s (Escobar, 2003; Hoffmann, 2002). In the next chapter, I will discuss how the community that this thesis focuses on experienced the violence, and what has been the socio-economic consequence resulting from it.
Chapter 3

Description of the ERD Intervention

In this chapter, I discuss the way in which the policies and dynamics discussed in Chapter 2 were at play in Corregimiento Las Marias, the community on which this thesis focuses. Following this discussion, I present ERD’s model of intervention in this community with a particular emphasis on its aims and the constraints it faced that highly limited its impact. I specifically discuss the political effects that its intervention has had in Corregimiento Las Marias with regards to the development of new forms of leadership, despite the organization’s claim of neutrality.

I. Recent History of Corregimiento Las Marias

As discussed in Chapter 2, the violence endured by the population has led to massive displacement, from the rural sector to the city, in the Pacific region where Corregimiento Las Marias is located (Interview with Luisa Pinzon, social worker of ERD, July 6, 2011). The civilian population who were forced to leave their land, those who chose to resist and stay, and those who returned to their communities after having to flee, faced immense social breakdown at the individual, familial and collective levels. The following account of Corregimiento Las Marias, reflects closely the current dynamic existing in the Pacific.

The Corregimiento Las Marias is located next to a river basin, and it is made up of 16 veredas, occupying 90,000 hectares. As with many rural communities in the region, since the 1990s, Corregimiento Las Marias has been affected by the national conflict. FARC, one of the guerrillas in Colombia, arrived there in the 1990s and established political and military control over the Corregimiento. Pablo Alvarez, a well respected community member, and a Justice of

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11 Veredas are hamlets located in the rural areas, outside of the municipal center. They are populated, but the houses are scattered in the area and the economic activity is mostly based on agriculture and/or livestock (DANE, 2007).
the Peace for the *Corregimiento* explained that: “Upon arrival, they expressed that their role was to take care of the community and fight for equality for all. We, the people, having suffered so much, believed them” (July 5, 2011). The FARC took control of the administration of justice and provided armed protection, filling the political vacuum left by the absence of the State.

For a short period of time, the guerrillas and the community did not clash. Some community members felt safer with its presence, as robberies and other crimes declined. The FARC carried out “social cleansing,” targeting community members who were involved in illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, and robberies (Interviews with council members María Pardo, July 6, 2011 and Pablo Alvarez, July 5, 2011). Many young men from the community joined the FARC as it offered a decent salary, a vehicle and a weapon, giving these young men both employment and a sense of power (ibid.).

In response to the spread of guerrilla forces, the paramilitaries arrived in the region to “clean it up,” they carried out the first massacre in the *Corregimiento Las Marias* in the early 2000s. On their way to the community, they went through two state-military control posts under the surveillance of the two battalions serving the area. According to varying sources, 6 to 8 people were killed in this incident (ibid). This massacre led to a massive displacement of the population from the region to major cities in the Pacific. Within weeks, due to the lack of support for the displaced in urban areas, most of these people decided to return once again to their respective communities, despite the lack of State support nor guaranty of safety (Interview with Juan Carlos Calderón, delegate for Human Rights in the Office of the Personería in the Pacific, August, 3, 2011).

After this massacre, national military forces established a presence inside the community to regain control of the situation. Then, after a period of 6 to 8 months, the military left. Both the
paramilitary and guerrilla forces returned to the *Corregimiento*, taking up a presence in different *veredas*. In many instances, the paramilitary and guerrilla members blended in with the population of the different *veredas*, creating a situation in which it became really hard to know who to trust (Interviews with María Pardo, July 6, 2011, and Camilo Serrano, coordinator of the entrepreneurial component, July 5, 2011). In the early 2000s, another massacre took place in the *Corregimiento*, leaving several members of the community dead (Interviews with Pablo Álvarez, July 5, 2011 and María Pardo, July 6, 2011,). The paramilitary accused the victims of being guerrilla members. Certain leaders knew that the massacre was going to take place but did not share the information (Interviews with Luisa Pinzon, July 6, 2011, and Camilo Serrano, July 5, 2011, and). As in the massacre of 2000, the paramilitary forces were responsible for this event. Again, they were not acting alone; they had the support of the military (Interviews with Pablo Álvarez, July 5, 2011, Juan Carlos Calderón, August 3, 2011, and María Pardo, July 6, 2011, and). This massacre also led to a massive displacement to the city of Buenaventura. While the amount of people displaced was significant, many community members decided to stay and resist the displacement. Others returned during the day to check their houses and their farmland (*fincas*) and to get some of their produce to feed their families or to try to sell in the local market in the city. The same year, several hundred families from *Corregimiento Las Marias* returned to the land with official support from the government. According to Juan Carlos Calderón, the delegate for Human Rights in the office of the *Personeria*, this return was “symbolic” because it was a massive one that was carried out with institutional support. A member of ERD also used the word “symbolic” to refer to the return process of 2003. Though, he used the term to highlight the disdainful way in which the government transported and treated the returnees: “The people were brought back in dump trucks (*volquetas*) like animals. They gave them [upon arrival] some
bad beans, a bad quality chicken...and that was all...” (Interview with María Pardo, July 6, 2011). For many community members, the support received from the State following their return was insufficient (Interviews with Dominga Martínez, community member, July 6, 2011; and María Pardo, July 6, 2011). According to an official report, the communities in the Corregimiento still endure the abandonment of the State. They have not received any support since returning to their land, nor have they received a guaranty that the violence will end.

The arrival of the armed conflict brought with it a break down of trust in the Corregimiento. Members of the community joined the different armed groups, and became involved in different violent acts against their neighbors (Interview with María Pardo, July 6, 2011). Members of the Corregimiento accused other members of being part of illegal armed groups, marking them to be killed in massacres, such as the ones described above (Interviews with Pablo Alvarez, July 5, 2011, and Camilo Serrano, July 5, 2011). In some instances, community members were aware that the massacre was going to take place and did not share the information (Interview with Luisa Pinzon, July 6, 2011). 12

“Finding out that that someone from your own community, from your own family, your neighbor has become the ‘executioner’ (Verdugo) [led to the break down of social ties]; no one knew who to trust any longer, no one knows who the informant was” (Interview with Camilo Serrano, July 5, 2011).

Pablo Hurtado, a council member, noted “[the war] ended our tranquility, invaded our cultural systems, … [and] the family integrity that existed in our communities… [before] people did not kill each other like that. The rules of peaceful coexistence that were in place were lost, [under the new system] the son of the neighbor killed the son of the neighbor.” Prior to the conflict, the members of the different veredas moved freely between communities. However,

12 With such rampant violence, this could have been the result of trying to survive (Interview with Luisa Pinzon, July 6, 2011)
once the massacres began to occur, interaction between the veredas greatly diminished (Interview with Juan David Pardo, community member, July, 6, 2011).

The attacks on civilian communities were part of a conscious strategy waged by all actors involved whose goal was to control the population, dismantle base support for opposition groups, as well as to control valuable resources (Agudelo, 2005). It was within this tense environment that ERD began its work with Corregimiento Las Marias. ERD was a non-governmental organization that had been working in different conflict zones in the Pacific region of Colombia. The next section discusses their work with Corregimiento Las Marias.

II. The Operating Thesis of ERD

The ERD organization was established as a civil society effort based on a belief that violence would not lead to displacement if economic conditions strengthened the connection between communities and their land. In its employees’ view, the root of Colombia’s social problems lay in “the most isolated rural areas where peasants have little option but to join one of the paramilitary groups, engage in petty crime, grow illegal crops or become displaced.” The representatives of the organization believed that communities faced with violence, that lack of an economic project, were more likely to suffer displacement, fueling migration to cities and fanning urban poverty. The organization worked with communities to strengthen their economic productivity in order to provide an incentive for people to stay. Carlos Alberto Muñoz, the coordinator of Project Formulation for ERD, noted that it is often the lack of attachment to the land that further facilitates the violence-induced process of displacement (July 13, 2011).

ERD works in areas such as Corregimiento Las Marias, where the state is absent (Interview with Sandra Sánchez, project coordinator of Corregimiento Las Marias, August 1st,
2011, and María Pardo, July 5, 2011). “It is a fact that in those marginalized and isolated areas, the Colombian State does not exist!... And in that context, different (illegal) armed groups have come to exercise power...through terror... which generates displacement” (Interview with Carlos Alberto Muñoz, July 13, 2011). There was a sense that the state has transferred its responsibilities towards the community to the international development agencies and NGOs (ERD Report, 2010). The only visible state presence is that of the armed forces, which, given their history in the Corregimiento, created conflicting responses. Nevertheless, ERD’s goal was not to supplant the state’s role. On the contrary, its employees hoped to partner with state branches that could support their initiatives (Interview with Carolina Ramírez, coordinator of Commercialization, July, 21, 2011).

ERD aimed to “contribute to attaining peace through promoting integrated development of rural communities.” Sandra Sánchez, the project coordinator for Corregimiento Las Marias, explained that, for her, having an integrated approach meant “that the solution was not only to develop the economy...[it was also about] building solidarity [within the community]...in order to be able to believe in....[the] region again, and to develop a sense of belonging to...[one’s] land ” (August 1st, 2011). ERD aims to engage in processes, for several years, as opposed to projects, that will lead to the socio-economic reactivation of marginal communities in the southwest of Colombia, with a particular focus on its rural regions (Interview with Daniela Herrera, July 26, 2011). They argue that long intervention periods allow ERD to have an impact in the area and support the community during the learning process, so that their efforts can bear fruit (Interview with Pablo Alvarez, July 5, 2011).

III. ERD’s Understanding of Peasants’ Communities

13 In several of my interviews this issue kept emerging. The military is seen as a source of protection, but at the same time elicits a sense of distrust. Moreover, even when the military is trusted, it is seen as a source of insecurity due to the potential for it to engage in combat with the other illegal armed forces present in the area.
During my observation of the organization I noted that the different members of the team had contrasting views of the peasant communities with which they work. The organization has a central office in Cali, where the project developers and area coordinators are located. Meanwhile social workers, trainers and agriculture technicians are based in the different communities with which the organization works. ERD’s mission statement reflects an understanding of the structural constraints facing communities that are highly affected by the conflict. Yet, when some ERD employees talked about the causes of the communities’ poverty they often framed them as being rooted in cultural and technological deficiencies. Many of these employees, particularly those who worked in the central office in Cali, viewed the peasant economy as being very primitive. In an ERD presentation detailing the organization’s range of interventions (created by Daniela Herrera, general director of projects for ERD, July 25, 2011) peasants were described as “resistant to change and as having a mental attitude of conformity.” One employee noted:

“The blacks, they are too comfortable, I will not say lazy, but comfortable! It is the law of least effort, one starts thinking... the fact they live how they live it is not just a matter of them being unfortunate... perhaps their aspirations are different. For them it is more important to be able to sit and look at the river and watch a soccer game, even if they don’t have money in their pocket...so they might not want to do what we might propose.”

Continuing the cultural critique, another worker, discussing the “lack of planning” with regard to the harvest, said: “The culture of Afro-Colombians has a different logic than the Andean culture. They live in what we perceive as anarchy, their homes are anarchic, and this anarchy is translated into the land, as well.” Finally, going even further, a third worker argued that another major issue is “that peasants have weak principles and values. Good or bad proposals can be made to the region...but due to the lack of positive principles and values, many
communities end up embracing the cultivation of illegal crops. That is why we try to focus on educating them with values that will prevent them from committing illegal activities."

Consistent with the critique of the peasants' value system, one main goal of the organization is to cultivate an entrepreneurial mentality within the community. In order to do this, some ERD employees argued, peasants have to abandon their laborer mentality and recognize that they have extraordinary capital with which to work. ERD helps strengthen their capacity to increase production according to the needs of the market (Interview with Daniela Herrera, July 26, 2011). Being an entrepreneur involves cultivating one's land with crops that are responsive to market demand, and developing a working knowledge of accounting, administration, finance and commercialization in order to be able to calculate production costs, prices and profit (ERD documents). Although the representatives of the organization constantly pointed out that there was room for the beneficiaries to make proposals for projects in which they would have liked to work, the proposals had to fit within the framework of raising production according to the demands of the market, closing the possibility for alternative visions of development.\(^14\)

ERD, however, was not a monolithic organization. The people working in the field in Corregimiento Las Marias, when discussing the community's reality, recognized that structural constraints, the conflict, and alternative forms of economy limited the impact of the program. They also showed a sense of self-reflection about the impact that their work and that of a similar

\(^{14}\) Overall, through my interviews with members of the community, there seemed to be general agreement with ERD's proposed definition of development: increased production and the ability to sell produce in the market. The peasants' position might be read at either pole of a dichotomy: on one hand, as the passive acceptance of externally imposed values—ERD's, and on the other, as the manifestation of an essential set of values. Instead, I contend that the peasant's position on "development" is the product of dynamic engagement with both ERD's position and their own interests.
organization might have had on the community. This is illustrated in the following discussion on the work of ERD.

IV. How Does ERD Intervene?

ERD began its work in Corregimiento Las Marias in 2007 to help returning families to re-establish themselves socioeconomically. The program was also open to families that had remained in the community during the periods of violence (Interviews with Carlos Alberto Muñoz, July 13, 2011, Sandra Sánchez, August 1st, 2011, Paula Andrea Jimenez, June 22, 2011). Overall, 200 families have benefited from the ERD’s interventions in Corregimiento Las Marias.

The economy of Corregimiento Las Marias has historically been based on agriculture, small-scale fishing and mining, and to a lesser extent on tourism. For the most part, these activities were carried out solely for sustenance, although in some cases, any surplus was sold to intermediaries to obtain cash (ERD Bimestral Report, 2007). Some of the crops produced in the region are: peach palm fruit (chontaduro), borojo fruit (borojo), the root vegetable known as papa china (colocasia esculenta), baby plantains, strawberry guava (guavaba araza), and plantain, among others. Chontaduro, a type of palm fruit, is the community’s most valuable crop, in that it brings the most income to farmers. However, it can only be harvested twice a year (Interview with the council member, Pablo Hurtado, August 3rd, 2011).

ERD’s vision was to create economic opportunities that could help to reactivate adequate forms of wealth generation, improve the quality of life, and at the same time could prevent the strengthening or emergence of illegal activities. ERD helped develop associations and strengthens those present in the Corregimiento. These associations enabled the “collective processes of adding value to products and commercialization” (Report ERD, 2010). The goal of the associations was perceived as creating spaces where production practices could be
standardized, and enabling the community to sustain production levels that could meet market demand (ERD Presentation, July 25, 2011).

Through these associations, ERD aims to insert the communities into the formal market; it tries to move the community away from a subsistence economy—albeit one in which some exchange takes place through intermediaries—to one in which production is based on market demand, which requires meeting buyer conditions for established quantities and qualities as well as deadlines: “Without opportunities for development there is no possibility of achieving peace, and without permanent and sustained agricultural production you cannot achieve commercialization, and in turn, development” (Interviews with Camilo Serrano, July 5, 2011).

The project aimed to develop an entrepreneurial mentality among the peasants, encouraging them to view their land in terms of potential economic value and ability to meet the demands of the market. To achieve this, ERD provided the project participants training in accounting and budgeting practices.

The Corregimiento also had an umbrella association, which aggregated the different first-level associations. This umbrella association was charged with generating long-term regional development; this was defined as fostering commercialization of agricultural production to cater to big chain supermarkets or promoting the development of infrastructure projects (ERD; documents, 2012). Moreover, ERD envisioned that the umbrella association could be treated with greater legitimacy by development agencies and international NGOs. As such, ERD believed, it was a more effective way to raise funds, given that it served as a representative of several associations and could have a greater impact than any of one association individually. Finally, the vision was that the umbrella association would have redistribute funds from
international agencies and NGOs amongst the smaller associations (Interview with Paula Andrea Jimenez, July 20, 2011).

ERD’s employees working in the community argued that the possibility of associative commercialization was hindered by the lack of trust within the community: “Having neighbors becoming partners in a productive association—that was something hard to understand for many. In 2007 [when the intervention begun] people were very resistant to this idea” (Interview with Luisa Pinzon, July 30, 2011). Thus, for the first years of intervention in the community, ERD has prioritized the development of trust within the members of the associations, rather than prioritizing the final goal of commercialization (Interviews with Paula Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011, and Camilo Serrano, July 5, 2011). Without rebuilding trust, it would have been almost impossible for the association members to put their trust in a commercialization process based on associative efforts (Interviews with Paula Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011). Members of the community identified the associations as:

“spaces where we found [ourselves] all together. We do events together or meet up to discuss. We visit the different veredas in the community, allowing [us] to start trusting people and the [different] communities again. We are recovering the communion that we used to have” (Interview with Juan David community member, July 6, 2011).

There were both associations that grouped people of each vereda, as well as associations across different veredas, helping to create multiple types of bonds, echoing the concept of social capital as defined by the development apparatus.

ERD also introduced new agricultural technologies for planting, harvesting, processing, and distribution to the Corregimiento. With a heavy focus on the environment, the goal was to increase productivity in order to boost earnings for small producers. In Corregimiento Las Marias there were two technicians that trained the community in the production of natural fertilizer, natural, integrated pest control methods, and methods for the placement of plantings to
optimize yields. Follow-up visits to the farmers were conducted to monitor if and how the new practices were being applied (Interviews with Paula Andrea Jimenez, June 22, 2011, and Juan David Pardo, resident of the Corregimiento and agriculture technician for the ERD organization, July 6, 2011, respectively). This technical support has benefited the small farmers’ productivity. ERD employees and a number of farmers asserted that an increase in productivity has led to an increase in income, though this has not yet been quantified by the organization. ERD was also trying to start a loan system. Under this initiative, the organization would buy the needed agricultural input (e.g. fertilizer, farming implements) for participants and would get repaid in cash (Interview with Juan David Pardo, July 6, 2011, Draft Report ERD, 2010). The requirement that the repayment has to be made with cash, forced farmers to try to increase their agricultural yield to sell in the market. While the design of this system was clear in its intention of trying to ensure that loans were used for their intended purpose, the lack of autonomy and trust implicit in this arrangement appeared to hinder adoption.

ERD’s commercialization process differentiates it from other development agencies and NGOs. The representatives of ERD believed that one of the main issues small farmers face was their inability to offer a consistent supply of products for the market. Hence, its aim was to generate conditions to support reliable yields (Interview with Carlos Alberto Muñoz, July 13, 2011). ERD’s goal was to create direct channels between peasants and private enterprises; their logic was that removing the intermediary could lead to better prices for both producers and their customers. In markets where intermediaries were entrenched, the organization’s goal was to have intermediaries becoming the small farmers’ clients in such a way that the farmers could establish the terms of the transaction and not vice versa. The farmers’ belonging to associations would enable them to build power in numbers and develop knowledge of market demands. ERD
facilitated the establishment of agreements between these two parties for the sale of the products (ERD’s document, 2012). Currently, Corregimiento Las Marias has a number of associations. One of them, so far, had established itself in the formal food production network. It is a supplier to a regional supermarket chain.

VI. Challenges

The project has faced many obstacles since its inception. Clear limitations were encountered throughout efforts to implement the technical training intended to transform Afro-Colombian farmers into small entrepreneurs. This required a level of education that many of the community members in the Corregimiento lacked (Interview with Marina Aguilar, July 6, 2011).

By mid-2011, after four years of the intervention, ERD was still assuring the associations’ paperwork and negotiations with the supermarket chain, as well as efforts to procure contracts with potential buyers. Moreover, ERD was still procuring funding for the organizations, as the applications were too technical for farmers to fill out on their own. At the time of my interviews, many of the ERD workers were concerned about the sustainability of their intervention in the Corregimiento, since they were scheduled to leave in early 2012, and the associations were not prepared to be self-sustaining.

Adding to this challenge, the corregimiento, like other communities in the Pacific region, was targeted for resource extraction, driving the cycle of conflict. Illegal gold mining has been growing in Corregimiento Las Marias, since the mid 2000s, leading to a continuous increase in violence. The death of several community members in early 2011 was linked to the interests of illegal armed forces. To the present these forces have established control over the mining business and those working in this sector there (ERD’s Report, 2011). In some instances, members from the community rented their land to be used for illegal mining. This work was

15 ERD was able to secure additional funding, and as of September of 2012, was still working in the Corregimiento.
carried out both by community members using backhoes and by employees of formal mining companies. Some of the leaders from various veredas allowed this mining to occur in their territory, regardless of its negative environmental impacts, including polluting the watershed (Interview with Pablo Hurtado, August 3rd, 2011).

The various ERD workers in the field explained that the commitment to traditional agriculture was lessened when “other [more lucrative] means of making a living emerged in the region” (Interview with Luisa Pinzon, June 8, 2011). On a good day, the community members who worked in these illegal mining enterprises could make COP 600,000 (around USD 332). This was equivalent to a week’s worth of sales of peach palm (Paola Delgado, production coordinator for ERD, July 29, 2011 during the Workshop to evaluate the ERD’s Work, and Interview with Paula Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011,). In 2009, when illegal mining activity picked up, there was a notable decrease in farmers fumigating and fertilizing their peach palm crops; this had a large, detrimental impact on their yield. The effect of this neglect was still evident as of mid 2011 (Paola Delgado, July 29, 2011). Similarly, the production of bananito (finger bananas) was affected (Paola Delgado, July 29, 2011).

Thus, as agriculture was abandoned in favor of illegal mining, the productive processes advanced by ERD were not fully implemented. While ERD ostensibly had 200 families as beneficiaries, at times only 50 of them continued working with the organization, with the rest dedicating themselves to extraction. This led to a decrease in the productivity levels achieved by the associations, limiting their ability to commercialize products for the formal market (Paola Delgado, Mary, July 29, 2011). Moreover, due to the strategic location of the Corregimiento, illegal militia groups pressure the community to increase their cultivation of illegal crops.

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16 Mining is having a very negative impact on the watershed, with cyanide and mercury being dumped in the river, and damaging the community’s access to water and an important protein source in the form of fish (ERD diagnostic, 2006).
VII. Political Consequences of a Rural Development Intervention

As discussed earlier, the building of associations was a critical component of ERD’s strategy. They have emerged as spaces for the articulation of alternative viewpoints and the development of new leadership within the community. ERD could not openly oppose the existing leadership in the community. To a certain extent, one could argue that this is rightly so, given that most ERD staff were not members of the community. Nevertheless, it was through the creation of spaces of reflection, both in meeting settings and in one-on-ones, that members of the Corregimiento began to openly oppose the existing power structure embodied by the directive board of the communal councils. As part of the process of association development and capacity-building, the social workers constantly asked the community members about their expectations for their family and community and how much they felt they were achieving. This ignited a series of debates among the participants, who found themselves with common grievances against the existing leadership. This type of discussion also took place in individual conversations between ERD workers and community members (Interviews with Paula Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011, Mariana Carrera, community member, July 6, 2011 and Marina Aguilar, July 6, 2011). Corruption charges were made against various council members who were able to obtain certain resources on behalf of the community, yet never distributed them (Interview with Pablo Alvarez, July 5, 2011, Dominga Martínez, and Juan David Pardo, July 6, 2011). In some cases, when the resources arrived, the directive board of the councils used their discretionary decision making power to benefit certain sectors of the community over others (Interview with Paula Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011, Social Diagnostic, 2010). This led to a further division of the communities in the Corregimiento and increased the sense of distrust (Interview with Paula Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011).
Overall, within the community there was a sense that there was a lack of representative leadership and those in power lack legitimacy. Moreover, in some veredas the directive board of the community council was not assuming their designated role. Some community members perceived them as not having community development at the forefront of their decision-making (Interviews with Pablo Alvarez, July 5, 2011, Dominga Martínez, and Juan David Pardo, July 6, 2011). Some of the field workers also found that working with the directive board of the community councils was very difficult. Given their interest in preserving the existing power dynamics in the community, the directive boards felt threatened by ERD’s intervention (Interviews with Paula Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011).

While the grievances that the community members articulated were seen as important for expanding the space for political engagement, the ERD workers tried to avoid direct confrontation with the community council by encouraging community members to work through existing channels in order to create change (Interviews with Paula Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011). As a result, several active participants in the organization have run for community council positions. In some instances they have won, and in others they have lost, but overall more people were trying to participate and showed their discontent with the existing leadership (Interviews with Paula Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011, and Juan David Pardo, July 6, 2011). In fact, some associations emerged from the community because of the desire to organize themselves and to create some change in the existing power structures. Given that the associations espouse solely economic goals, utilizing them for organizing was perceived as a safe mechanism that would not...

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17 I want to clarify that, first of all, this disillusionment did not regard all council members, nor was it present in all the veredas. Second, for logistical reasons, I was unable to interview community members who were not working with ERD, so there might be some limitations in the representativeness of the group of people I interviewed.

18 Nevertheless, in the initial presentation of the project, ERD had to introduce the project to the directive board first, for approval, and then they decided who would be the beneficiaries of the project. Once it was established in the community, over time, ERD was able to include people who were not initially approved by the junta (Paula Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011).
threaten the existing power structure (Interviews with Pablo Alvarez, July 5, 2011, and Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011). Moreover, the associations created legitimate spaces for decision-making about development within the community, making having to go through the directive board of the council directly avoidable (Interview with Camilo Serrano, July 5, 2011).

Furthermore, ERD’s vision was that, as the associations become stronger and start representing a larger share of the population, they would be able to challenge the decisions taken by the directive board (Interviews with Paula Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011, and Carolina Ramirez, July 21, 2011). Leadership development, in addition to economic development, was seen as a long-term tool that would create the conditions to resist displacement. Moreover, ERD workers framed leadership development as an opportunity for community members to become political subjects once again—a subjectivity that had been lost in their experience of violence and displacement (Interviews with Paula Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011).

Despite the explicit manner in which the interventions by ERD impacted the politics within the community, the official stance of the organization is one of neutrality regarding the socio-political context. Sandra Sanchez pointed out that the organization couldn’t support a political movement, critique what was going on inside of the community councils, nor express an opinion about any recruitment [by illegal forces] that might have been taking place. This is all done in the interest of keeping the organizations’s workers safe in areas like Corregimiento Las Marias where there was a power struggle underway (August 1st, 2011). However, Carolina Ramirez, the coordinator of Commercialization for ERD, noted that “the associations are very important vehicles for the commercialization process, not just to increase production [and] minimize expenditure, [but also… as a means to build numbers for political purposes]. For, if the associations represent 100, 200, 500 peasants in a community, that gives them both voice and
vote in municipal politics. Thereby allowing them to advocate for [the communities’ needs, such as] building schools, fixing roads, or to ignite development.”

Thus, the social aspect of the organization extends beyond the re-creation of a social fabric or the creation of associations to commercialize agriculture. In the longer term, the goal for the associations is to create change at a regional level, and to view their economic achievement as leverage for the demands they are making of the directive boards of the community councils (Interviews with Paula Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011), and of the municipality and the national government (Interviews with Paula Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011, Carolina Ramirez, July, 21, 2011, and Sandra Sanchez, August 1st, 2011). The goal is to create a unified sense of development within the region (Interviews with Paula Andrea Jimenez, August 6, 2011, and Carolina Ramirez, July, 21, 2011). In the context of Corregimiento Las Marias, this vision becomes relevant given that the leadership of each vereda is not already thinking collectively. For example, all 16 veredas in the Corregimiento share the same watershed, but each of them was thinking about their territory without necessarily thinking about how the territories in the watershed and their overall development was interconnected. Since the different veredas were thinking exclusively about their own development, mining ventures were allowed regardless of the negative consequences they might have had for the communities downstream (Interview with Pablo Hurtado, August 3rd, 2011). The ERD employees envision the umbrella organization as an appropriate structure for unifying the community, and for bringing to the forefront a shared vision for the region. Some employees noted, however, that this long-term goal is in conflict with the role of the community councils, as the latter are supposed to be tasked with planning for and implementing regional development projects. Given the early stage of the development of the associations, it is not possible to evaluate how this existing tension plays out.
in the community. In the next chapter, I analyze ERD’s intervention, thus far, and its broader context in light of the existing literature.
Chapter 4

Conclusion

Understanding the Interrelation of Micro and Macro-policies.

This thesis examines the links between the long-term sustainability of micro-level Regional Programs of Peace and Development (RPPD) interventions such as Entrepreneurial Rural Development (ERD) and the state’s macro-level agricultural policies. The goal of RPPD programs like ERD was to stimulate economic and social development in formerly displaced communities and those at risk of displacement. However, the agricultural policies of the government’s development plan had negative economic impacts on the very farmers targeted by the RPPD. Moreover, the agricultural policies were also linked to the violence that the country faced—and in many instances were related to the displacement that rural communities experience. In the first section of this chapter, I situate the ERD intervention within big D development, the development apparatus, as an organization that embraces the neoliberal rationality. Further, I discuss how the solution proposed by ERD planners for the community was depoliticized through a framing of the corregimiento’s structural conditions in cultural and technical terms. I also examine how the ERD intervention had a contradictory discourse wherein a position of neutrality was seen as essential. Yet, at the same time, the reflective spaces created by the organization helped to develop new forms of leadership within the community. In the second section, I locate my analysis in the context of the Uribe government’s overall economic approach, and, more specifically, in its agricultural policies. I argue that programs such as ERD, which are part of the government-supported RPPD, have limited impact on economic development, ultimately becoming strictly social interventions.
I. Political Implications of a Rural Development Intervention

As explained in earlier chapters, Colombia has gone through a process of neoliberal restructuring that has led to the privatization of former state obligations. NGOs were perceived as part of a voluntary sector detached from both state and market and, as such, also seen as a segment of society at the margins of politics. However, if politics are understood to “refer to power-structured relationships maintained by techniques of control” then politics is not limited to institutions, but permeates each part of society (Fisher, 1997). Moreover, as the privatization process has unfolded, NGOs, like ERD, have progressively become important actors responsible for carrying out some of the state’s former duties and acting as a key mechanism of governance (Postero, 2007, p. 166).

ERD’s approach to development seemed consistent with that of many of the NGOs that emerged under the neoliberal order, which embraced a discourse “in which all citizens including the poor, were encouraged to be enterprising and seize the opportunities of the global economy” (Kamat, 2004, p. 164, see also Ferguson, 1994; Li, 2007; Williams, 2004). Thus, the ERD aimed to instill entrepreneurial attitudes and values in intervention participants. These outcomes were to be achieved through training programs, group meetings, and one-on-one consultations with peasants. The peasants’ new attitude was expected to lead to consistent production that would meet the needs of the market and produce an easier path to commercialization, thereby resulting in poverty alleviation and lowering the amount of displacement that occurs in such communities. Thus, ERD, as other NGOs, “inevitably carried with it strong normalizing components” (Escobar, 1992).

A participatory approach, aimed at generating the circumstances necessary for the community to create beneficial changes for itself, also became an important aspect of the ERD’s
intervention. Triantafillou argues that through participatory practices and training, communities are asked to reposition themselves as “active and responsible subjects” who can take responsibility for improving their lives and communities (2001). Part of ERD’s intervention, then, became educating the communities to have the “right attitude” to embrace the technical, entrepreneurial mentality. Seeing that the social breakdown that took place due to the violence that the community endured had led to dissolution of social ties and trust, another key component of ERD’s intervention was the building of social capital.

In part, ERD’s intervention echoes Ferguson’s description of development projects as a process of depoliticization. Indeed, as discussed earlier, while some of the employees, in charge of creating the intervention program, understood the structural issues at hand, they seemed to dis-embed the community’s issues from the broader political and economic context when discussing both the community and their intervention. Instead, they framed their underlying concerns through a cultural and technical lens. They viewed the peasants as resistant to change, and lacking moral grounds to make the right decisions. Intervention workers claimed that once exposed to ERD’s intervention, peasants “adopted a mental attitude toward progress” (ERD’s presentation). The technical approach and discourse of development in this intervention was intertwined with a racial discourse in which the “other”— peasants, both indigenous and black— was constructed as stagnant, backward, uncivilized and licentious, in opposition to the mestizos (Taussig, 1978).

Nevertheless, the structural circumstances in the Corregimiento made ERD’s process of instilling an entrepreneurial attitude (in the terms defined by the organization) very hard to achieve. The technical training intended to transform Afro-Colombian farmers into small-scale

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19 As discussed previously, the field workers did not have the same understanding of the community as that of the office workers in Cali. In general, they demonstrated an understanding of the structural causes that led many members of the community to become engaged in illegal activities.
entrepreneurs required a level of education that many of the community members in the Corregimiento lacked (Interview with Marina Aguilar, July 6, 2011). As such, the associations, referenced in Chapter 3, remained dependent on ERD in order to obtain contracts with supermarket chains or to apply for funding through grants. In addition to limited levels of education, the socio-political conditions existing in the community also hindered project development. The conditions in the Corregimiento Las Marias echo the overall reality in the Pacific region. As explained in Chapter 3, at the height of the recent boom in mining, only 25 percent of the families that were supposed to be participants in the project were actively involved. The others were lured away by more lucrative endeavors in the illegal economy.

Colombian anthropologist William Villa, points out that in the Pacific, while many of the community members remain involved in agriculture, this traditional system of production has lost relevance amidst the political and social dynamics linked to the war. The war created changes in the regional economy that brought more lucrative alternatives than traditional farming. Moreover, the latter does not generate a surplus and thus does not meet economic expectations, particularly of younger generations (August 10, 2011). Villa further explains that the ethnic identity of particular groups, Afro-Colombians and Indigenous, are essentialized as embracing the traditional productive system (Interview with Villa, August 10, 2011). In reality, while many of these communities are still primarily engaged in agricultural production, some are also actively participating in the extractive economies and involved in alternative markets.

Peasants who got involved in the illegal economy were, in fact, acting as entrepreneurs and embracing the liberal understanding of rational choice that “presumes all individual behavior to be rationally calculated to advance the actor’s material interests” (Rankin, 2002, p.19). The lack of policy support for their agricultural products and the presence of lucrative illegal
economic alternatives were respectively push and pull factors in peasants' decisions to get involved in the illegal economy. Thus, an entrepreneurial mentality or rational approach to land use, through different than that advocated by ERD, was clearly present among many of the area's small farmers, both prior to the intervention, and as a response to it. The farmers demonstrated an entrepreneurial spirit by engaging in the most economically profitable option available to them. Moreover, while farming legal crops may have been a more sustainable practice from an environmental and social point of view, in this context, entrepreneurship and sustainability may have been contradictory goals.

ERD is an example of an NGO that aims to ameliorate the effects of 'little d-development', i.e. capitalism, by generating development alternatives. ERD seeks to impart training and skills to support the communities' participation in markets, to make welfare available to those at the margins of the market, and to contribute to the democratization of civil society. It also aims to instill in community members participating in the intervention entrepreneurial attitudes and values — goals that echo the depoliticization of development put forward by Ferguson.

Nevertheless, there were two aspects in which ERD’s intervention did not fully fit Ferguson’s depolitization framing. First, the use of social capital by ERD workers was not decontextualized, as is that often put forward by the development apparatus. Second, the peasant associations were helping to sustain or create political leverage to challenge local politics, as well as municipal and state politics, thereby keeping ERD’s work from being fully depoliticized.

In their use of social capital, the ERD workers had a more grounded understanding of this concept, in opposition to that of the state and the development apparatus. The field ERD workers highlighted that the lack of social capital emerged from the violence that the community endured,
and that building it was important as it was very much linked to the economic project they were proposing: associative commercialization.

Another aspect in which ERD’s program differs from the depolitization process presented by Ferguson is that, contrary to the understanding held by “development” planners in Ferguson’s account, politics were neither necessarily obscured in, nor removed from, the intervention, itself. The ERD workers, both in the Cali office and in the field, did not see the state apparatus as a neutral instrument whose goal was to implement plans, or as a machine to provide social services and create economic growth (Ferguson, 1994). In fact, as explained earlier, ERD workers conceived of the state’s absence as an abandonment of these marginal communities, and as a conscious transfer of responsibilities from the state to international development agencies and NGOs. Even a military presence was seen as capable of, at any moment, betraying the community and was, as such, perceived with distrust.

Moreover, there was a clear understanding among ERD workers of the power disparity between the community and Colombian society at large. To address this problem, the organization aimed to engage communities in electoral politics, as a means of altering the power imbalance by building coalitions of farmers who would push for a particular development agenda. It is key to understand how a technical and market-oriented approach to development not only promotes participation within the confines of the development project, itself, but also creates spaces for political participation more broadly. ERD’s regional proposals remained within the market-oriented and electoral realms, as they were framed in terms of achieving increased commercialization within the formal market and putting pressure on elected officials to deliver particular infrastructure projects. Even if this paradigm fails to provide an alternative form of development, it does succeed in creating potentially meaningful spaces for collective
critical thinking, and in some instances, has even led to the emergence of new leadership challenging existing power structures. It could be argued that these mechanisms might lead to the development of stronger political capabilities that could help the communities “move through political space and provide the tools to reshape these spaces” (Williams, 2004, p. 95). It will be critical to evaluate how these political spaces evolve in the future.

One way to think about evaluating this is to look at different examples in which a neoliberal participatory approach has taken hold, opening spaces to challenge the system. In Bolivia, for instance, through the discourse of participation, citizenship, and inclusion, indigenous groups challenged the idea of limited multicultural citizenship and further challenged the structural inequalities that perpetuated their exclusion. They demanded participation in public decision-making and the intervention of the state in the redistribution of wealth and the protection of natural resources (Perreault, 2006). These demands were broader reaching than the ones promoted within the neoliberal discourse of development that many NGOs brought to these communities, which aimed to limit them to the local, municipal level and to specific projects. Indigenous communities used the organizations created through this discourse to organize and mobilize against neoliberal economic restructuring. Ultimately, they demanded further citizenship rights, which led to the mass mobilization that took place in October 2003 (Postero 2007).

This shows that a community’s agency plays an important role in how its members interact with their existing constraints and with the interventions that they encounter, and in how they decide to participate. Moreover, the Bolivian example suggests that development interventions should be evaluated by looking at whether they facilitate a large-scale mobilization of the poor (Moore & Putzel, 1999), since beyond the micro level, it is the state’s policies that
can constrain or expand the possibilities of this sector of the population (Enriquez, 2010; Moore & Putzel, 1999).

Development discourses and practices are the product of interactions among a diverse set of actors—development workers, target populations, state actors, academics, etc., each with specific interests and conceptual frames. They all operate within multiple fields of power—race, class, gender, etc. While a neo-Foucauldian understanding of development, such as that put forward in Escobar’s and Ferguson’s analyses, speaks to one particular manifestation of power—efforts to normalize and create consent in populations targeted by development interventions, it falls short of fully capturing the complex workings of power in society. For instance, as exemplified in the Bolivian case, the population affected by a development intervention can exercise agency and embrace, resist and transform the project.

In this case study, organizing through associations did not emerge from the community, itself, but was externally driven. Clearly, it is still far from fully delivering desired economic outcomes. Nonetheless, community members have begun to use the proposed associations to create legitimate spaces where decisions within the community relating to development can occur without directly challenging the existing power structure. Furthermore, through the critical spaces that emerged in the meetings, some members have strengthened their leadership and run for positions within the community council.

Could these organizations create a space where the existing understanding of development might be challenged? Could they link up with the broader Afro Colombian movement? At this point, it is too early to tell. The tension between existing power structures and the leadership created by these new associations should be a subject for further research. Nevertheless, we can conclude that development discourse can work both as a discourse of
empowerment and a discourse of control, and that these forces are in constant interaction and contradiction as they create new development practices.

II. Neoliberal Agricultural Policies and their Effects on the Small Farming Sector

In order to understand how government supported programs such as Regional Programs of Peace and Development (RPPD) are part of the development apparatus and the ways they can “modify the nature and or effects of the processes of little-d development (capitalism)” (Mitlin et al., 2006, p. 1701), the RPPD must be situated within the broader political economic structure of capitalist development in Colombia. The goal of RPPD projects like Entrepreneurial Rural Development is to ignite economic and social development in formerly displaced communities and those which are at risk of displacement. In this section, I discuss how the agricultural policies of the development plan implemented during Uribe’s tenure had negative economic impacts on the small farmers that the RPPD targeted. Moreover, I explore the ways in which they were entangled with the violence plaguing the country.

As part of the intervention policies supported by the State, the RPPD adopts as a key objective the insertion into the market of those small farmers who supposedly have the capacity to participate in the country’s productive economy, and are willing to adopt an entrepreneurial philosophy. The support and economic projects that the ERD provides does not aim to bring alternatives to neoliberal development. Rather, ERD aims to foster development alternatives that might allow a kinder incorporation of small farmers into the market. In other words, although ERD’s interventions alleviate some of the limitations20 experienced by participating peasants during their tenure with the program, structural constraints ultimately remained unresolved and unchallenged. Thus, these interventions may well not be sustainable. Moreover, ERD’s ultimate

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20 These limitations include access to technical support, and the cultural and financial capital needed to make a business successful.
goals are undermined by the government’s broader development model, which focuses on large-scale export-oriented agriculture and does not necessarily translate into better conditions for the rural population (Meza, 2010). In fact, the liberalization of the economy in Colombia and its implications for agricultural development policies have led to what Harvey has described as “accumulation by dispossession” (2003).

This form of accumulation was reflected in the direct expropriation small farmers endured in the face of global market forces and capitalist development (Harvey 2003). As such, accumulation by dispossession was the result of the states’ turn toward export market production and the increase of food agricultural imports. Farmers’ dispossession was also taking place through more indirect mechanisms, such as privatization and the removal of public support, both of which further favor big agribusinesses (McMichael, 2006; Thomson, 2011). Moreover, accumulation by dispossession in Colombia was related to the implementation of new economic structures and land ownership and was also linked to direct violence toward the rural population, resulting in displacement.

The Colombian conflict’s unfolding in the neoliberal era constitutes a fitting illustration of Cramer’s and Harvey’s accounts in which violence and development are entangled. Indeed, market forces, violence, and their interaction could—and did—lead to displacement in Colombia. These effects were visible in the Pacific region, where conflict and development were not oppositional forces, but rather, complimentary. In many instances, violence helped to shape the economic relations and structures that became part of development processes. In the Pacific region, paramilitary forces were linked to big agribusiness investors through the use of violence as a means of appropriating land for use by those investors for agricultural production. Government policies promoting cultivation of export crops such as African palm offered tacit
economic support to these mechanisms. Similarly, communities such as the ones in Corregimieto Las Marias are enduring the effects of the mining boom. Thus, this violence is linked both to the ongoing civil war and drug violence, as well as to the insertion of peripheral regions into capitalist development, a process that has led to the en masse expulsion of peasants and the conversion of various forms of property rights into exclusive forms (Elhawary, 2008; Harvey, 2003; Thomson, 2011). Colombia is a clear example of how “accumulation based upon predation, fraud, and violence” continues today, contradicting Marx’s assertion that it was relegated to the original stage of capitalism (Harvey, 2003, p. 144).

There is a misalignment between micro interventions aiming to generate mechanisms leading to the socio-economic reactivation of marginal rural communities in Colombia, and economic macro policies put forward by the state. This is linked to the State’s understanding of development and its perspective in which rural actors serve as the engine for it. The state perceives economic growth as linked to the growth of big agribusiness. As a consequence, its policies implicitly assume the peasant economy’s inefficiency and inability to compete in the globalization process (Machado, 2006; Meza, 2010; Interview with Villa, August 10, 2011). State action also does this explicitly, through the dismantling of government support that had once existed for the peasant economy. “The problem of rural development [in Colombia] today is not due to technical issues or lack of resources, it is a political problem and a problem having to do with the conception of macro economic and sectorial policies” (Machado, 2005, p. 66). Consequently, even as Regional Programs of Peace and Development seek to achieve integrated development, they can ultimately only provide social welfare as they are unable to overcome the structural factors that limit the growth of small farmers (Meza, 2010).

III. Final Reflection: Current Situation, Recommendations, and Limitations
In 2010, Juan Manuel Santos succeeded Uribe in the presidency of Colombia. From the beginning of his term, Santos committed to making right many of the abuses that rural communities have encountered, particularly those which has been victims of displacement. Even though this was perceived as a shift from the past government and signified the beginning of deeper engagement with some of the urgent issues faced in Colombia’s rural regions, the Santos National Development Plan does not differ greatly from his predecessor’s in the area of agriculture.

Similar to Uribe’s development plans, Santos’ program focuses on attracting investments for agro-export production (Fajardo, 2012a). The free market approach remains the method of choice for increasing productivity and competitiveness without state intervention (Fajardo, 2012a; UNDP, 2011). The plan is consistent with the neoliberal approach and the focus remains on export-driven production, which can only be fulfilled by big agribusiness, and not by small and medium size producers (Fajardo, 2012a; UNDP, 2011). Moreover, land concentration has led to an increase in the price of land and of land speculation. The development plan leaves the small farmer with the limited choice of becoming part of large agricultural projects through associations. The fact that this is the only choice available to small farmers, and that it does not grant them the space to define their own desired development outcomes in the first place, is problematic. Another limitation of this approach is that small farmers are expected to integrate into large agricultural projects, without sustainable access to resources such as land, capital and technical support (UNDP, 2011). As the corregimiento Las Marias case shows, this has the potential to push small farmers into illegal economies (Albán, 2011) and leads to violence and displacement. As Alfredo Molano, a Colombian sociologist and journalist describes it: “The agrarian policy of the government that has been in practice is a play of three acts: first act, the
paramilitaries come in with the chainsaw, second act, negotiation with paramilitaries, and final act, the lands are in the hands of big [agribusiness] investors” (2008).

A process of land redistribution is necessary for overcoming poverty and the lack of democracy that the peasant communities face. Griffin et al. (2002) propose a land reform, in which land from large landholdings would be reallocated to small landholders, who would then work the land as owner-operated, family-based farms. The theoretical underpinning behind their proposal is that small farmers are, overall, more efficient than large farmers. For small farmers, labor is relatively cheap, while land and capital are expensive; whereas for large farmers, labor is relatively expensive, and land and capital are relatively cheap. Thus, small farmers tend to adopt higher labor-land ratios and lower capital–labor ratios. While large farmers adopt higher capital–labor ratios, and lower labor–land ratios. As a result, small farmers are able to produce a greater output per acre\textsuperscript{21}, leading to a more efficient practice. The increase in production following land reform would therefore improve the economic conditions of the rural population.

The redistribution efforts should target those landholders who possess significant amounts of idle land (Mondragón, 2008), and lands being used for the cultivation of illegal crops. The state should provide compensation to those landowners who can prove legal ownership of the land. Large properties that are efficient, and that follow the law, should not be targeted (Machado, 2009). Presumably, farmers currently relegated to inadequate lands that can only sustain illegal crops, would move into the production of legal crops as higher quality, arable lands become available. This would also diminish the labor supply for illegal crops (Mondragón, 2008).

\textsuperscript{21} Even with the many pressures that the small farmer has faced, this sector of producers remain the main provider of food crops for Colombia (Montaño, 2012).
Land redistribution, without complementary policies and support, would not be enough to bring deep changes to the rural economies. This includes access to other resources, such as: capital, technical support, market information, production technology, and economies of scale in the service sector, among others (Machado, 2009). The state should establish mechanisms to make these resources available. Moreover, limits on land holdings, and appropriate taxation policies, should be implemented to discourage excessive land concentration. Improved taxation enforcement would also de-incentivize land speculation, which would lead to an increase in production (Machado, 2009; Mondragón, 2008). However, political will is a necessary precursor to making agrarian reform possible. Unfortunately, the neoliberal approach of the state, which echoes the interests of the landed elite, discourages redistributive interventions. The close relationship, between state actors in Colombia and the landed class makes agrarian reform unlikely.

The reality on the ground in Colombia is that land redistribution is happening, but in the direction of increased accumulation by fewer and fewer landholders.

“[In Colombia] it is not about demanding an agrarian reform, it is about confronting the one that has been taking place already [in which market forces, agrarian policies and violence are interconnected]. Everything seems to indicate that most of our efforts should be focused on preventing that process from being consummated, at the same time that we imagine alternatives” (Moncayo, 2008, p. 13).

In this context, different organizations in civil society welcomed the recent passing of the Victims and Land Restitution law in June 2011. The Law created a new land policy that establishes integral reparation for survivors of human rights abuses, and establishes measures for the return of millions of hectares of land illegally taken from its legitimate owners (Amnesty International, 2012). Different organizations in civil society view the law as a step in the right
direction, since it both recognizes the existence of the conflict (which had been denied by
Uribe’s government), and the rights of the displaced persons to reparations.

However, implementation of the law will be difficult while the conflict is ongoing. If the
conditions to which the displaced return are the same as the conditions that created the
displacement in the first place, a new wave of displacement and land concentration will occur
again. In this scenario, the perpetrators might be able to force the returnees to transfer their
newly obtained property deeds. In other words, the technocratic approach to land restitution does
not address the issues of violence and security for those who would return to their land
(Mondragón, 2011), and is therefore an incomplete response by the state.

As Santos’ development plan does not take into account issues of poverty, land
concentration, conflict, or lack of state presence and support in rural areas, comprehensive
agrarian reform remains unimaginable; and the success of promising land restitution policies are
undermined. Colombia’s agrarian problems will persist unless the state carries out deliberate,
comprehensive, and proactive policies, supported by the necessary state resources. A new
understanding of the role and benefit of small-scale agriculture in the national economy is
necessary for building the political will for deeper changes, which might, in turn, lead to the
success of programs such as the Regional Programs of Peace and Development, and to an
improved reality for rural Colombia and its inhabitants.
Annex 1

Methodology

This thesis critically assesses the agency of peasant communities throughout their interactions with the non-profit sector in an ongoing NGO intervention. Fieldwork for the project was conducted during two trips in 2011, which lasted a total of three months. With the help of the Center for International Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), I was able to reach an organization working in an Afro Colombian *corregimiento* in the Pacific.

During my first trip, in the summer of 2011, the organization helped me to contact members of the community that were participating in the program to carry out initial interviews. I also conducted a series of interviews with organization workers—both program developers and field workers. All together, I conducted 30 semi-structured interviews with community members participating in the organization’s project, NGO workers, Afro Colombian activists, and government officials. Following fieldwork, I transcribed, coded, and analyzed the interviews, a process through which the themes shaping this thesis’s narrative emerged.

Because conflict in the region was dormant, but nonetheless present, the organization decided that I could only move through the community accompanied by one of its workers. In the first days of interviews, the person accompanying me sat through the interviews with me. This person’s presence clearly constrained community members’ ability to honestly comment on the organization’s work. However, after the first day, though an organization staff member still accompanied me to interviews, this person chose not to sit through the conversations. While this might have opened up some room for interviewees to be more transparent with me in their assessment of the organization’s work, I suspect that my introduction into the community by the organization in question might still have impacted interview outcomes. Indeed, throughout the
discussions, I noted a positive bias toward the organization – it was difficult to hear any form of constructive criticism from the participants I interviewed. Moreover, my positionality as a white Latina foreign to the community may have also limited interviewees’ trust in my intentions and impacted the interview data I collected.

I returned to Colombia in December 2011 with plans of interviewing program participants reached through contacts outside of the organization (such as council members), and community members who had chosen not to participate in the intervention. However, due to health issues, I was unable to carry out this portion of my research.

This thesis also evaluates contradictions in Colombia’s agricultural policies: neoliberal policies in this sector limit the development of the peasant economy, even as government-supported programs such as the one examined here aim to ignite the social and economic development of these same peasants. Though several of my interviews helped me understand this dimension of my research, the bulk of my analysis on the subject resulted from an inductive approach to analyzing primary data (official documents and interviews) and secondary data collected by a number of experts in the field of rural development in Colombia.

Finally, due to the sensitivity of some of the information shared by these individuals during interviews, I have changed the names of the organization, of the corregimiento, and of all interviewees from the community or the organization. I have renamed the organization Entrepreneurial Rural Development (ERD), and the corregimiento Corregimiento Las Marias. I have also removed geographical and historical information that could potentially render the organization identifiable. I have however kept the names of the scholars I interviewed, since the information they provided me was more general.
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