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Hegemonic Vehicles, Capitalism and Conflict: A Systemic Critique of the Conflict in Urabá, Colombia

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PATRIA Y FAMILIA

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Abstract

Why has the Colombian conflict spanned for so long? With the signature of the 2016 peace agreements, what the world knew about the conflict has become contested. Was disarming the guerrilla sufficient to achieve long-lasting peace in Colombia? Was it sufficient before, when disarming the armed actors was the only priority for former governments? Has violence ceased in Colombia after 2016? This doctoral thesis scrutinises Colombian history to argue that the conflict in Colombia is not merely a war of the society against its so-called "enemies". The armed confrontation that we are used to studying as "the conflict" conceals material conditions and social relations in themselves conflictive. This thesis approaches the conflict as a single unit because only thus we can see regularities and patterns underlying the different episodes of violence. One of those patterns is the systematic lack of willingness by most ruling classes to solve the underlying causes of the conflict. This thesis interprets this pattern as a sign that the conflict has an additional social function. It argues that failure after failure of peace negotiations and processes demonstrate that the protracted social and armed conflict is not merely a social phenomenon but has a function essential to those who have the keys of peace in their hands.

This research deploys a historical and critical analysis of the political-economic conditions and relations in the sub-region of Urabá, Antioquia, to unveil the social function of the conflict that has protracted for such a long time. It explores the relationship between the conflict and capitalism, focusing on practices regarding capital accumulation, dispossession of land and peasants' displacement, and the

defence of the private property of the means of production, among others. This research's findings establish that the conflict was historically caused by the operation of capitalism and currently serves capitalism to reproduce and be resilient to its contradictions, crises and conflicts. This work conceptualises the conflict as a hegemonic vehicle, as a historical institution of the current social bourgeois order in Colombia, whose role is to structure social relations by creating situational logics whereby people consent to the interests of the ruling classes. Critically reworking Gramsci's hegemony, this work produces the concept of hegemonic vehicles that interprets the practices that continuously reproduce the bourgeois hegemony within specific historical contexts. We conceptualise these practices as historical institutions that are strategically employed to achieve the consent of subordinate groups through the concession of material and ideational conditions. This work aims to historicise the concept of hegemony and show its dynamism, variability, and flexibility, according to the conditions of the social formation where it is deployed. The twofold goal of this research is to give an insight into the protraction of the conflict. At the same time, it creates a conceptual framework that explains the conflict's social function while contributing to the question of the resilience of capitalism. This thesis interprets the conflict as a hegemonic vehicle, an institution that structures social relations favourable to capitalism—we use this category to explain its protraction.

Acknowledgments

Colombia is a country of victims. Not a single Colombian knows their country without conflict. Not a single Colombian has been unaffected, directly or indirectly, by the dynamics of the conflict. My grandmother, a peasant woman from Coyaima, Tolima, was displaced, and her family's land was dispossessed by the armed forces of the conservative government during La Violencia. Left landless, she and her family had to move, first into Ibague and then into Bogotá, to find means of subsistence. From the beginning to her current days, my grandmother has been a worker. When she was not sewing, she was cooking tamales to sell. When she was not raising a family, she was doing handcrafts to earn extra money. All her efforts are reflected today in this PhD thesis. Sadly, her story is neither special nor a rarity. Sadly, her story is the history of millions of Colombians. It is the history of cities such a Bogotá — cities of the displaced. The heat of the Colombian people is embedded in their history. The Colombians have survived through decades and decades of conflict, only to realise that they still have decades to keep surviving. Those conditions have forged generations of subversive people that have given their lives for the transformation of Colombia. They struggle from the countryside, cities and abroad. They contribute to the transformation in every way possible, with their labour, political work, organisation, combat, teachings and learnings. They are the main inspiration for this work. Because, despite the violence and repression of reactionary groups, they still carry the hope for a Nueva Colombia—a country not of victims but people living peacefully in social justice. Colombia does not need more inspiring stories of victims thriving through the conflict. Colombia needs to face the conflict in its broadest sense to ensure a better

coming for its future generations. However, as long as the Colombians live the injustices of the current social order, any form of subversion is not only justified but necessary. This work aims to contribute to that enterprise from the academy. This PhD thesis is an initial point for an academic career committed to the transformation of society and the emancipation of the working-class in particular, and humanity in general.

I would first like to thank my PhD supervisors. Thanks to Dr Albena Azmanova, who has supported and encouraged me since my arrival in Belgium as a master's student. She has been an inspiring academic and the main reason I chose to do my PhD in Brussels. Since the beginning, she has been critical about my work but has never impeded me to develop the work I always dreamt of doing. I hope to keep contributing to her Brussels Group with my work and critique. Dr Yvan Guichaoua, on the other hand, became an essential part of this work. His work and career inspired me to put my theory in the service of empirics. He is the essential element that makes my critical theoretical effort a complete *praxis*. To him, all my acknowledgement for his advice and support. For his time and even to inspire me to run, all things made my PhD experience better.

There are many people to thank, and anyone who knows me knows that I acknowledge them continuously with my love. I thank those at the beginning of everything, Linda, Daniela and Gerardo, who have been growing with me personally and intellectually and have been unconditional with their knowledge and friendship.

To Beto, who has encouraged me to study and inspired me to defend my grounds. Thanks to that "Brussels Group", Raphaël, Azar and the hopeful new addition, Jaime, for being role models. I look forward to working together in future critical endeavours. To Abdo for all his support throughout this experience. Overall, to my fellow researchers for being part of that community with which we tackle the PhD challenge.

A special thanks to all my comrades, now spread in different organisations and groups, for showing my work the way to transform society. Their practices in the different instances of the struggle have made me an indefatigable fighter for the Nueva Colombia. To all who are alive and even more to all who have perished, this work is theirs. My trajectory is and will always be a weapon to a Colombia with social justice. They are a guide for life and struggle!

Special thanks to Juanita and Alejandro for embracing me in their home. They were fundamental to make my field research possible. They guided me through Urabá and showed me that, indeed, it could be the "best corner of America". This work acknowledges all the victims of the conflict and hopes to contribute to the real and lasting peace of the region.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr Sergio de Zubiria for his courses on Marx and Frankfurt School at Universidad de Los Andes. He was my initial inspiration to use intellectual work to transform society. Thanks to Dr Laura Horn at Roskilde University for her thoughts and insight. Thanks to Dr Dylan Riley at UC

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Introduction

**When Peace Arrives
I Suspect That We Will Love Differently**

*When peace comes
I suspect we will love differently:
we will have uprooted the resentment
and in the fertile fields of hearts
of men free from selfishness,
we will do the new planting
of genuine love
that bears for fruit
freedom that does not wither.*

*Our love will be
the necessary mixture
of passion and reason...;
passion to surrender
and reason to hear from everyone
[…]
reason and passion
to be thought and fire
to destroy and rebuild;
that destroys
the narrow measures
[…]
breaking the fence
of the whims
that imprison
the sublime possibilities
to love more
for what we are in the conscience
that from what it seems
in the formats
of every human reified mannequin ...*

*We will build love
that rises
with no gangway schemes ...,
that goes crazy
madly screaming:
for you, I die
if I see you
in the infinite dimensions
of the sower of justice;
if I see you a maker of furrows of dignity,
if I feel you farmer of steps of freedom ...*

Jesús Santrich (2007)

1. A Prologue on Subversion

This poem by Jesús Santrich is this thesis first entry point to critique the conflict in Colombia. Is it reducible to an armed confrontation? Can we reduce subversion to terrorism? How can this conflict give way to a long-lasting peace? How should we interpret the perpetually failing efforts of the state to end the conflict?

This poem was written by Jesús Santrich, the late guerrilla fighter of the Martín Caballero Bloc of the FARC-EP, signatory of the peace agreement, former member of the Chamber of Representatives of Colombia and head of the dissident group The Second Marquetalia. His verses and life-trajectory witness the protraction of a conflict that continues killing and harming thousands of the Colombian people. The poem displays the utopia of peace reigning in the country. It expresses that peace entails breaking fences and destroying and reconstructing the very humanness and its society. It also portrays peace as something that cannot wither, as a final state and not as a condition of "violence-lessness". When peace arrives, it will be everlasting. Paradoxically, Santrich was one of the most notorious guerrilla fighters to abandon the peace process in 2019 and rearm a dissident group in the jungle to continue the insurgency. In this regard, we ask: How come a so-called fighter for peace "betrays" his comrades and abandons the most viable peace chance of late? Although seemingly paradoxically, Santrich's case is the story of many other peace subversives[1] who have strived in vain to solve the deeper social drivers of the conflict and had returned to the battlefront seeking social justice. After the 2016 peace accord, many subversives

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[1] Orlando Fals Borda defines subversives as those having a subversive consciousness. They are not aiming to "destroy society". They aim to reconstruct society based on novel ideas and guided by ideals and "utopias" defying tradition(Fals Borda, 1968, p. 3). Fals Borda's meaning of subversion is the meaning of subversion this thesis embraces.

have resumed their insurgent action. Some fighters returned to arms demanding the state fulfilment of the accords. Others returned to insurgency to protect themselves from the state's violence and unwillingness to protect the guerrilleros in reincorporation. In appearance, these recidivists refuse to keep their word and condemn the country to the eternal spiral of violence and conflict. In contrast, the ruling elites pose before the international community showing their commitment to ending the conflict. However, they have neglected in most possible ways the accords' implementations. Ultimately, their unwillingness is condemning Colombia to a new cycle of violence—a new armed conflict.

The story behind the protraction of the conflict is very complex, as are the political decisions of fighters like Santrich are intricate. Nevertheless, working upon this seemingly paradigmatic practice of the *struggle for peace*, we can start thinking of peace not exclusively as the absence of violence. It also invites us not to reduce subversion to purposeless antisocial practices. When we examine the motivations of the subversive actors in Colombia, we can interpret that the conflict, commonly framed as the struggle of the state to protect society for the last sixty years, is a conflict embedded in the capitalist system of social relations, since its consolidation in the country. In his historicisation of subversion in Colombia, Fals Borda argues that societies portrait most subversion as antisocial under the light of their traditions. However, if we were to scrutinise subversion under the light of social change, antisocial are those preventing change and not the subversives. He argues that subversion is amoral within its social order because its nature defies the past's historical dynamics and corresponds only to the utopic projection that the subversive

practice has of the future (Fals Borda, 1968). The republican history of Colombia, for instance, is the embodiment of subversion in its bourgeois form. It was the organisation of forces to destroy a social order and reconstruct a new one.

Fals Borda sees social order as a concrete entity and defines it as that ensemble of consistent and contradictory components that give members of society a social *image* of themselves and the world and a proper *style* to act, perceive and assess them. Both style and image must last enough to be transmitted from one generation to another (Gellner, 1969; Mannheim, 2013). The operative components of a social order are its social values and norms, social organisation, and techniques. Accordingly, due to the internal contradictions or the social order's overthrow, its contrary refracting components are anti-values, counter-norms, rebel organisations, and technical innovations. Thus, subversion is the condition that reflects the internal contradictions of the social order within a historical period determined according to the new goals that the subversives define for a society (Fals Borda, 1968, pp. 14, 16–17). The order that emerges from the social coercion is essentially based on tensions and contradictions that are always latent. Understanding Colombian history calls for analysing the collective periodical efforts to transform the local society, always latent and periodically exacerbating (Fals Borda, 1968, p. 7). Furthermore, we believe, and it is the goal of this thesis, that it is also necessary to analyse the collective efforts to prevent the social transformation from materialising.

This thesis interprets the conflict within the contradiction subversion-vs-social order to re-signify it not simply as a phenomenon but as an institution with a specific social function. Instead of focusing on the practices to subvert the social order, we

mainly focus on those acting against social change and favouring the existing social order. Hence, we define the conflict as a hegemonic vehicle, a structuring institution creating situational logics whereby people consent to the social order. The social order regards the way social relations are enacted and organised. Within a capitalist social system, this order is permeated by capitalism's operative logic—namely, the competitive pursuit and production of profit(Azmanova, 2020, p. 19). In the Colombian social formation is currently ruling the dialectic interaction between the capitalist system of social relations, the bourgeois hegemony and the hegemonic vehicles. Historically, the "social bourgeois order" (a historical configuration of the capitalist order in Colombia) does not create the operative logics of capitalism; it simply institutionalises it as a political rule. The Colombian social formation displays a particular articulation of social forces which have developed analogously to capitalism, as we will see throughout this thesis.

This thesis interprets the conflict as a part of the continuous making of the Colombian state and the capitalist social order, which has become essential to its maintenance. Within this idea, we must think about the biggest conundrum of the Colombian conflict: besides why it persists, it is how to solve it. The conflict has acquired such an essential role in the social order's reproduction[2] that those ruling refuse to address its fundamental causes. There is where we find illuminating Santrich's situation. Regardless of the extent to which his return to arms was legitimate or even strategic, it was the consequence of a social order that refuses to lay

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[2] Note that throughout this thesis, the notions of the reproduction of society, the social order, or of the system of social relations are used. This notion of reproduction resonates Bourdieu's explanation of how educational systems reproduce the structure of power relationships and symbolic relationships between classes(Bourdieu, 2003). And it differs from the acceptation used in social reproduction theory.

the conflict down, for it is one of its most important weapons. The conflict enables employing the legitimate monopoly of violence against those aiming to reconstruct society. It authorises the state to destroy subversion. Then, suppose subversion is the only strategy for addressing the fundamental causes of the conflict, as its utopia is peace, and the state is entitled to destroy subversion. In that case, it is the state who perpetuates the conflict. We endeavour to understand why.

2. Framing the Conflict, Constructing the Argument

As we conclude this work, Colombia experiences one of the greatest and strongest strikes since the 1949 Bogotazo and 1977 Civic Strike. It was caused by the chronic pushing conditions of capitalism and the social order. Aside from the critical conditions caused by Covid-19 that have affected millions of workers' living conditions, the Colombian government decided to issue a tax reform that sought to expand the tax base and distribute income from the middle-class to the poorest and most affected by the pandemic. The government also proposed bill 010, health reform seeking to face the pandemic challenges, exacerbated by the old conflicts that the health system has produced in the country. Both tax and health reforms had as a common denominator the privilege of the capitalist actors to the detriment of the working class. The tax reform aimed to fund an "Ingreso Solidario", a universal basic income social program, by augmenting the tax base and the taxes mainly to the "middle-class" workers. At the same time, companies and large owners remained almost exempted from any prejudice. For its part, the health reform intended to improve the conditions of the private enterprises managing public resources to

augment taxpayers' health coverage(López, 2021). Both reforms, seeking funding for social programs and public expenditure, were proposed months after the government decided to invest 9.5 billion pesos in military spending—making Colombia the second country with the most military spending in Latin America during the pandemic (Lopes da Silva et al., 2021). As it is recurrent, the government justified military expenditure with the struggle against drugs and terrorism—both allegedly putting the public order at risk. However, government critics have called out its abysmal job at protecting social leaders and peace signatories who are being assassinated with impunity since the signature of the Peace Agreement in 2016. Demonstrators demand, among other things, the withdrawal of the reforms, a reform of the national police (including its doctrine), compliance with the agreements of the 2019 strikes (which included addressing income inequality) and compliance with the Peace Agreements.

The government's response is identical to its historically given treatment to social grievances: criminalisation and securitisation. The current demonstrations outbroke for akin reasons to the causes of the conflict. Likewise, the state's treatment is akin to the repression that has caused violence. The government insists on keeping alive the conflict by blaming "insurgency and terrorism" for the people's discontent. The government party vouches for conflict-like military repression, arguing that the protests exhibit a "dissipated molecular revolution[3]. Therefore, it has deployed its

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[3] The "dissipated molecular revolution" is a term coined by the Chilean neo-Nazi philosopher, Alexis López. He reinterprets Guattari's molecular revolution, which criticises the revolutions of the 20th century, based on political parties. Guattari argues that the new social revolution will be led by social movements and irregular radical groups that will deconstruct the social order through violence. López reinterpretation turns into a military doctrine that sees any social protest (even non-violent) as one of the multiple faces of the subversion against the social order and its institutions. This doctrine underpins the violent treatment of the social protest.(León & Pérez, 2021; Robinson, 2021).

entire military apparatus to repress the people on the streets, as if they were repressing

insurgents in an armed conflict (The Guardian, 2021; The New York Times et al., 2021).

Armed citizens are also on the streets, privately "administrating justice" and

"collaborating" with the armed forces. The government portraits them as the "good

people", simply defending the order. This situation resembles the actions of

paramilitary actors throughout the conflict (Amnesty International, 2021)[4]. By May 24,

2021, there is an estimate of 3,155 cases of police violence (not including

disappearances), 955 victims of physical violence, 43 murders allegedly committed by

members of the public forces, 1,388 arbitrary arrests of demonstrators, 595 violent

interventions in the context of peaceful protests, 46 victims of ocular damage, 165

firearm shooting cases, 22 victims of sexual violence and five victims of gender-based

violence(Temblores, 2021). Almost five years after the Peace Agreement, which aimed

to end the historical conflict, the Colombian government has renewed the conflict by

claiming its legitimacy to suppress any form of subversion violently: history, once

again, is repeating itself.

One of the oldest conflicts of the western democratic world, the Colombian conflict

has predominately been defined through its armed dimension. We argue that this

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[4] The following are the declarations of an armed citizen who got recorded when standing next to the police. He was shooting with a firearm at the demonstrators on the 28th of May 2021 in Cali: "In other words, what would happen if you had your home, your family, your businesses in danger. You go out to defend yourself. We have created a group for the benefit of the entire commune 22; we went out to defend the commune. Not with the aim of causing harm, but so that the vandals will retreat. The public force could not react and […] what would have happened, [...] what would have happened if we had allowed it. Suppose they kill a person if they burn down our companies and burn down our houses. Everything that has cost us to build them. I had a feeling of solidarity. I should not be in doubt. And this has to be public; we citizens have to support the public force, we have to have a peaceful country, order and normalcy must return, the people demand it [...], it is time to stop"(Andres Escobar, 2021).

approach conceals the structural and systemic causes of the social conflict. We join the authors researching its different aspects by perceiving violence and armed conflict as rooted in a social conflict—defining the conflict itself as a *social and armed conflict* (Estrada Álvarez, 2015; Fajardo, 2015; Ordoñez, 2014; Vega Cantor, 2015). Conceptualising the conflict as having social and armed dimensions enables us to move away from the classical dichotomic characterisations of conflicts, namely within the dichotomies structure-agent, internal-international, greed-grievance. Moreover, we acknowledge the works of Forrest Hylton (2006), Vilma Franco (2009), Jasmin Hristov(2014), Teo Ballvé (2020), Jacobo Grajales (2021), among others, who, through their original investigations, maintain an analytical perspective that perceives the conflict as embedded in capitalism. This thesis, like their works, researches the embeddedness of the conflict in the capitalist system of social relations.

We argue that to unveil the conditions and relations that keep the conflict alive and understand the motivations and interests of the different actors is via a critique of capitalism. To that purpose, we draw on a view of capitalism as a social system whose historical iterations are configurations of a unity of constitutive features – what Albena Azmanova calls 'the repertoire of capitalism'. We examine the conflict concerning these constitutive features. We argue, ultimately, that the armed conflict exhibits the characteristics to be interpreted as a constitutive element of the social system in Colombia—in service to the reproduction of its social order. This thesis does not disregard violence, but it explains the violence in Colombia as the form that capitalism's enabling practices took in the country. We use the case of Colombia to

illustrate how high-intensity violence became an essential trait of its social relations, unlike in other capitalist societies.

This thesis analyses capitalism as a system of social relations and explains how the conflict became functional to the current social order in Colombia. We define the conflict as a hegemonic vehicle, challenging the scholarship that sees the conflict as merely a historical conjuncture. We employ critical and historical analysis to unveil its social function within capitalism. This thesis develops the following three main arguments:

First, we design the concept of the 'hegemonic vehicles' to account for the reproduction of the bourgeois hegemony in particular contexts. This concept aims to contribute to understanding the resilience of capitalism via focusing on its crises and contradiction. With the notion of hegemonic vehicles, we go beyond the common understanding of hegemony as the leadership and domination of a social group over others(Gramsci, 1985) and identify historical institutions that structure social relations according to the needs in different social formations demands of capitalism.

This thesis suggests that hegemonic vehicles enable the reproduction of bourgeois hegemony in different social formations, despite capitalism's contradictions and crises. Chapter two will propose a conceptual framework that reworks Gramsci's hegemony using theoretical tools of critical theory, critical realism, and historical institutionalism. It depicts hegemony as a political strategy based on dynamic ideational and material concessions that adapt to different historical and social contexts. We conceptualise the hegemonic vehicles as structuring institutions (constitutive elements of the repertoire of capitalism), helping to create situational

logics whereby people embrace and enact capitalistic social relations. The hegemonic vehicles are structuring institutions serving to reproduce capitalism along three dimensions of capitalism's reproduction, namely (1) its systemic dynamic (capital accumulation), (2) institutional structuring (3) distributive outcomes. Thus, we can analytically pinpoint the practices conditioned by hegemonic vehicles that enable capitalism. Those practices are to be perceived neither as "false-consciousness" nor as manipulation of people to embrace the hegemony; they also create tangible *material conditions* for people's livelihood and change people's cost-benefit assessment and interests. This concept could allow theory to reinterpret social phenomena as structuring institutions with fundamental functions to particular social orders. We envision them as reinforced by social groups to bind people to a "common sense" and dissuade them from subverting the social order. This work restricts its analysis to Colombia and identifies the armed conflict as a hegemonic vehicle reproducing its peculiar social order. However, further extrapolation and tests of replicability of the concept could enable us to identify these institutions in other societies.

Second, this thesis explores the phenomenal form of the conflict, the violence as embedded in the social conflicts of capitalism. We extend the time-framing from the short and medium durée, which places the beginning of the conflict between the late-XIX century and the mid-XX, to the long durée that identifies its causes during the institutionalisation of private property, during the stately order of the Spanish Crown. Thus, we analyse the historical relations of production within the development of capitalism to understand the interests and practices of the different actors.

The conflict in Colombia has proven to be something other than just an armed confrontation between actors with conflicting interests. The multiple peace agreements have all failed to solve the leading causes of the conflict. After their signature, new phases of conflict outburst and old violence returned. War in Colombia has turned into a non-transformative practice that has enabled the ruling class to reinforce the status quo instead of generating social change. We claim that the protraction of the conflict is because, during the peace processes, actors focus more on disarming the subversive side than on addressing the structural and systemic causes of the social conflict; or, when peace agreements address these causes, ruling classes fail to implement the solutions. After all, peace agreements may challenge their social order. Thinking of the conflict as embedded in the system of social relations enables us to scrutinise practices and motivations conditioned by the practices of appropriation and pursuit of profit (conceptualised as operative logics of capitalism in Chapter one). It also enables us to consider factors such as non-violent subversive actions, structurally conditioned agencies, transnational interactions, interested grievances, all of which may escape the traditional, actor-centred approaches to armed conflicts.

Third, this analysis explains why the conflict has spanned for such a long period and still fails in being solved. We argue that the conflict became a functional institution in Colombia, structuring social relations according to capitalism's needs. Therefore, the ruling classes, the fundamental class of the bourgeois hegemony, refuses to solve the structural and systemic causes of the conflict. The conflict is

essential to Colombia's current social order to create situational logics whereby people consent to the bourgeois hegemony and embrace capitalism.

This thesis concludes that the conflict in Colombia has the fundamental function to reproduce capitalism along different dimensions. We divide this work's empirical section into three chapters that explore how the conflict has enabled the reproduction of capitalism along these dimensions. The structural dimension (Chapter three), related to the structuring institutions of capitalism, explains how the conflict has enabled the institutional protection and promotion of private property. The systemic dimension (Chapter four), which refers to capitalism's operative logics, such as displacement and dispossession, establishes how primitive appropriation within the conflict enabled the competitive production of profit and capital accumulation. The relational dimension (Chapter five) is related to the hierarchisation of social status through unequal material and ideational resources distribution. On this level, we account for the way actors find their place within the social order and explain how the conflict creates situational logics whereby people consent to their subordination to a ruling class, forgoing some interests. The trifold analysis shows that the conflict has a fundamental ideational and material function in Colombian society. It enables the ruling classes to use the monopoly of violence in their favour and sustain the life chances that capitalism grants to the working class. Our take on the conflict's protraction is that as a structuring institution, the conflict has significant value for reproducing the social order and, therefore, cannot stop. Moreover, since it is embedded in the capitalist system of social relations, the only conditions that could

achieve lasting peace would be transforming capitalism's structuring institutions and challenging competitive profit production and capital accumulation.

With those three arguments in mind (the social function of hegemonic vehicles, the social and armed character of the conflict in Colombia and the social-reproductive role of the conflict), this thesis uses a single case study approach. It focuses on the conflict in Urabá, Antioquia and how it creates situational logics whereby people find their place in the social order and consent to it. We study Urabá as an empirical site in which the bourgeois hegemony exists in the form of a paramilitary rule and analyse the different practices of consent and coercion that reproduce such power. To bring to light the hegemonic function of the conflict in everyday lives in Urabá and understand the scope of interests of the subordinate populations, it deploys a historical analysis of the political economy of this society with particular attention to the structuring institutions caught in the confrontation between subversion and counterinsurgency. Drawing on primary and secondary research on the conflict in Urabá, this work provides a critique of the political economy of conflict and peace. As outlined above, this research's objective is to understand the social function of the conflict under the light of the demands and imperatives of capitalism, a shift from understanding the conflict as a mere historical conjuncture to understanding it as a structuring institution. In conceptualising the social-constitute function of the conflict, we critically engage with Gramsci's (1985) conceptualisation of bourgeois hegemony, which explains the strategy of dominant groups to remain in power with the consent of their subordinates. His ideas on politics and power forged a consistent approach to understanding the resilience of bourgeois rule and the lack of social revolutions in

mature capitalism. Through a historical account and bringing in the political economy of the conflict in Urabá, we will formulate and reinterpret the comprehension of the conflict to use it as a tool for social justice and peace.

This thesis reinterprets the concept of hegemony, not to validate but to understand the new forms it acquires by shaping situational logics and conditioning people's interests. We do so in Urabá as a site of emblematic mutual constitution between the social and armed conflict and capital production, focusing on analysing the conditions that shift people's objective interests into consent to capitalism. This research uses this region as a study case to generate an alternative conceptual tool for capitalism's analysis. It also reorders the frame of conflict, underscoring its social function and understanding how it produces conditions for its reproduction through the enaction of capitalism's imperatives in everyday practices.

Considering those goals, we can posit that the conflict has become a fundamental institution that structures social relations favourable to capitalism. The ruling classes refuse to address the structural and systemic causes of the conflict, not only because it entails scrutinising the entire social order but also because the existence of the conflict bestows them the legitimacy to protect their social position under the pretext of protecting society. Their blatant disregard for the peace agreements demonstrates a refusal to put an end to an institution that has been so key to their hegemony throughout the years. Through the narratives of people and analysis of the political economy of the conflict in Urabá, this research foregrounds the dynamics that display how the bourgeois hegemony adapts and shapes in particular contexts.

3. Methodology

This thesis employs a cross-disciplinary methodology focusing on historical and political-economic research and deploying tools stemming from Marxism, critical theory, critical realism, historical institutionalism, international political economy and conflict theory. This thesis bases its approach on historical materialism, uses a dialectic methodology[5] and its methods include a combination of critique grounded on historical analysis of a single case.

The historical analysis traces the causal dynamics of the series of events in the development of capitalism in Colombia that created and exacerbated the conflict. Note that we challenge the approach to conflict as a transhistorical event that any alike society is prone to experience; this is a way to explain why Colombia has experienced such a conflict while other similar societies have not. We depart from the empirical phenomenon of violence to explain the existence of the institution of conflict as it is functional to capital accumulation and profit production. However, we do not see the conflict a priori as a "phenomenon essential to society", which means that every society is determined to be conflictive. The existence of social conflict depends on the presence of conflictive social relations. We see that due to contradictions in capitalism, its social relations are antagonistic and essentially conflictive. However, armed conflict is not essential to capitalist society; it depends on the historical development

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[5] See Sayers who explains that dialectical philosophy and its methods are based on the idea that "to understand the concrete nature of things it is vital to see them in the context of their interconnections with other things within a wider whole. For dialectic, concrete and particular things are always and essentially related, connected to and interacting with other things within a larger totality. This context of relations is internal and essential to the nature of things, not external and accidental"(Sayers, 1984, p. 143).

of specific social formations. In our argument, the conflict as a hegemonic vehicle of capitalist reproduction is a historical institution developed in Colombian society. However, this social function is not unique nor transhistorical; other structuring institutions could and may do the same.

On the other hand, we undertake critique to establish the conditions in Colombian society for capitalism to be possible. We argue that the conflict is one of those conditions—therefore, its institutionalisation—for capitalism in the country to work. When we analyse the conflict, we critically present its systemic functionality and thus critique such a system[6]. This work aims not to negate the conflict as a phenomenon but to transcend and address its protraction by scrutinising its function to society. Borrowing from Marx's methodology(1981), we do not offer a parsimonious explanation of Colombia's several categories regarding capitalism. We explore the interplay of power in the conflict and challenge what we perceive as conflict, as a mere historical event. This contribution is akin to Marx's critique of the neoclassical political economy. It seeks to unveil the social function of conflict, explaining its protraction. It challenges the "common sense" on the conflict that defines it as a mere historical event and reduces it to its armed dimension, neglecting its structural and systemic implications. Such an approach to the conflict is socially valid for the current relations of production because it legitimises the protection of capitalistic institutions and the attack to any form of subversion.

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[6] Note how Marx employs the notion of critique of political economy. In a letter to Lassalle, Marx describes his upcoming works as a "*Critique of Economic Categories* or, IF YOU LIKE, a critical exposé of the system of the bourgeois economy. It is at once an exposé and, by the same token, a critique of the system"(Marx, 2010, p. 270). In similar vein, herein we do.

The combination between critique and historical analysis will often take the reader to events that seem unrelated to the conflict in Urabá. That is because I have built a historical context for explaining how the conflict arrived, developed and is ongoing. That is why the information abides between national/international and local/regional levels because political, economic, and social events taking place in one city had implications for the following events in our region of study. Hence, we spend some time explaining events such as La Violencia or the National Front. Although they mainly happened in the central cities, they had critical effects in the peripheries.

Urabá: The Case Study

As a doctoral thesis written from the discipline of international relations, this thesis uses a single case study analysis (SCSA) in the way Yin defines it, "as an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident"(Yin, 2009, p. 14). We provide a level of detail understating, resembling a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973), enabling us a thorough critique of the complex and particular nature of the Colombian conflict. Willis (2014)explains that the SCSA has three central principles, which have guided the methodology of this thesis. The first is the notion of "boundedness", whereby it is incorporated the synchronic (spatial) and diachronic (temporal) elements of the case. We treat the conflict as a single unit of analysis, spatially bound to the Colombian social formation observed from within the delimited period, from Spanish colonisation until 2020(Gerring, 2004). Ontologically, the choice of SCSA is because this thesis does not claim that in every

capitalist society should exist a hegemonic vehicle identic than the conflict in Colombia. Unlike the holistic case design, we look at the specifics of the conflict in Colombia and not the overall nature of the conflicts. Second, the single case study gives room to draw two kinds of conclusions, first, on the particularities of the case, which is typically more associated with an interpretative approach. Then, it enables to conclude generalisations, which in this thesis are related to its affinity with a critical approach. Third, SCSA is associated with a distinctly qualitative approach(Bryman, 2012). Thus, this research employs methods that draw qualitative conclusions to a large extent. Still, it does not discard the complementarity of descriptive statistics to show trends within the case.

Specifically, the study case treated in this thesis is the conflict in Urabá[7], Colombia. Urabá is not the only place where the conflict has been historical, intense, and protracted. Admittedly, regions such as the Cauca, the Catatumbo or the Magdalena Medio are equally worth studying and valuable for conveying our arguments. All these regions, including Urabá, have been a place of confrontation of all the armed actors, have experienced displacement and dispossession, have strategic importance for political, economic, and military goals, and are influenced by the conflictive social relations of capitalism. This thesis chooses Urabá due to the attainability of its goals. Since we trace the conflict's origin to the introduction of the structuring institution of private property of the means of production to the country by the Spanish Crown, and since we argue that the conflict was a consequence and

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[7] When this work speaks about Urabá, it concretely refers to the subregion Urabá of the Antioquia department. Seldom, it talks of the Great Urabá, region that in its conception also includes municipalities and territories of the Cordoba and Chocó departments.

vehicle for capital accumulation, its necessary to identify the historical conjuncture in which these dynamics transpired. The advantage of researching Urabá is its clarity in these dynamics. It is very ancient and served as the dwelling of many indigenous tribes as a territory. However, as a subregion explored, colonised and exploited, its history is much more recent. The time frame of this work also dwells between the national/international and the local/regional levels. Nationally this work's time frame starts in the indigenous modes of production and its transformation with the Conquista. Locally, it begins with the colonisation of the region. Note that the Conquista is the colonisation performed by the Spanish Crown since their arrival in the XV century. The colonisation of Urabá is the movement of displaced landless peasants seeking refuge from the war and landowners and entrepreneurs seeking to expand their capital accumulation in the early-XX century. They should not be confused.

Urabá's área is 11664 Km2. It borders Panamá, Cordoba and Chocó, and Antioquia's subregions North, West and Southeast and has an outlet to the Caribbean Sea through the Urabá Gulf with several fluvial bodies, notably the Atrato River. Urabá has 10% of Antioquia's population with over 700.000 inhabitants concentrated mainly in Apartadó, its capital, and Turbo. Urabá's economy is based primarily on banana production. Entrepreneurs consider Urabá as "the best corner of America" for being a free-trade zone and having access to foreign markets. Given its geographical conditions and access to the sea, it is a corridor for commercialising goods and products, including illicit drugs. Currently, it is the place of operation of the narco-paramilitary groups, the "Golfo Clan". The Victims Unit registers that there are

presently 1'306.325 victims of the armed conflict in Colombia. 562.098 victims are in

Urabá. 43% of Colombia's victims live in Antioquia, and 83% live in Urabá. Antioquia

is also the department with most land claims by dispossessed peasants, and 32% are

in Urabá (Gómez Gómez et al., 2019).

Between 1986 and 2016, this subregion was a place of confrontation between the

counterinsurgent and subversive forces. It experienced massacres, forced

disappearance, illegal appropriation of land and gender- and sexual violence(Justicia

Especial para la Paz, n.d.). This subregion distinguishes by its agroindustry

production, banana, African palm, cattle, and its role in the supply chain of cocaine.
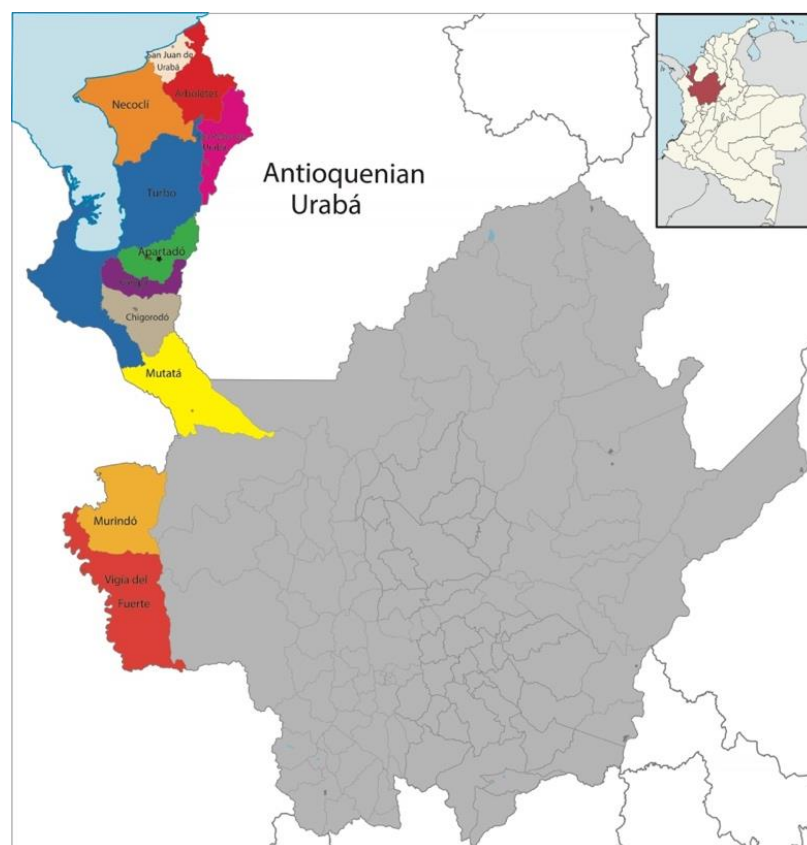
Map 1 Map of Antioquenian Urabá

There is evidence that paramilitary groups have protected the process of production

of these agricultural commodities. The Office of the Attorney General has condemned

forced displacement and invasion of collective territories and the links between producers and entrepreneurs with paramilitary groups (Verdad Abierta 2014). Currently, the region persists in forced displacement, conflicts between communities, insufficient protection to communal and territorial leaders, especially human rights defenders and land claimants. In addition, there have been complaints of land acquisition, presumably by paramilitary actors, destined to infrastructure, as part of their "social policy", and 27 municipalities host megaprojects which could be a scenario for extorsion and forced displacement (CCEEU, 2017).

This research chooses Urabá as its case of study centrally because it strategically enables us to answer this thesis' research question from a historical and political-economic analysis. Also, it is one of the most emblematic cases of armed conflict in which we can discern and scrutinise the relationship between conflict, violence and capitalism. Furthermore, the Urabá case enables us to extend the conflict research into other regions and serves as an analogy to understand the underlying dynamics of the conflict phenomenon in Colombia. However, I acknowledge that further research on the conflict in other regions from this work's approach would help to support our arguments.

Methods

This research's method comprised field research. First, it consisted of archival research in Bogotá to gather information between January and March 2020. Second, it consisted of a visit to Apartadó, Turbo and Arboletes, in the Subregion of Urabá, for two weeks in March 2020. As the only researcher on the field, I gathered information through a

non-participatory, passive observation within an informed ethnographic visit of the territory. I attended a SINTRAINAGRO worker's union event about their historical memory and role in the region around the conflict. I also had casual interactions with people and talked to professionals on the field working for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Additionally, I conducted a semi-structured interview with a former paramilitary member and a non-structured interview with an exiled unionist. These interactions and casual testimonies served me to build a narrative of the state of affairs in the region and understand their perceptions of the current paramilitary rule. In the subsequent chapters, the reader will notice that people's perceptions correspond to the historical and political-economic events that transpired in the conflict in Urabá. The relation between conflict and capital (how war enables capital production) is an aspect that this research wants to reiterate but aims to reinterpret through their perceptions and living conditions.

This research originally involved field research in four subregions of Antioquia: Northeast Magdalena Medio, Urabá and West, in ten municipalities, Segovia, Remedios, Yondó, Puerto Nare, Apartadó, Vigía del Fuerte, Turbo, Frontino, Dadeiba, from the 20 of January to the 22 of March of 2020. Initially, I wanted to combine informed observation with non-structured interviews with social and political leaders, local public servants, and victims to construct a signpost of people's attitudes towards the ruling classes and the social order. However, the project changed throughout its planning in several ways. First, different subregions of the Antioquia department, there was no critical relevance to compare them, at least for

the goal of the argument. Therefore, I decided to only focus on one subregion, Urabá. Second, the choice of municipalities in Urabá was not to compare amongst, but it resulted from snowballing during my stay in the region. Therefore, there is no relevant difference between the municipalities, and the choice of the different municipalities was no other than to see different scenarios. Third, the execution of the interviews failed when trying to approach the population with questions related to the conflict. Due to security measures and the militarised order current in Urabá, which we explain in Chapter five, people are unwilling to give information and talk about the conflict with strangers. Therefore, I had to adapt the methods along the way and conduct non-participatory observation while trying to "live" the daily life in the region. These observations transpired while walking on the streets, shops, bakeries and restaurants, gyms and sports events, beaches and touristic spots, cemeteries, churches, public transportation, bars and nightclubs and public parks. Four, the original plan was that for most of my time in Colombia, I stayed in Urabá. However, I shortened my stay to only two weeks due to a lack of economic resources and concerns with security measures. Therefore, I collected and processed data from secondary sources for most of my time in Colombia. The time in Bogotá was before I arrived in Urabá and informed the observation I carried out in the subsequent weeks.

The main goal of this research is not to generate new information based on unprecedented data; it is to use the available and accessible information to offer a novel interpretation of the conflict. The scholarship on Urabá is ample due to its conflict's intensity and its importance in the national and international economy. Therefore, it was preventable to focus only on collecting data from primary sources.

Most of the information I gathered in libraries in Colombia, as most of it is not digitalised and unavailable for remote consultation.

The gathered information varied between historical literature and works in political economy, sociological research, and works on the conflict. To collect data, I focused on three aspects: the evolution and practices around the private ownership of rural lands, the relationship between capital accumulation and conflict actors, and military and political actions changing the social relations in Urabá. This decision corresponds to the three dimensions that this thesis presents. The information collected revealed that the military defeat of the guerrillas translated into a public obliteration of any form of subversion and a current rule of a counterinsurgent bloc of power.

I collected the second type of data and information from local people, professionals, and social and political leaders. Many non-structured interviews and casual conversations with workers of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Norwegian Refugee Council took place. They, either as locals or coming from other cities, have been working in peace-building and historical memory-building. Those citizens were the gatekeepers to the region and helped me access public meetings and events. I attended a session on an initiative to build the historical memory of the worker's unions in Urabá at the National Union of Agroindustry Workers (SINTRAINAGRO). In it participated former guerrilla members of the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), unionists, civil society members and representatives of the United Federation of Workers in Denmark 3F. Another important source was an interview over the phone with a former paramilitary currently in prison. He, whose

name has been changed to "Francisco", used to be a political leader of the United Self-Defences of Colombia (AUC) and the Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC). He expressed to me that his role was "to socialise", to share the political views of the paramilitary organisations. Before joining the paramilitary groups, he was a banana worker and a union leader. Another non-structured interview was conducted with an exiled member of the union National Unitary Agricultural Union Federation (FENSUAGRO). He had to leave the country after the paramilitaries threatened his life. All the interviews were carried out in Spanish. Names of most of the respondents have been withheld for security and confidentiality reasons.

Except for the interview with "Francisco", interviews were conducted without audio recorders because of the insecurity feeling the devices generated to participants. Under the advice of a local person, most of the interactions were uninformed. Beyond revealing my name, occupation, origin, and objective of my visit to Urabá, the interviewees were unaware that I used their experiences to write about the conflict. People were more willing to talk about their daily lives in informal conversations than in interviews. The observations, data and information were interpreted and collected into fieldnotes that I wrote at the end of every day.

Data Analysis

The data gathered in the field diary in Urabá is mainly observational notes, where I documented 'events experienced principally through watching and listening. They contain as little interpretation as possible and are as reliable as the observer can construct them' (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 110). The field notes were collected

after each day and transcribed my experiences throughout the day, with few "interpretations" or analyses. Moreover, "theoretical" and "methodological notes" were taken based on the information gathered in libraries and from secondary sources. I took most of the notes in Spanish, and some I translated into English. I analysed the notes according to these following elements(Kipping et al., 2013): *Source criticism*, with which I analysed and imagined the participants' origin, biases and interests and assessed their reliability; *triangulation*, whereby I compared the data gathered with the historical tale and my theoretical framework; and *hermeneutics*, which helped me to evaluate and interpret the information by considering the cultural, social and temporal context of the data collection. The interview was transcribed and later analysed with the rest of the notes using NVivo.

The strategy of analysis was using a combination between narrative and thematic analysis. Since I was inquiring about the narratives on the conflict, focusing on the depiction of local actors and practices, I recurred to analyse the information first with narrative analysis. This strategy enables the researcher to interpret stories told within the context of research, which at the same time was everyday life for the participants. I paid attention to how, when and where their stories were told (in a bar, meeting or private sphere), why people were telling me their stories (most of the time as a form acquainting with me in an informal context) and what was the relationship of their story to my main topic(Parcell & Baker, 2017). Given that people were not interested in talking to me about my specific topic, the conflict in Urabá, I also employed a thematic analysis to identify patterns or issues recurring in the people's conversations(Hawkins, 2017). This analysis relies on a priori information, so I knew

how to make their answers relevant to my topic when asking questions on informal subjects.

Another element important to data analysis was operationalising the central concepts. Given the systemic approach I employed, operationalising the system to which I referred was fundamental. Azmanova's work was a source of my approach. I operationalised her way of envisioning the system as embodied and enacted through capitalism's operative logic of competitive profit production, which is enabled by the practices of primitive appropriation(Azmanova, 2020). This research operationalises the operative logic simply as capital accumulation and the primitive appropriation with evidence of *displacement* and *dispossession*. It also operationalises capital accumulation through *land commodification*, *peasants proletarianisation*, and the continual revolutionising of production.

Given that the concept of the hegemonic vehicles has been under construction during this doctoral thesis, a more rigorous operationalisation is still missing. The concept was an outcome of a dialectic process. With a priori theory and critique, I decided to create a concept that I applied to an empirical study case. The current state of the concept is a synthesis between the theory and empirical evidence. Therefore, I could not operationalise the hegemonic vehicles beforehand.

The reader will remark that this research organises and presents the information in two simultaneous and interdependent levels: national/international and local/regional. The national/international level analyses the conflict's roots in Urabá. It includes aspects such as the institutionalisation of private property since the arrival of the Spanish Crown, the influence of the IWW or the Cold War and the impact of La

Violencia and the Thousand Days War upon the region. This level contains most of the context with which we historicised the social practices in Urabá. The local/regional level comprises mainly the dynamics taking place in Antioquia and the Great Urabá. This level anchors political, economic, and sociological information to history and places practices into a broader scope. We choose to organise the information in function of the interdependence of the three dimensions of the repertoire of capitalism, namely the structural, systemic and relational.

4. Findings

The evidence contained in this doctoral thesis suggest the following findings:

- The armed conflict of the second half of the 20th century shares structural and systemic causes than the civil wars of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Understanding one wave of violence without considering its precedents provides little information on the underlying connection between wars.

- Colombia's conflict causes are embedded in the operation of the capitalist system of social relations in the country. Capitalism in Colombia has taken the shape of a social-bourgeois order that has employed both coercion and consent to sustain its hegemony. There is a co-constitutive relationship between capitalism and conflict in the country.

- The conflict has enabled the creation of life chances and material conditions as well as it has harmed people's welfare and life. This duality is part of what explains why the conflict is still alive. The conflict has a social function to the current social order and system.

- The paramilitary rule is the capitalist hegemony's form in Urabá. It is an entanglement of relations between international, national and local actors who are enabled by the conflict situation to accumulate capital.

- According to the evidence, we can suggest that the conflict is a hegemonic vehicle. It is a structuring institution that enables the consent of the working class to the hegemony of the capitalist classes. We have proven that it was institutionalised during the National Front. However, a further historical analysis could prove that it was institutionalised earlier.

- Suppose all capitalist societies have a core repertoire, equal in its logics, which shapes differently according to the social formation. In that case, we could argue that hegemonic vehicles are operating to reproduce the capitalist hegemony in every capitalist society.

5. Relevance and Originality

Capitalism is an essential trait of Colombia's status quo. Therefore, we cannot explain the conflict without scrutinising capitalism. The originality of this work lies not in the new data and information it brings to the research of the region Urabá. This work does not claim any originality from the sources or the empirical analysis. Its originality lies instead in the interpretation it offers of the conflict. It combines several conceptual frameworks to explain the protraction of the conflict and uses the Urabá as a case study, enabling us to delimit in space and time the reach of our claims. This work contributes to a part of the literature concerned with the conflict's duration and inability to be solved. Most empirical evidence is researched in a cross-country

analysis (Collier et al., 2004; Fearon, 2004; Regan, 2002). Addressing Vargas' claim about gaps in the literature, this work correlates conflict's duration with a sub-national analysis(Vargas, 2012). Also, it contributes to the literature describing and categorising the conflict as social and armed(Estrada Álvarez, 2015; Fajardo, 2015). This work employs a historical materialist theoretical framework to reinterpret the conflict's protraction(Azar & Farah, 1981; Brecher, 2016). At the same time, it contributes to the scholarship on the resilience and reproduction of capitalism and the inability to attain social transformation despite crises, conflicts, and contradictions(Ansari & Shahzad, 2017; Joseph, 2013; Waldman-Brown, 2018). Its originality is twofold. It reinterprets the framing of the conflict, explains its protraction, and introduces the notion of 'hegemonic vehicles' to the analysis of social change.

This work uses existing theoretical frameworks to formulate a novel concept to understand social conflicts. And it uses said theory to understand a concrete phenomenon. It ultimately has a transformative ambition[8]. This work has the theoretical endeavour to contribute to critical theory and Marxist analysis of society. It is committed to the transformation of society and the achievement of peace with social justice in Colombia. Therefore, the critique and historical analysis also informed the fieldwork and was informed by the fieldwork. Because the outcome of this

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[8] See Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* on transformation of society: "[…] it is men who change circumstances, and that the educator must himself be educated. Hence, this doctrine is bound to divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society. The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionising practice"(Marx, 1998 4th thesis). "Social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which mislead theory into mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice"(Marx, 1998, p. 753 8th thesis). "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it"(Marx, 1998, p. 754 11th thesis).

investigation cannot be limited to the consultation of secondary sources — at least that was the spirit I had when I arrived in Colombia. Although limited, the object and use of the field observation provides sociological content to the investigation. Although it was limited given several unexpected conditions, such as economic resources and security impediments, it enabled me to taste the situation in Urabá, especially considering that the current situation is of an armed peace in which all indicators, news and information depict a peaceful situation. Once on the field and supported by other sociological works on the region, we understood that conflict was as alive as ever. As this research shows (Chapter five), the fieldwork enabled us to learn some informal rules and practices on the streets, enacted through daily life. It was fundamental to underpin our argument that consent has been constructed and sustains the social relations in Urabá. Every silence, change of subject or non-verbal communication spoke to us louder than any discursive statement. That kind of language is always relevant and, although well documented, renews and replicates the voices that argue that the conflict is still there.

6. Reflections and Positionality

A foreword on my positionality. My Colombian nationality, placement as a working-class member, belonging to a family victimised by counterinsurgent actors, Marxist ideology, and interests to subvert the current social order influence this work's depiction of history and the conflict. It certainly affected people's responses and the kind of information I could access. My gatekeepers in Urabá were personal friends, professionals working in peace-building organisations. And with them, I have

ideological affinities. Due to their jobs, they have above-average access to material resources, and my stay in Apartadó was in a middle-class neighbourhood with few risks. Therefore, my arrival in the region was seamless, and they got me access to some sources that, in general lines, shared some of my perceptions. Although I never revealed my ideological biases to unknown people, my curiosity about the conflict created a predisposition. Such a topic arouses all sorts of emotions, from victims' adverse reactions to positive ones by the people whose lives improved after the paramilitaries settled in Urabá. Precisely that role, combined with the scarcity of time I spent in the region, impeded a meaningful interaction with local society members. At that point, I decided to change my strategy, stop asking for explicit conflict-related questions, and inquire about their lives in the region. This strategy was much more successful and enabled me to map the situation of Urabá.

A couple of times, I had to chance to navigate the streets of Apartadó by myself, and people always treated me as a tourist. Locals noticed me on the streets because of how I looked and dressed. Although the current rule targets unwanted behaviours, their rules did not apply to me as an outsider—we explore this in Chapter 5. Otherwise, the people were friendly and warm. Their friendly embracement reflects upon our interpretation of armed peace. Because in appearance, the region is an attractive hotspot for visitors, with the best landscapes and people. However, more detailed and informed research shows otherwise.

Once I realised my failure to establish trust with the potential respondents and sorted it out, my other concern was to be noticed and confronted by the paramilitary authorities. I had learned that I was being observed several times by the

paramilitaries' informants. However, I was never contacted or confronted. Maybe because I decided not to conduct interviews, it also helped my discreet experience.

My approach to the secondary sources is also biased by my prior knowledge of the conflict and its scholarship. Although I tried to review different interpretations of the conflict, I preferred structuralist and long durée interpretations. I also chose to prioritise the texts of the professors with whom I studied in the university and my political militancy. Therefore, by no means do I claim any sort of impartiality in the interpretation, sources and conclusions of this work. Instead, this work voices the needs, demands, grievances and interests of the working class in Colombia and has a further subversive goal to transform the current society.

Being inspired and based on Marxism and critical theory, this work contains a normative base related to the commitment to emancipation from social injustices. This research shares this concern with many subversive actors who see that the only lasting peace in Colombia is the one produced by social justice. The grievances related to the conflict have been the entry point for this work to research. The demands of land claimants, peasants, guerrilla fighters, victims of state terrorism, social and political leaders, subversive academics, impoverished workers, criminalised students, and many other subordinate actors were among the departure points for this research work its arguments. It is also the result of my career expectations and life project as an aspiring academic scholar and organic intellectual.

7. Chapters Overview

With the following premises and backgrounds (the goal of establishing the role of the conflict in Colombia for the reproduction of capitalism and unveiling the conditions and relations of the phenomenon of conflict; reinterpreting the conflict as a hegemonic vehicle institutionalised to structure social relations according to the needs of the social order; and analysing and doing a critique of the conflict in Urabá) this research project develops in the following five chapters. Let us recap: This work views hegemonic vehicles are structuring institutions adapted by ruling classes within a specific historical context to shape situational logics whereby people consent to their rule and disregard their class or vested interests. The conflict has produced situational logics whereby working-class members are bound to the capitalists' rule and deem as subversives their enemies. Those situational logics are not simply manipulation; the hegemonic vehicles created material conditions that translate into life chances for the people. Its function to the social order could explain the conflict's protraction, and it legitimises the protection of society and frames as its enemies those aiming to reconstruct it.

Chapter One, "*How to think about the conflict?*" elaborates a conceptualisation of the conflict that transcends its understanding as a merely phenomenal form and discerns its "essence", namely its function in the capitalist system of social relations. This chapter constructs a theoretical framework that provides us with tools to critique the conflict. As mentioned above, this research delves from a historical materialist approach. This chapter presents the theoretical framework upon which we build such a critique, blending critical theory, critical realism and historical institutionalism. This

chapter critically explores the notions 'repertoire of capitalism' (Azmanova, 2020), structural conditioning (Archer, 1995; Creaven, 2012) and protracted social conflict (Azar & Farah, 1981). First, the repertoire of capitalism depicts the operation of the capitalist system of social relations. It serves to discern the different dimensions upon which the conflict deploys capitalism's domination and perpetuates its injustices. Azmanova treats capitalism as a social system with constitutive and enabling dynamics which are in turn enacted via structuring institutions and which, consequently, affect the distribution of life chances among social actors. We define the trajectories of the injustice of the conflict based on the key forms of domination in capitalism that she identifies: structural, systemic, and relational ones. Within these dimensions emerge social practices whereby the hegemonic vehicle of conflict manages to reproduce capitalism even though its contradictions generate the conflict. Second, the notion 'structural conditioning', developed by Sean Creaven, is used to address agents' rationale to act according to their situational logics within social relations. Social practices encompass a dialectic between involuntary placement, vested interests, and opportunity costs. Situational logics are seen as an objective influence conditioning actions and supplying agents with strategic directional guidance. Third, we will explore the relationship between how history affects institutions and shape social, political and economic behaviours and how the conflict has persisted over long periods with its multiple sporadic outbreaks of violence. We will approach the notion of protracted social conflict from a historical institutionalist approach to show that the different preconditions of violence have been caused and are consequences of critical conjunctures. That is why, through the empirical sections,

we discretely focus on some of these critical conjunctures of Colombian history. In the critical engagement with these concepts, we expect to shed light on other important notions to our understanding of the conflict, such as class, interest, and power. Rather than engaging with the detailed conceptual discussion of these terms, we will address them as we trace these categories in Colombian society.

Chapter two, "*Hegemonic Vehicles, Hegemony and Critique*", introduces the central concept of this work. This concept results from a dialectical exercise inspired by Marx's work. This work uses a priori conceptual frameworks to analyse Colombian history and political economy critically. And as a result, it proposes a new conceptual device to do a critique of society. As mentioned above, this work aims to create a conceptual framework that contributes to understanding the resilience of capitalism despite its crises, conflicts, and contradictions. Marxism and critical theory have extensive work in understanding capitalism, its different dynamics, and implications. As capitalism is in motion and adapts to the different historical conjunctures, new insights on capitalism are never dispensable. From a historicist approach, this work aims to scrutinise capitalism in its context and its motion. Thus, we introduce the notion of 'hegemonic vehicles' as a concept whose primary purpose is to help conceptualise the ability of the bourgeoisie in different social formations to sustain its leadership with the consent of the working class. Almost a century ago, Gramsci performed such an analysis during his time in prison—and this work is an endeavour to elaborate further his notion of hegemony. This section critically engages with Gramsci's notion of hegemony. However, this work approaches the hegemony, highlighting political realism's influence in his works. We define the hegemonic

vehicles as institutionalised historical practices structuring the situational logics that enable and reinforce subordinate classes' consent to the capitalist hegemony. Its use is to critique specific historical phenomena in order to discern their function to society. An analysis of the conflict in Colombia shows that, despite the countless efforts to solve the conflict, political decisions, mainly of the country's ruling classes, have constantly jeopardised the peace and caused new waves of violence. An analysis of these dynamics concludes that the conflict cannot simply be ended through a peace agreement because it contains a social function within the Colombian social order. We characterise Colombia's conflict as a hegemonic vehicle, as a historical phenomenon institutionalised to create situational logics whereby people, workers, victims, indigenous, peasants, and others consent to maintaining the bourgeois social order, despite their subordination. By characterising the conflict as a hegemonic vehicle, this work expects to explain its protraction.

Chapters three, four and five develop the empirical analysis and investigate the conflict in Urabá, Antioquia. The empirical section is divided into three chapters, following the three trajectories of domination and injustice Azmanova articulates in her critique of capitalism. These chapters principally explain how the conflict has employed practices that protected the different components of the capitalist system of social relations in the country and how that protection legitimised it among the victims and subordinate groups—the losers in the conflict dynamics.

Chapter Three, "*Land Question and Conflict*", establishes how the conflict helped reproduce the capitalist system of social relations in the structural dimension of

domination. This dimension refers to how institutions, serving as enabling structures, enact capitalism's systemic dynamics of capital accumulation. In the case of Colombia, for its social order and in the conflict, one of the primary structuring institutions is the private property and management of the means of production because private property was one of the main enablers of the capitalistic mode of production in the country. Private property has structured capitalistic social relations, which are displayed in relations and practices that enact capitalism's systemic dynamics in everyday practices. This chapter performs a historical analysis of the development and consolidation of the private property of the means of rural production. It explains the land question and offers a historicised critique of the structure of rural property since the "stately social order" that introduced the institution of property. The land question depicts how the rural property has been historically hoarded and how violence is its primary enabler. The chapter starts by analysing the history of the land question in Colombia and explains how the mode of production of social life transformed from the pre-Columbian to the Republican periods. The second section describes how the ruling classes institutionalised the private property and management of the rural means of production, i.e., rural land. It depicts how such an institutionalisation was driven by capital accumulation and the detriment of the land's pre- or non-capitalistic uses. Thirdly, the chapter establishes the relationship between conflict and private property in Urabá. This section displays that violence and land tenure are entangled. The privatisation of land partly caused land conflicts, and violence enabled such land privatisation. This section also displays the legal mechanisms that owners of the means of rural production have used to legalise the

lands they dispossessed and hoarded. The chapter concludes by showing how the hegemonic vehicle of the conflict enables violence and protects private property, thereby enabling the reproduction of the existing social order. Since we claim that hegemonic vehicles create situational logics and assume that the hegemony requires material conditions to maintain leadership and domination, structuring institutions that enact competitive profit production are fundamental. In the case of Colombia, given the material conditions of the conflict and the essential role of the rural output, ruling classes protect the private property of the land at any cost, and the conflict enables that protection.

Chapter four, *"The History of Dispossession and Displacement in Urabá"*, presents the operation of the hegemonic vehicle of conflict upon the systemic dimension. The systemic dimension, the trajectory of injustice related to the systemic domination in capitalism, refers to the core norms that constitute the capitalist system of social relations. Those constitutive features of capitalism are associated with creating profit and capital, which is distinctive from how other modes of production reproduce. Following Marx, Azmanova posits that the competitive production of profit, enabled by primitive appropriation, is the constitutive dynamic of capitalism as a social system. Thus, the systemic dimension mirrors how these features interplay with the conflict. The scope of systemic domination covered in this work is confined to an analysis of the dynamics of capital accumulation enabled by the practices of primitive appropriation: dispossession and displacement. We argue that the conflict, through dispossession and displacement, allows capital accumulation by proletarianising peasants and commodifying non-capitalistic lands. The chapter offers a historical

analysis of the colonisation of Urabá. This colonisation refers to the movement of landless peasants seeking refuge from violence and capitalists and entrepreneurs seeking means to produce profit. This section shows the transformation of Urabá from being a non-capitalistic space to its turning into the "best corner of America" in terms of conditions for generating profit. The second section explores an important historical conjuncture for the development of the conflict, namely the outbreak of violence in the 1950s (La Violencia). This conjuncture caused in the following years the transformation of the conflict from an inter-class war between elites of the "traditional parties" into an intra-class conflict of a unified bourgeoisie against any attempt at subverting their social order. The last section explains the relationship between conflict, hegemony, and capital accumulation in Urabá. It displays how Urabá fully integrated into the capitalist system as a productive space during the second half of the XX century, mainly thanks to global banana production. This section also shows how displacement of peasants and dispossession of their lands enabled their respective commodification and proletarianisation. The section concludes by addressing how the counterinsurgent bloc of power employed paramilitary armies to protect and allow profit production and capital accumulation while the paramilitaries established a rule that attained people's consent. Capital accumulation is a fundamental feature of capitalist society. The conflict's dynamics have enabled ruling classes to continue appropriating the means of production and using their power to counter any subversive effort by social actors to self-defend from primitive appropriation.

Chapter five, *"Armed Peace in the Best Corner of America"*, discusses how the conflict operates to reproduce capitalism along the relational dimension of the social order. This dimension emerges from a trajectory of domination whereby actors are subordinated to others due to the asymmetrical distribution of resources resulting from the operation of capitalism on the other dimensions of the social order. This dimension contains the more subjective dynamics of the conflict, antagonism between social groups. We could say that the state of the relational dimension is the outcome of the operation of conflict on the other dimensions of capitalism. In the case of Urabá, we can see that capitalism demands having the means to produce profit and enable capital accumulation. Useless or profitless land must be exploited, just as colonisation in Urabá did. At the same time, people can produce capital if they hold those means that others do not own and, therefore, extract what they do have, namely labour. Capitalists sought to own and control land because that entitled them to produce profit and hire landless peasants. Capitalists used land dispossession and displaced peasants to own those means of production in Urabá. The ownership and management of the means of production come attached with material and ideational resources, which creates asymmetrical social relations and eventually antagonism. Capitalists in Urabá have access to more capital and political power. On the other hand, after having lost their lands, labour decided to fight back the appropriation or simply consented to the conditions that the capital conceded them. In the first case, workers supported guerrillas and subversive legal parties and, in the latter, decided to embrace the interests of the capitalists. Subversion and their challenge to private property and profit production created the reaction of capitalists who consolidated a

counterinsurgent bloc. In the Urabá, that bloc came in paramilitary groups working hand to hand with the public force. The conflict ultimately reinforces the asymmetrical distribution of power that capitalism generates (and the conflict itself). It creates material and ideational conditions whereby workers embrace the rule of the paramilitaries.

This chapter explores the more subjective dynamics of the conflict. It explains how in Urabá, the subversive actors went from representing the workers to being their enemy. The conflict and the war reorganised and created situational logics for people persuading them to forgo the grievances associated with their asymmetrical position in society and embrace the life chances of the paramilitary rule. The first section explains how the conflict turned into an institution in the context of the historical conjuncture of the National Front. It describes how the different actors reorganised their interests after the capitalists unified and countered the subversives. We argue that at this moment, the conflict changed from being an intra-class class one to an inter-class one. The second section talks about the relationship between inequality and conflict in Urabá. The third section describes the war between guerrillas and paramilitaries and how the balance of power changed in the Urabá. The fourth and fifth sections explore how works and how people experience in their daily lives the paramilitary rule. The chapter concludes by establishing how the conflict has reinforced paramilitary rule and the different instances of capitalism in a situation known as 'an armed peace'. Finally, this section ascertains that the conflict has motivated people to disregard the interests and grievances associated with their

unfavourable position in society and embrace and support counterinsurgent domination and leadership.

Chapter 1: How to understand the Colombian conflict?

"Colombia was, and continues to be, proof that gradual reform in the framework of liberal democracy is not the only, or even the most plausible, alternative to social and political revolutions, including the ones that fail or are aborted. I discovered a country in which the failure to make a social revolution had made violence the constant, universal, omnipresent core of public life."

Excerpt From: Eric J. Hobsbawm(2002). "Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life".

1. Introduction: Building the Toolbox

How does this thesis understand conflict? How does it understand the Colombian conflict? This chapter presents the theoretical framework underpinning this thesis's arguments, concepts and interpretation of the Colombian conflict. This thesis revisits the definition of the Colombian conflict. We argue that only focusing on the conflict as a mere historical conjuncture has contributed to its protraction. It limits its resolution to addressing the most apparent traits (its armed dimension) and conceals its systemic and structural causes. The armed dimension of a conflict, its actor-centred characterisation, may eclipse its social function. Otherwise, why eradicating armed actors has not solved the problem? This thesis invites the reader to reconsider the conflict and its causes. To unveil the conflict's "essence", we propose understanding the conflict under a systemic light of the broader social relations. This chapter provides the toolbox to understand the conflict as an *exacerbated non-transformative social conflict*,

a protracted social and armed conflict that is not contingent but essential to the capitalist order in Colombia.

The Colombian conflict has often been narrated through securitised narratives of subversion, reducing the Colombian's grievances on multiple injustices to organised crime, terrorism, and antisocial violence. One of the oldest conflicts of the western democratic world has often been represented through its armed dimension and, in so doing, concealing the structural and systemic causes of the social conflict. The issues of armed violence since the 1960s (Duncan, 2015; Giraldo, 2015b; Gutiérrez Sanín, 2015; Torrijos, 2015), criminality of the guerrillas in the conflict(Moreno Torres, 2006; Pécaut, 2008; Rubio, 1999), greed and economic motivations in the conflict (Rangel Suárez, 1999; Richani, 2003; Röhl, 2003), paramilitarism and counterinsurgency (Arjona & Kalyvas, 2005; Cruz Rodríguez, 2007; Hristov, 2014; Huhle, 2001; Ljodal, 2002; Rangel Suárez, 2005; Zelik, 2015), political violence (Gutiérrez Sanín, 2015; Pécaut, 2015; Wills Obregón, 2015), the conflict and the access to state's power (Pizarro Leongómez, 1992; L. Alberto. Restrepo, 1992; Zamosc, 1986), capital, drug traffic and paramilitarism (Gonzalez et al., 2003; Medina Gallego, 1990; Palacio & Rojas, 1990; Romero, 2002, 2003), the normative approaches to subversion (De Zubiria, 2015; Giraldo, 2015a; Hylton, 2006), war against terrorism in Colombia (Andrade Becerra, 2014; Chaparro Amaya, 2005; Waldmann, 2007), state's precarity and weakness (Chambers, 2013; García Villegas et al., 2016; F. E. González, 2003; Gutiérrez Sanín, 2003; Oquist, 1978; Pécaut, 2001; Sánchez Torres et al., 2007; Schmidt, 1974; Wills Obregón, 2015), the institutional weakness of the state in historical perspective (Kalmanovitz, 2010; Salazar T. & Castillo, 2001; G. Sanchez & Aguilera

Peña, 2001; Wills Obregón, 2002, 2015), the correlation between inequality and violence (Albán, 2011; Baquero Melo, 2006; J. Restrepo & Aponte, 2009; Richani, 2003; Rubio, 2002; F. Sanchez & Chacon, 2006), structural causes of the conflict (De Zubiria, 2015; Estrada Álvarez, 2015; Fajardo, 2015, 2015; Medina Gallego, 1990; Vega Cantor et al., 2009) and class struggle and conflict (Deas, 1999; Fals Borda, 1968, 2009; Franco Alzate, 2009; M. Palacios & Safford, 2002), among other topics related to the conflict, have been researched at length over the last six decades through the standpoints of political economy, political violence, human rights and security. A group of authors have begun to position an approach to the conflict that explore its different aspects with the common factor of placing violence and armed conflict as embedded in a social conflict caused by the nature of the social structure and the social system. In this thesis, we subscribe to the aforementioned group. We intend to contribute to the characterisation of the social and armed conflict considering its embeddedness in the structuring institutions of the capitalist system of social relations. We will engage with several of the issues mentioned by taking the analytical turn to capitalism as a system of social relations to understand and elucidate how the conflict became functional to the current social order in Colombia.

The Colombian conflict is a social and armed conflict whose causes and dynamics are embedded in the capitalist system of social relations(Estrada Álvarez, 2015; Fajardo, 2010; Vega Cantor, 2015). Its empirical form displays sporadic armed confrontations caused by and enabling capitalistic social relations, and it has become a structuring institution enacting capitalism's systemic dynamics. Throughout this

thesis, we expound on the conflict's twofold dimensions to explain the reason for its protraction.

In her book, Hristov provides a way of conceiving Colombia's conflict by thinking of violence as embedded in the context of local and global processes of capital accumulation (Hristov, 2014). Her depiction of paramilitarism as a multifaceted structure embodying the use of violence for the purpose of dispossession, labour and resources exploitation, and suppression of dissident actors is contained in the spirit of this thesis. We interpret her arguments as conveyed within an analysis that disentangles systemic, structural and relational dynamics. That same analysis we deploy in this thesis.

This thesis frames the conflicts origin within the dynamics that structured capitalism—the institutionalisation of private property as a means to produce capital. The violence in Colombia has to do with the process of class formation and class struggle, which, at the same time, has been enabled by practices of primitive accumulation[9] (Ballvé, 2020; Grajales, 2021; Hristov, 2014; Hylton, 2006; Lombana Reyes, 2012). We could trace class formation in the institutionalisation of private property by the Spanish colonial power. And identify intra- and inter-class struggle in the multiple confrontations between political parties and armed groups. This thesis

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[9] This chapter explains later why we use primitive appropriation and not primitive accumulation. Although they do not negate each other, primitive accumulation has to do with the "starting point" of capitalist accumulation, originated in the dynamics of divorcing the producer from the means of production—a political process of class struggle and coercion by the state on behalf of the expropriating class (Marx, 1981). For a more precise description of the ongoing process of divorcing peasants from their means of production and to understand this beyond dispossession, we employ primitive appropriation: "the appropriation of what is to be deployed in the competitive pursuit of profit"(Azmanova, 2020, p. 39). However, we see the same analysis when authors describe primitive appropriation, primitive accumulation or Harvey's accumulation by dispossession as enabling practices for capital accumulation.

claims the relation of different cycles of violence in Colombia to capital accumulation since capital accumulation involves violent practices, giving power to some to the detriment of others in a zero-sum way.

We could herein establish a distinction, yet complementarity, between armed violence and pro-capitalist violence. Armed violence will refer to violent actions within the armed conflict context in Colombia. However, pro-capitalist violence is entrenched in the social conflict that capitalism spawns. Borrowing Hristov's concept, pro-capitalist violence is "a type of violence functional to creating, facilitating or restoring conditions for capital accumulation" (Hristov, 2021). Pro-capitalist violence transcends the specificity of the Colombian context and could be found in other societies with no active armed conflict. In the context of Colombia, both "types" of violence join and muddle. However, keeping this distinction is fundamental to show that capital accumulation is an inherent violent practice as much as in conflictive societies and even in the most "peaceful" societies. So, to lay down some examples, pro-capitalist violence could be the violent actions carried out by the existing alliances among the White Guards (landowners' private gunmen) and military and political officials against land and environmental defenders in the context of land conflicts in Chiapas, Mexico(Hristov, 2021). But pro-capitalist violence also is the violence exercised by police forces against evicted people in order to restore the property rights of a landlord in the contexts of Spain and Brasil(Silva Moreira et al., 2021).

Our version of the conflict better fits a historical materialist approach to society because it explains how historical context may exacerbate conditions of violence in the presence of objective antagonistic social relations, such as the capitalist relations of

production. However, violence could be employed to transform or to contain transformation. Hylton captures this exacerbated non-transformative character of the Colombian conflict with his notion of "military hypertrophy" of resistance. He describes as stubborn the containment of profound demand for social revolution, recurrently defeated throughout Colombian history. We see a protracted conflict with cycles of revolution-counterrevolution interluded by brief reformist periods(Hylton, 2006). But what is most important about the Colombian conflict, which underpins our claim about its institutionalisation, is argued by Grajales, who describes a transition from periods of high-intensive war to relatively limited practices of violence(Grajales, 2021). This transition plays a fundamental role in blurring the distinction between economy and politics in the regime of accumulation. The former driven by market forces, the latter by confrontation. Grajales' warless capitalism, a regime of accumulation depending on positions of power once achieved through violence, now subdued by post-conflict institutions, discourses, and economic forces, supports our vision of a latent social conflict with institutionalised narratives of war. This notion of warless capitalism is compatible with the notion of pro-capitalist violence that, as we have defined above, is not necessarily violence in the context of armed conflict. These narratives of war underlie when episodic violence exacerbates and reiterates.

This conceptual chapter sets to revisit literature on conflict from a Marxist analysis as a tool to critique the Colombian conflict. Herein, we establish the language that will enable us to understand the history and political economy presented in Chapters Three, Four and Five. This toolbox creates the connection between outbreaks of violence, processes and events. For instance, only thinking of capital accumulation,

we can create a link between the Royal Concessions during the Colony, the attempts

of Agrarian Reform and the Land-Grabbing by paramilitary groups: all events of

different periods but all related to the appropriation of the means of production. The

following table presents the different components of this toolbox and its purpose for

this thesis.

Function	Concept	Central Claim	Purpose
Methodological	**Historical Materialism**	○ Attention to production ○ Historisation ○ Distinction of phenomenal from essential ○ Critique ○ Historical analysis ○ Experiential basis	Historical materialism supports the kind of analysis this work does, and it supports our endeavour to search for an "essence" within the conflict.
Ontological	**Capitalism**	○ Capital accumulation ○ Primitive accumulation ○ Private property ○ Exploitation ○ Profit drive	Conflict is embedded in the capitalist mode of production and system of social relations
	Repertoire of Capitalism	○ Systemic dimensions: enabling dynamics ○ Structuring institutions helping to enact operative logics. ○ Relational effects on distribution of life-chances.	It provides the analytical framework to deploy this research's arguments.
	System of Social Relations	○ Interconnected structured social relations to make a complex social totality work.	Underpins the systemic approach
Epistemological	**Critical Realism**	○ Emergentist approach, to stratified material world comprised of dimensions ○ Nor structure, neither agency ○ Human action happening in a stratified social world	Base for the structural conditioning.
	Historical Institutionalism	○ Institutions rules to structure behaviours ○ Agency and social norms within a context ○ Historicity ○ Institutional change	Explains resistance to change, people consent to current institutions and institutional crystallisation.

		o Hostile interactions extended over long periods with sporadic violence outbreaks, with varied frequency and intensity.	
	Protracted Social Conflict	o Functional-Structural approach o International linkages o Communal content and identity groups	Supports this work stress the social conflict, and it is the framework to depict the Colombian conflict as protracted.

Table 1 Structure of the Toolbox

2. A historical materialist methodology

This toolbox stems from Marx's methodological and critical work in historical materialism. Its primary function to our argument is its pledge and tools to distinguish essence from social phenomena within a historical context. It enables us to think about the conflict's embeddedness in capitalism and to argue that class struggle underlies the different cycles of different forms of violence in Colombia. All these issues are related to production.

The first element we take from historical materialism is its attention to the modes of production. Marx argues that the production of life is the first premise, a prerequisite, to all human existence and, therefore, of all social life and history (Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 47). His method studies social life, considering modes of production—"the way in which men produce their means of subsistence" (Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 37).

The conflict in Colombia is not only the consequence of a particular mode of production and its historical specificity, but it affects that mode—we argue that it

enhances that mode of production. This thesis sets its timeframe since the consolidation of the current mode of production but considering the *indigenous mode of production.* We depict the changes in "the way men produce their means of subsistence" as the roots of the country's current conflictual and antagonistic social relations. In the late-15th century, the Spanish Crown introduced new modes of production with new technology to produce, changing the man/nature relation. They introduced technology that fitted production in a sedentary life, which was fundamental for creating a surplus of goods(Montaña Cuellar et al., 1974). Note that we do not claim that the conflict is merely the product of the technical change. Instead, we point out its underlying social relations because social relations make a technical change in production last and preclude others. The social relations the Spanish Crown introduced brew the conflict not only with the technology they brought but mainly through the institution of property, which was the social relation that valued their technology. The changes in the mode of production established a new set of social relations (Chapter Four). Throughout this thesis, we demonstrate a relationship between the capitalist mode of production and conflict.

The second use of historical materialism is its attention to *historicised* relations of production, not "production in general" (Sayer, 1975). This thesis centres its critique on the social relations in the context of Colombian social formation, and it avoids the argument that any society with private property experiences armed conflict. When we

think of historicised relations of production, we embrace Sayer's definition as broadly

all those social relations necessary to, or implied in, a particular mode of production[10].

> "The fact is, therefore, that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way [definite individuals under definite conditions of production] enter into these definite social and political relations. Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production." (Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 41).

In this passage, Marx invites us to understand each set of social relations and

their "structures" in their context and not *a priori*. The methodological implication is

that we can only understand the characteristics of mode of production, the system of

social relations or structuring institutions by doing empirical analysis. Therefore, this

thesis employs a historical analysis of Colombia's social order as an empirical step to

critique the conflict. We approach the "structure" and class questions as empirical

rather than transhistorical concepts. For doing so, we use historical materialism: "a

science whose object of analysis is productive forms, and whose method is an

empirical investigation" (Sayer, 1975, p. 782).

The third use of historical materialism in Marx's critique of political economy

is its endeavour to extract from the phenomenal form of the conflict the real relations

that it helps to reproduce. Marx regarded phenomena as deceptive and saw the role

of science as that of scrutinising from phenomena the essence of things. According to

Marx, a scientific analysis would unveil the reality of the case versus what the case

appears to be. To achieve this, Marx states:

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[10] Sayer's definition conflicts with other definitions in specific passages of Marx and Marxism. However, it is consistent with Marx's empirical analysis and contrary to more restrictive definitions that reduce relations of production to property relations(Sayer, 1975, p. 782).

> "The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions of their life, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way" (Marx & Engels, 1998, pp. 36–37).

We guide this investigation on these premises. We depart the critique of the conflict from its "phenomenal forms", the conflict as experienced. Marx understands experience not as purely subjective but determined by the being of the world—"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (Marx, 1977)[11]. "The conflict as experience" is the conflict already existing within the social order of the bourgeoisie in Colombia[12]. Like Marx, we do not aim to investigate the conflict abstractly; we understand the conflict as grounded in the direct experience of the "agents of capitalist production":

> "In the succession of the economic categories, as in any other historical, social science, it must not be forgotten that their subject—here, modern bourgeois society— is always what is given, in the head as well as in reality, and that these categories therefore express the forms of being, the characteristics of existence, and often only individual sides of this specific society, this subject, and that therefore this society by no means begins only at the point where one can speak of it *as such*; this holds *for science as well*" (Marx, 1993, p. 106).

The predominant understanding of the conflict, only in its phenomenal form, the experience of armed conflict, is a conception somehow eclipsing its real function to

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[11] Marx's method is particular as it conflicted with empiricism and with idealism parallelly. While the distinction between essence and appearance is an idealist question, his proposed method corresponds better with empiricism. A critical use of both is what enabled him to interpret the underlying essence of the social life in capitalism by interpreting real practices of society members.

[12] Orlando Fals Borda shows the evolution of subversion and argues that the current social order is the social-bourgeois order (Fals Borda, 1968). In Chapter Four we speak further on the question of the social order.

the current social relations. Just as Marx's critiques the political economy, we critique some approaches to the conflict: "Vulgar economics actually does nothing more than interpret, systematise and turn into apologetics the notions of agents trapped within bourgeois relations of production" (Marx, 1991, p. 956). This thesis explores the prominence of a structured agency on the conflict, conditioned by the relations of production. We employ Marx's grasp of production to determine an "adequacy" for the categories we research about the conflict. Marx argues that a mode of production involves some material conditions and some definite social relation as a condition of its existence(Marx & Engels, 1998). So, what phenomenal forms conceal, the "real relation" or "essence", are these "conditions and relations" that make capitalism possible and are not necessarily apparent to the immediate experience. For our case, the phenomenal categories, some instances of the conflict, are adequate at the level of direct experience. Said direct experience is nothing but the process of production experienced in everyday life: how people solve their daily lives within the material conditions and social relations of a Colombia in conflict.

Four, historical materialism justifies the need for critique and not simply analysis. To grasp something's essence, we must perform a critique(Marx, 2010). A critique is an analysis establishing the conditions that must prevail for the experience grasped by phenomenal categories being possible. If these categories grasp experience adequately, a statement of the conditions in which the categories can exist would be a statement of the conditions of existence of the phenomena described by the categories themselves(Sayer, 1975, p. 785). So, for instance, a statement telling us about the conditions under which the social-bourgeois order could exist would enumerate the

conditions of capitalism in Colombia—among which this thesis establishes the conflict. We argue that the conflict in Colombia must prevail for capitalism in the country not to be subverted. However, conflict is a phenomenal category that is also invalid if extracted from its historicity. The conflict, characterised as we do in this work, is a category that is not necessary to capitalism abstractly but became necessary to the current social order within the historical becoming of the country. The conflict is historical, thus empirical.

Five, historical materialism is a method that combines historical analysis and critique. As Sayer argues, historical analysis is by no means irrelevant. The historical analysis comes after the critique(Sayer, 1975, p. 790). We need critique to deploy historical research and historical analysis to create new critiques. Therefore, we depart from critiques tailored to different instances of society. We depart from a critique of capitalism that shows us the historical processes we need to research. So, instead of looking for commodity or profit's origin, the critique tells us to look specifically at the historical processes which resulted in the, for instance, decomposition of the peasantry in Colombia. This thesis blends the causal analysis with the critique to perform a newer critique of the phenomenon of the conflict in Colombia.

As we aim to grasp the "essence" of the conflict, this thesis employs a twofold analysis: a historical analysis and a critique. The historical analysis of the material conditions and social relations in which the conflict developed is an empirical work that begins with the phenomenon of the conflict. Then, it explains the conditions of possibility of the conflict: its causes.

The reader will find, sometimes in some detail, the depiction of historical conjunctures that are not directly related to the case being of this work. However, under those historical conjunctures, the conditions of possibility of the conflict and its sporadic episodes of armed and pro-capitalist violence developed. This work does a historical analysis of how primitive appropriation, embodied in practices of displacement and dispossession, were conditions of possibility of the conflict. These conditions were historical; they developed specifically in the conjunctures of Colombia. We do not aim to submit the conflict under any general theory or set of higher laws that said conditions are supposed to prove. Because we do not conceive conflicts as generally caused by a cluster of conditions. While some conditions may make a particular society more prone to experience armed conflicts, the conception of abstract laws of armed conflict alienates the conflict's function in the specific context of Colombian society. For this reason, we do a historicist analysis of the conflict[13].

Six, historical materialism supports the methodological strategy of using a case study to propose the central concept of this work, the hegemonic vehicles. Marx stress the experiential basis of cognitive categories—how perceiving and defining something reflects its underlying relations. On the one hand, phenomena can be deceptive and phenomenal categories somehow inadequate. For instance, armed conflict does not reflect the underlying social conflict in Colombia. Then, said inadequacy is not merely a matter of subjective perception; it is not people misperceiving the world. When conceptions "inadequately match" the experiences, the inadequacy lies at the level of experience itself. The illusoriness is how the world

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[13] This kind of historical analysis is what Marx does in works like *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, where he offers a causal analysis of various events in France's capitalist development.

"presents itself" and not inadequate perception. On the other hand, phenomenal categories are not entirely inadequate. The armed conflict does give us hints of its underlying relations. These phenomenal categories enable people to make sense of their experience and provide a framework to formulate courses of action(Sayer, 1975, pp. 183–784). Therefore, although we aim to unveil the real relations of the conflict, we cannot disregard nor negate the conflict in its phenomenal form; we transcend its phenomenal form and try to understand the conflict within its real relations.

In short, this thesis aims to elucidate the conflict's function to the system and the current social order in the country. People enact social order. A reason for choosing historical materialism is that it gives prominence to human agency despite being focused on social structures. Although each society member experiences the system as an objective, external reality, governed by its operative logic, over which they have little to no control, the conflict results from an agency. A conflict analysis must think of both conditions of existence of the conflict within a social formation and agency. Only thus can see its causes without falling into extreme voluntarism. The kind of essence/appearance distinction we employ is not an ontological distinction; it is analytical. The material conditions and social relations constitutive of capitalism only exist in capitalism; they do not underly it in any physical sense. Same as the material conditions and social relations constitutive of the conflict, they only exist within the Colombian social formation. The conflict only exists in the phenomenal form; the form people experience the conflict and the manifestations of armed violence. However, there are several ways to conceptualise the conflict, one of them derives from the critique and regards its conditions of existence. The conflict is not simply the

consequence of some prior set of hidden relations of production: the conflict is production relations enabled by, among other practices, pro-capitalist violence, even if framed differently. That is what we advance in this thesis.

3. Defining Capitalism: The Ontology

What are the conditions of existence of the conflict? What set of relations originated the conflict? If we claim that the conflict is functional to capitalism, how can we define said capitalism? This section establishes this thesis' ontology of society and capitalism.

3.1. Caveats on Class and Base-Superstructure

This thesis presents two caveats of our grasp of capitalism. As mentioned, this work does not aim to scrutinise the essence of a conflict ontologically. We do not aim to create an abstract theory of conflict but to enquire for its essence based on the conditions and relations of Colombian society. This work employs a historicist analysis based on previous critiques. However, it refrains from a priori assuming those critiques as valid for the Colombian context. We critically question two categories common in Marxist scholarship, for they could lead to discerning other categories that are invalid for specific contexts. They are the class and the base-superstructure ontology.

To avoid the oversimplifying of class, in Chapter Four, we do a historical analysis of the class formation, empirically based on the critique of the political economy of capitalism. We are interested in the social relations that enable profit production and capital accumulation and produce exploitation and asymmetrical life

chances for society members(E. O. Wright, 2000). We do not assume that the exclusive condition of the class is the ownership of the physical means of production. If well, that is to some extent the case for class in Colombia, we defined the country's classes concerning production conditions, in general. Given the intricated nature of the conflict between economic and political aspects, other production conditions intervene—for instance, controlling the political and institutional power, which is not an economical means. The category bourgeoisie that this thesis employs encompasses the holders of the property deeds of the means of production and those using their power to control those means. That is why often we speak of the ruling classes. Colombian history displays that we cannot uncritically embrace the assumption that a prior economic power caused ruling class political power. During the Spanish Colonisation, the stratification created by race often bestowed political power first, creating economic power. In other cases, both powers were mutually constitutive. Overall, in Colombia, we identified as bourgeois those entitled to exploit others by their dominant conditions in producing profit and capital accumulation. This definition works regarding the scope of our study, and we should revisit it each time we have to define the class.

Concerning the base-superstructure ontology, commonly, readers interpret Marx's passage in the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* as if society was divided into two parts, an "economic structure" or "base" and a legal, politico and ideological "superstructure". Certain Marxisms extract from this that the base has primacy as it causally determines the superstructure. This interpretation contradicts Marx's empirical work, especially the standpoint of *The German Ideology,*

where Marx rejects inductive empirical generalisations. The base-superstructure ontology contradicts our claims against *a priori* abstract generalisations and historicism. It goes against some of the premises of the conceptual framework that we propose in the following chapter. Analytically, it is unreasonable to distinguish the so-called superstructure from the base universally. The problem lies in that we cannot reduce relations of production to property relations.

As Marx states in the Preface, property relations are "but a legal expression for" relations of production. It may be true but only in particular cases. The property is not the only social relation for capital production in Colombia. While it is the most important in our case of study, we embrace the critique that identifies other structuring institutions as equally relevant for the profit production—this we will be presented in short. We cannot equally distinguish production relations independently from property relations. Undeniably property relations have a legal component, and according to this ontology, that component belongs to the superstructure. However, this ontology assumes the causal primacy of base over superstructure. We will establish in the empirical sections that the legal institutions were often used to encourage production in Colombia. For instance, when we analyse the allocation of baldio lands by the state, we will see those property relations had causal primacy over the production relations—the base-superstructure ontology is not valid.

As an alternative to the base-superstructure ontology, we propose analysing society as a social totality. This notion, developed by Lukacs, and opposed to base-superstructure, is compatible with the notion of social being determining consciousness, fundamental to our materialist methodology. It sees society composed

of many social practices forming a concrete social whole, interacting, relating, and combining very intricately. Additionally, it sees social reality with a specific organisation, a specific structure and principles. We could see this organisation and structure as relations to particular social intentions—intentions by which we define the society and the rule of a particular class (Williams 1973, 7).

3.2. The System of Social Relations

In *Grundrisse* (1993) and *Capital* (1981), Marx explores the social basis of the capitalist mode of production, which determines labour's subjection to capital. Workers have no alternative to survive other than by selling their labour-power. This social relation is characteristically capitalistic and constitutes the essence of capitalist production; capitalism could not have emerged only with merchant capital and interest-bearing capital alone. Capitalism requires:

> "[T]he confrontation of, and the contact between, two very different kinds of commodity owners; on the one hand, the owners of money, means of production, means of subsistence, who are eager to valorise the sum of values they have appropriated by buying the labour-power of others; on the other hand, free workers, the sellers of their own labour-power, and therefore the sellers of labour. Free workers, in the double sense that they neither form part of the means of production themselves, as would be the case with slaves, serfs, etc., nor do they own the means of production, as would be the case with self-employed peasant proprietors. The free workers are therefore free from, unencumbered by, any means of production of their own" (Marx, 1981, p. 874).

To Marx, society is an ensemble of social relations, a social totality (Marx, 1998). One of the most crucial points of his critique of the political economy was that analysing how production was abstracted from its specific social determinations could unveil how the capitalist relations of production were universalised. Producers are

separated from the whole process of production by dividing the "process of labour into parts at the cost of the individual humanity of the worker, the atomisation of society into individuals who simply go on producing without rhyme or reason […]" (Lukács, 1971, p. 27). Society should be seen "neither as a composite of individuals nor in a collectivist manner (society as a community), but as intersubjective practices within a structured system of social relations" (Azmanova, 2020, p. 30).

Several authors treat capitalism as a system of social relations. It means rethinking some of the main concepts of historical materialism—forces and relations of production, class, base and superstructure, among others. This thesis is framed within this same enterprise and aims to enquire about the resilience of the capitalist system of social relations in the Colombian social formation.

Wood overcomes the base-superstructure ontology contending the separation between the political and the economic inside and outside Marxism(Wood, 1995). This separation allowed classical economists to portray the economy abstractly and emptied capitalism of its social and political content. Said separation had been part of the universalisation of capitalism's laws, allowing the protection of capitalism's primary institutions and camouflaging capitalist accumulation from the political dispute. Instead, economic and political factors are closely related since the system of social relations, and the 'starting point' of capitalist accumulation originated in the dynamics of divorcing the producer from the means of production, otherwise known as primitive accumulation (Marx, 1981).

Wood argues that there is no such thing as a mode of production in opposition to 'social factors'. Marx precisely analyses the mode of production and economic laws

in terms of "social factors" (Wood, 1995, p. 24). Society has different social relations between actors that operate through a particular production, distribution, and exchange organisation based on specific class relations maintained by a particular power configuration. Thus, the social system is a set of interconnected structured social relations to make a complex social totality work.

Our insight of the system is committed to the primacy of production and sees that the relations of production are presented in their *political* aspect, in which they are actually *contested*, as relations of domination, rights of property, the power to organise and govern production and appropriation (Wood, 1995, p. 25). This point is crucial because we commonly treat the Colombian conflict as a phenomenon perceived and resolved in the *political*. However, it contains aspects rooted in the very relations of production. As Wood explains: "the object of this theoretical stance is a practical one, to illuminate the terrain of struggle by viewing modes of production not as abstract structures but as they actually confront people who must act in relation to them" (Wood, 1995, p. 25). Therefore, by understanding the conflict as a social and armed conflict, we expect to transcend its phenomenal form and address its function to the entire society. However, we cannot do so if an *a priori* distinction between the political and the economic restrains us, for, empirically, the two aspects are interwoven—hence we do not use the base-superstructure ontology and instead opt for a systemic analysis of society.

3.3. The Repertoire of Capitalism

The system proposed here acknowledges the specificity of material production and production relations. This work sees social, political and economic factors as interwoven and adopts the framework of Azmanova's *repertoire of capitalism*. She views capitalism as: "a system of social relations with constitutive and enabling dynamics enacted with the help of institutions with structuring effect, which in turn affect the distribution of life-chances in society" (Azmanova, 2020, p. 50).

Capitalism's repertoire comprises the constitutive dynamic of *competitive production of profit* and the enabling dynamic of *primitive appropriation*, which jointly render the system of social relations capitalistic. Everyday social practices enact those systemic dynamics through which people enter into particular social relations. Private property and management of the means of production, the "free" labour contract, and the market as a mechanism of commodity exchange and a mechanism of economic governance are capitalism's core institutions structuring capitalism's enacting practices (Azmanova, 2020, p. 40).

Azmanova's analysis disaggregates capitalism's systemic and structural dimensions. The systemic dimension contains the dynamics of competitive profit production and primitive appropriation, and the structural dimension encompasses the systemic dynamics' enaction through institutions that serve as enabling structures. Capitalism's structuring institutions distinguish capitalistic social relations from other forms of social relations.

This work embraces Azmanova's disaggregation of the different dimensions of capitalism as a framework to perform a historicised analysis of social phenomena

while doing a critique of the Colombian conflict. We use it to establish the dynamics of the hegemonic vehicles. Under this conceptualisation of society, we approach the conflict's systemic and structural causes and elucidate its social function and protraction.

3.4. The Repertoire of Capitalism in Colombia

How it looks the repertoire of capitalism in the Colombian conflict? We analyse the conflict in systemic, structural and relational dimensions(Azmanova, 2020). Systemic dynamics are those dynamics constitutive to the capitalist system of social relations, current and globally dominant but historically shaped in different social formations. Structuring institutions, specific to each social formation, enact those systemic dynamics and shape particular social relations. Since we endeavour to understand the conflict's function to the capitalist society, conveying a critique of the conflict in its different dimensions is only attainable if we can perceive how the system conditions social relations. Therefore, we cannot isolate the conflict from capitalism. We pay attention to the prominence of social agency in the conflict and violence while structuring institutions and systemic logics of capitalism condition it.

Hristov shows that, diachronically, the private property of the means of production, the labour relations, and the market are central structuring institutions affecting the social relations in the conflict's context (Hristov, 2014). This thesis complements her work and centres on the conflict's leading causes while acknowledging other structuring institutions. We focus on the control, ownership and

management of means of capital production and centre on the ownership of rural land (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013).

As we critique Colombia's concrete situation, we see capitalism as a system of social relations institutionalised in the Colombian historical variations (Azmanova, 2020). Historical variations are first national models that are synchronically coexisting and second diachronic successions of capitalism's modalities—from liberal to neoliberal capitalism and to precarity capitalism. In Colombia's social formation, the first variation, what she calls "institutionalised social order"—the unity of a social system and a political system—is the bourgeois hegemony and its current social-bourgeois order (Fals Borda, 1968). The second variation, its modalities, are the reconfigurations of capitalism's repertoires, varieties within a general formula of capitalism. Due to this work's extensive timeframe, we focus less on the modalities of capitalism in Colombia and more on the variation of its institutionalised social orders. Thus, social formations correspond to historical developments of the modes of production under the influence of global capitalism modalities and their interaction with the different political systems. However, when we refer to capitalism, capitalism contains core features that may be equal in every social formation, i.e. its systemic dimension.

The systemic dimension of capitalism is those shared core values of the capitalist mode of production. Azmanova draws on Marx and Weber to discern the constitutive features of capitalism. The centre of the capitalist repertoire is its constitutive dynamic: "capital accumulation" for Marx and the "pursuit of forever renewed profit by means of continuous, rational, capitalistic enterprise" for Weber

(Marx, 1977; Weber, 2001 cited in Azmanova, 2020). She synthesises both constitutive dynamics in the *competitive production of profit*—which, she argues, captures best the system-generating dynamic of capitalism.

Since we aim to establish the relationship between the conflict and different trajectories of domination of capitalism, concerning its systemic dimension, we address the dynamic of competitive profit production and capital accumulation enabled by primitive appropriation in the form of land dispossession and forced displacement. However, we will primarily refer to capital accumulation. While Weber hints at a central sociological aspect of capitalist societies—the sense of continuity and reproduction, his *capitalistic economic actions* are invalid in our case. Weber defines *capitalistic economic action* as one resting on the expectation of profit by exchanging that happens on peaceful chances of profit. Weber deems that the acquisition of profit by force is not in the same category as capitalistic economic action, following its particular laws (Weber, 2001, p. XXXII). But since this thesis centres on the conflict's role in reproducing the capitalist society, the "formal and actual" distinction between peaceful and forceful acquisition of profit is indistinguishable. According to Weber, the dynamics and practices within the conflict context would not configure capitalistic economic actions. However, this work argues that both "peaceful chances of profit" and "profit by force" serve "capitalistic economic action". Hristov advances this same critique to Weber's understanding in Colombian society(Hristov, 2014). Notwithstanding this inadequacy, Weber's capitalistic spirit captures the motivation to generate profit, present in some rationalities behind the different forms of violence in Colombia (Richani, 2005).

Overall, the relational dimension of the conflict is the confrontation between society members aiming to subvert the social order against those who intend to protect and reproduce it. Said reproduction contains the imperative to expand capitalism to "exterior" spaces (Luxemburg, 2003). Within said expansion is where we can find resistance. When capitalism pushes to produce new dispossession sources, people in Colombia had reacted and reconfigured the relational dimension of the conflict. Estrada argues that counterinsurgency and subversion are inherent to Colombia's current capitalist social order. Subversion assumed an armed rebel expression due to the constitution of historical-concrete conditions and the reproduction of such a social order (Estrada Álvarez, 2015, p. 4).

Primitive appropriation is the enabling dynamic of competitive profit production (Azmanova, 2020). It enables capital accumulation within the conflict. Marx explains capital accumulation starting with the transformation of money into capital within wage-labour. Wage-labour, a capitalist relation of production, allows capital production and surplus-value extraction (Marx, 1981, p. 873). Capital accumulation presupposes surplus value, and surplus value is necessary to produce capital—meaning that the historical institutionalisation of the private property of the means of production precedes the systemic dynamics. That is why this thesis starts doing a historical analysis of private property in Colombia (Chapter Three). Private property is at the kernel of capital accumulation and produced by the alienation of labour (Marx, 1988, p. 81). The creation of private property, the appropriation of means of production, is a fundamental practice in capitalism, as in the conflict's context. Marx states that this "primitive accumulation" is an accumulation that is not

the result of the capitalist mode of production, but it is its point of departure (Marx, 1981, p. 873). Torres-Mora (2020) explains that capital alienates labour from their means of production through primitive accumulation and accumulation. However, primitive accumulation is previous to all other accumulations, while accumulation is the continuous reproduction of capital (De Angelis, 2000).

In rural contexts, we can find practices that fit the description of primitive accumulation, whereby capital landowners expel workers to privatise natural resources control (Glassman, 2006). According to Ince (2018), primitive accumulation is not a finished practice, but a cyclical process reproduced in contemporary capitalism. Azmanova conceptualises primitive appropriation as an enabling condition of competitive profit production. It is "the appropriation of what is to be deployed in the competitive pursuit of profit", a process that not only precedes capitalism but that it is ongoing (Azmanova, 2020, p. 39). Harvey revisits primitive accumulation because the "primitive part" could undermine current practices within accumulation, especially in neoliberalism (Harvey, 2003). He proposes the accumulation by dispossession, a complex process whereby owners generate profit at the subordinates' expenses. As in primitive accumulation, it entails surplus value extraction but more complex ways. Harvey (2010) uses the example of how the "special economic zones" promote small farmers' eviction to implement big-scale projects—all this through complex legal tools promoted by the state.

This work enquires how the conflict is caused by and enables the systemic dynamics of capitalism. It focuses on capital accumulation and primitive appropriation. First, we operationalise primitive appropriation in two practices that

enable capital accumulation in Colombia: displacement and dispossession. Empirically, we can see that people's forced displacement, primarily peasants, is prominent in Colombia's history. For that matter, Colombia is the first country with the most internal displacement globally (UNHCR, 2020). This work investigates displacement through violent and institutional means promoted by the state and enforced by legal and illegal repressive apparatuses. Under the prevalence of private property in Colombia, capitalists can grab land using all means and expand into non-capitalistic lands.

Enabled by primitive appropriation, we operationalise capital accumulation with *land commodification*, *peasants proletarianisation*, and the continual revolutionising of production. On commodification, this work considers the transformation of communal lands into means of capital production. On proletarianisation, it focuses on peasants turning into wage-labour, either as the agrarian proletariat in industries like the banana plantations or as employees of illegal structures like surplus labour for paramilitary groups. Marx explains how workers the more they produce, the poorer they become; as they become cheaper commodities, the more commodities produce. Commodification happens when labour produces commodities and produces itself and the worker as a commodity (Marx, 1988, p. 71). The proletarianisation of labour in Colombia is one of the consequences of displacement and dispossession. It turned collective or public lands into privately owned means of capital production, turning peasants into wage-labour. On the continual revolutionising of production, this work presents the struggle between members of society to own, control and manage land. Urabá's historical and geographic settings have conditioned all forms of confrontation

for grabbing land—since the colonisation of landless peasants till the war to control banana plantations and coca crops, the underlying imperative of revolutionising production has been present.

Azmanova's sense of systemic domination, as the overarching submission of all society members to the operative logic of capitalism, expresses how a joint enterprise bound all actors: that of producing the society in a capitalistic mode, engender by the imperative of competitive profit production (Azmanova, 2020, p. 53). Azmanova distinguishes structural from systemic domination. The former is related to the constraints on people imposed by society's structuring institutions, which enact the system's operative logic. In our case, the structural domination is related to private property of the means of rural production. So, transforming the structuring institutions of society could address this domination trajectory. However, Azmanova rightly points out, ending private property would not address the systemic domination, the subordination of all society members to the capitalist system's operative logic. Society members internalise the operative logic of competitive profit production and act accordingly, setting social and personal achievement parameters. This systemic trajectory of domination displays in Colombian society in the everyday experiences and not only within the violent dynamics of the conflict. Given the conflict's protraction, all society members daily enact the conflict while the conflict conditions their everyday experiences. Therefore, solving the conflict cannot reduce to address one or another dimension. Solving the conflict entails transforming the whole society. However, the conflict itself reproduces the capitalist system and, therefore, we claim its protraction.

Capitalism's systemic domination, the imperative to competitively produce profit, affects all Colombian society members. This trajectory has been somewhat addressed in works on alienation and anomie in the Colombian society (Britto Ruiz & Ordóñez Valverde, 2005; Fals Borda, 2009; Mejía Quintana, 2009; Ortegón Salazar, 2014). We can recast Estrada's words to explain this trajectory in Colombia: "it has been imposed a socio-cultural logic based on values *genuinely* capitalist, incorporated in the common practices and the subjectivities. Selfishness, competition, productivism, meritocracy have turned into ethical principles in the new capitalist face, joint to historical practices of clientelism and corruption, and the new practices generated by the *drug-traffic culture*—all nowadays socially reproduced. The hegemonic project lies in the endeavour to break up all expressions of cooperation and solidarity" (Estrada Álvarez, 2010, p. 18 translation by author).

In short, we research the protraction of the conflict from the systemic approach herein presented. We use the concept of hegemonic vehicles to express the interactions between the different dimensions contributing to capitalism's resilience. We operationalise the different dimensions according to the historical conditions of the conflict and the contextual situations of the region of Urabá. In the following chapters (Chapter Three, Four, Five), this work identifies how the dimensions operate in the context of Urabá and establishes the function of the conflict in advancing and securing the systemic, structural and relational dynamics of capitalism. In other words, it establishes how the conflict expanded and secured capital accumulation through primitive appropriation, how it secures the structuring institutions of capitalism, mainly the private property, and the relations of production, which are class relations

within a non-transformative and crystallised class struggle embodied in a protracted conflict.

4. Epistemologies of Human Action

This thesis critiques the Colombian conflict to elucidate its "essence", to transcend the phenomenal form of the conflict. Yet it does not negate the conflict as grounded in the direct experience of the agents. Human action is fundamental as the only able to develop, create and consolidate institutions, enact capitalism with their daily life experiences, protect or subvert society. We understand that the conflict has a systemic function, but the conflict is a practical experience in the end.

The Colombian conflict's function is to reproduce capitalism. However, capitalism is not alien to humans; it is ultimately a form of social relation. When we claim that capitalism reproduces, what actually reproduces are how social agents produce their lives under certain conditions. We do not attribute to a reified system reproduction or subversion of capitalism. Those practices belong to men, so the conflict and institutions structuring society.

This thesis is neither a pure structuralist nor a humanist approach to human action. "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (Marx, 1977) and "Social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which mislead theory into mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice" (Marx, 1998, p. 574 Thesis 8). In short, we see human practices as a product of a compound between systemic and structural conditions and will, power and consciousness.

We attempt to understand the "inner connection" of the conflict employing Marx's *materialist conception of history*[14]. This is to critique two analytical opposite ends, typical in the literature to understand the Colombian conflict. The conflict is neither a problem of will and ill-consciousness of Colombians nor an inextricable condition of the Colombian society upon which nothing can be transformed. Instead, we argue that acting society members institutionalised the conflict to transform and consolidate the conditions and relations most convenient to their conditions of agents in capitalism.

Our historical materialist conception of the conflict departs from the action of the *real* individuals, their activity and their material conditions of life, which we can understand on an empirical ground (Marx, 1998, p. 37). As Marx in the *Theses,* our focus is the practices of men in the transformation of their material conditions. In their social relations and not as individuals, men are products and agents of their circumstances (Marx & Engels, 1998). It focuses on the social organisation of living humans and their relation to nature throughout history. Eagleton says that up to here, historical materialism is not an "ontological affair"; it does not aim to assert that only matter composes *everything* and that everything else is absurd (Eagleton, 2016, p. 8).

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[14] In a nutshell, Marx criticised the mystification of Hegel's idealism, in which pure thought was central to his dialectical method, and the a-historicism of the materialist critique of Feuerbach to Hegel. Marx proposes a new materialism as a tool to understand and transform society, to reveal and unveil the constraints that alienate humanity. This materialism captures Hegel's point on estrangement, how to overcome the separation of the object and the subject, and turns it upside-down, that is, not by abstract consciousness but by transforming the everyday experience. It also captures Feuerbach's critique of Hegel and his endeavour to render human relations the base of materialism. Moreover, man, who is part of nature, also distinguishes from other living beings for having consciousness. Thus, although materialism contradicts consciousness's primacy over the material world, it does not deny its importance. It only attaches consciousness to the need for subsistence and the production of life materially. This understanding of man and nature's relationship, the need to produce, is what Marx uses as a framework to study history. The mode of production is not what the material world needs to reproduce but the definite form in which men act and express to produce a mode of life. Thus, consciousness coincides with man's production, "[…] both with what they produce and with how they produce." (Marx, 1998, p. 37)

Instead, ideas and consciousness play in materialism; they are "interwoven" with men's material intercourse. They are produced by active men and conditioned by other men's activity to develop productive forces. Thus, consciousness is historical and only exists as a conscious being, as in the actual life process.

This last part answers the question, what is the conflict. This work does a critique of the conflict its function on capitalism in Colombia. We do so by approaching the phenomenal form of the conflict, the conflict as an experience. This section defines such experience of conflict based on the idea that in Colombia, the conflict is not transhistorical but a historical phenomenon of which we can trace causes and origins. Our critique avoids assuming generalised and abstract ideas of the conflict, ultimately concealing its importance to capitalism. On the contrary, we base our critique on a historicist account of the conflict. We will engage critically with three theoretical approaches that would help us depict the phenomenal form of the Colombian conflict.

4.1. Critical Realism and Structuring Institutions

The conflict in Colombia became an institution helping to condition people's interests and actions. To some extent, the conflict is still current due to how we see the conflict. We will always conclude the same solution if we repeatedly employ the same tools to investigate it. The trend focuses on violence and armed confrontation and undermines the systemic and structural factors. The way Colombians vote (Preciado, 2010) could be a proxy to argue that they believe that it is enough to disarm the enemies of society and pacify the war for solving the conflict. However, history has

proven that to be untrue. Accordingly, we need to approach the conflict differently. This thesis critically employs the epistemology of critical realism to approach the phenomenal form of the conflict.

Earlier, we said that based on the critique of capitalism, we deploy a historical analysis of Colombian society to critique the conflict. Our critique does not aim to find abstract causality to conflicts. And instead, it aims to discern the specific conditions of possibility of the Colombian conflict. Therefore, we need a standpoint to identify causal mechanisms within a specific and historicised ontology. At the same time, such a standpoint should enable us to reconcile a reality that exists independently from human existence and a socially produced world. We claim that the conflict's protraction is not due to social manipulation. It has to do with how the conflict shapes the world, so people, with an agency, decide that the conditions and relations that caused the conflict are convenient.

The distinction between "form and essence" always leaves us questions on which one is more important and how to observe a phenomenon's essence. For that, this thesis uses an "emergentist" approach to perceive a stratified material world comprised of dimensions—many of which as "unobservable". Each of these dimensions has discrete autonomous causal properties and conditional effects, and each arises product of the interaction at an anterior dimension. So, when we discern structural, systemic and relational dimensions, we assume that they have autonomy and a sort of stratification among each other despite being internally related. Creaven argues that critical realism's methodological task is to "investigate the dialectical

interplay between these distinct "domains" of the social world in shaping structural or systemic outcomes" (Creaven, 2012, p. 1).

Thus, we observe that in Colombia, specific forms of human agency (how social labour and class struggle shaped in Colombia) and social system and structures have explanatory primacy in shaping the conflict and its dynamics. In other words, we believe that for understanding the conflict, we must scrutinise the historical development of capitalism to find the conflict's causes. Using historical materialism as a critical realist social theory, we can tackle the epistemic problem to see the conflict as the pure structural or agential action. It is compatible with our systemic approach to the conflict. Instead of committing to either structure or agency or simply conferring the human action a dual character between one and other[15], see human action happening in a stratified social world comprised of dimensions embodying "real" yet emergent entities.

We employ Azmanova's depiction of structures as structuring institutions(Azmanova, 2020). This way allows structures to preserve their activity and real existence, avoiding the reified notions used by some Marxists. Structuring institutions are real because every day, people's practices enact them. Creaven, although not defining structuring institutions, sees structures as:

> "the unobservable resultants of the interaction of past generations of human agents which, though activity-dependent upon contemporary individuals in the sense that these can be reproduced or transformed only through the doings of the living, nonetheless confront flesh-and-blood people as an inherited social environment of independent powers and effects (of objective constraint, enablement and impulse)" (Creaven, 2012, p. 6).

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[15] Creaven explains that this decision of conferring the human action a dual character between structure and agency is the approach undertook by "eliosionist" sociologies such as structuration theory or post-structuralism(Creaven, 2012).

Structuring institutions have history, pre-existence that transcends the individual's vital experience but materialises in conditioned interactions. This understanding of the structure, as structuring institutions, avoids its reification while preserving its predominance to the agency. It does not reduce the structure to decontextualised and a-historical human practices. Structuring institutions predate the interactions reproducing or elaborating them. Since interactions always predate the elaborated or reproduced structuring institution resulting from it, the two (structure and agency) cannot be identical and must be analysed separately[16].

Through structuring institutions, we explain how in the conflict, structured-structuring human practices help to reproduce predating structures institutions of the Colombian society. For instance, that is the case for the private property of the means of production. Such an understanding of the "structure" is compatible, although not exclusively, with the way critical realists approach social reality and human action.

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[16] See Nicos Mouzelis on the importance of the distinction between agency and structure: "[T]he utility of the agency-institutional distinction is that it helps us to realise that for a full explanation of social stability or change one must look at social phenomena from both an institutional [i.e. structural] and an agency perspective. […] Parsons, by focusing exclusively on institutional incompatibilities (system integration or mal-integration), has ignored social conflict (social integration) as a major mechanism of social transformation. Marx, in his work as a whole, provides a more balanced framework for the study of social change, because he has combined a social-and system-integration approach. As already noted, he analyses capitalist societies both in terms of growing systemic or institutional incompatibilities (e.g. growing contradictions between technology and the institution of private property), and in terms of agents' struggles (for instance by enquiring into the development of class consciousness, organisation and conflict). The crucial point here is that although the system-social integration distinction […] is an analytic one, it refers to aspects of social reality that can vary in relatively independent fashion — given that growing institutional incompatibilities do not automatically generate social conflict or a certain type of strategic conduct. Situations can be envisaged in which, for example, specific institutional incompatibilities, on the level of agency, lead to revolutionary, reformist or 'apathetic' conduct. […] The above makes it clear that the distinction between institutions and actors (between system and social integration in Lockwood's formulation or between institutional and strategic-conduct analysis in Giddens') becomes useful when one allows for agents to react in a non-fixed, not predetermined manner to institutionalised rules and their eventual incompatibilities. That is to say, it becomes useful for asking questions about how actors perceive institutional incompatibilities (if at all), and what they do about them" (Mouzelis, 2003, p. 118).

However, we borrow their approach and explanation of human action as structurally conditioned. The structurally conditioned human action explains why people in the conflict decide to engage in subversion or the society's protection.

4.2. Structural Conditioning

We embrace the notion of structural conditioning that explains how people may choose to reproduce conditions that affect their "apparent" interests. It is puzzling that in Colombia, working-class members choose to support counterinsurgent actors, even though only the subversion of society could deliver social justice and end their subordination. According to Marxist theory, class consciousness (Marx's notion of *class-for-itself*) is unavoidable once workers see the exploitative nature of capitalism by also understanding their class regarding the relations of production. This consciousness, which is the organisation of workers to pursue a common interest, is necessary to establish the dictator of the proletariat via the revolution (Marx & Engels, 2019). However, in Colombia, there is no correspondence between class and consciousness. Workers choose to embrace the hegemony of capitalists, even though it entails reproducing the conditions and relations of the conflict. We demonstrate this situation in Chapter Five. A structurally conditioned human action may explain why.

Structural conditioning focuses on agency within the social context. We employ it to explain the hegemony away from the conception that dominant classes *manipulate* subordinates to embrace their interests. Structural conditioning considers the agency relevant and emphasises its "rationality", bounded to a structured context. Thereby,

when people act against their "objective" interests, they are not simply manipulated but possibly acting according to their social context assessment.

As institutions created within historical conditions, we see that hegemonic vehicles structure social relations by conditioning people's actions thru creating situational logics favourable to the necessities of the hegemony. We argue that the working-class members disregard their class interests and consent to the owners' interests because ruling classes shaped the conflict into an institution whereby "subversion" is contrary to the people's interests. Thus, subversive groups lack legitimacy and the capacity to overthrow the social order. Meanwhile, ruling classes cannot resolve the conflict due to its function, granting their rule legitimacy and resilience to capitalism in Colombia. The hegemonic vehicles create situational logics whereby people disregard their class and articulate their economic corporate interests, helping to consolidate inter-class alliances that enable the hegemony. The conflict has created the conditions whereby the worker's interests are met if workers consent with the capitalist's interests. Workers must disregard their "objective class interests" to acquire living conditions. For instance, they must let forgo grievances on changing land ownership structure.

We see capitalism as a system of social relations, whence, instead of understanding society as determined by a structural "base" or structure, we perceive structuring institutions that shape social relations. By analysing production relations, we visualise the structuring institution of private property of the means of production—instead of seeking reified structures. In Colombia, the institution of the

private property defines, in "objective" terms, class and conditions people's agency. We historically analyse this in chapter Three.

Creaven defines structural conditioning as "the dynamic interplay between involuntary placement, vested interests and opportunity costs attached to different social practices, [which] provides rational agents with "good reasons" for acting in accordance with their "situational logics" in social relations" (Creaven, 2012, p. 239). He suggests that structures (structuring institutions) "explain" social interaction as much as social interaction explains the structural change. Structures do not operate as "hydraulic determinations" of human action and consciousness; instead, they are part of the mediatory structural conditioning process (Creaven, 2012, p. 208). Archer explains that we can grasp structural conditioning as an "objective influence which conditions action patterns and supplies agents with strategic directional guidance" (Archer, 1995, p. 196). This conditioning happens by defining the objective situational logics in which interactants find themselves in social life. These situations are mediatory because they condition (not determine) different courses of action for those differently placed by supplying them with different reasons (Archer, 1995, p. 201).

To Creaven, there are three aspects to the mediatory structural conditioning process whereby "directional guidance" is imparted to the members of society. These aspects are involuntary placement, vested interests, and opportunity costs.

Involuntary placement happens in a social environment pre-structured by material and cultural emergents. It accounts for "what there is (materially and culturally) to be distributed" among society members, how distribution happens, and how these distributions are related to one another and other institutions. Creaven

attaches the "distribution" of cultural and material goods to the position in which people are involuntarily inserted into agential *collectivities* at birth. Due to the asymmetrical access to resources, placement provides members with differential life chances (Creaven, 2012, p. 208). We see involuntary placement as a person's life chances at birth, resulting from the interaction between his and his relative's position in the relations of production (class) and the allocation of the material and cultural goods they have acquired or lost throughout their history. With this, we include victimhood when we consider people's actions. So, for instance, a landless peasant family has certain living conditions product of its class and the dispossession of its land. In this case, the material precondition of human action is not exclusively due to class but also to the historical context of a person.

Vested interests are associated with involuntary placement. The involuntary placement of actors in "positions" within social relations distributes different vested interests to those differently placed. "Vested interests are definable as those appropriate modes of social praxis which agents occupying a particular socially constructed situation in society can or ought to pursue if they are to enhance or defend their life-chances or wellbeing (whether individually or collectively vis-à-vis the members of other social groupings differently situated)" (Creaven, 2012, p. 209). For those actors whose position in society depends on hoarding means of economic, political, and cultural production, their vested interests will include maintaining their power, privilege, and authority relative to subordinate actors. In short, the conservation of the status quo. Whereas, for those collectively disenfranchised, with restricted access to resources, their vested interests would be those structural praxes

that allow them to seize control of resources to end their subordination, join the ranks of the advantaged, or at least improve their life chances by obtaining a more equitable share of a society's resources (Creaven, 2012, p. 209).

This work defines vested interests distinguished from class interests, which detach from class formation and consciousness(Lukács, 1971). Vested interests apropos a social placement are the "appropriate" social praxes people should undertake to enhance or protect their life chances. However, these vested interests are appropriate concerning the intersection of their class with the social position regarding the initial allocation of goods (involuntary placement). Thus, vested interests may include class interests but are not the same. Due to his placement, a social member could seek to enhance his position by disregarding the interests of his class and yet acting appropriately towards his vested interests.

Moreover, vested interests are not subjective, as opposed to wants and desires (economic corporate interests). Instead, they are objective features of situations since the structuring institutions define the general living standards of the differently placed people and determine which courses of action are best suited to their members. For instance, for factory workers, union membership could be a more effective means to attain conditions and enhance life chances in a capitalist society than individualised grievances and even more effective than refusing to work or destroying the means of production. This is because the proletariat's agential situation, as propertyless, denies its members the resources to enhance their life chances independently from their labour in the private means of production.

Structural conditioning, grasped in terms of involuntary placement, and the attendant vested interests are necessary but insufficient to assess how structuring institutions affect the interactions that enact them. Vested interest does not provide a "structural-interest" explanation of social agency. Agents may ignore the "appropriate" courses of social action to their positioning, and even having recognised their vested interests, agents may choose to disregard them. Agents may even find subjective wants (corporate interests) more compelling than whatever objective social interests they possess. As Archer explains, "[s]ince a vested interest is not a 'social force' nor do peoples responses have anything in common with billiard balls' unreflective movements, then their influence depends for its efficacy upon them being found good by large numbers of those who share them (though not necessarily upon them being found best by all in the same position)" (Archer, 1995, p. 205). Thus, Creaven proposes *opportunity costs* as a mechanism that allows vested interests to be transmitted into forms of social consciousness and specific mode of social practices geared to their pursuit or defence (Creaven, 2012, p. 210). Archer writes: "Without in any way depriving agents of their fundamental interpretative freedom, nevertheless real structural influences mean that objective opportunity costs are associated with different responses to frustrating or rewarding experiences, which condition (without determining) the interpretations placed upon them" (Archer, 1995, p. 205).

Opportunity costs are attached to the different modes of social praxis whereby individuals may pursue their needs and wants. Responses to structurally determined agential circumstances are likely to produce rewards or costs and induce these effects differentially for members of different social groups. However, opportunity costs are

not a mechanic determination of agency and consciousness. Human beings are "sovereign artificers" whose power, intentionally or rationally, grant them autonomy of action and thought—even to resist structural constraints. Precisely the notion of structural conditioning diverges from seeing agents as determined to follow their vested or class interests. Differential opportunity costs attached to different practices render uncertain whether agents seek to forgo penalties and facilitate rewards or subordinate vested interests to subjective needs and wants (Creaven, 2012, p. 211).

The mediatory influence of opportunity costs is twofold. First, they work through allocating different costs for the same course of action to those differently situated. Individuals are placed in social groups with greater or lesser access to means of production, facilitating social mobility or hampering those at a disadvantage. This grasp of opportunity costs does not preclude subordinate members from achieving upward mobility. However, they do entail more significant costs and risks attached to enhancing social conditions. Second, besides affecting difficulty or ease undertaking the same course of action for differentially situated groups, the different opportunity costs also condition which actions are entertained and thus explain why these can be opposed. That is the case because objective positioning in social relations, which ensures the following specific kinds of social strategies if they effectively enhance or defend their vested interests, also exerts pressure over them to behave appropriately. In other words, to maintain power or avoid restrictions on their freedom or consumption (Creaven, 2012, p. 213).

4.3. Historical Institutionalism

This thesis uses historical institutionalism to study politics and social change—or the lack thereof. Historical institutionalism is a valuable tool because it pays attention to real-world empirical questions, oriented by history and concerned with how institutions structure and shape behaviours(Steinmo, 2008). This work enquires how capitalism's structuring institutions affect social relations and explains that the institutionalisation of the private property of the means of production during the stately Spanish order is at the origin of the conflict (Fals Borda, 1968). By institutions, we simply mean rules and norms, which may be formal or informal, but are necessary for politics as they shape participation and strategic behaviours. This work contributes to understanding how institutions, such as private property and others, have conditioned the behaviour of society members and how it has allocated opportunities and conditions differently.

As stated earlier in this chapter, structuring institutions, such as private property, belong to the repertoire of capitalism (Azmanova, 2020). These structuring institutions exist within the historical development of a particular set of social relations. We study structuring institutions that shape social relations "capitalistically", enabling capital accumulation. We do not intend to show the private property (of the means of production) as a transhistorical social relation or negate the possibility that similar social relations existed in other modes of production. The importance of the structuring institutions of capitalism is contextual in the historical developments of the societies in which they are current. Equally, we do not mean to say that the existence of these structuring institutions determines an equal outcome of behaviour of society members. We argue that the conflict in Colombia originated

during the institutionalisation of the private property of the means of production. In that case, we do not claim that said institution causes all conflicts, nor that private property automatically produces conflicts like the Colombian one. This thesis claims that we cannot explain the Colombian conflict without explaining how capitalist institutions structured social relations and material conditions. Such conditions and relations enabled different behaviours among Colombian society members, which turned into the conflict over history.

All forms of institutionalism see institutions as rules that structure behaviours. Historical intuitionalism differs from other forms of institutionalism in how it depicts the beings whose actions or behaviours are being structured by institutions. Rational choice schools, for instance, contend that human beings are rational individuals who calculate the cost and benefits of their choices. Upon this premise, rational choice institutionalists argue that institutions are important because they shape individuals' strategic behaviour. Individuals would follow the rules if rules enabled them to maximise their gains.

On the other hand, sociological institutionalism underscores the social character of the human being. People are neither self-interested nor "rational" individuals but "satisficers" who act habitually. Sociological institutionalism sees institutions as shapers of how people see the world. Institutions are not simply rules within which they try to work. People do not follow the rules to maximise self-interest but follow a "logic of appropriateness". Steinmo explains these institutions as social norms that govern everyday life and social interaction (Steinmo, 2008, p. 126).

This thesis stands in between both approaches. We do not assume the rationality or the maximising drive of the individual but find that humans are both norm-abiding rule followers and interested rational actors—that was how we explained human behaviour within the framework of structural conditioning.

Steinmo argues that historical institutionalism also stands in between these two institutionalisms. Historical institutionalism bestows agency to the individual while paying attention to social norms within a context. Individuals, context, and rules are central in human choices, and then, there can be no *a priori* way of knowing which one study when trying to explain an outcome. He explains that historical institutionalists do not believe that humans are simple rule-followers or simple strategic actors following the rules to maximise interests. Historical institutionalism is interested in why people make specific choices or particular outcomes occur(Steinmo, 2008, p. 126). Similar are the questions this work answers: why people choose to embrace the rule that perpetuates the conflict and why the protraction of the conflict. To answer these questions, we must think of the agency within the Colombian conflict as both rule-following and interests driven—both within a historical context.

History is central in historical institutionalism because it serves as a reference point for time-series analysis. It is also central because political and economic events happen within a historical context, resulting in consequences for behaviours or events. Moreover, history is central because agents may learn from experience. Historical institutionalism believes that behaviours, attitudes, and strategic choices happen within particular social, political, economic and cultural contexts. Thus, it treats actions as specific and distinctive according to their context instead of approaching

them as essentially the same irrespective of time, place, or context. Finally, Steinmo argues that history is central because the past also moulds expectations (Steinmo, 2008). Thus, by having an ample understanding of historical contexts and their actors, historical institutionalists can offer more accurate explanations for specific events.

This work embraces the historical institutionalist approach to frame the protraction of the Colombia conflict because it does not see the conflict as a chain of independent events. Its historicist approach is more than simply the temporal dimension, and we take history as an empirical basis that displays that any variable is hardly independent of one another. The causes and consequences of the conflict are entangled and embedded in capitalism and its historical formation in the Colombian context.

Our use of historical institutionalism is also interested in its intellectual agenda to understand the mechanism of institutional change—or the lack thereof. Institutionalists believe that change is difficult because institutions are embedded within a larger set of institutions. The change of a set of rules has implications for others. Thus, we expect resistance to change. In the case of Colombia, that is the goal of the counterinsurgent bloc of power: counterattacking change(Franco Restrepo, 2009). Second, humans form expectations around given institutions. So, change can have long-term effects that often are difficult or impossible to predict. Consequentially, people prefer to continue with the current rules—even if they are "suboptimal". Finally, institutions can crystallise because people invest in learning the rules, and change can entail high costs—aside from the resistance of those who benefit from the current rule. Institutions affect human behaviour, and over time, they can

shape preferences. Therefore, humans may prefer and advance one or other sets of institutional arrangements(Steinmo, 2008). This thesis also explains the lack of change within Colombia's conflict, akin to said intellectual agenda. Over time, ruling classes institutionalised the conflict as a norm to prevent social change and subversion from happening. Our empirical and theoretical goals provide insight into how ruling classes prevent social change and help capitalism reproduce despite contradictions, crises, or conflicts.

According to their context, the power of institutions lies in the fact that their enaction enables people to access certain living conditions. Social institutions are akin to an "idea", "notion", or "sense" of the social life. Institutions ensure that human behaviour favour such an "idea"(Steinmo, 2008). Therefore, social change requires institutional transformation and the subversion of such an idea. Azmanova explains how important it is to address the different forms of domination in capitalism to subvert it truly. She talks about the relational, systemic and structural dominations. When we extrapolate her claims, we can see that subversion regarding institutions also has different entangled dimensions. Changing the practices of enaction of a specific institution or destroying a social institution would not be enough to transform society if we do not address the "idea" that underlies them. In the case of the conflict, addressing the armed violence between people or simply destroying the structuring institution of private property of the means of production would not be enough to transform society if we do not change the "idea" underlying them, namely capitalism.

This thesis mainly explains how protectors of the social order employ institutions to prevent social change. Institutionalisation happens when social groups

frame ideas, values or beliefs that give them legitimacy as guiding principles. In our case, we explain the institutionalisation of the conflict when ruling classes turned it into an institution based on the institutionalised social order. Ultimately, the function of the conflict in Colombia is to protect its underlying "idea": capitalism.

4.4. Protracted Social Conflicts

While acknowledging the extensive literature on conflict analysis, this thesis argues that conflict analysis must focus on unveiling the conflicts' function to society. Therefore, we set to unveil the Colombian conflict's social function by analysing its phenomenal form, its empirical form. However, we do not aim to generate a general conflict theory, and the reach of our arguments restricts to the Colombian conflict.

We critically engage with Protracted Social Conflicts (PSC) as an analytical departure point to analyse the Colombian conflict. We embrace its conception of the empirical conflict as an interplay between social contexts and conditioned agencies. PSC sees conflicts broadly and considers different action levels between different dimensions throughout an institutional history. However, we do not embrace this approach's tenets *a priori*. We mainly borrow its notion of protractedness—conflict's causality rooted in the multi-level historical interactions between a system of social relations and social actors—for our analysis of the conflict but disregard the grand assumptions of the approach (unless the empirical analysis proves otherwise).

Protracted social conflicts are hostile interactions extended over long periods with sporadic violence outbreaks, which vary in frequency and intensity. PSC defies the agent-centred conflict resolutions as it deems that structural settings cause

conflicts. It proposes an understanding of the conflict concerning the interaction (and not the distinction) between dichotomic categories, often present in other conflict analyses. PSC underscores that causes of conflicts are within and across rather than exclusively between states. It argues that understanding conflicts requires traversing the multiple levels of society, from the local to the international (Ramsbotham, 2005). PSC also focuses on structural inequalities' impact on conflict. It proposes an explanation for the interplay between the structural inequalities and the distributional inequalities among socio-economic groups through a model of the structure of inequalities.

Azar contrasts three aspects of the prevailing orthodoxy in conflict studies with the PSC approach. First is the tendency to regard conflicts through the rigid international/external dimensions dichotomy. Second, the dominant analysis frameworks are often based on the functional differentiation of conflict aspects and types into sub-categories of psychological, social, political, economic, and military conflict and different levels of analysis. Third, the tendency to focus on overt violent conflict while disregarding covert, latent or non-violent conflict, and on the idea that conflict ends when violent acts are terminated (Ramsbotham, 2005). In contrast, the PSC suggests that:

> "[…] many conflicts currently active in the underdeveloped parts of the world are characterised by a blurred demarcation between internal and external sources and actors. Moreover, there are multiple causal factors and dynamics, reflected in changing goals, actors and targets. Finally, these conflicts do not show clear starting and terminating points" (Azar, 1990, p. 6).

Azar explains four clusters of preconditions for the outburst of PSC, which he describes as the turn of a non-violent into a sporadic violent situation.

- <u>Communal content</u>: refers to "multi-communal" societies with disarticulation between the state and the society. A single communal group or coalition usually dominates the state. For PSC, group identity is its primary unity of analysis. PSC focuses on identity groups and their relationship with the state and how membership in a social group mediates individual interests and needs. The disarticulation between state and society is the heritage of the colonial legacy, which artificially imposed European ideas of territorial statehood onto already existing communal groups. As a result, a single communal group or coalition dominates state institutions. Dominant groups are indifferent to the needs of the other groups, straining the social fabric and provoking fragmentation (Azar, 1990).

- <u>Human needs</u>: It considers to what extent identity groups can access human developmental needs. Since fundamental ontological needs for survival and well-being are contingent upon satisfying basic needs, they outbreak grievances when people find their needs not evenly met. Failure to redress these grievances cultivate niches for conflict. Azar defines the needs like security, development, political access, and identitarian. He equates peace with development and argues that overt conflict compels the reduction of underdevelopment. Those groups seeking to satisfy their identity and security needs through violence are, in effect, seeking change in the structure of their society(Azar, 1990, p. 31).

- <u>Role of the government and state</u>: Both are also fundamental to ensure that community groups meet their basic human needs, security and recognition. It

includes access to the market and political power. Historically the state has been endowed with the authority to govern and use force to regulate society, protect citizens and provide for them. The state plays a critical role in the satisfaction or frustration of people and identity groups' needs. When one or a few groups use political power to dominate others, conflictive situations exacerbate and lead to conflict. The dominant western liberal form of state "is an aggregate of individuals entrusted to govern effectively and to act as an impartial arbiter of conflict among the constituent parts". However, empirically, authority "tends to be monopolised by a dominant identity group or coalition of hegemonic groups that use state apparatus to maximise their interests at the expense of the other groups"(Azar, 1990, pp. 10–11). The breaking of the "communal content of the state" results from mobilising group interests and identity by ruling elites and the reactive counter-identification of excluded "minorities", precipitating legitimacy crises.

- <u>International linkages</u>: Governance happens not only at the state level, but international dynamics also affect internal policy. These international linkages could be in the form of economic dependency or client relationships. Economic dependency happens as international economic system trends dictate economic development policies, which could deny access to the needs of particular groups. This situation distorts the domestic political and economic systems by realigning subtle coalitions of international and domestic capital and the state(Azar, 1990). On the other hand, client relationships refer to the arrangement whereby a state's security is guaranteed in return for loyalty,

which requires the sacrifice of autonomy and independence, leading to potential policies against the public's needs.

These four preconditions for PSC depend upon contingent actions and events of process dynamics. Azar groups them in three groups of determinants: communal actions and strategies, state actions and strategies and built-in mechanisms of conflict. The communal actions and strategies encompass the different processes of identity group formation, organisation and mobilisation, its leadership, the political goals and tactics, and the scope and nature of external ties. The state actions and strategies refer to the political choice of the governing individuals and elite to manage using different forms of political accommodation to coercive repression and instrumental co-option. Finally, for the built-in mechanisms of conflict, Azar draws on the work of other development scholars to trace the processes whereby mutually exclusionary experiences, fears and belief systems generate and reproduce antagonism a solidify PSC(Ramsbotham, 2005).

We rescue PSC's effort to perceive conflict's causes in a multi-level, contextual way. Azar's preconditions to conflict display several of the dynamics that created the conflict in Colombia. However, as we mentioned before, we do not assume their precondition character unless historical analysis says otherwise. We see these "preconditions" as factors that affect the reproduction of the conflict and protract it. In that sense, PSC assumptions that conflict primarily in Third World countries, where systems may be weaker, is unimportant to our work. Also irrelevant is the assumption that deformed systems (economically, politically, militarily, socially) tend to produce

protracted social conflicts. Because we see social conflict embedded in the system of social relations, which, given the way it reproduces, is conflictive. Despite the PSC goal to unveil the covert conflicts, it still bases conflict on an eventual outburst of violence. We take another road. Within social conflicts embedded in capitalist social relations, the violent conflict is the particularity and not the rule. The Colombian armed conflict resulted from the interaction between the nature of the system and historical conjunctures. It is particular in its history and is not a determination of any sort of structural setting. Therefore, we disregard Azar and Farah's (1981) structure of inequalities, which is compelling as empirical analysis, but epistemological forecasting lacks validity in this work.

PSC links the protraction of the conflict to identity hostilities and ingroup/outgroup effects, such as power and resources distribution and perception. It explains deprivation as a result of a complex causal chain that involves the performance of the state and the pattern of international linkages. Initial conditions such as colonial legacy, domestic historical setting, and the multi-communal nature of the society play essential roles in shaping the genesis of protracted social conflicts(Azar, 1990, p. 12). Moreover, it links social inequalities to inequalities embedded in the social organisation of production and inequalities in the relative political power of different socio-economic groups(Azar & Farah, 1981, p. 322). Although PSC sees political and economic power independently, and we argue against such a distinction, it does consider trajectories of inequality (or injustice) embedded in "specific forms of productive structure".

PSC considers different forms of relations of production (including power relations) and, assuming a structural-functionalist approach, argues that conflict happens when the system loses its flexibility and fails to maintain its flexibility. Thus, it sees hegemony as the organisation of the economic groups and the existing mediation mechanisms—as a situation of equilibrium in which one power manages to subsume other powers. We argue against this conception of hegemony—as a situation that is either fulfilled or in crisis. We will see this in Chapter Two. However, in Colombia, we do not see conflict as the hegemony's fracture but as an enabling mechanism for the ruling powers to reproduce their hegemony.

Lastly, another feature we rescue is the link PSC does of conflict theory to international relations theory studying the world's political economy. It argues that the international stratification system partly determines the intrastate structure of inequalities. Azar and Farah classify the world economy based on a functional and geographical division of labour. They identify two groups of countries. The developed countries in the North continue to specialise in advanced industrial production processes and maintain a virtual monopoly over the production of new technology. And the developing countries in the South specialise in agriculture or raw material production and lately in traditional industrial production(Amin, 1975). They contend that the prevalent types of productive structures determine the international division of labour, sustaining a technological gap between the North and the South. This division of labour influences inter-state economic and political power relations and tends to produce dependency on international markets. Therefore, the international stratification system depends on 1) the relative economic strength of the country and

2) the power to affect the international market, which is directly linked to the political position of each state in the international system (Amin, 1974; Wallerstein, 2011). The existing inequalities among countries tend to reinforce internal inequalities, given that weaker states lack access to resources for growth.

According to PSC, the type of productive system of a state depends not only on the international division and the level of available technology but also on the internal social organisation of production. For instance, an agricultural-based productive system creates particular forms of relations of production (peasants and landlords). The relations between social groups will either reproduce or alter the existing productive structure depending on economic and political power articulation.

In short, the PSC are prolonged and often violent struggles by communal groups for basic needs such as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and political participation(Azar, 1990, p. 93). Ramsbotham (2005) argues that PSC attempts to synthesise the realist and structuralist paradigms into a pluralist framework to escape from the orthodox analysis of the conflict that isolated is an overt component from the underlying non-violent features. With this concept, we move away from the violent-focused conflicts into a broader scope that foremost recognises armed violence as one of the different expressions of conflict. In this approach, the distinction between domestic and international fades. Azar argues that there is an internal logic behind the international conflicts present in domestic interests and the drive of nations and states to satisfy them. The state is not a neutral entity, but it materialises the group's interest or groups that manage it. Its role is to satisfy or frustrate basic communal needs, thus preventing or promoting conflict.

Chapter 2: Hegemonic vehicles, Hegemony and Critique

1. Introduction

This work aims to address the question of why the Colombian conflict has been so protracted. Its findings interpret the conflict's function in the current social order in Colombia: namely, to reproduce and protect the system in its different dimensions; encompassing capital accumulation, the capitalistic structuring institutions of Colombian society, and the rule of the bourgeoisie. Accordingly, it conceptualises the conflict as a hegemonic vehicle—a structuring institution operating to reproduce capitalism in Colombia. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the concept of hegemonic vehicles and discuss their reach as a conceptual framework which addresses the resilience of capitalism to inherent crises, contradictions and conflicts.

The concept of hegemonic vehicles investigates the "hegemony" within concrete historicised practices, with this specific formulation stemming from a historical analysis of the Colombian conflict. The starting point is the confrontation between social groups over the means of production, predominantly land[17]—a capitalist class hoarding the means of production against a working class trying to wrest back control of land and said means of production (including political power, among other forces). Paradoxically, the conflict has become a situation that conditions the working class to support the ruling classes—the social group profiting the most

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[17] See the report *¡Basta ya! Colombia: Memorias de Guerra y dignidad* by the *National Center for Historical Memory* which contemplates that "the appropriation, use and ownership of the land have been the engines of the origin and persistence of the armed conflict" (own translation) (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013, p. 21). Also see: (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2018; Fajardo, 2010, 2015; Fals Borda, 1975; Gómez Hernández, 2011; Ordoñez, 2014; Pineda, 2016; Tirado, 1970)

from the conflict and perpetuating its conditions and relations. This work demonstrates how the bourgeoisie in Colombia has employed the conflict to secure its hegemony's material and ideational conditions. It aims to transcend the phenomenal form of the conflict, i.e. its armed dimension, in order to explore its real relation to society. Therefore, the Colombian conflict is characterised as a hegemonic vehicle. This institutionalised historical phenomenon structures social relations favourably toward the current social bourgeois order. Thus, this thesis aims to contribute to an understanding of the conflict and elucidate potential strategies that agents of capitalism employ to make capitalism endure through its contradictions.

We employ some features of Antonio Gramsci's hegemony whilst developing a new conceptual device. We do not necessarily aim to transcend Gramsci, but merely to employ a particular interpretation of his work. Hegemonic vehicles primarily aim to identify the practices whereby the leading classes maintain their hegemony. Instead of seeing hegemony as a stage in political rule that can either be complete or in crisis, this work investigates the practices that operate continuously within hegemony in a specific context.

Hegemonic vehicles may prevent capitalist crises, contradictions and conflicts from turning against the hegemony. Gramsci argues that a hegemonic crisis does not automatically cause the end of the hegemony. He suggests that in such cases—when the hegemony endures—the hegemonic classes deploy a "passive revolution" to regain the consent of the subordinate classes whilst continue to revolutionise economically and politically. This work argues, in turn, that ruling classes continuously reinforce social institutions corresponding to their context to bolster the

consent of the subordinate classes. These institutions do not insulate against crises, per se, but turn crises into situations that shape people's preferences favourably. Thus, we can explain the reproduction of the hegemony, even before a hegemonic crisis emerges, by looking into the institutions that affect social relations in a particular context. This is what the concept of hegemonic vehicles explains.

The previous chapter presented a theoretical framework upon which this work constructs the concept of hegemonic vehicles. We base our concept on Marx's historical materialist methodology, discerning "essence" or real relations from social phenomena through critique and historical analysis. Moreover, we use elements borrowed from critical theory, critical realism and historical institutionalism. We conceive hegemonic vehicles as institutionalised practices to structure social relations in specific societies. Unlike later interpretations of Gramsci's theory of *cultural hegemony*, hegemonic vehicles are not just discursive or ideological devices used to manipulate masses, culture, and beliefs. They are social practices that correspond to a historical context and transform material conditions and social relations. They do not exist within abstract or metaphysical structures; they are a way to interpret people's actions within a specific context.

2. Building a Critique

The theoretical goal of this work is to build a concept to interpret and critique the Colombian conflict, and elucidate several aspects of it: understanding the conflict in Colombia, its relation to the current social order, the value in transcending its existing interpretations, and when and where it exists. In other words, it helps to transcend the

phenomenal form of the conflict, its empirical dimension, to unveil its real relations—its essence. This work is inspired by and employs Marx's critique of the political economy to respond to said questions.

Given that the practices and dynamics of the conflict occur within a capitalist system of social relations, we can only critique the conflict by critiquing capitalism. We start building the hegemonic vehicles—the foremost goal of which is to provide critical tools—on other critiques of capitalism. This work builds its critique on a historical analysis of social formation in Colombia. Dialectically, said historical analysis employs existing critiques of society and capitalism(Sayer, 1975). Therefore, one of the central goals of this work is to develop a critique of the political economy as the ultimate object of and arena for the critical enterprise (Arato 1982).

The political-economic approach aims to create a broad social theory. It substitutes economics in the narrow sense, and sets itself apart from social theory that focuses solely on cultural or ideological dimensions to the exclusion of economic questions. Accordingly, our analysis does not reduce the conflict to political or social issues analysed from within the neoclassical economic tradition, nor does it analyse the multiple forms of misrepresentation generated around the conflict. This work replicates the focus of nineteenth-century political economists. They shared a vision of the economy as an essential part of a social whole, tracing the links between economic, political and social developments. At the same time, this work does not see economic factors as unilaterally determining or causing political and social effects, and will not reduce all historical phenomena to economic explanations.

Marx pioneered the critique of political economy theory. He argues that it failed to relate its insights to a broader set of social concerns and failed to recognise its nature as historically grounded (Browning & Kilmister, 2006). By integrating some of Hegel's analyses and combining internal and external elements, Marx criticises classical political economists, arguing that their analyses arose from tradition. He critiques the political economy by exploiting its internal contradictions and questioning its fundamental basis from outside. Hence, Marx's critical perspective includes political economy dialectically combined with external elements , such as philosophy, history, sociology, and anthropology (Smith, 1990).

Browning and Kilmister (2006) argue that Marx deploys his modes of criticism in his critique of political economy in four ways: by solving inherited problems of the classical political economy; by uncovering hidden derivations, taking concepts that classical economists regard as fundamental and showing how they derive from more basic notions with further contradictions or problems; by developing new concepts to understand phenomena undermined via concepts of the classical political economy; and through his formulations on ideology and fetishism, providing a more general characterisation of the kind of thinking underlying classical economics, Marx demonstrates its similarity to the structure of thought found in society, particularly in justifications of the capitalist system.

In his theory on the fetishism of commodities, which provides a further statement of the historically grounded nature of economic categories, Marx expresses how historical necessities determine social phenomena rather than expressing a natural necessity. On this question, Marx writes:

"The categories of bourgeois economics consist precisely of forms of this kind. They are forms of thought which are socially valid, and therefore objective, for the relations of production belonging to this historically determined mode of social production, i.e. commodity production. The whole mystery of commodities, all the magic and necromancy that surrounds the products of labour on the basis of commodity production, vanishes therefore as soon as we come to other forms of production". (Marx, 1981, p. 169)

This work takes Marx's forms of critique of the political economy to develop an alternative analysis of the Colombian conflict. Like Marx, the departure point taken to understand the conflict and its implications is seeing how people produce their material lives.

Marx starts the *Grundrisse* by stating: "The object before us, to begin with, [is] material production. Individuals producing in society—hence socially determined individual production—is, of course the point of departure" (Marx, 1993, p. 83). As aforementioned, the conflict in Colombia has its origins in the confrontation over land and other means of production. Thus, the conflict, which has many implications and dimensions, ultimately revolves around how people produce their material life within the Colombian social formation—the conflict is mainly a political-economic question. We see that the production of Colombia's current and real conditions is contingent on the conflict. In Marx's words: "The questions raised above all reduce themselves in the last instance to the role played by general-historical relations in production, and their relation to the movement of history generally. The question evidently belongs within the treatment and investigation of production itself" (Marx, 1993, p. 97).

However, the conflict has been conceptualised—especially by the state—as a continuous struggle between the legitimate state and different threats to "democracy,

the population and the vital interests of the Nation" (República de Colombia, 2013, p. 24). This definition fails to relate the conflict to a broader set of social concerns. It fails to recognise its nature as being historically grounded. This definition of the conflict hinges on an entire social, political and economic framework which is rendered "true"—the grounds upon which ruling groups construct conceptions of legality and morality.

This work undertakes a political-economic critique of the conflict. It explains the conflict as a phenomenon which conceals other social phenomena and relations in the current social order. The existing conception of the conflict has gaps in its definitions. We provide an alternative understanding of the conflict by reconceptualising it as a social institution that enables the reproduction of the current system of social relations. Therefore, this work proposes the concept of hegemonic vehicles. As a conceptual construction, it provides a language to reinterpret historical phenomena that are portrayed as simple "failures" of the system, but which in fact contain derivations of the justifications of the capitalist system of social relations.

Finally, we understand Marx's critique of the political economy, developed by other Marxists, as a product of the interaction between *Doxa* and historical context. This work does not undermine existing theoretical contributions—it simply employs them in a historicised critique of Colombian society. This work draws on some features of the critique of the political economy developed by the "new reading of Marx". This approach rejects the premise of dialectics between trans-historically conceived forces of production and the historically specific relations of production. Instead, it looks at Marx's work as a critique of "capitalism in terms of a historically

specific form of social interdependence with an impersonal and seemingly objective character" (Postone, 1993, p. 3). Bonefeld explains that this new reading renounces the classical argument on trans-historically valid economic laws of development, and perceives society's economic appearance as a necessary manifestation of definite social relations (Bonefeld, 2014, p. 4). Similarly, this work provides a conceptual account of the capitalists' mechanism for reproduction and protection of the system. Although we focus exclusively on Colombia's social formation, this, of course, does not reject the explanatory potential that the concept may have for other contexts.

3. Human Practice and Philosophy of Praxis

Performing a critique consists in unveiling the real relations which constitute a phenomenon (Sayer, 1975). In our case, we aim to critique the conflict to transcend its empirical form of violence and understand its function in the social order—and thus explain its protraction. We say transcend, rather than substitute, the empirical form because it is from said empirical form that we find the evidence on which to develop the critique. The evidence and primary source for the critique are human practices. Therefore, we cannot undermine the experience of agents. For both Marx and Gramsci, human practices are essential in recognising social transformation. They are also fundamental because we see the conflict as a structuring institution built, ultimately, by human agency and its practices. Social transformation, or lack thereof, can only be explained within the practical dimension of Colombian society.

Classical political economists focus their analyses on the *practice* of material production in bourgeois society—which they elevate to the category of the general

production practice. Marx highlights how they see human labour as the source of wealth and value. However, he criticises classical political economy for reducing *practice* (as a productive activity that transforms the natural world) to an economic concept. Through their class analysis, Marx and Engels criticise this conception of the *practice* and demonstrate its limitations regarding the concepts of labour and value. They connect the transformation of the exterior dimension to the transformation that it produces—in the form of labour—on human nature by including an account of labour in its historical form, i.e., alienated labour, which is the product of determined social relations.

Sanchez Vazquez argues that the central point of Marx's critique of the political economy is *praxis;*[18] he contributed to discovering the social character of the material praxis of labour in theoretical practice. From the Greek up until the Enlightenment philosophies, that character only mattered for privileged social activities, such as art and politics. However, Marx extended the theorisation of praxis to labour; the primary and fundamental activity in transforming nature. The philosophy of praxis, the philosophical consciousness of praxis as an essential sphere of man, depends on the conception of man as an active and creative being, or transformer of the world, not only in consciousness but also in "practice in reality" (Sánchez Vázquez, 2009, p. 57). In the *Thesis on Feuerbach*, Marx suggests that we set fundamental philosophical

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[18] Praxis, in ancient Greek, was the term used to designate the action of doing something. However, in *praxis*, the action has no end in itself, and does not produce any object alien to its subject or activity. It was contrary to *poiésis* that designated the fabrication of something. However, throughout history, a different meaning has been attributed to praxis. For practical reasons, herein we will adopt Sanchez Vazquez's definition, which is to designate the objective conscious activity—which we must not reduce to its utilitarian acceptation, which derivates from the use of "practical" in the ordinary language. Praxis, then, is about the process of transformation of the world and not of its contemplation(Sánchez Vázquez, 2009, p. 28).

problems by considering human activity through history (Marx, 1998). Therefore, throughout his work, he investigates numerous aspects of human labour.

Praxis in Marxism, interpreted as a synonym for a revolutionary transformation of society, was once undermined by the II International and social-democrat theorists. However, Lenin restored the practical side of Marxism by emphasising the role of man's practical and revolutionary activity. The "subjective" factor is a decisive element for transforming the social, political, and economic reality (Lenin, 1974). Moreover, Lenin also emphasised that these subjective factors could only be decisive if integrated into the movement of objective factors (social forces). In his work, Lenin developed a theory of concrete praxis that aimed to identify the real conditions of society's revolutionary transformation through a historical lens.

For Gramsci, the praxis, a core category, exists as a result of the transformative action of men. It is the only reality attached to the constant progress of history, the history of the self-production of man (Sánchez Vázquez, 2009, p. 66). However, Gramsci inherited some elements of his concept of praxis from Croce's idealism. Therefore, we critically engage with Gramsci's praxis philosophy in the following paragraphs as a contribution to this work's objective. It serves as an initial step in our critique of Gramsci's hegemony—upon which we construct the hegemonic vehicles.

Some authors argue that Gramsci used the term *philosophy of praxis* in order to avoid referring to Marxism under the censorship of the fascist prison where he wrote his *Notebooks.* However, other authors argue differently. To them, the *philosophy of praxis* constitutes a diversion from the historical materialism of Marx and Engels. Haug argues that the philosophy of praxis, in its first manifestation in the *Notebooks,*

is a core concept of the Gramscian project, a third position situated between objectivist

materialism and Croce's spiritual theory of history (Haug, 2000). Gramsci's

philosophy of praxis criticises Croce's use of Hegelian dialectics as part of a liberal

utopia that aimed to reduce ontological contradictions to mere differences. With the

critique of objectivism, a new approach to the dialectic opened up, shifting the terrain

away from the philosophy of consciousness into a wider ensemble of social relations,

in which human praxis mediates history.

According to Haug, in Notebooks 10 and 11, the philosophy of praxis ties the

concept of philosophy to hegemony. For him, the appearance of the philosophy of

praxis marks a nodal point reflecting the inner connection of Gramsci's reflections in

his work (Haug, 2000, pp. 4–5). In Notebook 8, Gramsci uses Croce's "distinction of

the moments of the spirit, and his affirmation of a moment of practice, of a practical

spirit, autonomous and independent though linked in a circle to all reality by the

dialectic of distincts" (Gramsci, 1985, p. 137). Gramsci thus moves into a different

terrain where he connects diverse practices and instances within a concrete historical

unity:

> "In a philosophy of praxis, the distinction will certainly not be between the
> moments of the absolute Spirit, but between the levels of the superstructure.
> The problem will therefore be that of establishing the dialectical position of
> political activity (and of the corresponding science) as a particular level of the
> superstructure" (Gramsci, 1985, p. 137).

Gramsci recasts Croce's "dialectic of distincts"—the unity between nature and

spirit of opposites and distincts—to formulate the concept of the historical bloc, i.e.,

the unity between structure and superstructure. However, later in this Notebook,

Gramsci steers away from Croce, who discounts Marxist philosophy on the grounds that Marx replaces philosophy with practical activity. Haug argues that the philosophy of praxis in Notebook 11 is a radical departure from the II and III International's Marxism. Hereafter, Marxian thought, interpreted as a philosophy of praxis, entered onto the terrain of linguistics, even of semiotics and the unconscious, mostly explored in post-Marxist and post-modern scholarship. This understanding of the philosophy of praxis dissolves the objectivism of *though-forms* of the natural sciences and tries to rectify the transference of elements of Marxist thinking on praxis to the right-wing and fascism (Haug, 2000, p. 16).

We stand against said dissolution of objectivism. Given this work's historicist approach, we argue that objectivism is a historical construction of capitalism's operative imperatives (historical necessities). We do not deny the object, but try to unveil the real relations behind the hypostasised objects. We believe that objectivism in the political-economic constitution of capitalism does exist, and is related to the practices and relations of production in society. We transpose this to the conflict as the way in which the ruling classes construct values and rules and elevate them to the category of objective truth. For instance; the notion that subversion is the enemy of the entire body of social members. Within the objectivity of the social order, subversive enterprises threaten its validity, however instead of negating that objectivity, we use history to demonstrate it as a valid truth only within the logics and interests of a specific social group. We define the "objective" interests of the different classes regarding their material conditions in equal terms. For instance, a landless peasant

ought, in theory, to be interested in challenging the conditions that affect them, however, in reality, this does not automatically happen.

We believe that the philosophy of praxis must unmask objectivism, but cannot deny it, at least as a social construction that gives validity and legitimacy to practices favourable to capitalism. With hegemonic vehicles, we see objectivism in the following way: although it reflects the historical need of an ensemble of social relations, it exists because it enables the capitalist repertoire. By simply denying objectivism, we would not dissolve it, but instead lose its transformative potential. We would only address aspects that seem more real but are not fundamental for society.

Thomas proposes a different interpretation of Gramsci's *philosophy of praxis,* as neither a complete departure from nor as a code word for Marxism. He interprets it as Gramsci's insight on the debates of the 1920s regarding the nature of Marxist philosophy (Thomas, 2015). In the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci re-evaluates Marxism's philosophical nature and his former philosophical positions for fundamentally political reasons—he sought to understand the reasons for the defeat of the Communist Party by the Fascist Regime in Italy. This interpretation correlates with our understanding of Gramsci's theory: a political theory that aims to understand the conditions of the status quo, based on the critical analysis of the political economy of a social formation. This work analyses the relationship between capitalism and conflict in Colombia, to explore how Colombia's ruling classes have managed to sustain the status quo despite such an extended conflict. It is on this basis that this work introduces hegemonic vehicles.

Thomas explains that Gramsci's philosophy of praxis is closely related to Labriola's thought — the only theorist, Gramsci believed, who sought to give historical materialism a scientific foundation (Thomas, 2015, p. 101). Labriola sees that the philosophy of Marxism is contained within Marxism itself and defines the philosophy of praxis as the heart and soul of historical materialism. He says that philosophy is immanent to what it philosophises: life to thought and not the other way around (Labriola, 1966). Gramsci's philosophy of praxis seems to be based on a similar connection between materialism and reality.

Thomas explains that the philosophy of praxis first appeared in Gramsci's work in reference to Machiavelli. Gramsci suggested that Machiavelli's thought could be called a "philosophy of praxis" in as much as it bases itself entirely on the concrete action of men to transform reality impelled by historical necessity (Gramsci, 1985, pp. 248–249). Gramsci first used the philosophy of praxis in relation to Marxism in a note entitled "Materialism and Historical Materialism", wherein he criticised vulgar forms of materialism.[19] Gramsci establishes a radical redefinition of philosophy as being

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[19] See Gramsci: "In this way we arrive also at the equality of, or equation between, "philosophy and politics," thought and action, that is, at a philosophy of praxis. Everything is political, even philosophy or philosophies ... and the only "philosophy" is history in action, that is, life itself"(Gramsci, 1985, pp. 356–357). This insight was also influenced by Gramsci's reading of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*. In them, Gramsci saw not only the outlines of a new philosophy but a transformation of philosophy itself. Philosophy no longer as a universal discourse, but as a specific practice alongside others; a form of political struggle. Gramsci says: "The study of the philosophical culture of a man like Marx is not only interesting but necessary. But one must not forget that it belongs exclusively to the field of the reconstruction of his intellectual biography. The elements of Spinoza, Feuerbach, Hegel, French materialism, etc., are in no way essential parts of the philosophy of praxis, nor can that philosophy be reduced to those elements. What is interesting is precisely the transcending of the old philosophies, the new synthesis or the elements of a new synthesis and the way of conceiving philosophy. One should further bear in mind that the elements of this new mode of conceiving philosophy are contained in aphorisms or in some way dispersed throughout the writings of the founder of the philosophy of praxis, and that it is necessary precisely to distinguish these elements and develop them coherently. At the level of theory, the philosophy of praxis cannot be confounded with or reduced to any other philosophy. Its originality lies not only in its transcending of previous philosophies but also and above

intrinsically political and mediated by a specific mode of organisation of the conceptual resources essential to society. Thomas points out that Gramsci's approach to understanding philosophy is related to his concept of hegemony (Thomas, 2015, p. 102). Thus, philosophy equated to politics, or the political constitution of politics and vice versa, provides a lens to read the function of Colombia's conflict and the social conditions leading to and perpetuating it.

Through the critique of Croce's distinction of philosophy and ideology, and of Bukharin's position on the *matter* as an ultimate and determining reality, Gramsci turns philosophy of praxis into a question of the relationship between the "philosophical" and the "non-philosophical". If philosophy, following Hegel, is a broad conception of the world, the philosophy of praxis insists that its task is to produce a more "coherent" conception of the world for everybody. Philosophy is not distinct from ideology, but redefined as something internal to it; it must provide resources for social transformation.

After the summer of 1932, Gramsci's philosophy of praxis became "the absolute 'historicism', the absolute secularisation and earthliness of thought, and absolute humanism of history. It is along this line that one must trace the thread of the new conception of the world" (Gramsci, 1985, p. 465). The three attributes—namely, *absolute historicism, absolute immanence,* and *absolute humanism*—are fundamental in Gramsci's research.

Absolute immanence refers to the relationship between philosophy and ideology, and leads Gramsci to see theory and practice as two internally related parts

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all in that it opens up a completely new road, renewing from head to toe the whole way of conceiving philosophy itself"(Gramsci, 1985, p. 464)

of the same thing. According to an ensemble of social relations, absolute humanism is associated with Marx's attempt to see humans as historically variable and thus mutable. Gramsci argues that the philosophy of praxis is an absolute form of humanism which aims to solve contradictions in previous humanist traditions, especially the inability to connect intellectual culture with broader social groups by transforming *common sense* into *good sense*. Finally, absolute historicism refers to Gramsci's adaptation of historicism to the philosophy of praxis. It refers to the need to historicise philosophical systems and sees their speculative claims as political and ideological organisation forms. However, even more crucially, it refers to the historicisation of the realm of conceptuality, understanding thought not as being located in an absolute metaphysical structure but as an active attempt to modify social activity in general (Thomas, 2015, pp. 109–110). This latter conception of absolute historicism is compatible with our historicist enterprise and Gramsci's different forms of explaining and illustrating historicism throughout his *Notebooks* (Morera, 2011).

Gramsci's philosophy of praxis is a fundamental tenet to the interpretation of hegemony proposed herein. According to Thomas' reading on this matter, instead of diverging from the Marxist tradition, Gramsci's philosophy of praxis is his positioning within important debates during the 20th Century. Moreover, it is an opposition to vulgar materialism and an attempt to constitute a new philosophy, reducible neither to materialism nor idealism. It also explains why we employ Gramsci's notion of hegemony in this work as we both target similar social problems. This work is concerned with social practices and the practices associated with the conflict in Colombia. These practices are neither unilaterally determined by the economy nor a

product of cultural "inoculation". They are practices that contribute to the overall production of conditions of society and bind people as they consequentially affect the production of conditions of existence. The main object in the analysis of the conflict is social practices, and the notion of hegemonic vehicles is first and foremost one that characterises said practices within the functioning of the capitalist system of social relations.

4. Hegemony and hegemonic vehicles

The primary goal of this thesis is twofold: to provide a theoretical and empirical perspective of the conflict phenomenon, and to contribute to the critique and the potential transformation of it. The empirical goal is to explain why the Colombian conflict has spanned such a long period despite the number of efforts to solve it. This endeavour has an emancipatory drive because, as this work will establish in the following chapters, the conflict is embedded in the system of social relations, and its resolution will require a transformation of the latter. This work contends that the conflict continuously fails to be solved because it has become an institution that legitimates the social order in Colombia, whilst leaving the capitalist system of social relations untouched and unchanged. This system has proven to be flawed and conflictive. The theoretical goal, then, is to contribute an account that expounds on the dynamics which make the conflict functional to capitalism; rather than being a vehicle of social change, as many revolutionaries and subversive groups intended, it is the primary way for capitalism to endure and for the hegemony of the capitalist classes to be maintained in the country. We call such an account the hegemonic vehicles. This

concept explains how the hegemonic classes employ historical institutions to structure situational logics that reinforce the subordinate classes' consent.

A distinctive feature of Gramsci's hegemony, which we want to emphasise, is the complementarity between coercion and consent. Coercion has been a practice much more studied within the conflict, and it is phenomenologically more experienced by the people. However, consent is a dimension that critics of Colombian history have overlooked—how pro-capitalist violence, armed conflict, and counterinsurgent groups manage to deliver to people in their needs and interests. Precisely, consent has two distinct but complementary forms, in the form of material compromise—addressing people's material needs. And in the form of ideology. This thesis emphasises the material compromise and the ideology because it seeks to show the enabling characteristic of the conflict as a hegemonic vehicle. The conflict affects people's situational logics and their interests.

To understand how ideology plays a role in the Colombian conflict, we will realise what ideology in general is. And in the following chapters, we will show how the hegemonic classes have employed ideology as a tool of domination and consent throughout Colombian history. Marx and Engels critique the German philosophy of the XIX century as it mystified social relations in their reduction into religious relationships(Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 35). Both critiqued this by laying down the materialist conception of history based on the idea that all human history is the existence of the living human individuals, and they distinguish from animals by consciousness. At the same time, consciousness is interwoven with how humans produce their existence not only physically but also in their *mode of life*. Thus, the

production of material conditions is intertwined with the production of ideas, conceptions, and concepts(Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 41,42). Active humans are the producers of their conceptions conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces. Marx and Engels state that "[i]t is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness"(Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 42). Therefore, ideology is not before history but develops alongside it. What does this say about ideology in Colombia, a society with a history of armed and social conflict?

The ideology that dominates Colombia corresponds to the mode of production. The capitalist hegemony in Colombia is accompanied by a dominating ideology that affects the working class beliefs and practices. To be clear, the bourgeoisie has defined the desired ideology according to its historical needs. That ideology affects people's modes of life—life still "determines" consciousness and not the way around. Drucker explains that Marx's concept of ideology refers to the theory that every class needs to orient its world and prescribe its future tasks(Drucker, 1972). Those needs change throughout history; thus, a class needs theorists that continuously search for any basis for their preconceptions. Whether those bases are valid or not, a class will exalt as "true" the theory that underpins their actions and interests. Like when Marx developed his analysis of ideology, the ruling classes in Colombia are the bourgeois, and thus ideology is dominated by them. As Marx critiqued the theories of the ascendant bourgeoisie, in the hands of Smith, Malthus or Bentham(Marx, 1969), addressing their needs and interests, even with lies and misleads, we can critique the current ideology of our societies. Marx writes: "The economic content gradually turned the utility theory into a mere apologia for the existing state of affairs, an

attempt to prove that under the existing conditions the mutual relations of people are today the most advantageous and generally useful. It has this character in all modern economists" (Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 437,438). Thus, we can expect that ideology works as an apologia for the existing situation, which in Colombia is a protracted social conflict. Ideology, we will see, is the theory the bourgeoisie and its allies have created to justify the violence people live in daily. Yet, ideology matched with economic compromise has helped to build a consent that today affects how people relate to each other.

4.1. Hegemony

Before defining the hegemonic vehicles, we need to consider their roots in the concept of hegemony.

Gramsci situates his hegemony in Lenin's political practice and works. Lenin's concept of the proletariat's dictatorship contains an idea of the organisation of the spontaneous feelings of the masses. This involves creating a workers' consciousness and incorporating it into their ruling institution via state power seizure. In the context of the Russian revolution, Lenin's idea was not merely coercive. If he considered that seizing the state power was crucial for the revolutionary strategy to disable the state's repressive apparatuses acting against them, Lenin's politics were at the same time consensual (or organic) enough to encompass a concern for the cultural aspects of a worker-peasant alliance. On said historical conditions, Lenin sought to establish the proletariat dictatorship in the same way as the struggle for socialism, i.e. overthrowing another dictatorship that endangered the conditions of the workers and peasants.

Lenin's strategy contrasts with that of Gramsci, not in its nature but in its historical conditions. Set in the historical context of fascism in Italy, Gramsci thought the hegemony to establish democracy better reflected the contemporary political grievances.

Keeping Lenin's influence in mind, this work approaches hegemony as an interpretation of strategic practices, and rational intellectual and moral leadership to control society's different dimensions with the consent of subordinate classes in accordance with historical needs (Riley, 2011). We understand hegemony neither as a reified apparatus for social control (Althusser, 2001) nor as an idealised value to radicalise liberal democracy (Laclau & Mouffe, 1992). Anderson suggests that Gramsci used hegemony as a differential analysis of class power structures in bourgeois democracies (Anderson, 2020, p. 51). Thus, considering its subject of study and delimiting its theoretical scope, this work will only understand hegemony as a capitalistic practice within the context of the social bourgeois order in Colombia. Although it does not dismiss similar strategies enacted by the subordinate classes in other national settings, this work does not consider counterhegemony as part of its analysis.

Hyug Baeg Im argues that hegemony is based on the leading role of the bourgeoisie in the capitalist system of social relations. Having a dominant position in the relations of production provides the objective basis for the practice of hegemony (Thompson, 1978). However, consciousness is not a mechanical reflection of production relations. Thus, dominating the relations of production is essential yet not sufficient for hegemony. The institutions affecting the consciousness of the people

must also be organised to draw political, social and cultural life in line with the historical necessities of capitalism. Therefore, hegemony is first and foremost a technique of political rule.

The hegemonic class needs to ally subordinate classes, with pluralism and democracy, to conditions that address their personal needs and wants. Hegemony is the political strategy of the dominant classes who, favouring consent and employing coercion, manage to shape their subordinates' interests favourably to reproduce capitalism and to disregard their class interests. Gramsci writes that:

> "The methodological criterion on which our own study must be based is that the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership". A social group dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to "liquidate", or to subjugate perhaps even by armed force; it leads kindred and allied groups. A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise "leadership" before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to "lead" as well" (Gramsci, 1985, p. 57,58).

The maintenance of power by the bourgeoisie, the dominant class in capitalism, requires a rule that combines both force and consent. Hegemony is, essentially, the ability to garner the consent of subordinate classes based on the representation of society's universal interests as a whole. The hegemonic class achieves such a representation by realising the subordinates' interests "concretely" (Gramsci, 1985, p. 182). Only by making them materialise can the coordination of concrete interests be achieved. So, hegemony is not a strategy that stays in the ideological dimension. Hyug Baeg argues that the dominant economic formation provides objective conditions

through which ideological leadership develops. Thus, we cannot reduce hegemony to pure "superstructural terms" (Hyug Baeg, 1991).

Hegemony is a historical concept because what it entails to lead intellectually and morally differs according to historical periods and production relations. Riley argues that hegemony tends to become broader (include more members of society) and more relational as history progresses. He argues that this has to do with the idea that states must be based on a highly developed world-view (Riley, 2011, p. 4). We can find this influence in the notion of common sense—the spontaneous philosophy embodied in language and un-reflected concepts—and its relationship to the philosophy of praxis. For Gramsci, Marxism had to explain the world to ordinary people, and had to employ the philosophy of praxis to transform common sense. Gramsci writes:

> "A philosophy of praxis cannot but present itself at the outset in a polemical and critical guise, as superseding the existing mode of thinking and existing concrete thought (the existing cultural world). First of all, therefore, it must be a criticism of "common sense", basing itself initially, however, on common sense in order to demonstrate that "everyone" is a philosopher and that it is not a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone's individual life, but of renovating and making "critical" an already existing activity. It must then be a criticism of the philosophy of the intellectuals out of which the history of philosophy developed and which, in so far as it is a phenomenon of individuals (in fact it develops essentially in the activity of single particularly gifted individuals) can be considered as marking the "high points" of the progress made by common sense, or at least the common sense of the more educated strata of society but through them also of the people" (Gramsci, 1985, pp. 330–331).

Although Gramsci addressed common sense as an area of contention for the working class, common sense is a fundamental feature in shaping "good sense" for

the hegemony of the bourgeoisie.[20] This sense must be shaped in agreement with the historical necessities of capitalism. Thus, common sense for the subordinate masses is nothing but the corporate consciousness— corporate being the immediate and narrowly selfish interests of a particular category (Gramsci, 1985, p. 77). The hegemonic class, in turn, has to be able to transcend the corporate consciousness, lead in civil society and dominate in the state on a "universal" plane (Gramsci, 1985, p. 160). Common sense is historical and attached to the material and ideational social conditions. While the consciousness of the subordinate classes resides in a common-sense mediated by their conditions, the bourgeoisie, when needed, finds ways to concede to the workers' demands while ensuring the representation of their economic interests. Gramsci writes:

> "Undoubtedly the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed—in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind. But there is also no doubt that such sacrifices and such a compromise cannot touch the essential; for though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity" (Gramsci, 1985, p. 161).

Thus, hegemony, which entails the accrual of consent, starts from a material compromise between dominant and subordinate classes. The hegemonic class has to make a concrete coordination of interest with the subordinate. However, this 'agreement' must not compromise the subordinate's real interests but rather, to some

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[20] In a footnote, Hoare explains that: "The meaning that Gramsci gives to these two terms is explained in the paragraphs which follow. Broadly speaking, "common sense" means the incoherent set of generally held assumptions and beliefs common to any given society, while "good sense" means practical empirical common sense in the English sense of the term." (Gramsci, 1985, p. 323).

extent, realise them by sacrificing some of its non-strategic material interests. Thus, without being the strongest force in the realm of production, the dominant class cannot realise the interests of the subordinate as it cannot maintain the material base of the economic compromise (Hyug Baeg, 1991, p. 128). So, to continuously reproduce the hegemony, the dominant class must make every effort to reproduce the existing mode of production. We call this process the creation of situational logics.

The dominant position in the relations of production does not automatically ensure a class' hegemony. A class attains hegemony when the structural dynamics, those concerning production relations, pass into the sphere of the complex superstructure. This means that in hegemony, the political and ideological "superstructure" must work to maintain the kind of economic compromise found at its base. However, reiterating Gramsci's view on agency and his rejection of mechanistic determination, the political and ideological spheres are a site of class struggle—hence, they have to be shaped through the struggle's effects. According to Gramsci, complete hegemony happens when a fundamental class accomplishes the unity of economic, political and ideological hegemony—which he also calls the "historical bloc"; "the complex, contradictory, and discordant ensemble of the superstructure and the structure" (Gramsci, 1985, p. 366).

Finally, Riley makes a compelling argument on the revolutionary origins of the hegemony, which explains why our analysis starts during Colombia's independence, the period before the constitution of the bourgeois hegemony. To the question; "how does hegemony develop?", Riley replies that "hegemonies are created during revolutionary experiences in which a single social class comes to actually embody the

interests of a society as a whole" (Riley, 2011, p. 15). At this stage, class alliances are formed out of a common interest to establish a new set of rules. Riley explains that when Gramsci spoke of the ruling class of unified hegemony, hegemony could here be understood in its intra-class or inter-class forms. This point shows that the capitalist class is not homogeneous and that its different groups, albeit with the same interests concerning production, may have different interests according to their respective contexts.

Until now, we have discussed some of the essential features of Gramsci's hegemony. Hegemony is a relevant concept when understanding the Colombian conflict. It helps to rationalise the purpose of the foundation of the Republic, the multiple civil wars between factions of the capitalist class, the breakout of the inter-class wars of the 20th Century and the paradox of how, despite continuously reproducing a highly conflictive context, the ruling class still enjoys consent from most of the subordinate classes. How is the bourgeois hegemony reproduced in Colombia? We will address this very question by examining hegemonic vehicles.

4.2. Hegemonic Vehicles

What is the purpose of conceptualising hegemonic vehicles? Human practices produce hegemony, and hegemonic vehicles allow us to understand how those practices operate. They are an interpretation of those practices, and underpin the hegemony during its trajectory of dominance.

Gramsci suggests that a class truly attains hegemony at the moment of the decisive passage from the structure to the spheres of the complex superstructure—

when the hegemonic groups achieve the transference of the structure's interests into society's ideological and political superstructure. Gramsci writes:

> "A third moment is that in which one becomes aware that one's own corporate interests, in their present and future development, transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups too. This is the most purely political phase, and marks the decisive passage from the structure to the sphere of the complex superstructures; it is the phase in which previously germinated ideologies become "party", come into confrontation and conflict, until only one of them, or at least a single combination of them, tends to prevail, to gain the upper hand, to propagate itself throughout society-bringing about not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity, posing all the questions around which the struggle rages not on a corporate but on a "universal" plane, and thus creating the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate groups" (Gramsci, 1985, p. 181).

Firstly, Gramsci conceives hegemony as being continually influenced by the base-superstructure ontology, mentioned only briefly by Marx, which means that the political and cultural phenomena happen in a sort of superstructure determined by relations of production. Although Gramsci rejects the determinism of some interpretations of Marx's passage on the superstructure, some sections of his work show his belief in the need to reflect the conditions of the production process into culture and the political dynamics. For him, only at the time of this passage can a class attain hegemony.

We do not conceptualise hegemonic vehicles under the base-superstructure ontology, but place them within the notion of capitalism as a system of social relations. Accordingly, hegemony cannot be accomplished at a "superstructural" level. We understand hegemony within the intricacies of ruling a system of social relations. This means that the economy does not necessarily determine the hegemony, that the

practices producing society's material conditions also condition the hegemony, and that culture or politics do not realise the hegemony but respond to people's concrete interests and demands. Hegemonic vehicles are institutionalised practices and, accordingly, should not be misrepresented in pure determinism of an analogical structure or the extreme voluntarism of individual agents' actions.

Secondly, since we conceive hegemonic vehicles within the framework of capitalism, they must necessarily consider the notion of class. We use this concept to question how the rational pursuit of personal needs and wants (disregarding vested and class interests), conditioned by the necessity to endure the capitalist hegemony, eclipses the process of class formation and class consciousness. This reinforces the way in which the ruling classes secure the consent of the working classes for the capitalist class and its goals. We follow Thompson's conception of class as a dynamic social relation (Thompson, 1978). Since the class does not exist within static structures, we view hegemony as composed of human practices conditioned by the complex interaction between structuring institutions and systemic dynamics to reproduce the conditions (material and ideational) for capitalism to endure in spite of its contradiction. The vehicles exist within class dynamics, related to fundamental yet changeable structuring institutions of the historical reconfigurations of capitalism. In other words, the institutions structuring social relations objectively define class. However, categorisations of class may change according to the historical reconfiguration of such institutions. Thus, we define the working class, exploited by its capitalist counterpart, not only as the demographic associated with work in the industrial means of production but also landless peasants producing goods for a

landowner, as in the case of Colombia. Classes are not mere bearers of the historical process, as Hall argues, they also have agency in that they are the subject of the historical process (Hall, 2017, p. 383).

Thirdly, hegemonic vehicles are distinct from Gramsci's concept of the hegemonic apparatus. Buci-Glucksmann explains the apparatus as a "complex set of institutions, ideologies, practices and agents (including 'intellectuals')". He states that: "[h]egemony is only unified into an apparatus by reference to the class that constitutes itself in and by the mediation of various sub-systems" (Buci-Glucksmann, 1980, p. 48). The apparatuses belong to Gramsci's notion of the state, which aims to explain the forms and modalities by which a given class stabilises and ensures the durability (more or less successfully) of its institutional-political power, as explained by Thomas (2015, p. 224). In so much, it is a concept akin to that of vehicles. However, vehicles are nothing but institutionalised practices to ensure the consent afforded to the hegemonic class. It is not a description of the state's practices, *per se,* because these take different shapes within disparate contexts and can be enacted by every social member.

> I have remarked elsewhere that in any given society nobody is disorganised and without party, provided that one takes organisation and party in a broad and not a formal sense. In this multiplicity of private associations (which are of two kinds: natural, and contractual or voluntary) one or more predominates relatively or absolutely—constituting the hegemonic apparatus of one social group over the rest of the population (or civil society): the basis of the state in the narrow sense of the governmental-coercive apparatus(Gramsci, 1985, pp. 264–265).

In his definition of apparatus, Gramsci includes a wide-ranging series of institutions and practices—including physical institutions like newspapers, schools

and parties. It also contemplates the apparatus of a hegemony organised by the working-class. However, we envision hegemonic vehicles as being eminently capitalist. They are institutionalised practices that work within the repertoires of capitalism. They enable the systemic dynamic of capital accumulation and enact the structuring intuitions of capitalism within a social formation. The vehicles must help to *protect* capitalism's repertoire, and therefore we do not conceive them as transformative practices. The main reason to define hegemonic vehicles as essentially capitalist is purely empirical. Because we can actually interpret them in current society by discerning the conditions and relations they promote, any interpretation of the vehicles within a repertoire other than capitalism would depend on an empirical analysis of the historical context.

Finally, the concept of hegemonic vehicles aims to dispel the view that hegemony is one-sided and complete, establishing "an all-embracing domination upon the ruled—or upon all those who are not intellectuals—reaching down to the very threshold of their experience, and implanting within their minds at birth categories of subordination which they are powerless to shed and which their experience is powerless to correct" (Thompson, 1978, p. 164). Gramsci himself puts forward that hegemony is not synonymous with domination by one class and submission by the other. It embodies class struggle and allows for self-activity and resistance from the subordinate classes (Wood, 1995, p. 105). Thus, and in contradiction to certain sections in Gramsci, hegemony should be perceived as a process in motion that is, at times, more or less achieved but never complete. The

hegemony requires maintenance and mechanisms to renew and reproduce its conditions—the hegemonic vehicles are precisely those mechanisms.

Gramsci refers to the passive revolution when conceptualising the crisis of hegemony; the point at which the historical bloc - the ensemble between the economic, political and ideological - breaks. Gramsci rightly points out that economic crisis does not automatically cause the collapse of capitalism and a transition toward socialism. He contemplates the possibility of capitalism's survival in the face of crises. The hegemony faces a crisis when the bourgeoisie cannot ensure society's productive forces in the capitalist economy. However, every economic crisis does not develop into a hegemonic crisis, as subordinate classes do not automatically withdraw their consent to capitalist rule automatically when facing a crisis. For Gramsci, when this 'withdrawal' occurs, a hegemonic crisis develops —thus, the hegemonic crisis is a crisis of authority (Gramsci, 1985, p. 210). However, even when a hegemonic crisis takes place, capitalists can still find ways to continue developing the capitalist economy, a point which Gramsci describes as "the old is dying, and the new cannot be born" (Gramsci, 1985, p. 276).

Gramsci explains the passive revolution as the moment: "in which the forces in conflict balance each other in a catastrophic manner, that is to say, they balance each other in such a way that a continuation of the conflict can only terminate in their reciprocal destruction" (Gramsci, 1985, p. 220). This "balance" of force entails an equilibrium wherein the ruling class can no longer lead—and no alternative leading forces can overthrow the hegemony. Gramsci conceptualises the "passive revolution",

in the context of this situation, as an attempt to politically and economically reconstruct in the face of a crisis. It consists in the ruling classes' efforts to keep subordinates always at the corporate level by preserving their relative weakness and neutralising "popular initiatives" while the bourgeoisie revolutionises itself economically and politically (Hyug Baeg, 1991).

Here is where hegemonic vehicles contribute to an understanding of crises. Gramsci sees the passive revolution as a strategy to recover from a hegemonic crisis. However, we see hegemonic classes institutionalise hegemonic vehicles to balance crisis, contradiction or conflict in their favour and avoid them turning against the hegemony. Hegemonic vehicles continuously produce situational logics that shape people's interests favourably toward the hegemony. A hegemonic vehicle is a practice that, due to its rooting in a social formation, is institutionalised and actively operating to structure material conditions and social relations.

We define hegemonic vehicles as institutionalised historical practices that structure situational logics enabling and reinforcing subordinate classes' consent for the capitalist hegemony.

Hegemonic vehicles are historical as they pertain to a set of social relations and material conditions constituted within a historical context. They correspond to the historical necessities of a social formation. In other words, they are functional to the principles which society and the system of social relations operate according to. They are real practices that are institutionalised to protect and enable the capitalist hegemony within a social formation. Therefore, they are not part of the system of social relations, but belong to a particular capitalist social formation.

Hegemonic vehicles are structuring institutions because they aim to affect social relations by reorganising the subordinate classes' interests. They operate within the capitalist system, affecting people's interests by shaping situational logics in a process called structural conditioning. In short, hegemonic vehicles condition the actions of members of society by creating situational logics favourable to the necessities of the hegemony. However, they are not mechanisms of ideological manipulation: they transform concrete conditions and realise the economic corporate interests of people to reverse the process of class formation, diminish unfavourable vested interests, and obliterate class interests and class struggle.

Hegemonic vehicles furthermore enable and reinforce the consent of the subordinate classes to the hegemonic forces in capitalism. Capitalism is a system of social relations based on capital production through the private exploitation of workers attached to the means of production. As such, it is a system that installs an objective contradiction between workers and owners. The capitalist's hegemony and the system's resilience depend on reproducing the material and ideational conditions for all society members. When capitalists do not achieve this, crises arise. However, hegemonic vehicles are in place to help enact the systemic dynamics of capitalism and maintain the consent of the subordinate classes. As such, hegemonic vehicles must operate at both the material and ideological levels to protect the system of social relations and its primary structuring institutions.

Finally, hegemonic vehicles are practices that are complex and transient. They are neither fundamental nor eternal in capitalism. They are circumstantial and correspond to the historical necessities of capitalism in particular contexts. Therefore,

they are not unique and necessarily exist within the complex process-in-motion of hegemony. Hegemonic vehicles are historicised structuring institutions, but differ from the structuring institutions of capitalism. We can define them as institutionalised practices that reinforce consent and protect the structuring institutions of a society. Therefore, these vehicles may structure human practices but do not structure society directly. In a social formation, we may find a myriad of hegemonic vehicles.

Before we move on into this thesis' account on the Colombian conflict as a hegemonic vehicle, it is pertinent to show with examples that hegemonic vehicles could be structuring institutions existing in other societies, including those we are not experiencing overt violent conflict.

We could interpret liberal democracy in the West as a hegemonic vehicle. Liberal democracy is an institution that bestows rights and duties to citizens. Its validity lies on the consent of the free people while it is always guarded by the legitimate weapons of the states(Dahl, 1998). Liberal democracy is a historical institution that corresponds to the social relations within capitalism—their values match and even complement each other. Thus, we must understand liberal democracy not in a vacuum but as an institution matching the historical needs for a more egalitarian society, at least in the political terrain(Weber, 2001). Moreover, liberal democracy transformed social relations and bestowed all classes equality before the law. It enables them to participate and even have a feeling of legitimacy on the decisions taken in other institutional instances(Lipset, 1959). In that sense, liberal democracy gives concessions to citizens of all classes to partake in the decisions spheres and even gain political and economic power. And therefore, liberal

democracy becomes an institution desirable and to be guarded by citizenship. As much as liberal democracy exists, the free market, the private property of the means of production and freedom needs to exist(Hoffmann-Lange, 2012). Because the decision-making process that entails liberal democracy requires the rationalisation that capitalism has helped to institutionalised in society—individuals are representing their interests and trying to maximise their conditions through economic decisions(Beetham, 2009). Thus, despite how flawed capitalism may be, liberal democracy helps to reinforce its legitimacy. However, if liberal democracy does not match the needs of capitalism at a point in time, it can wither away without taking with it the system of social relations. Liberal democracy can be an institution born during capitalism, but capitalism has endured and thrived during monarchies and continues to exist even in those "not free" countries.

Another example of a hegemonic vehicle could be clientelism in Latin America. This practice could be loosely defined as a type of linkage strategy that parties use to win elections (Kitschelt, 2000). However, a more historicist critique of Latin American societies could show that it goes beyond a strategy; it has become an institution structuring social relations. Gonzalez Ocampos defines clientelism as a social relation of goods or favours for political support in a personalised and discretionary manner(Gonzalez-Ocantos & Oliveros, 2019)This depiction helps us to see that enacting this institution structures power relations among individuals into patrons and clients. Moreover, said power relations favour owners, who are in capacity to offer all sorts of goods and favour, and therefore can influence politics. This ownership could come hand in hand with the representation of capitalists' interest in the political

spheres (Kuo, 2018). Clientelism is a powerful institution in Latin America because of the historical deprivation of access to goods and services for the working classes(Stokes, 2013). Thus, specific favours enable and reinforce their consent to the ruling groups—often capitalists. Clientelism is not ideological manipulation but the satisfaction of the economic corporate interest of the people, thus, often siding with their patrons and giving them their share to assure political power. Moreover, it is impossible to claim that clientelism is an inherently capitalist institution—its origins could be trace in ancient Rome and Greece (Gruen, 1984)or during the feudalist mode of production(Kettering, 1988). However, it is an institutionalised practice that has enabled the capitalist hegemony in Latin America. Clientelism is a hegemonic vehicle and not an inherent practice of capitalism because if the many efforts to dismantle it prosper, capitalism would not be necessarily at risk. Other hegemonic vehicles in the different social formations would be there to reinforce the hegemony of the capitalists.

This work aims to account for the protraction of the Colombian conflict. Its protraction is mainly related to a failure to produce social change and the lack of support for the revolutionary actors advancing the working-class' objective interests. Therefore, hegemonic vehicles are the central concept of this work to achieve its goal of providing an understanding of the Colombian conflict from a new optic. It interprets the conflict as an institutionalised practice that structures social relations in Colombia according to capitalism's needs.

5. The Colombian Conflict: A Hegemonic Vehicle

The Colombian conflict is a long-enduring social confrontation that, even if taken with its shortest possible timeline, is one of the oldest conflicts in the western hemisphere. It is a conflict that has taken the lives of millions of Colombians and seriously affected the world system. Ending the Colombian conflict has been a joint endeavour between numerous governments and organisations worldwide. Since the second half of the 1980s alone, there have been at least ten different peace processes in Colombia, initiated with different armed groups, from armed subversion to countersubversive groups (Fundación Paz y Reconciliación, 2019). These processes may have brought about changes in the armed power balance, but have failed to address the structural and systemic causes of the conflict, creating new waves of violence. Many of these peace attempts were hijacked by illegal armed organisations. However, on many more occasions, successive governments and the state breached the agreements and neglected to implement accords. It is still puzzling that despite having failed in its constitutional duty to provide peace to its citizens, the state enjoys overall legitimacy, and its ruling classes have continued support to remain in power.

The conflict has affected the living conditions of many generations of Colombians. Its definition and representation, without anticipating the consequences of resolution, could significantly impact the future of Colombia. Gómez and Alzate (2017) analyse the content and representation of the social and political conflict in school textbooks and academic articles. They argue that the conflict has structural causes and is also the outcome of social perceptions. They focus on textbooks because, unlike other historiographic products, textbooks benefit from an almost-overall social

consensus. Hence, their content is an insightful sign of how society has been taught about and sees the conflict. They uncovered that one of the predominant textbook's narratives of the conflict portrayed the subversive groups as actors corrupted by greed. Insurgency is depicted as a façade for terrorist organisations to legitimise the accumulation of private profit drawn from drug trafficking and other criminal economies. This narrative teaches that any subversive actor is illegitimate, and the goal of society has to be to neutralise any of its political aspirations and grievances (Gómez Mendoza & Alzate Piedrahita, 2017).

The armed confrontation and strategies to manage illegal armed actors have been decisive campaign stances in most Colombian elections. Duque Daza (2007) undertakes a similar analysis of the content of the 2006 election campaigns. He suggests that a "hard position" triumphed in 2006, in keeping with the government's line taken between 2002-2006, to keep the armed confrontation with the insurgents qualified as a terrorist. The "hard position" also portrayed opposition parties, and those more open to a negotiated solution to the violence, as "friends of terrorism". Citing Uribe, the candidate who became president in 2006, Duque writes that : "the country will have to choose now if we will keep improving the Democratic Security as the road to the peace, or if we will pull back, so the disguised communism surrenders the motherland to the FARC"(Duque Daza, 2007, p. 30). This representation of subversion by the ruling classes and the state has shaped the political preferences of a majority of Colombians, which explains why governments have put so much effort into creating a leitmotiv that delegitimises subversion and boosts the state's image as the representative of the entire society's interests (Basset, 2018).

Paradoxically, there is a strong counternarrative that paints the conflict as a war between society (as a whole) against its anti-social, terrorist enemies which is evoked to advocate for the continuation of the armed confrontation, a rejection of negotiated solutions or change in the structural causes of the conflict, and refusal to implement the agreements. This faction is the current ruling the country. With the exception of the second Santos period between 2014-2018, this is the discourse that enjoys the most legitimacy among the voting population.

These facts inspired this work to question the duration and endurance of the conflict, and whether it has a broader social function beside the apparent historical phenomenon that function could explain said protraction. In principle, the first answer is yes; the conflict helps to reproduce the power of the ruling classes, reinforces the bourgeois hegemony and protects capitalism from its contradictions. Therefore, we designated the conceptual framework of hegemonic vehicles in order to explain how the conflict helps capitalism, and unveil the real relations hiding behind the empirical form of the conflict.

This work's main argument is to resituate the conflict as a hegemonic vehicle, as an institutionalised practice that helps structure social relations in Colombia according to the interests and demands of the bourgeois hegemony. The conflict enables ruling classes to shape situational logics whereby people consent to the social order and disregard their class or vested interests and grievances.

The institutionalised conflict pertains to the Colombian social formation and the evolution of social antagonism since the institutionalisation of private property as the primary means of production during the Spanish colonisation. The armed

manifestations of the conflict, which are embedded in the social conflict of capitalism, have been a historical phenomenon in the country. We can trace outbreaks of armed confrontations back to the civil wars of the 19th Century and the beginning of the intra-class conflict to control means of production. In this period, pro-capitalist violence advanced the corporate interests of the two traditional parties of the bourgeoisie. However, the institutionalisation of the conflict - when it became a norm intended to represent the interests of society against its subversive enemies - would not happen until the 1950s, during the National Front. Then, factions of the conflicting elites decided to stop the intra-class confrontation and tackle the potential subversion that certain working-class groups were organising and strengthening. With the National Front, the ruling classes institutionalised a social project with the primary purpose of protecting the social order. This change corresponds to the historical necessities of capitalism in a context of social revolution and grievances, starting in the 1920's but enhanced during the 1960's. Although with tremendous transformative potential for the working-class, the newly inter-class conflict became functional to capitalism and the ruling bourgeois classes. All the following practices enabled the bourgeoisie to use the state to protect their interests and hegemony.

The conflict structures society as it affects and reorganises the conditions whereby subordinate classes define their interests. It does so not by manipulation, but by delivering material and ideational conditions to the people embracing the interests of the ruling classes. So, the privilege of the social order translates into having working companies, protecting the market, creating employment and enabling people overall to realise their economic corporate interests within the production relations of

capitalism. Consequently, people choose to forgo their class or vested interests, reversing class formation and struggle to embrace and protect the social order. Moreover, when people agree with the counterinsurgent bloc of power which rises up against the subversive actors, they do it through coercion and consent. This means that people choose to support the capitalist interests because, according to their contexts, it rationally enables their life chances. In Urabá, we will see how the paramilitary rule combines practices of coercion and consent to gain legitimacy. Their rule enables banana companies to emerge to control the operation of labour and trade unions, a relatively stable armed peace and the provision of several social services that were interrupted or unfulfilled by the state.

The conflict is a hegemonic vehicle operating since the 1950's to shape social relations in a logic of good and evil. People associate all the different forms of subversion with terrorism and insurgency and, overall, as being an obstacle to having a working, peaceful society. This reorganisation of social relations conceals the crisis, contradictory and conflictive social relations of capitalism and social transformation — the fundamental goal of the subversive actors. The lack of material and ontological security, adequate living conditions, and social services (among other things), are blamed on the maliciousness of the subversive actors and not on the disfunction of the capitalist system. For their part, capitalist classes use their ideology and this narrative to protect a highly conflictive system that privileges their social positioning. The end of the conflict, which will only be attainable due to structural transformations, would unveil the contradictions of capitalism and evidence the grievances of the subversives

by giving them access to political power, more access to means of production and legitimacy among certain people.

Currently, the state is not implementing the 2016 peace agreements. It has done nothing to stop the reproduction of the conflict, and we attribute that fact to the latter's social function. Therefore, we say that the conflict is a hegemonic vehicle. Using its context within the Colombian social formation, it is a structuring institution that lends itself to the resilience of capitalism to its crises, conflict, and contradictions by creating conditions for people to consent with the social order. The conflict may not be the only hegemonic vehicle in Colombia, and its duration may have an end. However, at least until present, reality has shown us its endurance. In the following chapters, this work establishes how the conflict is a hegemonic vehicle by undertaking a historical analysis and critique of the social relations in Urabá, Colombia

Chapter 3: Land Question and Conflict

1. Introduction: The Structural Dimension

In her account of capitalism, Azmanova distinguishes between its structural, systemic, and relational dimensions. The systemic dimension refers to capitalism's primary and secondary dynamics: competitive profit production and primitive appropriation. The structural dimension, which she argues is not composed of "structural dynamics", refers to how the institutions act as enabling structures to enact the systemic dynamics. Private property of the means of production is one of capitalism's fundamental structuring institutions because it enables its systemic dynamics — that which renders the system of social relations distinctly capitalistic (Azmanova, 2020, p. 41). Within particular social relations, people enact capitalism's systemic dynamics in their everyday practices. Core institutions structure those practices and relations. To Azmanova, those institutions are private property and management of the means of production, the "free" labour contract, and the market as a commodity exchange mechanism and a primary mechanism of economic governance (Azmanova, 2020, p. 40).

This thesis addresses the structural dimension within the historical context of the Colombian conflict. This chapter focuses on the history of one of capitalism's most relevant institutions to understand the conflict, namely private property and management of the means of production. It is a fundamental institution because its introduction during Spanish colonisation marked the beginning of the social conflict that underlies all the different waves of armed conflict in Colombia. The contestation

over property and control of the means of production, especially rural property, is the leading cause of the social conflict and the armed confrontation (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013).

We characterise Colombia's conflict as protracted due to its multiple, entwined, and long-standing causes, created in a specific historical development of the capitalist system of social relations. If capitalism is a distinct system because of its antagonistic social relations structured by its particular institutions (relations of production), in Colombia, those antagonisms have been exacerbated in armed conflicts through a combination of historical conjunctures and structural contradictions. The historical context explains why capitalism's typical social conflict developed as a protracted armed conflict.

Chapter Four establishes that capitalism's primary systemic dynamic is the competitive production of profit enabled by primitive appropriation. In Urabá, this historically took the form of forced displacement and land dispossession. Said displacements and dispossession which created and reproduced conflicts enabled capital accumulation. In this chapter on the structural dimension, we establish that the "agrarian structure", i.e., rural property as the means of production, is an institution structuring conflictive social relations in Colombia. Paradoxically, while private property generates armed conflicts, armed conflict legitimises private property as a fundamental institution of Colombia's social order. Therefore, this thesis portrays the conflict as a hegemonic vehicle—a fundamental institution for capitalism to endure through its contradictions and crises. Initially (from the 1820s-1950s), although rural property enabled competitive profit production, it gave rise to land hoarding,

unproductiveness, and non-competitiveness. These contradictory effects sparked pro-capitalist violence between owners and motivated them to resort to violent, armed competition while pushing them to expand into non-capitalist spaces to sustain profit. After the 1950s, owner classes utilised the conflict to legitimise the existence and prominence of private property among the people and to continue to expand capital accumulation. To understand the narrative of private rural property, it is important to bear both inter-class and intra-class conflicts in mind.

The literature on the Colombian conflict and history refers to the conflict over the property and management of the rural means of production as the *agrarian question* or the *agrarian issue.* Fals Borda argues that Colombia's attachment to the production of primary goods for export conditions its "structure", and the agrarian question is therefore central to characterising its society (Fals Borda, 1975, p. V). Although his arguments date back almost five decades, the "agrarian structure" has retained very similar characteristics and is as conflictual as ever. Fajardo (2003) explains that the land's property as the typical agrarian means of production, leads to high levels of hoarding in Colombia. This hoarding joins a modest productive development, fundamentally centred around small and medium-sized property. The macroeconomic policies on farming, especially those regarding interest and exchange rates, and, in general, protectionism in the financial sector, have contributed to property hoarding and monopolistic rents. These types of policies generate non-competitive agriculture, which has limitations in interacting or articulating with efficient systems of agro-industrial production and commercialisation. Thus, the chances of reintegrating rural populations, displaced due to property hoarding and

primitive appropriation, into other productive sectors are limited and traumatic. This situation translates into an increase in informality and poverty in urban areas (Fajardo, 2003, p. 668).

Land hoarding, reflected in higher GINI coefficients, goes hand in hand with inefficient land use. Fajardo argues that the current system of relations negatively affected the economic and social spheres as it worsens most of the population's living conditions. It contributes to the configuration and deepening of the social and armed conflicts and creates alienation and impoverishment among rural and urban populations. Moreover, it is one of the bases of the agro-export economy as it raises the production costs of farming goods and land and the country's capacity to face the pressures of the international agrarian market. The period of the conflict's institutionalisation, after the 1960s, translated into a severe conflict in the rural areas over access to land and political representation (Fajardo, 2014, p. 27). Enabled by primitive appropriation, the agricultural frontiers rapidly expanded with the cultivation of new crops, especially exports and illicit crops, which deepened the social and armed conflicts. At the same time, the production of basic alimentary goods for Colombian consumption starkly declined. These types of production are associated with the agriculture practiced by peasant communities, who are also the primary victims of armed conflicts.

2. Brief History of the Land Question in Colombia

This thesis argues that Colombia's land question, the question of land tenure, is the most prominent display of the constitution of the structuring institution of private

property of the means of production. This work embraces the argument that conflicts over rural property are the leading cause of the Colombian conflict (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013). Whilst acknowledging that private property is not the only structuring institution enabling the capitalist system of social relations in Colombia, it is the most important in the conflict's historical development.

In Colombia, the history of private property inevitably includes land conflicts—as land is one of the central means of production. The appropriation and commodification of land, enabled by primitive appropriation, is at the origin of the conflict as we know it. The beginning of the history of private property lies in the privatisation of pre- or non-capitalistic means of production. Thus, the social relations around private property were institutionalised in the country after the stately order was established during the Spanish colonisation (Fals Borda, 1968). Private property is not unique to capitalism, but it is a fundamental institution that enables the system to exist and reproduce. This section reviews a brief history of the land question as detailed by Fals Borda. He traces this history on the basis of three main elements: first, the change in the relations of production from the stately order and its mode of production during the colonial epoch to the current capitalist mode of production; second, technological change during these epochs and its impact on the agrarian structure; and third, the impact of the "capitalist rationality", what we see as the systemic dynamics of capitalism, on the relations of production. This latter explains that capitalist imperatives, when affecting old forms of labour, enabled modern techniques and fostered innovation to strengthen capitalism which caused the

"decomposition" of the peasantry—a process characterised as the commodification of land and labour.

2.1. The Indigenous Forms of Production

At the time of the Spanish arrival in Colombia, indigenous "forms" of production could be categorised in two ways: communitarian and tributary.

By 1560, most of the existing tribes—between 1 and 1.4 million people—used the "indigenous communitarian" form of production. This form was determinant in the gathering and nomadic stage, with minimum social organisation and rudimentary technology preventing most surplus accumulation. The land had no exchange or monetary value, just a use-value to the families or relatives in the community. It was not privately owned nor ownable. Forests and rivers were communal and used to hunt and fish for collective subsistence (Montaña Cuellar et al., 1974). As barter was "symmetric", it reigned in the excessive accumulation that could produce social or class differences. People bartered for what was needed and convenient, not for positional or status-based purposes. Furthermore, the indigenous system had inherent control measures within family or relative units to avoid individual excesses. Social organisation among food-gathering tribes was simple; they moved according to their needs. The only authority figure was a cacique[21], often designated by the community. The indigenous population had great respect for nature and a strong sense of community and mutual assistance, constructing their gods and spiritual world accordingly and harmonising their economic activities with it (Fals Borda, 1975).

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[21] The cacique is the chief of an indigenous tribe.

The tributary form, on the other hand, was more complex and most common among sedentary tribes. Having developed agriculture and knowledge of the use of wooden and stone tools allowed for surplus accumulation, excess and some forms of exploitation. Only some groups adopted this form. They had superior technology and more nuanced social differentiation which provided the foundation of the economy or tributary regime (Fals Borda, 1975, p. 3). Within these societies, archaeologists have documented the existence of different social strata, such as "kings", high rank warrior "casts", priests and "vassals". "Kings", for example, were entitled to some personal luxuries and collected farming taxes in the small villages (Tovar, 1970) within this system of social differentiation based on the division of labour and a sort of exploitation with surplus accumulation. However, this exploitation was not for profit—it was a necessary subordination to ensure collective subsistence. Although the tributary form required a division of labour, the state was incipient, and the ruling groups barely accumulated any surplus or war spoils, and it was therefore not an entire class society nor a feudal society (Fals Borda, 1975, p. 6). The product from land and mining was mainly redistributed within the tribes or exchanged among them. Some tribes even had markets to exchange products, but there is little evidence of monetary exchange, and precious metals only had cultural, ritual, family or use value. Surplus produced from indigenous economic activity was used to reproduce labour-power rather than being used for exchange and accumulation; however, some other trends started to emerge. This rudimentary form of exploitation enabled the Spanish to impose their stately forms of domination.

2.2. Stately and Slave Mode of Production

The Spanish crown brought with it features of the mode of production in Spain. The articulation between the indigenous form of production and the Spanish approach produced the "stately order". This order started with two economic and social domination mechanisms: the "repartimiento" and the "encomienda". Colonists used the indigenous tribes for communitarian labour that only required human resources, stone and the macana[22]. They introduced animal domestication for agriculture, iron, and the wheel, which accelerated production to develop the plough. As production increased, so did the surplus that the "lords" appropriated in terms of concentrated indigenous labour in settlements. These lords adjusted the mandatory communitarian work costume of the indigenous, allowing for slavery and overexploitation. Only white people were allowed to own tools and for the use of captive labour-power. Thus, the dominant groups appropriated the means of production. (Fals Borda, 1975, p. 73).

Upon their arrival, the conquistadors were driven by expectations of wealth based on precious metals. However, as stocks of precious metals became exhausted, the focus was reoriented to land. And so the land question begins as violent colonisation evolving into civil colonisation and bureaucratic control.

In the first epoch of the *Conquista,* land had relatedly low value as compared to the indigenous populations as an exploitable class. Very quickly, the colonialists took control of access coasts and rivers, developed a foreign economy and dominated the indigenous population through taxes. This exploitation took two forms. Through looting, conquistadors appropriated the belongings and valuables of indigenous

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[22] A wooden weapon or agricultural tool widely employed by the indigenous peoples.

groups, such as gold, precious stones, fabrics, victuals and even their persons—if they could be exchanged as slaves, or their labour-power used for agriculture, transport, construction, etc. in occupied areas. Through these practices, the first villages were founded (Friede, 1974, p. 235).

Exploitation of the land as well as indigenous populations started to produce profit. The colonial labour system, "el Repartimiento", enabled the exploitation of indigenous persons as profit producers, and in so-doing allocated all rewards to Spanish colonialists for working the land. Fals Borda argues that the repartimiento introduced the class society because it legitimated the Spanish lords exploitation of indigenous labourers (Fals Borda, 1975, p. 21). Furthermore, within this system, allocation to colonists was not equal, creating differences even among the exploitative class.

As increasing number of indigenous workers died due to their exploitation, profits began to decrease. Therefore, successive Spanish governments redesigned their indigenous policies to create "la Encomienda". Indigenous labourers were declared free vassals of the crown and owners of their held lands.

The encomienda limited the colonists' power both to dominate the indigenous populations or to perpetuate their rights as "feudal lords". Indigenous exploitation entailed becoming an "Encomendero", someone responsible for overseeing free indigenous labourers. These persons were entitled to profit from the surplus generated by indigenous labour, but had to pay the crown tribute, and were also expected to shoulder duties such as constructing local churches, hiring parish priests,

paying daily wages to labourers and having the capacity to defend the cities from pirates and other forms of attack.

The political and economic power of the first colonial epoch stems from the encomienda. The system was the backbone of the colonial society as it allowed for adjustments for conflict resolutions. It produced social relations that created family lineages linking Encomiendas, whose power resided in appropriating the indigenous surplus product collected through tribute, either in-kind or as services to the Encomendero (Colmenares, 1973, pp. 80–90).

The colonists attempted, on multiple occasions, to turn the Encomienda into an enduring property right, inheritable as an estate. In some cases, the Encomiendas lasted for two or three generations, as inheritance of the decedents of the first Encomendero. However, the crown opposed this practice, and dismantled it over a period of two centuries. The crown's restrictive approach to the colonist exploiters and the Encomienda prevented the development of feudalism, and instead gave rise to an adapted stately regime in which serfdom was more tributary than feudal. Moreover, the encomienda enabled the political and economic domination that eventually led to the system's downfall, as royal servants increasingly received land favours which facilitated the creation of the first haciendas and latifundia (Fals Borda, 1975, p. 24).

As land tenure bestows power, land occupants sought –and still seek— to shape mechanisms of land allocation. This is where the latifundium structure originated and became institutionalised with the state's help to support the dominant class' interests (Fals Borda, 1975, p. 27).

Before latifundia, land belonged to the Spanish crown as the Catholic Church bestowed its blessing on their ownership of everything discovered in America. Every conquistador or colonist was bound to legalise all land concessions through an obligation called "confirmation". Initially, confirmation depended on the colonist living on and cultivating the land, and if not the crown could reclaim the lands back. The latifundia started through a legal record called "*Merced*", which refers to land favours or concessions. It authorised the establishment of stately and slave haciendas as well as the "*Mayorazgo*"—also known as entailed estates and ecclesiastic lands. The Mercedes were the legal origin of Colombia's land property an existed in three different forms, as detailed in the chart below (Fals Borda, 1975, p. 30):

Table 2 Types of Mercedes During the Colonisation

Types of Mercedes During the Colonisation		
Type of Merced	**Area in hectares**	**Use**
Large estate	2500 to 1400	Stockbreeding
Small estate	450 to 150	Stockbreeding
Subsistence crops state	90 to 35	Subsistence Agriculture
Source: (Páez Courvel, 1940)		

As one Merced was not enough to competitively produce profit, colonists soon began to request access to more. They had to attest that the lands in question were barren, unoccupied by any indigenous communities, and not already planted with crops or constructed upon. These requirements created conflicts between indigenous communities, who had ownership of the "good" productive lands, and the colonists who sought to relocate them to new settlements. The concentration of indigenous populations in settlements allowed for political and economic control to be exerted over them, as well as evangelisation.

The Merced started to blend with the Encomienda creating, what Fals Borda calls, the American precapitalist mode of production. Colonists controlled indigenous settlements, charged tribute, and acquired rights to demand concession lands. This facilitated land hoarding and the stately production relations attached to the stately hacienda. The stately model relied upon precapitalist relations based on lands and mines as means of production. The "lords", or encomenderos, appropriated tribute as well as the mining and agricultural surpluses produced in the haciendas. Private property in the form of the hacienda, distinctive to the feudal grant, provided the foundational economic and social structuring institution of the New World. In Colombia, it structured exploitation relations from the colonial period up until the current capitalist relations of production (Fals Borda, 1975, p. 34).

At first, indigenous labour-power was allocated to haciendas through their settlements. However, since the indigenous populations were the king's vassals, they had rights and those persons who were employed in haciendas should be able to return to their settlements. Although they were theoretically free, and not a captive working force, in practice, the landed wanted to establish the workforce in their lands. Thus, they conceded plots to the indigenous workforce to settle and cultivate their subsistence goods or indebted them for life through daily wage advances, creating the basis for the stately hacienda with attached serfs. This became commonplace and the decrease in indigenous settlements was a landmark of developing capitalist relations in the nineteenth century. It was the origin of the system of laboured tenant farmer, hand, or peasant, and as indigenous reservations and settlements shrank, landowners took recourse to recruiting black slaves. Numerous haciendas combined the stately

and slave relations of production until the nineteenth century. Slaves, who came from advanced cultures and societies in Africa, were assigned more technical tasks while the remaining indigenous labourers kept working in farming and mining.

2.3. The Independence and the New Mode of Production

In the mid-eighteenth century, as white and mestizo people invaded the indigenous reservations, rural labour turned into peonage. This situation led to violent conflicts between indigenous and occupying populations, who sought to take over the reservations or evangelise their rightful inhabitants. Many displaced indigenous workers became attachés to haciendas, in employment as workmen or daily labourers. Others, who attempted to return to their lands, became landless workmen of the new owners.

The worsening of conditions for indigenous populations caused political conflicts as the landless joined the Comuneros revolution, collaborating in actions to recover the dispossessed lands. However, as Comuneros failed and "liberator laws" were issued, the indigenous became agrarian workmen on a large scale. Fals Borda explains that the "liberator laws", addressing the social changes produced in the transition from the colonial to the republican regime, painted the indigenous reservations as unacceptable colonial legacies. The laws institutionalised individual liberties, political equality, free enterprise and market, including for indigenous populations (Fals Borda, 1975, p. 97). They settled the conditions for a nascent capitalism and liberal society, the basis of the bourgeois hegemony in Colombia, and countered some aspects of the colonial legacy. This liberalism, decreed by the

Colombian National Congress in Cucuta on the 11ᵗʰ of October 1821, did not affect land hoarders, it simply legalised the latifundistas and primarily affected indigenous communities turning their territories into individually ownable plots. The land laws of 1821, 1832 and 1843 produced numerous smallholdings and eliminated the indigenous tribute to replace it with "voluntary" tithe to the church.

The land question, i.e. conflicts over land tenure, originated with the structuring institution of private property during Spanish colonisation. As aforementioned, all lands in the New World were considered royal property, and their allocation through concession was limited to occupants and producers to avoid the formation of a feudal nobility in America. However, in practice, the colonial authorities conceded unmerited Mercedes and let many encomenderos appropriate vast amounts of unclaimed land that they never cultivated. After independence, the new government implemented the same system and used it to pay national debts or to favour particular families. The new power conceded millions of hectares of unclaimed land to companies and private national and foreign parties in payment for services and works such as the construction of railroads and roads, navigation missions, mining and hydrocarbon exploitation and national bonds. The newly patriotic government institutionalised the latifundia when, after confiscating large estates from Realists (loyal to the crown), the unaltered lands were allocated to the foremost army officials and their families. The patriotic leaders appropriated and hoarded the national lands and kept the systems of stately and slave exploitation.

The new conditions consolidated the peasantry, one of the central elements of the land question. It has worked in production relations spanning regions and epochs.

Accordingly, the peasant has changed from its precapitalist forms, from persons seeking satisfaction of basic necessities, either in own or else's land, to free forms of labour or small producers attached to the capitalist laws of prices and markets, competition, profit maximisation, property concentration and resources monopolisation. This change produced the "decomposition of the peasantry" or rural proletarianisation, which intensified as of the nineteenth century and fuelled the conflict. The transition to capitalism enabled this decomposition: firstly, by ending indigenous reservations and slavery, and later with mechanisms such as rent on arable land, sharecropping with obligations, and the indebted peonage. All these mechanisms had in common the increasing importance of the monetary transition, replacing the payment in labour and kind, and the influx of the old profit principle propelled by this transition (Fals Borda, 1975, p. 92).

The general principles of land concession, which also held during colonisation, are that the claimant (called "spontaneous settler") must cultivate the soil, build a house, and demonstrate a valid economic use for a specific time — as stipulated in Law 14 of 1870 and the Civil Code and every subsequent related law. In practice, the state concedes large parcels of land to people who do not intend to use it and are only seeking property deeds (which served to deter settlers and workers interested in using the land). With the state's complicity, absentee landlords speculated with land, expecting land valorisation either from adjacent infrastructure or peasant labour that renders lands productive. In the latter case, the formal owner sells the lands or arranges exploitation contracts with the settlers as tenant farmers (Tovar Pinzón, 1975). These practices have been the source of numerous peasant-owner conflicts. Fals

Borda explains that these practices impose a "three-step law" upon the deed-less settlers. First, the settlers clear the wild soil and cultivate it; second, these worked lands are bargained over with local farmers, starting the process of plot hoarding; third, the latifundista claims the lands, either with a public concession or by coercion.

The agrarian question kept evolving as the productive forces changed from the colonial epoch to the nascent form of capitalism in the nineteenth century. The introduction of new technologies, such as the steam engine, also impacted the stately and slave modes of production. By the time of independence, peasants were still reliant on human and animal power to produce. In the 1820s, the first steamboat entered a market lacking technical development, industries and in contradiction to the interests of the nascent merchant bourgeoisie. However, this bourgeoisie soon realised the potential of steam as a productive force and endeavoured to control it. From 1850 onwards, the bourgeoisie incorporated steam into production, enabling the import of products and pushing towards a free market for agricultural products. At this time, tobacco was in demand in Europe, so the state gave up its monopoly and allowed private entrepreneurs to begin this production. In 1848, the state ruled on the establishment of the "free market", allowing producers and merchants the freedom to export and import according to the capitalist laws of supply and demand (Ospina Vásquez, 1955).

With this legal precedent, new entrepreneurs opened farms in unclaimed lands and turned plots of their haciendas over to tobacco crops, while other dispossessed the indigenous populations of their reservation lands. The end of the indigenous reservation was the first impact of modern capitalism on the peasant estate in its

decomposition process. This situation transformed production relations and increased rent profit to landowners — these owners became agrarian entrepreneurs. Workers entered labour relations as piecework, for daily wage or sharecropping and moved into the production centres. During this period, a trifold economic process started: 1) land hoarding by a few powerful actors, 2) increase in production and profit, and 3) partial liberation of the workforce (Fals Borda, 1975, p. 76).

Alongside tobacco, stockbreeding and coffee cultivation developed, producing an even higher impact on the social fabric of the rural population. Gradually, production relations were modified to the benefit of landowners; their power, wealth, and proportion of owned lands all grew. As lands were commodified, their value augmented. The combination of these three goods' "economic revolutions" propelled capitalism nationally. Fals Borda argues that the Colombia was going through a stage of original capital accumulation in this period, an argument compatible with the consolidation of capital in Urabá, as the following chapter establishes. The basis of accumulation was landowners and the new merchant class exploiting peasant labour-power and appropriating almost all the agricultural surplus. In Antioquia, these exploitative classes also controlled gold mining, creating a financial bourgeoisie who traded in lands and crops using loans for road construction and exploitation of unclaimed lands (and thus making Antioquia an important location for the development of capitalism).

The development of capitalism entrenched unequal development, not only among regions but also within them. Foreign capital and technology were injected into certain regions, which also strengthened the regional bourgeoisies. These

haciendas and newly developed mills were the synthesis between old forms of labour organisation and new production relations supported by the technical change. From this division of labour, a rural proletariat arose and imposed rent over land workers. Like during the colonial epoch, technological and capitalist development benefited the traditional dominant groups and served the interests of incoming transnational corporations. This allowed for original accumulation and a transition from the old stately and slave modes of production to a mercantile and agrarian capitalism in which the owners of the means of production extract almost all surplus, with the unconditional support of the state.

The twentieth century saw a continuation of the process of the expansion of capitalism, and its extension into new areas. Fals Borda traces original accumulation in Antioquia, Valle, the Coast and Cundinamarca, where Colombia's main cities are situated. We argue that the colonisation of peripheral spaces within and in other departments is not original accumulation, but primitive appropriation deployed in non-capitalist space (Azmanova, 2020; Harvey, 2006; Luxemburg, 2003). The case of Urabá fits this conceptualisation; it represents the space where capital coming from Antioquia and the Coast expanded to continue its process of profit production and capital accumulation.

During the twentieth century, the decomposition of the peasantry happened alongside the hoarding of land among few hands and the augmentation of production and profit in agriculture and stockbreeding through technical changes. These processes were undertaken by the class of capitalist agricultural entrepreneurs who created conflicts by displacing the traditional landowners and affecting small farmer

and direct land labourers, which ended up as a proletariat of micro-smallholders. The nascent industrial bourgeoisie propelled a profound transformation in the agrarian sector through the construction of roads and infrastructure, and also continued to create conflicts between peasants and landowners.

3. The Structuring Institution of Private Property of the Rural Means of Production

This thesis identifies the conflict dynamics concerning the structuring institutions of capitalism in Colombia as the structural dimension. At the same time, this work claims that the conflict turned into a complementary structuring institution, according to Colombia's historical context, to help the system reproduce despite its contradictions and crises, i.e., it became a hegemonic vehicle. Land was violently appropriated, privatised and hoarded, and these practices were institutionally legitimised through laws that progressively established private property as a fundamental institution of Colombia's social order. The conflict first enabled and then legitimised land grabbing.

This section focuses on how the state created a legal corpus that incorporated private property into the fundamental institutions of the Colombian social order. Since our case is the conflict in Urabá, a predominantly rural region, we will focus mainly on land tenure. In short, this section examines how the protection of private property of the rural means of production was legitimised.

In the previous section, we presented the origin of the institution of private property in Colombia. This section focuses on the institutional mechanisms that have enabled the protection of private property and proprietors under the systemic

imperatives of capitalism over time, namely capital accumulation and primitive appropriation.

3.1. Land Policies During the Inter-class Conflict Period (XIX century-1957)

This work scrutinises the effect of capitalism on the conflict and, in turn, of the conflict on capitalism. Therefore, it is concerned with private property of the means of production as a structuring institution of capitalism and not on the transhistorical practice of owning and holding land. This work's scope is to explore property as an enabler of capital accumulation and profit production. So, when looking at the land laws, we aim to demonstrate that armed conflict dynamics have concealed the causes of the social conflict over land tenure. In reality, the armed conflict has enabled owners to advance their interests. We work under Gramsci's concept of hegemony, whereby dominance is not limited to coercion but similarly encompasses consent. Thus, the capitalist classes have utilised the state's institutions to favour their interests as the top class of capitalism, while creating conditions for the working class to consent to capitalism. This means that they have protected their social position while reinforcing the gears of the capitalist systems in the country.

19th and Early-20thCentury

Until 1905, the government issued a plethora of laws and decrees allocating the state's lands to serve the interests of the bourgeois order established after the independence. Among other things, these laws sought to: compensate the militaries from the independence wars and the war veterans of the XIX century civil wars, attract foreign

migration to colonise frontier lands and ensure demographic stability, enable infrastructure works, pay public debt bonds and fund the lossmaking state budget, improve cultivation to bolster export and internal trade, widen the agricultural frontier, legalise occupied lands exploited by colonists and rural population, and allocate land to different territorial entities to compensate for state inefficiency.

The first laws concerning the agrarian question were laws 61 of 1874 and 48 of 1882. They established the conditions for promoting the colonisation of baldios (public, uncultivated, unclaimed lands) and expanding the agricultural frontier—both necessary conditions to consolidate capitalism in the country. As land tenure became institutionalised, these laws also contributed to ongoing social conflicts by setting the foundations of latifundia and the profit production function of the land.

Law 61 of 1874 defined property rights relating to baldios as the rights acquired by an individual occupying an uncultivated nation's plot, which is subject to no special treatment the under law, who dwells on and works the land, regardless of the plot size. Furthermore, it granted settlers the right to receive, free of charge, an adjacent plot with the same area as their cultivated plot (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016, p. 36). However, this additional plot had to be used in the nation's interests to promote export crops and generate profit. Therefore, it applied exclusively for settlers who had profitable crops: pastures for cattle, cocoa, coffee, sugar cane, or other permanent crops (Ministerio de Industrias, 1931, p. 121 Vol. III). Settlers with no permanent crops (i.e. peasants growing subsistence crops) were limited to receiving an adjacent plot of less than 30he.

Due to a lack of technical and economic tools, the law also stipulated that settlers must delineate inhabited and worked plots themselves, enabling speculators to hoard large areas of uncultivated land.

The historical importance of this law was that, through it, the state formally gave preference for the transfer of property rights over baldios to people who intended to inhabit and work the lands with a clear bias to profit production. It conceded large estates, without conditions, in exchange for territorial bonds, which contributed to latifundia and haciendas.

In 1882, Law 48 ratified the principle of allocating land to producers, irrespective of comparative size. It protected settlers' ownership rights and limited the allocation of adjacent plots to a maximum of 5000he. It also changed the rule on the acquired rights, which had previously favoured territorial bondholders who were mainly interested in speculating and possessing land for the power and prestige it bestowed. This law ruled to alternate the allocated adjacent plots with settlers' cultivated plots to control the unused latifundium and satisfy the labour demands of landowners. However, this alternating distribution created conflicts between settlers occupying uncultivated lands and the licensees claiming the lands as their own, as well as additional conflicts between the landed class and peasants, who worked as tenant farmers, and aspired to be emancipated from the current production relations by claiming baldios as settlements (Fajardo, 1986).

In 1884, the government issued decree 832, which helped to configure the rural population's stratification. It favoured settlers with enough capital to cultivate large estates with artificial grazing or permanent crops and hire peasants or poor settlers to

work as tenants. These settlers had the right to acquire adjacent plots of the same area of to cultivate. This decree also imposed two further restrictions: it forbade trading two or more separate plots, or the sale of any allocated plot before having property deeds. However, it left the right to large licensees open as it imposed no specific duties in this regard. In the event of land conflicts, it also favoured the holders of the territorial bonds over settlers.

Between 1827 and 1869, large concessions (over 5000he) predominated, while land allocation to settlers was negligible. Between 1870 and 1900, in contrast, the area allocated to large licensees decreased whereas allocation to settlers and farmers increased. Overall, 89% of the land was allocated to 309 licensees possessing over 1000he, while the remaining 11% was distributed amongst 823 licensees with under 1000he each. Despite state efforts and the limits established by the law, extreme inequality persisted, as reflected in the high GINI indexes—0,71 for 1827-1869 and 0,76 for 1870-1900—(Kalmanovitz & López, 2006, p. 60).

During this period in Urabá, the allocation of baldios corresponded to the process of the region's colonisation. Antioquia expected to turn Urabá into a prosperous region, favouring the concession of baldios for for-profit production. For instance, in 1851, a group of capitalists from Medellin tried to collect funds to acquire approximately 2 million hectares of baldios between the Pacific Coast and the Atrato River. Their goal was to promote the colonisation and industrialisation of the West of Antioquia, from the Pacific to Urabá. In 1854 the government allocated 16000he of baldios to a private company called the Compañia de Mutata to construct a road from Santa Fe de Antioquia, traversing Buriticá and Dabeiba to reach the navigable waters

of the Sucio and Leon rivers (Parsons, 1996, p. 57). This route was used for capital to ingress the region and the exploitation of mineral resources, as exemplified by the English mining company Frontino in 1856.

Allocation of Baldios 1901-1930

The successive conservative governments in power until the 1930s issued more aggressive legislation to promote and regulate the peasant colonisation of baldios and widen the agricultural frontier. They allocated large estates to agricultural, mining and railway companies, and issued the policy of *targeted colonisation*, which created official colonies in several regions. Further laws were introduced on baldio allocation in forests for mining exploitations and hydrocarbons, as well as cessions to departments, municipalities and other territorial entities, and the creation of penal colonies. During this period, the assertiveness of the legislation matched the dynamism of the coffee colonisation and the peasant exploitation of uncultivated land. Similarly, it reflected the expansion of roads and railroads, the increase in export crops such as coffee and bananas, and the development of mining and hydrocarbon exploitation through concessions to national and foreign companies.

In 1905, Law 56 introduced the following changes (among others): the maximum area of land that could be allocated was reduced from 5000 to 1000he; plots left uncultivated since the law of 1882 had to be returned to the state; settlers and farmers were required to request state demarcation of their plots; the market for land available to allocate was opened up by authorising settlers to alienate plantations and facilities in baldios and permitting them to buy the adjacent plots; and the issuance of

territorial bonds was forbidden. This legislation consequently centralised the allocation of baldios under the president, and effectively allocated these lands: as a concession to farmers, to companies to develop public infrastructure, to new settlements and settlers, and in exchange for bonds and concession deeds. Although the regulation was very protective of settlers, it posed no obstacle to the allocation of large land areas. For instance, the banana industry grew exponentially as the United Fruit Company in Magdalena received 56000he and the German Albingia in Urabá a further 14000he (Arango Restrepo, 2011, p. 198).

Law 110 of 1912 changes the definition of the baldios to: a "plot within the national borders with no owner, besides the state, and which allocated as such has to return to the state" (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016, p. 55). This new formulation included non-owned parts of the territory, such as riverbanks, islands, or coasts. It again changed the limit on the size of plot that could be allocated to 2500he.

In 1928, decree 150 ordered large landholders to show the original property deeds and a failure to do so would result in the landholder being forced to return the lands to the state. This legal tool enabled peasants and settlers to challenge the ownership of unused lands by latifundia and hacienda owners.

During this period, events like the Thousand Days' War and the separation of Panama from Colombia affected Urabá, upsetting the coloniser's drive and delaying Urabá's reinvention as the profitable land of Antioquia's dreams. The allocation of baldios in Urabá had to create balance between settlers' needs and the requirements of infrastructure to transport goods. It also caused disagreement between municipalities over their proximity to the project of the 'Road to the Sea'. Despite these

conflicts, the central government decided that the colonisation of Urabá was of national interest—it was a strategy to avoid situations like the separation of Panama. However, the sentiment was not shared by all Antioquenians, who saw the region as back-ward, savage, and 'full of liberals'. In 1913, the Departmental Assembly issued a list of incentives for people to settle around Dabeiba and Mutata: a concession of 10 to 20 pesos in gold; monthly allocations of 10 to 15 pesos in gold during the first six months; tools; and a plot of 100he of baldios issued by the national government. The settler, in return, had to build a house, clear at least 4he of the land in the first six months, and cultivate 1he of manioc, plantain, sugar cane, or artificial grazing. By the end of the first year, 8he had to have been cleared, but settlers could not destroy tagua palms or rubber trees and were required to "good health and good working habits". After four years, they would receive 10he of land for each one cultivated with permanent crops, on condition that they allow the construction of the projected railway to continue (Parsons, 1996).

For the entrepreneurs of the colonisation, land tenure provided a solution to certain problems. White, a protagonist of the colonisation of Urabá, explained that the region was ruled by insecurity over land deeds (White, 1915). Colonisers were discouraged by the presence of indigenous reservations, which created uncertainty about land rights and were portrayed as obstacles to the nation's progress. Nevertheless, and over time, the colonial endeavour managed to use the reservation lands for "profit production" in the nation's interests, and the institution of property therefore protected those interests. This situation is exemplified by looking at people such as the American entrepreneur Henry Granger, who received a concession that

enabled him to exploit a 99-year monopoly over a railroad that connected the Urabá

Gulf and Medellín. The government conceded several advantages to the contractor for

constructing the "Central Railway of Colombia", whilst also fostering immigration

from the USA and Europe to provide labour for banana plantations (although, this

project admittedly never took off).

Baldios During the Liberal Republic 1932-1946

From 1930 onwards, the new Liberal government had to face the agrarian crisis caused

by land conflicts over the previous years in conjunction with mitigating the effects of

the global economic crisis of 1929 on agricultural goods and rural and urban labour.

Therefore, the government decided to parcel up some latifundia in conflict and

allocate the resulting baldios to settlers. The government proposed a new land policy

in 1933, which this time was intended to solve the problem of hacienda land deeds

and the demarcation of private from public lands. This policy never passed in the

parliament due to opposition from trade unions.

The government had issued three previous laws (laws 5 and 62 of 1930, and

law 25 of 1931) to legalise settler's occupied lands, promote agricultural production

and public works, cede baldios to the administration of certain some departments and

municipalities, and control land hoarding in the banana areas.

With law 5 of 1930, the government ceded 100000he to Antioquia to promote

agriculture and stockbreeding in Turbo, Urabá. The land allocation strategy was

supposed to prioritise Colombians, and particularly low-income families and farmers

intending to reside on and use their lands for subsistence. No settler could receive over 200he.

Law 200 of 1936 established a new land regime. This law echoed the idea that "the conflictive situation of the rural realm in Colombia was due to a serious opposition between juridical factors (property deeds) and economic factors (peasant's needs)", as proposed by the Industry Minister J.F. Chaux (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016, p. 67). Land tenure rights, defined as unalienable in the law, stated that "when the property deed surpasses the fair share, ceases to be a right and constitutes a usurpation. If respected the property deed as a right, it would be saved the principle's inviolability, and in turn, enable the penalisation of the usurpation. It comes to integrate labour as a condition to the property right" (Londoño, 2009, pp. 69–70).

Law 200 promised to be a cutting-edge land reform which would solve the agrarian question. Among other things, it imposed two mandatory conditions: that baldios were demarcated from private land, and that country estates owned by individuals were economically exploited either as sown fields or as pasture for livestock. It ordered the termination of ownership over unused lands and confirmed the requirement to present valid property deeds. It obliged landholders to use the lands or be subjected to the penalty of expropriation within ten years. It gave property rights to settlers using private uncultivated lands for at least five continuous years and created a special jurisdiction called the "land judges" to solve land conflicts (Perez Salazar, 1938).

In 1936, the government also issued law 34 modifying the baldios, amending the regulations in favour of settlers who established and used the lands and limited land hoarding. It also limited land allocated in exchange for territorial bonds, stockbreeding, and farming, and obliged bondholders to use their allocated lands. The new law reflected the change of policies adopted by the Liberal government after a long Conservative "hegemony". It showed an intention to distribute public lands more rationally and equally, favouring allocation to small and medium-scale farmers. However, both laws still gave warranties to large baldio licensees, especially to stockbreeders.

Land policies during the Conservative governments 1946-1953[23]

In 1946, the conservative government issued law 97, modifying some of the Liberal rulings. Among other things it; restricted settlers' entitlement to baldios to avoid conflicts with landowners, gave mayors the task of requesting the allocation of baldios, increased the maximum land plot size for stockbreeding to 5000he, and rendered critical natural areas adjacent to islands, navigable rivers, and beaches in the baldio reserve off-limits.

According to the INCODER, despite La Violencia, the rate of baldios allocation did not change in the period of the Liberal Republic. On the contrary, the number of beneficiaries and total surface allocated increased (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016, p. 82,83). During this same period, the representation of small and

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[23] Let us frame this period within the context of 'La Violencia' since 1948, the bloodiest confrontation between Liberals and Conservatives party members, which exacerbated existing land conflicts. Its significance lies in being the preface to the change of nature of the conflict, i.e., to become an intra-class conflict from being an inter-class between the elites of both parties.

large awardees and the area of land allocated to them decreased, while the representation of the medium awardees and their land entitlements increased.

Land Policies during the Pacification Government of Rojas Pinilla 1954-1957

General Rojas Pinilla was appointed to "pacify" La Violencia and disarm Liberal, Conservative and Communist armed groups. It is important to note that the end of La Violencia, the last period of inter-class conflict during the XX century, was followed by the consolidation of a new bourgeois hegemony through the political pact between elites—the National Front. The appointment to the office of Rojas Pinilla is the immediate antecedent to the intra-class conflict, whereby the ruling capitalist classes started to institutionalise the conflict against the enemies of society to maintain the capitalist system of social relations and the leadership of its most prominent class, the bourgeoisie.

Rojas Pinilla's amnesty promised to allocate lands to peasants and baldios to settlers. The 1894 decree created an ambitious and absurd plan of colonisation that eventually failed. Although his government allocated 1004380he to 13133 individuals, those who benefited least were small awardees. The medium and large awardees fared far better, and the latter was the group which benefited most.

From the XIX century until 1957, a period in which a series of conflicts between different factions of the capitalist classes took place, the following trends in terms of land legislations and baldio allocation can be identified:

- Allocation prioritised settlers or farmers, confirming the legal precedent in land tenure which favoured those persons who would both work and

live upon the land. However, land retained its profit-production function due to the major concessions and limited awardee duties which endured.

- Governments set limits on the size of areas allocated. Overall, the allocation of stockbreeding land was higher than agricultural land. The allocation of land was increasingly equitable after the XIX century. Liberal governments which were closer to the merchant and industrial elites, displayed the strongest intentions to rationalise and democratise the allocation of baldio titles.

- However, this was counteracted by the ambition to protect territorial bondholders and preserve the sizable baldio concessions in the law.

- Although land allocation remained unequal, small and medium allocation helped to create a rural middle-stratum.

- The capitalist imperative of competitive profit production continued to be displayed in the interests of the ruling classes to promote peasant colonisation and the expansion of the agrarian frontier, mostly with export crops.

The following chart gives an overview of baldio allocation from 1903-1957.

Table 3 Allocation of baldios to private individuals. Colombia, 1903-1957

Allocation of baldios to private individuals. Colombia, 1903-1957				
Periods	# Awardees	%	Area (He)	%
1903-1913	4125	7.7	848425	26.5
1932-1946	12359	23.04	607673	19
1947-1953	14894	27.7	764896	23.9
1954-1957	12649	23.6	976520	30.5
Total	44.027	100	3197514	100

Source: (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016)

3.2. Land Policies at the Onset of the Intra-class Conflict Period (1958-1988)

As argued throughout this thesis, we see the conflict in Colombia as a hegemonic vehicle. After the National Front (1958), the elites institutionalised the conflict to favour the bourgeois hegemony and the capitalist system of social relations. Before 1958, two factions of the bourgeoisie competed over profit production via state control. Only after this period, in a historical context favourable to anti-capitalist sentiment and communist subversion, the elites started to use the state to jointly protect their power and society. This became the new framing for the conflict: a war against a subversive enemy.

We argue that the protraction of the conflict relates to its social function — that of helping to reproduce the capitalist society despite its crises, conflicts, and contradictions. The CNMH argues that the common thread in Colombia's agrarian history is the dialectic relation between agrarian conflicts, violence, peace accords and attempts to address the agrarian question — this latter displayed mainly in the inequitable distribution of land and the poverty experienced by the rural population (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016, pp. 93–94). To date, no agrarian reform has managed to address the land question. The social and historical causes of the conflict in Colombia and its plethora of armed expressions have never been addressed. Therefore, at the time of this thesis's writing, although the conflict has changed its dynamics and characters, the underlying causes remain the same and revolve around private property and capital accumulation.

At this point, it is necessary to scrutinise some of the land policies in this phase of the conflict.

Rehabilitation National Plan 1958-1961

The first government of the National Front had the difficult task of resolving the aftermath of La Violencia, which included the dispossession and displacement of thousands of rural inhabitants. Putting the numerous claims from affected people and the administrative and political obstacles in executing the rehabilitation plan temporarily aside, the Commission in charge had to address the social and public order problems caused by the invasion of haciendas by peasants and rural inhabitants. They lost their labour, lands, and goods to the violence. These peasant practices have been occurring since the 1920s and 1930s at the centres of the agrarian conflict; peasants organised armed self-defence groups against the Conservative violence. Peasants organised massive invasions to haciendas and established peasant settlements. As expected, the Commission had the difficult task of addressing this situation either by allowing this violation of private property or by recovering the properties through peaceful or military means.

However, a more critical problem for the government was the "communist threat" inherent in the peasant settlements. If it was true that the Communist Party incited many of the hacienda invasions, then there was an anti-subversive sentiment that defied foundation. By this time, the communist peasant self-defence groups had demobilised and were turning into agrarian movements.

The government had three goals; to counter the communist influence, to solve old agrarian problems, and to stop the massive rural migration movements to the cities. Consequently, the National Front started its rehabilitation in the most affected areas with a programme that parcelled up the lands and other "directed colonisations" of the frontier zone— this move motivated numerous peasant families to migrate and escape from the pro-capitalist violence in areas like Urabá.

Through the 'parcelling', the government sought to resolve the conflicts created by the invasion of uncultivated, privately owned lands (Bonilla, 1966). The institution in charge of the parcelling was the Caja Agraria bank. However, conflicts began to arise with the Rehabilitation Commission as the bank attempted to create profit through the credits offered to the violence victims by establishing extremely high rates for the peasants. Furthermore, the staff of Caja Agraria created administrative obstacles, and operated with irregularity and often fraud (G. Sanchez, 1988). Overall, the Commission was unsuccessful and dissolved in 1960.

Law 20 of 1959 and Baldio Colonisation in the onset of the National Front

Law 20 did not simply aim to rehabilitate the agrarian population, but rather to set agrarian spaces into motion to produce capital and profit. Thus, the parcelling programmes aimed to: reconcile settlers and owners displaced by the violence living in shared territories; incorporate poor landless peasants, displaced landholders, and owners of barren, unproductive lands into other agriculture and livestock activities; more efficiently exploit uncultivated or poorly cultivated lands; and redistribute rural property to increase the overall number of properties and promote the agriculture and

livestock industries. This law used the disturbing public order situation to reinforce the economic function of land in the country—i.e., to increase profit production.

Agrarian Reform of the National Front 1962-1974

Law 135 of 1961 approved the first agrarian reform of the country. The agrarian reform was a reaction against the subversive context of Latin American and the Cold War: to avoid the "contagion" of the Cuban Revolution and spare the rural population and agricultural sector from the ravages of the armed violence of the 1950s. The CNMH highlights three aspects of the reform: 1) its social, not exclusively economic, character; 2) the property structure of the land and its use; 3) the nature of the solutions to the agrarian problem.

The reform originally had to transform the traditional patterns of land distribution, provide technical and social services, and improve the living conditions of its beneficiaries. It had to address the full structure of land tenure.

According to ECLAC figures, exploitations of over 100he occupied 64% of the agricultural surface, while smallholdings, which represented 56% of the total number of exploitations, only occupied a little over 4% of the land (Lleras Restrepo, 1961). These figures show the high level of land tenure hoarded by relatively few hands. The senator at the time, Carlos Lleras Restrepo, presented the following observations of the agrarian question at the time:

- Smallholdings do not allow for an adequate use of the workforce, wear out the land, and do not promote the use of agricultural techniques.

- The latifundium occupies a large surface area in extensive stockbreeding, but has a very low land and labour use; the technique is very behind and has very low productivity.

- Among the exploitations of less than 5he, the are "precarious and temporal" forms of tenure, very similar to sharecropping.

- Sharecropping and agricultural tenure are also practiced in exploitations over 500he.

- Agriculture uses 9,7% (2.9 million hectares) of the land and provides 64.5% of the gross product. Stockbreeding uses 90,3% (29.8 million hectares) of the land and provides only 35% of added value.

- The difference between rural workerss and small farmers' income (2'065.000 persons) and that of big capitalists (150.000 persons) is vast. In 1953, the average income of the former was $377, while the latter's was $2146 (Lleras Restrepo, 1961; Cited in Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016, p. 119).

Finally, the Rural Reform contained an ultimate goal synthesised in the following quote by Lleras Restrepo: "More than a country of labourers, Colombia must be a country of owners". The governments of the National Front—seeking to pacify the country, prevent the class struggle and protect the social order—saw that instead of augmenting the mass of wage labourers, it was more tenable to create a society of small rural owners (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016, p. 120). Thus, amidst the urban expansion and the country's industrialisation, the government recognised that it was strategic to promote industry at the same time as the rural reform to stop

rural migration to the cities, raise agricultural production and improve the rural population's lives. The goal was to consolidate a prosperous class of rural owners to counterbalance the latifundium and smallholdings without affecting the sizeable territorial property.

Lands Acquisition, Crop Distribution and Baldio Allocation 1962-1988

Law 135 of 1961 created the INCORA (Colombian Institute of the Agrarian Reform) and cemented the system for the allocation of baldios. It remained in force until law 30 of 1988. In the first period, the programmes of land acquisition took a progressive pace. The INCORA estimates that during the Reform, over 13 million hectares were distributed to create 4.1295 properties. This figure was based on registered properties of over 100he that could be the object of acquisition by the INCORA. However, only 202.094he were acquired in nine years, and 68,3% of these properties measured less than 60he (in which not all lands were cultivable).

On the other hand, there were problems with the calculation of the amount of land to allocate. The Reform benefitted over 800.000 families with little to no property, although the available parcelling land barely amounted to 9 million hectares; it was therefore impossible to allocate a plot per peasant family (INCORA, 1970, p. 78). The solution was to combine baldio allocation with land colonisation.

Urabá was considered by the INCORA to be the most important new project for the country. A 1964 report designed and launched a project of support to spontaneous land colonisation. The INCORA supported Urabá's colonisation through baldio entitlements, roads construction and credits.

The Reform results were less than satisfactory and almost insignificant if considered within the historical and political context of land tenure conflicts, as well as the legal and juridical obstacles in the expropriation of private properties. The CNMH argues that a rural reform is inviable if the state must buy all the land to allocate to poor peasants in order to solve social inequality and improve rural productivity(Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016, p. 149).

Land Allocation to the Amnestied by Law 35 of 1982 and Law of Agrarian Reform of 1988

In 1982, through law 35, the government conceded an amnesty to insurgent fighters willing to demobilise. To manage this transition, the government created the National Rehabilitation Plan (PNR) that, among other things, allocated land to victims and reintegrated them into the system of economic production. This trajectory toward peace helped to reactivate land parcelling activities. It increased baldio entitlements in areas affected by the armed confrontation. It reactivated the acquisition of land for the agrarian reform and increased baldio allocation in colonisation zones with guerrilla influence. By 1987, 185.760he of land had been distributed among 12254 families.

In 1988, law 30 was issued in order to reactivate the agrarian reform in a new attempt at establishing peace with the insurgent groups in a volatile social environment. The law specifically targeted the inoperancy of the instruments of land expropriation (which were deemed responsible for the failures of the Reform). The law tried to simplify the administrative process of land negotiation, increase the body

of legitimate reasons to declare land to be of public use and social interest, restrict the hoarding of baldios, promote peasant participation in the decision-making process, issue new resources for the INCORA and enforce the allocation of free land to peasant communities. On the negative side, the law obliged the INCORA to acquire lands on the basis the commercial value instead of the cadastral value, which primarily favoured the holders of uncultivated lands.

Overview of the Agrarian Reform (1961-1988)

In 32 years, the state allocated 370.360 property deeds for baldio lands amounting to a total of 13'360.882he, and assigned 85.403 smallholdings covering a further 1'415.468he. In cadastral terms, this created 455.763 new owners and the privately-owned agricultural surface grew to 14'776.350he. In the year 2000, the number of privately-owned land estates registered in the rural cadastre was 2'183.833, the number of owners had increased by 21%, and the privately-owned surface by 46.5%. The substantial increase in privately-owned surface through baldio entitlements shows that the average size of the allocated land plot supersedes the total area of private properties registered in the cadastre (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016, p. 174).

The demise of the agrarian reform started in the 1970s, according to the ideological thesis on the development in Colombia proposed by Lauchlin Currie, which favoured capitalist modernisation of the countryside and ranching over agrarian reform as the most suitable strategy to urbanise and industrialise the country

(Currie, 1951). For Currie, the peasantry's proletarianisation and commodification were unavoidable, as was the migration of the surplus rural labour to the cities.

In 1972, the Chicoral Agreement was signed and subsequently institutionalised in 1973 through laws 4, 5 and 6 (which followed in 1975). This agreement was a counter agrarian reform signed by members of the bourgeoisie. Given the opposition voiced to it by the agricultural trade unions and some political sectors, combined with the juridical-legal obstacles in the way of acquiring lands for the Reform, the state opted to continue the old policies of legalising baldios exploited by settlers, and at the same time to continue conceding large public estates to businessmen, landowners, politicians, whilst promoting rural modernisation and stimulating capitalist agriculture to produce export products. The CNMH points out that among the political causes for the agrarian reforms' failure, one was the consolidation of an agrarian bourgeoisie and the other the fierce opposition of landowners, capitalists, and ranchers. Added to this this was the INCORA managers' preference for investments over non-profitable peasant production, based on the argument that the main obstacle to rural development in Colombia was not the monopoly over land but the prevalence of smallholdings and their inefficient use of the land.

The peasantry, grouped in organisations such as ANUC, radicalised their grievances with influence from subversive groups and parties (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2018). In 1971 and 1974, the ANUC led important mobilisations, achieved recognition for peasant organisations and opened participation channels for the peasantry.

In short, the agrarian reform did not solve the structural causes of the conflict - it in fact exacerbated them and gave rise to new ones.

3.3. Land Policies at the Neo-Liberal Era

Amid the economic opening that worsened the agricultural sector crisis in 1994, the government issued law 160. This institutionalised the submission to the recommendation of the World Bank and introduced the assisted market of lands as a redistributive mechanism for smallholders and landless peasants. Formally, the new law aimed to foster equality, social justice, equal opportunities, and citizen participation in the rural realm. Apart from some changes in the promotion of peace and recognition of new political subjects (women and indigenous) in the new reform, the law kept the same rhetoric as its predecessors. These changes related to the new constitution of 1991, which attempted to establish a new social pact between the state, citizens, and specific sectors of the subversive groups.

A novelty to highlight in the new law was an acknowledgment that the state must promote progressive access to land tenure to agricultural labourers and extend public services to rural areas to improve the income and life quality of the peasantry. It was intended to "reform the agrarian social structure through procedures aiming to eliminate and prevent land hoarding or its anti-economic division and to allocate land to landless peasants older than 16 years, smallholders, women head of the household, indigenous communities, and other beneficiaries of the government programs". Additionally, it established assistance to rural people with scarce resources to acquire

land through credits and direct subsidies (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2018, p. 184).

In this new law, the state attempted to reconcile two forms of agricultural production: the capitalist and the peasant—which had subordinated relations, competition, and complementation. It created two new agricultural production units: Peasant Reserve Zones (ZRC) and Business Development Zones (ZDE). Among other things, these zones aimed to organise and rationalise the conflictive expansion of the agricultural frontier. Following the World Bank, the law changed the old land allocation system into an "assisted" market. The beneficiaries had to purchase land, and the state was then required to subsidise 70% of its value in a "non-refundable credit". Within this system, the capitalistic use of land once again remained institutionalised, as it defined allocated lands as Family Agricultural Units (UAF):

> The UAF is the basic enterprise of agricultural, livestock, aquaculture, or forestry production. According to the zones' agroecological conditions and the right technology, it enables the family to remunerate its labour and use a profitable surplus that helps create an estate.

The beneficiaries of this reform had the duty to bargain lands, use the land to establish a UAF, improve an indigenous reservation, or provide dwelling to displaced or elderly peasants. They could not trade the lands and had to use them according to the criterion previously specified under the penalty of alienation. In such cases, the person acquiring or renting the lands would be considered *possessor mala fide* and would not have legal recognition. To enforce this measure, the law entitled public notaries and public registrars to only record and note down in public deeds the observations according to the law and not include any transaction breaching it.

However, the actions of notaries and registrars often facilitated dispossessions and displacement of land, as we will see in the case of Urabá in the following sections. Under the new law, the allocation of baldios did not recognise the occupants as owners according to the civil code, yet it demanded that they occupy and exploit the lands. Instead of restricting the amount of area allocated, the new law led to the lands being determined as UAFs, depending on the context of each region.

As a result of this law, during the first six years of implementation, 1564 properties of a total of 303.503he entered into the Agrarian National Fund. Of this, the INCORA allocated 295.619he among 20.681 families (who received 14he plots, on average). Between 2001 and 2004, the INCODER replaced the liquidated INCORA, leaving a massive information gap with regard to the Fund and its beneficiaries between 2001 and 2003. Keeping said gap in mind, the CNMH estimates that between 2002-2012, 135.080he were allocated to 12.610 families (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2018). Moreover, land allocation through the assisted market benefited far fewer peasant families than expected, partly because of the lack of information and means on the part of peasants and the fund itself to subsidise the acquisitions.

The land market in Colombia is an obstacle in the transfer of land from large landowners to landless or smallholder peasants. Contrary to how the market is conceived—as one whose forces enable the free transaction of, and access to, lands— in reality it is akin to the property distribution structure in Colombia. The intervention of the state is not significant enough to modify the market. The most profitable lands, which are predominantly held by large landowners, are rarely traded among smallholders. Transactions the other way around, however, happen only when the

land acquisition favours profit production for the large landowner, and this often occurs in areas where peasants have been violently displaced. In these zones, the power groups which exercise territorial domination choose who can purchase lands and whether a buyer corresponds to their interests. Armed violence significantly affects the price of the lands. For instance, in guerrilla-controlled areas, prices are lower, while in those areas influenced by drug trafficking, the prices rise due to the buyers' enormous acquisitive power (FAO & CEGA, 1994).

As aforementioned, the scope and expansion of UAFs differed according to the zones. Each department determined the range of UAFs that could be accorded. In Choco, for instance, the range was between 20 and 78 UAFs, while in Antioquia it was only 12-55 UAFs. Nationally, between 1995-2012, 98% of the allocated lands were within the legal range, and of these, 77.8% were smaller than an average UAF. This figure shows that land policies have cemented land hoarding and the tendency to shrink peasant smallholdings (*microfundio*). This phenomenon may also in part be because most of the beneficiaries were small farmers lacking the means to support and render an entire UAF productive. Furthermore, if allocations over the legal range only amount to 2,2%, the surface which they cover is high (13%) within the total 658,356he allocated (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2018).

In 2013, the government revealed a scandal related to the unlawful, excessive allocation of baldio lands. It found irregularities in the claim and allocation of land to non-peasant landowners with no right to baldios. Between 2006-2010, authorities flagged 1.879 dossiers of illegal allocation amounting to roughly 416.454he. In Urabá, the Cordoba Rancher Fund received 106 properties (3.770he) in the areas of Turbo and

Necocli, some 3.702he over the legal range (J. C. Restrepo, 2013). The government also denounced the appropriation of already-allocated baldios through violence. In a separate event, a group of leftist senators denounced the practice of creating fictitious societies (using both national and foreign capital) to acquire large portions of land - or the state's facilitation of multinational corporations' land grabbing (Borras & Franco, 2010).

4. Land Conflicts and Private Property in Urabá

Land ownership is one of the main enablers of capital accumulation in Colombia since rent, agro-industrial production, and drug trafficking hinge upon it. At the same time, land is the primary means of production and subsistence for peasants, ethnic communities, and indigenous peoples. On the one hand, a capitalistic use of the land, driven by competitive profit production, enables social relations to reproduce and the bourgeois hegemony to endure crises. On the other, it violates the acquired rights of the rural inhabitants, creates inequality and fuels conflicts. In the armed conflict, armed groups looted the land because it bestowed power upon them: guerrillas for territorial control and paramilitaries to profit from rent and productive projects.

The previous section shows that private property led to land dispossession and peasant's displacement because it favoured land hoarding and latifundia. This situation motivated violent mobilisation, the creation of subversive armed groups and legitimated a counterinsurgent bloc. Nevertheless, these armed confrontations have allowed for the expansion of capital accumulation into new spaces through violent but legal dispossession and displacement.

According to cadastral information from 1984, 2000 and 2009, in the last 30 years, the bimodal structure of land ownership (latifundium/smallholding) developed into a multimodal structure which includes the following forms of ownership:

- Private Property in which medium and large holdings dominate

- Peasant Reservation Zones (ZRC)

- Collective properties including indigenous reservations, afro-communitarian councils, communitarian peasant enterprises, religious communities, and peace communities

- Public lands such as baldios, national parks and natural reserves

Because of this multimodality, agrarian laws have been challenged to resolve conflicts among the different categories of owners. These conflicts, in very general terms, include: first, disputes over land and water between small growers and big companies (as in the case of conflicts between peasants and indigenous populations and oil, mining, and energy companies); second, indecisiveness and lack of government will to create new ZRCs; and third, conflicts between indigenous populations, colonists and latifundistas over the colonisation zones.

The CNMH identifies some trends in the distribution of private property that have underpinned the use of violence within the system of social relations, namely subversion against counterinsurgents. There has been a gradual decrease in the unequal distribution of rural private property due to baldio allocation to settlers, parcellation of the haciendas during the rural reforms, fragmentation of the largest

property holdings, and aggregation of smallholdings. Despite this progress, inequality is still very prominent. Land allocation programmes to landless and smallholding peasants lack impact due to insufficient resources to support exploitation of the land, such as subsidised credits, technical assistance and provision of commercialisation channels. Inequality persists as does the free allocation or leasing of expansive baldios to land accumulators and agricultural companies (who invest in land either to speculate or to launder money from drug trafficking). Inequality also continues because of the extensive acquisition of lands in zones affected by the armed conflict which amounts to both legal and illegal land hoarding(Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016). The map shows the Gini index by land distribution and notably the high level of inequality of this in Urabá.

Map 2 Gini Index by Land Distribution Antioquia
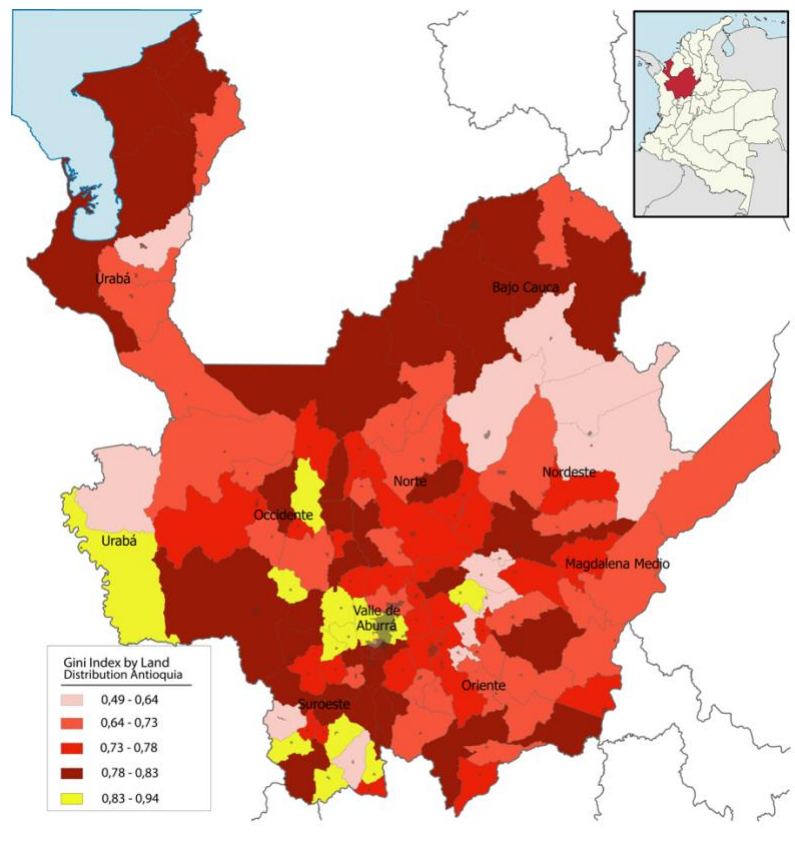
Source: (Salazar, 2019)

4.1.   Land Dispossession in Urabá

The following chapter details the history of land dispossession in Urabá concerning capitalism's systemic dynamics. Here address land dispossession regarding private property's history in Urabá. It started as the dispossession and displacement of peasant settlers by colonists and landowners and evolved into Urabá configuring as a capitalist spatiality in the 1960s. Urabá became a centre of commercial agriculture — adapting to the needs of capital accumulation and profit production. Lombana (2012) explains that this process incorporated territorial and geographical spaces into capitalist dynamics. The capitalistic reconfiguration affected social relations. She

locates the configuration of Urabá as a capitalist spatiality since the 1960s when transnational capital arrived to create the Sevilla Fruit Company, a subsidiary of the United Fruit Company. In general terms, the social relations of capitalism manifested in the practices of primitive appropriation during the colonisation of Urabá. Capitalists had to colonise non-capitalist spaces to enable capital accumulation. However, this process was relatively isolated from the national dynamics. It was a region under construction, mainly by the movement of the displaced population seeking refuge from La Violencia and later the capitalist colonists that followed to accumulate capital.

The dispossession means were twofold: violent, through the use of force and threats, often with the support of the National Army; and bureaucratically. The practices of this second means of dispossession included moving the fences to expand the areas of the plots, the acquisition of lands at low costs by taking advantage of the peasants' unawareness of their values, or the creation of companies by foreign capital to impersonate settlers to request the allocation of baldios(Lombana Reyes, 2012, p. 48).

In the 1960s, capitalists came in to cultivate banana palms and established 6000he of palm for oil. At the same time, the Road to the Sea, connecting Urabá with Medellín and Antioquia, was concluded. Urabá turned into a land of opportunities for many victims of the 1950s conflict because production, especially the banana, generated life chances for them. However, these chances did not always turn into welfare because pro-capitalist violence, theft, and overexploitation were common in the new social relations. Capitalist production of the banana only started after capitals

dispossessed peasants from their means of production(García, 1996, pp. 42–43). Taking Urabá into the dynamics of capital accumulation entailed the violent restructuration of the existing social relations. Before, the lands were wilderness and then turned into subsisting plots for displaced peasants were commodified and turned into banana crops. Institutional and violent means enabled land hoarding and peasantry proletarianisation, again displaced into the regional periphery what extended the agrarian frontier(Lombana Reyes, 2012).

We can understand the recurring interest of the bourgeoisie to colonise the region Urabá because it had fertile lands to which capital could expand and strengthen the national capitalist project. It started with the cultivation of tagua, rubber and ipecac in the XIX century and extended to banana, palm for oil and stockbreeding. All these productions benefited from the processes of violent dispossession of peasants' lands and their commodification. The stockbreeders, for instance, went from holding 124.951he in 1975 to 499.587he in 2017. The banana producers also held from 15.006he in 1975 to 34.000he in 2017.

The most aggressive strategy of land dispossession to produce profit came with the incursion of paramilitarism at the end of the 1980s. Paramilitarism was a fundamental strategic component for the regional and national bourgeoisies to secure their hegemony in areas with high subversive activity. It was a novel strategy to intensify the primitive appropriation of land for capital accumulation and profit production(Franco Restrepo, 2009; Hristov, 2014).

The most distinctive practice of the paramilitary groups during their first military attacks was displacements. In the following stages of their military

dominance, they would use consent and leadership to sustain their order, as we will see in the following chapters. Displacement mainly focused on the areas with the most profitable land, i.e., the banana axis. Between 1990 and 2007, this area had 69,3% of the displaced people of Urabá. The graph shows a sustained increase since 1995 and had its peak in 2001 when 15.413 people were displaced. It shows the reported displacements in Urabá between 1988 and 2007 — years of paramilitary predominance.

Table 4 Reported Forced Displacements Urabá
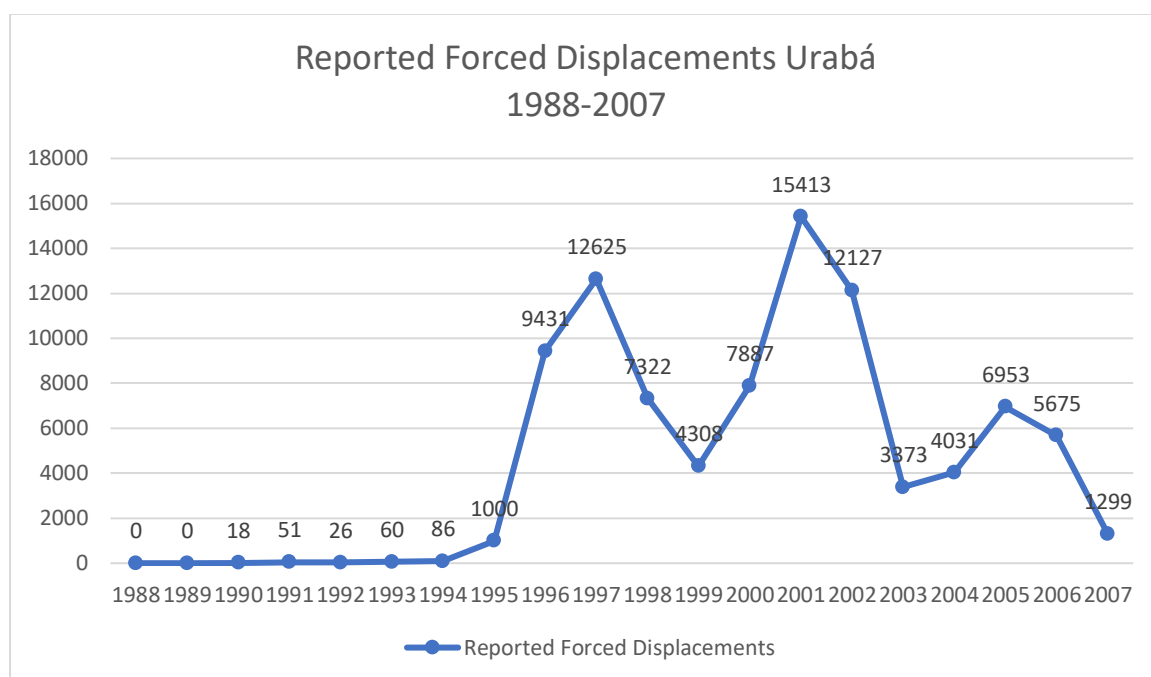
Source: (García et al., 2011, p. 352)

5. Private Property and the Hegemonic Vehicle of Conflict

This chapter presented a brief history of the social conflict that produced the private ownership of the rural land. We established that private property acquired the social function to enable capital accumulation and was the leading cause of armed conflicts. Rural private property structured antagonistic social relations that evolved into armed

conflict. We have seen that such conflict also enabled the acquisition and protection of private property. Therefore, we contend that it became a central hegemonic vehicle for the social order to prevail.

This interpretation of the conflict starts with the institutionalisation of private property, structuring social relations whereby some society members exploit others. Such an institutionalisation started with importing Spanish social order qualities and consolidated with the bourgeois order shortly after the independence. Private property in Colombia structured social relations based on the capitalist imperative of capital accumulation. Turning collective, non- or pre-capitalist, non-ownable lands and labour into private means of production enabled primitive appropriation and capital accumulation. One of the main and historical causes of Colombia's social and armed conflict is the question of rural land tenure because it was the core of capital accumulation and profit production.

The social conflict in the rural areas is mainly the struggle of social groups for subsistence means against other groups obliged to produce profit and commodify land and labour. In turn, the armed struggle is the violent clash between those defending their subsistence from the advance of primitive appropriation. Before the mid-XX century, the armed conflict mainly transpired as a war between different elites of the bourgeoisie for the control of means of production and the state's power. After the global institutionalisation of the war against communism during the Cold War, Colombia institutionalised a conflict that established a set of practices and values as

"common sense"[24]. They depict the armed conflict as the confrontation of society against its enemies—people menacing the monopoly of the state's legitimate use of physical force to enforce its order(Ahumada, 2007).

The relationship between the conflict and private property of the means of production is symbiotic. As we have established, the social and armed dimensions of the conflict are essentially affected by the structuring institution of private property. However, suppose we see the conflict as a fundamental structuring institution of Colombian society. In that case, we can also establish that conflict is necessary to uphold private property and, therefore, the current social order. The consent over the National Front, which "reconciled society", established a common goal to protect society's central institutions. It reshaped the intra-class conflict into an inter-class conflict antagonising against those menacing the main intuitions of the social-bourgeois order (Fals Borda, 1968). The newly rebranded conflict was the confrontation against those who threatened capitalism, including thousands of rural inhabitants protecting their means of subsistence from capital accumulation. This conflict has legitimised primitive appropriation with legal and illegal coercion and consent.

In Weber's words, the state's role is to monopolise the legitimate use of violence to dominate within its borders, which we could translate into to enforce its order(Weber, 2004). Such an order may change over time to adapt to the new demands of the social system. However, since private property is still a core structuring

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[24] Gramsci defines as a common-sense, "conception which is related to the passivity of the great popular masses"(Gramsci, 1985, p. 187). He relates common sense to "popular science" and the traditional conception of the world(Gramsci, 1985, p. 197).

institution of capitalism, the enterprise of protecting the social order contains safeguarding private property.

Perrilla Lozano explains that the Colombian state has explicitly assumed the duty to protect the bourgeois social order. Colombia defines itself as a social state governed by the rule of law. In 1938 Reform and 1991 Constitution, the state corroborated its duty to protect and promote the "social", according to the current social order. In 1938, in response to the capitalist crises of that decade, the state assumed, among other duties: a public and social interest, the rationalisation of the distribution of welfare, equality and public assistance as its explicit functions. In 1991, the constitution stipulated that the state had to procure general welfare and improve people's quality of life based on universality, integrity, and solidarity. Articles 1 and 2 stipulate guarding the public interests and guaranteeing the currency of a fair order(Perilla Lozano, 2001). Such a social order contains capitalism as a system of social relations and its structuring institutions. Thus, the state protects private property as a class interest of the bourgeoise and as a common interest to the current social order.

Franco explains the justification of war as a process of displaying to different interpretative communities the compliance to axiological and normative principles socially accepted to validate the deployment of organised violence. She also sees this effort to justify the continuation of the conflict as a political need. She sees that as the dialectic of domination lies upon coercion and consent, something we have highlighted. The parts in conflict need armed violence and its legitimacy to reinforce the antagonism. Franco contends that the armed groups seek to dominate both

adversaries and communities' "bodies and spirits". The latter, dominating the "spirit", which we interpret as controlling and leading upon the ideational realm, is necessary to avoid that fear and harm of the war turning into grievances and mobilisation (Franco Restrepo, 2009, p. 42). Thus, legitimacy in war is essential as it could deescalate or reshape the formation of antagonistic factions. We argue likewise when talking of the conflict as a hegemonic vehicle. The conflict restructured the social relations of Colombian society to fit the demands of capitalism and bourgeois hegemony. It shaped material and ideational justification to deploy a counterinsurgent and anti-subversive war in protecting the structuring institutions of the Colombian society. Thus, private property is not portraited or grasped anymore as the product of primitive appropriation through displacement and dispossession but as a fundamental engine of society. Moreover, those society members claiming rights, justice and restitution are reinterpreted as enemies to society, eligible to be eradicated at any cost.

As we have claimed, the war against the enemies of the social order has not been deployed only through coercion. The dominance of the capitalists in Urabá came with plenty of concessions and advantages for the people. After a bloody war against any member or groups accused of sympathising with FARC-EP, the violent pacification of the region did bring stability to Urabá. This topic is explored more thoroughly in the following chapters.

The armed confrontation of the 1980s-2000s enabled land dispossession, first by forcedly displacing rural inhabitants and then through legalising the dispossession, which mechanisms the following section presents. It is worth reminding that this

thesis has operationalised primitive appropriation as the combination between forced

displacement and land dispossession.

5.1.   Consequences of the Armed Conflict on the Land Tenure

This chapter does not focus on the concrete cycles of armed violence between the

subversive and counterinsurgent bloc. Instead, we focus on the consequences of the

armed confrontation on the structuring institution of the Colombian society, namely

the private property and management of the means rural production. The following

chapters will address the different conjunctures of pro-capitalist violence to elucidate

how the conflict, as a hegemonic vehicle, helped legitimise the domination and

exploitation of capital-allied counterinsurgent groups on the working class. In this

chapter, we propose to see the different micro-dynamics of violence as an entire

conjuncture. In Urabá, this violence happened mainly between the 1990s and 2000s

decades. Following the work of Garcia and Arambulo (2011), we will establish three

consequences of the armed conflict on the land tenure: the land distribution, the

primary sector and the tertiary sector, specifically the commerce.

Land Distribution

The arrival and domination of the counterinsurgent bloc, led by the paramilitary

groups at the end of the 1980s, set land hoarding as a core goal and forced

displacement as an enabling practice. Displacement and dispossession were not mere

collateral damages of the incursion of paramilitarism; they were a display of the

national dynamics between land and armed conflict. The counterinsurgent bloc

carried out a "scorched land" policy that, besides territorial control, also delivered control over production processes through land hoarding. This relationship was the best vehicle for capital to carry out the agrarian counter-reform, attempted since the 1970s(García et al., 2011, p. 373). The latifundistas were the most committed to this strategy.

Garcia and Arambulo emphasise a contradiction between the reality of land hoarding and its measuring indexes. Such a "reality" is constructed based on field works querying servants, dispossessed peasants, and other inhabitants, while the other on the statistical figures provided by the Cadastral Department and the Gini coefficients. This distinction is not minor because it is part of dispossessed lands' legalisation strategy. The statistical strategy of legalisation contained 1) inconsistencies in the measurement of land hoarding in Urabá, given the lack of systematic figures; 2) changes in the IT platforms during 2002 and 2003, causing information loss; 3) explicit exclusion of the figure of "landless landholders"—a figure representing the people using the lands as tenant farmers but not owning them. Hence, statistical improvements misrepresent the reality of the peasants' conditions(García et al., 2011).

The economic and social function of the land in Urabá to the capitalists is trifold: to speculate, which is a strategy for Colombia's future international commerce and megaprojects in the region; to produce profit, given the agroecological qualities; and to control, given the strategical location to weapons contraband and drug traffic. The significant value of the land explains why between 1997 and 2005, Urabá was the second region of Antioquia with the most forced displacement and second in

percentage of abandoned lands. In Urabá, were abandoned 3.336he of land—15.2% of all Antioquia. Mora and Muñoz explain that between 1995-2004 the latifundia expanded (over 200he), and the medium plots decreased (between 20 and 100he). In 1995, 24,2% of the lands were latifundia and increased to 35% in 2004(Mora & Muñoz, 2008).

In 2002, at the peak of the paramilitary incursion—also the peak of rural displacements—the Gini coefficient reached 0,837. However, the coefficient for the following years decreased dramatically to 0,66 for 2004, 0,67 for 2005, and 0,68 for 2006. However, the on-ground reality displayed otherwise. García and Arambulo argue that the Gini index is incapable of showing the land situation in Urabá and conceals the land questions. Since 2004, the measurement of the index changed, excluding from its base "landless landholders", a category that contains a significant percentage of the rural population.

The incursion of the paramilitaries worsened the distribution of land, favouring land hoarding and latifundia. However, it required the institutional complicity to erase the trace of primitive appropriation with the misguiding statistical measurements.

Primary Sector

The formal and informal coercive transfer of land deeds from peasants to paramilitaries changed the agricultural sector's production. Firstly, the paramilitary dispossession reassigned the added value in those plots. Besides land hoarding, it augmented the rural income centralisation. The displacement was a spatial and

economic exclusion of the peasants, and it produced the impoverishment of the region, mobilising peasants to claim land and other grievances. Secondly, it caused the reconfiguration of the agricultural sector's production and changed how the new landholders valued the different factors of production — land, capital, and labour. The social relations around rural production changed when the structure of the property and the forms of regulation of paramilitaries settled in the region.

The land was economically unused within the agricultural and stockbreeding sectors between 1992-1997, and the primary sector land decreased by 68.283he. At the national level, this trend results from armed conflict, the economic opening, and the inefficiency of the agricultural sector, given the high transport and production costs. However, between 1998-2006, land use increased continuously, and the agrarian frontier expanded.

Agriculture differentiates from stockbreeding as productive activities in their positive social impact. The former is more labour-intensive and can be subsistence and commercial crops. While stockbreeding is more land-extensive, employing little labour-power has a worse social impact. Between 1990-2006, land use for pastures oscillated between 300.000 and 498.00he while the area used for agriculture has never surpassed the 132.000he. During the peak of the conflict (1992-1997), agriculture decreased from 132.000 to 81.000he, while the stockbreeding only decreased 30.000he. 37,8% of the cultivated hectares of land were abandoned, and since 2006 the agricultural sector never reached the areas of the early-1990s. The stockbreeding sector only lost 9,09% of the pastures, but after the paramilitaries consolidated their order, it

augmented 64,3%(García et al., 2011, pp. 383–384). Remember that stockbreeding is linked to landowners, latifudistas and capitalist sectors of the counterinsurgent bloc.

The stockbreeding absorbed the lands for agriculture, which was one of the causes of the conflict in Urabá. Here we see how the conflict, institutionalised as a counterinsurgent struggle against subversion, legitimised the practices of the enemies of the guerrillas and enabled the appropriation of land for the interests of the capitalist stockbreeders.

However, the conflict also favoured commercial agriculture, to the detriment of the peasant subsistence agriculture. Its organisation, land hoarding, and yields characterise commercial agriculture's production relations in Urabá, mainly banana. These characteristics enabled commercial agriculture to protect from the armed conflict while having more cooperative ties with the paramilitary groups—contrary to the peasants in the region's northern part. Subsistence production, less attractive to the counterinsurgent bloc, had fewer options to protect from paramilitarism—this dynamic displayed in the decrease of plantain, corn, manioc, rice, and cocoa crops. While peasant agriculture lost around 51.000he, banana crops augmented from 18.498 to 27.579he between 1991 and 1992, and for fourteen years had a stagnant growth of 5.000he. Banana production grew "despite", or thanks to, the conflict(García et al., 2011, p. 385).

In 2006 the integrated agricultural sector recovered to the levels of the early-1990s, 90.000he of which 1/3 was banana crops. However, this time it was composed mainly of commercial agriculture. Peasant agriculture never achieved its initial levels. Of the peasant production, the plantain crops started to have a more prominent rôle

from 12.186 to 37.978he. In only nine years, the plantain grew 25.729he, more than the banana crops that grew 11.820he. Therefore, since 2003, plantain crops have led the agricultural production in the region. The plantain production lies between the traditional peasant and the agro-industrial production. The agro-industrial production competes with the peasant and has efficient large-scale production systems based on the property concentration. Peasant production happens in the smallholding, inadequate to implement competitive standards.

The plantain has a third way based on the peasant property, smallholdings with an equitable distribution of production combined with features of the banana crops such as the production organisation, recollection, and channels of commercialisation. In short, plantain is suitable for producing profit as it is produced co-ordinately and exports the product, while the rejected surplus is sold in the local and national markets. Garcia and Arambulo present the following chart displaying the change of peasant crops and how plantain overtook the production of all the other crops, including corn.

Table 5 Internal Composition of the Peasant Economy.

Internal Composition of the Peasant Economy. Urabá, Antioquia, 1989-2006 (percentages)				
Product	**1989-1992**	**1993-1997**	**1998-2002**	**2003-2006**
Rice	8	10	10	10
Cocoa	3	4	4	3
Corn	68	51	45	39
Plantain	17	31	37	47
Manioc	3	4	4	4
Total Peasant Agriculture	100	100	100	100

 Source: (García et al., 2011, p. 387).

Based on the agricultural censuses of 1960, 1970 and 2014, we can argue that the wars and the progression of capitalism in the Urabá impacted profit production favourably in stockbreeding and commercial agriculture to the detriment of peasant agriculture. The most critical impact is displayed in the 2014 census and indicates the consequences of war in Urabá (1980-2000). Those who primarily benefited from the waves of displacement and dispossession were the stockbreeders who, in forty years, managed to expand their usable land.

Figure 1 Land Usage in Antioquia (agricultural and stockbreeding activities)
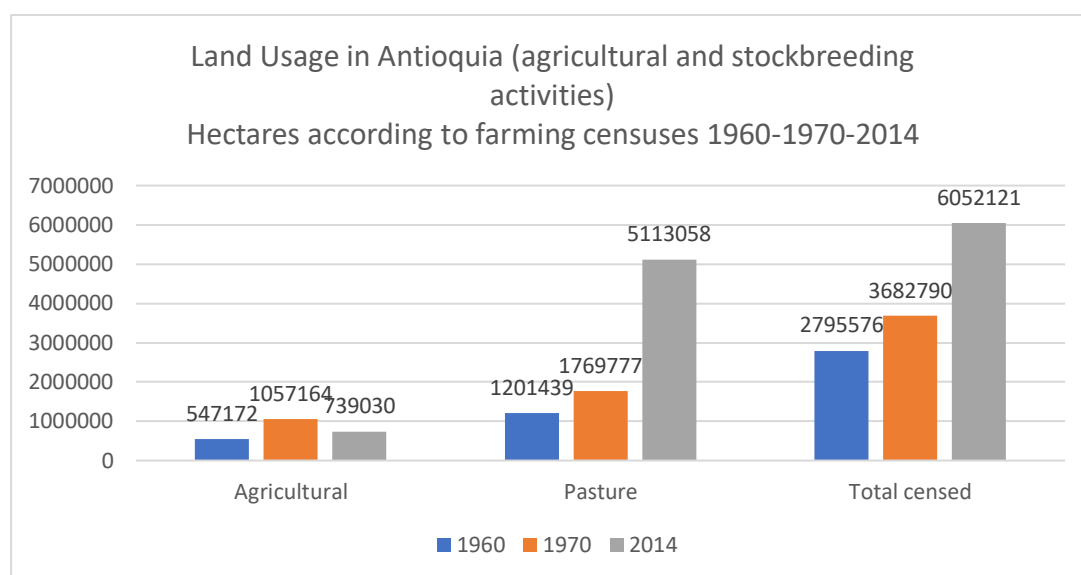
Source: (IPC, 2020)

Tertiary Sector and Commerce

Because of the reduction of the primary sector, especially peasant agriculture, the tertiary sector grew. This event changed the regional economy and each sector's importance in the goods markets, factors, and added value. The urban-rural dynamics also changed the social relations of production. After 2006, they mainly were concentrated in the municipalities in the services and commerce sectors. The

paramilitary incursion affected the processes of urbanisation and tertiarisation through the following practices: 1) Displacement of rural population into the municipal centres and pressure on the service sector; 2) an illegal economy associated with drug traffic and contraband, both co-opting the legal and illegal economic circuits; 3) presence of international and national organisations for victim's attention and humanitarian intervention, which augment the money influx and the services demand(García et al., 2011, p. 389). All these elements contributed to exacerbating urban conflicts and the tertiarisation of the regional economy.

Overall, the tertiarisation in Urabá displays in the growth of the various service sectors. The rent-based services grew—those attached to the effects of the rent of the regional economy, i.e., construction, hotels, restaurants, and shops. Also did the technology and development services sector, which profit from the region's development and industrial activity. Extractive economies and the industrial sector also grew, although at a lower rate.

The effects of the conflict on the economy's tertiarisation could be explained through the displacement and pressure over goods and services of the urban economy, the illegal economy, and the demand that the humanitarian intervention created(García et al., 2011).

As paramilitaries displaced peasants, the urban zones' receiver spaces were also affected. Besides the demographic change, the widening of the urban centres centralised the economy, and displacement happened in function to the economic centrality of the municipalities. Most people arrived in Turbo and Apartadó. Based on

the different censuses. García and Arambulo present in the following table the

demographic change in the municipalities of Urabá between 1964 and 2005.

Table 6 Demographic Distribution of the Municipalities of Urabá, 1964-2005

Demographic Distribution of the Municipalities of Urabá, 1964-2005 (percentages)					
Municipalities	**1964**	**1973**	**1985**	**1993**	**2005**
Arpartadó	12	16,4	17,7	20,4	26,4
Arboletes	11,7	11,1	9,2	6,2	6,1
Carepa	2,7	4,8	4,8	8,2	8,6
Chigorodó	4,4	6,2	9,3	11,5	11,7
Murindó	1,6	0,9	0,7	0,8	0,7
Mutatá	5,3	4,7	3,7	3,3	1,9
Necoclí	10,4	9,5	10	8,9	9,6
San Juan de Urabá	6,7	6,2	5,4	4,9	4,1
San Pedro de Urabá	11,6	10,8	7,9	7,2	5,6
Turbo	26,1	25,5	28,8	26,1	24,1
Vigía del Fuerte	7,4	3,8	2,5	2,5	1

Source: (García et al., 2011, p. 393).

The illegal economy also affected the tertiary sector. Although Urabá is not an

illicit crops producer, Urabá is fundamental for drug traffic as its main

commercialisation corridor with the international markets. Urabá, being the first link

of the abroad transportation process, is where the most added value is generated

nationally—even more than coca leaf cultivation and coca paste processing. Illegal

rent comes with higher demand for goods and services and stimulates the growth of

the tertiary sector.

Lastly, the plenteous amount of forced displacement to the urban centres also created pressure on the state to address the humanitarian crises. Governmental, national, and international organisations assumed this task. Their presence also brought money into the region through donations, loans, and investments. Besides the economic effect, their presence increased the number of state institutions related to education, health, and social infrastructure.

5.2. Victims' Law, Land Restitution and Dispossession Legalisation

In 2011, the government issued law 1448, best known as the "victims' law and land restitution": "By which measures of care, assistance and comprehensive reparation are issued to the victims of the internal armed conflict and as well as other provisions". This law was a landmark as it acknowledged the existence of an armed conflict and gave rights and recognition to its victims. It covers several victimising actions such as homicide, kidnapping, forced disappearance, forced recruitment, forced displacement, and direct victims or families. The law emphasises the complementarity of the state's response demanding a combination of economic, symbolic, psychologic, educative, and political strategies to take care and repair the victims individually and collectively(Rettberg, 2015).

The component of land restitution of this law, what concerns most to us here, talks about the right of the victims to recover their plots and lands when dispossessed or abandoned, regardless of holding ownership deeds, due to the armed conflict (LEY DE VÍCTIMAS Y RESTITUCIÓN DE TIERRAS, 2011). This law aimed to restore land tenure and improve socio-economic conditions of peasants, victims of the violent

primitive appropriation of the conflict—something that harmed the systemic dynamics of capitalism in the country.

The law has entitled restitution rights to all victims since the 1 of January 1991. Owners holding deeds, land occupants without deeds (heirs, people with deeds of sale, non-registered deeds, or occupants of at least five years) and occupants of baldio lands could claim land restitution.

The law created a Land Restitution Unit to gather restitution claims and rule through restitution judges. The law also considered allocating dwelling allowances to the forcibly displaced population.

Land restitution became the newest source of the conflict between land claimants and capitalists. It also became an opportunity to legalise their land ownership for those who did dispossess and displace others and acquire their lands illegally or legally through coercion. After the Victims' Law, the rural question displayed under new conditions, this time with a counterinsurgent bloc that tried to hoard land and protect the capital accumulation enabled by the primitive appropriation of the previous decades. Several actors formed a complex of anti-restitution of lands composed of paramilitaries, businessmen, and local authorities. Gomez et al. (2019) classify the strategies to keep and legitimise land dispossession in Urabá in five—violent, judiciary, territorial, social, and a transversal strategy called the co-optation of public servants to favour dispossessors. They entailed violence and institutional practices and included illegal groups such as guerrillas and paramilitaries.

Table 7 Strategies to legalize and maintain dispossessed land

Strategies to legalize and maintain dispossessed land			
Violent strategy	**Judiciary Strategy**	**Territorial Strategy**	**Social Strategy**
Assassinations	Judicialization of social leaders and relatives	Eviction to returned people. Illegal police actions.	Settlement promoted by illegal groups, firms, private individuals
Threatening	Disciplinary denunciation of public servants	Destruction of subsistence crops	Co-optation of leaders through threats and money
Accusations and stigmatizations	Delays in the land litigation	Shutting of roads and water sources	Creation of parallel organizations
Forced displacement	Impunity for the dispossession culprits and relatives		Promote to invasions
Attempts to co-opt public servants (civil and public force)			

Source: (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2015)

Violent Strategy

The violent strategy—with practices such as assassination, threatening, accusations and stigmatisation and forced displacement—aims to employ coercion to displace peasants and refrain them from claiming their dispossessed lands through the enabled channels. Until 2016, 60 land claimants were killed, and Antioquia presented the highest number of victims(Fundación Paz y Reconciliación, 2016).

From 2012 to 2016, paramilitaries and land dispossessors threatened land claimants seeking to refrain them from land restitution(Verdad Abierta, 2017). According to the National Police, in Antioquia happened 5077 threats, 1108 of which in Urabá, constituting 22% of Antioquia's threats, as shown in the following map.

Map 3 Antioquia: summation of threats by subregion, 2012-2016
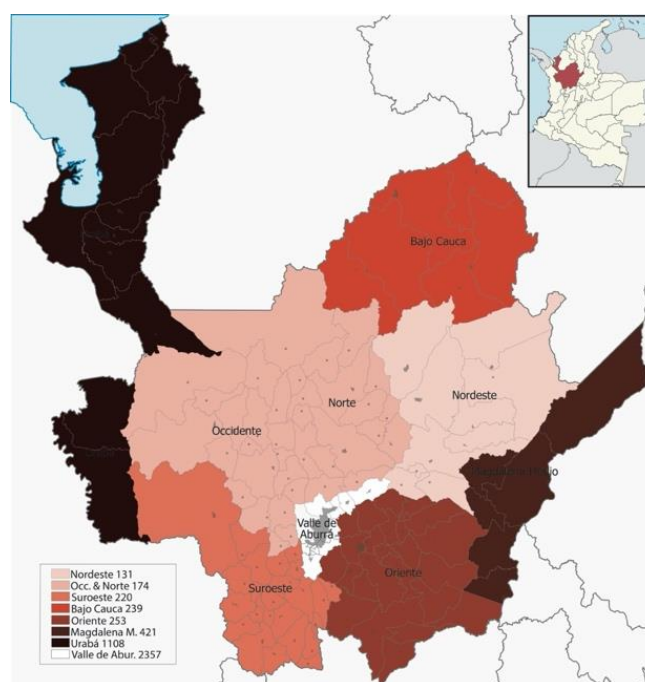
Source: (Gómez Gómez et al., 2019)

Since the issue of the Victims Law and until the signature of the peace agreement in 2016, Gómez et al. registered 800 homicides associated with land restitution conflicts. The following table shows the homicides in the whole Antioquia department.

Table 8 Homicides by subregions in Antioquia, 2012-2016

Homicides by subregions in Antioquia, 2012-2016						
Subregions	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Urabá	196	140	133	128	203	800
Bajo Cauca	182	145	190	176	147	840
Vl de Aburrá	324	145	190	176	147	840
Oriente	287	286	160	169	158	1060
Occidente	347	245	82	71	117	862
Suroeste	157	162	187	237	211	954
Norte	243	178	128	163	125	837

Nordeste	53	53	106	151	118	481
Mgdalena M	26	45	50	56	37	214
Antioquia	3083	2484	1985	1906	1859	11317

Source: (Gómez Gómez et al., 2019)

Social leaders, some of whom are leading collective land restitution, have been targeted by the "anti-restitution of lands armies". Between 2012 and 2016, 52 social leaders were murdered. From the signature of the peace process (2016) to March 2020 in Antioquia were murdered 71 social leaders, 12 in Urabá.

Table 9 Homicides of Social Leaders by Subregions in Antioquia, 2012-2020

Homicides of Social Leaders by Subregions in Antioquia, 2012-2020										
Subregions	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Urabá	2			1	1	4	2		2	12
Bajo Cauca		1		1	6	4	15	3	2	32
Valle de Aburrá	10	2		5	2	7	1	1	1	29
Oriente			1	2		3		1	1	8
Occidente					1		1	2		4
Suroeste		1	1			2				4
Norte	2	3		1	2	2	7	2	1	20
Nordeste	3	1			2	2			1	8
Magdalena Medio		1					2	2		5
Total	17	9	2	10	14	24	28	11	8	122

Source: (Gómez Gómez et al., 2019; INDEPAZ, 2021; ¡PACIFISTA!, 2020)

Judiciary Strategy

This strategy consists of obstacles and delays in the judiciary processes of the restitution. When issuing the law, the government presented a number (in the following table) of expected decisions by restitution judges and magistrates on restitution processes. Although the expectation was optimistic, by the 1 of April 2016

were only 1500 decisions. In 2014, were filed 72.623 claims, 80% less than expected.

The law expected the filing of 360.000 claims in ten years. Until 2014, were made 965

restitutive decisions, of which 946 were wrong: 74 decisions did not delimit the land;

418 decisions were for a larger area; 424 decisions were for a smaller area. In March

2015, transpired 1041 restitutive decisions for 94.156he. The National Congress

estimated that to achieve the goal of returning the 6 million hectares — the Restitution

Unit would have to restore 984.307he per year before the end of the Law in June

2021(El Espectador, 2015). In Urabá, until 2019, were filed 6.888 claims, which only

transpired 195 restitutive decisions(Castro, 2019). In December 2019, the

Constitutional Court decided to extend the validity of the Law until 2030, giving one

more decade to achieve the total of returned land.

Table 10 Expected number of restitutive decisions according to the government (2011)

Expected number of restitutive decisions according to the government (2011)									
Indicator	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Verdicts in cases of abandonment	1741	14433	49529	65600	60180	38007	12673	5968	5968
Verdicts in cases of dispossession	359	2977	10216	13655	12414	7840	2614	1231	1235

Source: (J. C. Restrepo & Bernal, 2014, pp. 46–47)

Territorial Strategy

The territorial strategy refers to the local actions to intimidate land claimants and

restituted peasants. Gomez et al. explain that this strategy is deployed chiefly by local

and regional capitalists in alliance with illegal groups and local authorities. One

common practice was to send the police to evict peasants and indigenous despite having their land rights restituted. Also, these capitalists masterminded their destruction of subsistence crops and shut roads and access to water sources(Gómez Gómez et al., 2019).

Social Strategy

This strategy consists of anti-restitution groups and capitalists infiltrating and creating social organisations to protect their ownership. Gomez et al. talk about the Colombian Owners Association "Tierra, Paz y Futuro" and the Association of Victims of the Lands' Law (ASOCOLVIRT). Both sought to mislead citizens by mirroring human rights associations and organisations defending land claimants. The Owners Association copied the name from the claimant organisations Association "Tierra y Paz" association and Foundation Forjando Futuro.

Gomez et al. present the case of a restitution decision that favoured a family member of the president of the Owners association. The decision argues that the second occupant (the dispossessor) acted "in good faith, exempt of offence". In another case, the president of ASOCOLVIRT lead events against land restitution. However, a restitution decision declares that his wife and familiars acquired land made available through a massacre. In June 1995, the president's wife received 25he of land in the Tokio allotment. On April 22, a paramilitary group killed five peasants in this same land(Gómez Gómez et al., 2019).

The strategy of co-optation of public servants

This last strategy is transversal to the other strategies. It consists of the co-optation of public servants and administrative authorities to favour dispossessors, landowners, and capitalists in their restitution decisions.

One component of this strategy was the use of cadastres to sustain the dispossession. According to Law 223 of 1995 Art. 79: a cadastre ought to be done each five years to identify changes in the property of lands and tax accordingly. In Urabá, only some lands appear with an updated cadastre, and most of their registries are out-of-date. In Turbo, Arboletes, San Pedro de Urabá, Carepa and Vigia del Fuerte, most of the information is not current. Besides, the places with updated cadastre evidence changes in boundaries or disappearance of pieces of land to uphold or favour land dispossession. Necoclí, Apartadó, Chigorodó, Mutatá, San Juan de Urabá and Murindó, are the municipalities with most of the restitution requests. These are the areas where this strategy happens the most.

Another component of this strategy is the persistence of criminal adjudication of baldio lands. Between 2006 and 2012, 307.335he of baldio were illegally allocated to outlander peasants from Antioquia, as presented in the following table. The irregular adjudication of baldios, as we have shown, is one of the causes of the armed conflict. The allocation of public lands to non-peasant people affects land restitution, leaving real peasants with no legal documentation and deeds of those lands.

Table 11 Irregular adjudication of barren land in Antioquia, 2006-2012

Irregular adjudication of barren land in Antioquia, 2006-2012

Case	Department	Municipality	# of pieces of land	Area in hectares
Fake resolutions in Turbo	Antioquia	Turbo-Necoclí	13	635
Findings of the Agrarian Environmental Attorney's office in Antioquia Part I	Antioquia	Various	1500	300.000
Findings of the Agrarian Environmental Attorney's office in Antioquia Part II	Antioquia	Various	130	6.700
Total	Antioquia	Various	1643	307.335

Source: (J. C. Restrepo & Bernal, 2014, pp. 82–83)

Finally, land legalisation happens when the state issues deeds of private land to landholders dwelling and working the land for a specific time. According to the Mission for the Rural Transformation (2014), 60% of land ownership lacks legal deeds. The Resolution 112 of the 28 of August 2013 from the Agricultural Ministry sought to massively legalise lands to peasants demonstrating dwell of unclaimed lands for more than ten years or five years if working the land. Between 2014 and 2016, 3624 pieces of land were legalised in Antioquia. Urabá had the most significant number of land legalisation with 1267. However, given that Urabá is the subregion with the most notable cases of dispossession claims, we can argue that those legalisations belonged

to the strategy to settle dispossession disputes favouring dispossessors. The following

map shows the number of land legalisation in Antioquia.

Map 4 Number of Legalizations of Lands in Department of Antioquia
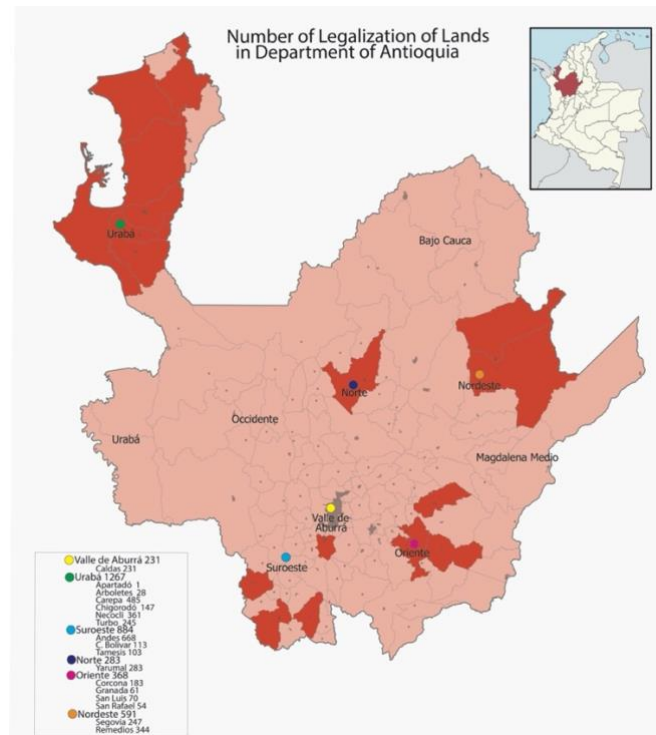
Source: (Gómez Gómez et al., 2019)

Chapter 4: The History of Dispossession and Displacement in Urabá

1. Introduction: The Systemic Dimension

This thesis explains the protraction of the Colombian conflict by scrutinising its social function. It interprets the conflict in Colombia as a hegemonic vehicle supporting the bourgeois social order and the capitalist system of social relations (in spite of its contradictions). The *conflict* is a social phenomenon linked to capitalism's antagonistic and contradictory social relations. This work sees the conflict as a continuum of violent antagonisms over capital accumulation (and political power). It distinguishes between two stages of the conflict which are differentiated by a critical event. First, an *intra*-class conflict between two factions of the Colombian capitalist class over state control and profit, and second, an *inter*-class conflict between a subversive working-class and a counterinsurgent bloc organised around capital interests and needs. The central claim is that the conflict became institutionalised: it became a hegemonic vehicle (when the conditions for a communist subversion arose) and persisted because of the legitimation they offered to the social order.

The conflict is a current institution of Colombian society which structures its social relations according to capitalism's imperatives. Those imperatives are the prevalence of its operative logics, protection of its structuring institutions and a "pacific" cohabitation between antagonistic and asymmetric actors. In the previous chapter, we examined the conflict's enabling and protecting role with regard to the

structuring institution of private property. This chapter focuses on the prevalence of capitalism's operative logics - its systemic dimension.

The term 'systemic dynamics' of capitalism refers to the shared core values constituting the capitalistic system of social relations. If we accept that private property of the means of production is fundamental to capitalism (as we have seen in Chapter Three), then capitalism itself is enacted through these constitutive dynamics. Azmanova (2020) synthesises the constitutive features of capitalism as the *competitive production of profit* enabled by *primitive appropriation*. These features form a systemic trajectory of domination whereby all members of society enact competitive profit production in their everyday experiences.

Systemic domination, or the competitive production of profit, is a phenomenon that affects all Colombian society members. This trajectory has been addressed to some extent in works on alienation and anomie in Colombian society (Britto Ruiz & Ordóñez Valverde, 2005; Fals Borda, 2009; Mejía Quintana, 2009; Ortegón Salazar, 2014). Estrada explains this trajectory in Colombia as an imposed socio-cultural logic based on *genuinely* capitalist values, incorporated into common practices and subjectivities. Selfishness, competition, productivism and meritocracy have turned into ethical principles in the new capitalist ethos, joined with the historical practices of clientelism and corruption, and new practices generated by the *drug-traffic culture*—all of which are now socially reproduced. (Estrada Álvarez, 2010, p. 18 translation by author).

This thesis will not specifically address such dynamics in the context of the Urabá, as to do so would drive this thesis in a different direction. Instead, to establish

the relationship between the conflict and systemic domination, the dynamics of capital accumulation and primitive appropriation will be explored by relying on the existing and accessible literature.

Azmanova conceptualises primitive appropriation as an enabling condition for competitive profit production. It is "the appropriation of what is to be deployed in the competitive pursuit of profit", a process that not only precedes capitalism but one which is also ongoing (Azmanova, 2020, p. 39). This work operationalises primitive appropriation through two practices that enable the dynamic of capital accumulation in Colombia: forcible displacement and land dispossession. Following Harvey's (2003, 2010) readjustment to the concept of primitive accumulation, this work looks into displacement and dispossession through violent means as well as the legal tools promoted by the state and enforced by legal and illegal repressive apparatuses. Under the auspices of the structuring institutions of capitalism, capitalists grab lands and displace workers using legal and violent means to expand into non-capitalistic lands. This process proletarianises labour and commodifies collective and public lands.

We operationalise capital accumulation with the commodification of land, the proletarianisation of peasants, and the continual revolutionising of production. In terms of commodification, we focus on transforming land into a means of production and for proletarianisation, on the transformation of peasants into wage-labourers, either as the agrarian proletariat in industries like banana plantations or as employees of illegal structures like surplus labour for paramilitary groups. Marx explains how, the more workers produce, the poorer they become as work actually becomes a cheaper commodity as production increases. Commodification entails labour

producing commodities whilst reproducing itself and the worker as a commodity (Marx, 1988, p. 71). The proletarianisation of labour in Colombia is one of the consequences of displacement and dispossession. It turned collective or public lands into privately owned means of capital production and by default turned peasants into wage labour.

Since the hegemonic vehicles' function is to create situational logics whereby subordinates consent to the hegemonic class, within the systemic dimension they operate to reproduce the systemic dynamics of capitalism to maintain the current system's constitutive dynamics. They do this by shaping the situational logics by which people perceive and grasp practices related to profit production as enablers of their corporate interests. In short, for the systemic dimension, hegemonic vehicles make subordinate actors consent to the imperative of competitive profit production by granting them material and ideational resources.

Instead of being a catalyser of social transformation by sparking a subversive revolution within the country's already conflictive social relations, the hegemonic classes created situational logics within the conflict whereby the working-class consented to capitalism. Unlike other subversions in earlier periods of Colombia's history, the communist subversion did not overthrow the social-bourgeois order or transform social relations (Fals Borda, 1968). The bourgeois factions managed to protect the social order by reshaping the social conditions within the conflict — what this work refers to as the conflict's institutionalisation. The conflict was institutionalised because it shaped society members' political behaviour by establishing bounding norms around social unity (Steinmo, 2008). After being

institutionalised, the conflict divided society in a confrontation against terrorist anti-social subversive actors. This situation diminished the organisation of class or vested interests and left the conflict's material causes and character untouched; that of a determined hegemonic class' struggle to maintain its conditions of domination at any possible cost.

On the role of the conflict upon the systemic dimension, this chapter shows the conflict, firstly, as arising in a specific context caused by practices associated with capitalism's systemic dynamics; and secondly, as an enabler of those capitalistic practices. The first part shows how, enabled by the practices of primitive appropriation, and operationalised as forced displacement and land dispossession, the capitalist system of social relations was established in Urabá. Urabá was an unpopulated and underexplored jungle with precapitalist social relations until the Antioquenian colonisation started commodifying land and proletarianising peasants. Primitive appropriation is an ongoing practice that continuously enables capitalism to colonise new accumulation and profit production sources. The second part explores the conflict's transformation into an institution that shaped Urabá's working-class's political behaviour. This chapter focuses on the systemic dimension, on capital accumulation, and shows how the conflict bound Urabá's society members to consent to and protect those practices. This chapter also explains the systemic dynamics of capitalism and digs into the social conflict associated with capital accumulation. It shows how the interaction between events at the national and local levels shaped Colombia's polarisation of subversive working-class groups against a counterinsurgent bloc.

2. The Colonisation of Urabá: a Story of Primitive Appropriation

Urabá's colonisation mirrors the history of the bourgeois hegemony in Colombia. It began with recourse to primitive appropriation to privatise the means of production, efforts to privilege the market as the mechanism of political and economic governance, and the conversion of peasants and indigenous populations into wage labour. Capitalist social relations institutionalise all constituting elements, including antagonism among society members. Then, dominant groups consolidate their rule through coercion and consent, binding other society members to enact capitalism's dynamics and protect its structuring institutions.

In a strict sense, we cannot talk about Marx's conception of primitive accumulation in Urabá because capitalism was already institutionalised at Colombia's core. We therefore use Azmanova's primitive appropriation, which more accurately captures the ongoing "colonisation" of everything that is to be owned, including non-capitalist areas that can be commodified (Azmanova, 2020). The consolidation of the system in Urabá resembles Luxemburg's account of capital accumulation, whereby capitalism must access non-capitalist areas for its reproduction. She explains that to access new supply sources for production—raw materials, labour and land,--capitalism depends in all respects on non-capitalist strata and social organisations (Luxemburg, 2003, p. 345). Urabá's colonisation reflects some of these dynamics.

Ramirez Tobon (2001) explains that colonisation[25] is the phenomenon whereby land is included in the historical process of production and the market in a capitalist society. Colonisation is the movement of the agrarian frontier of accumulation caused by human enterprises conditioned by the systemic dynamics of capitalism and the decomposition of urban and rural property and labour. According to Ramirez Tobon, in rural areas in Colombia, demographic growth and monopolistic forces destroy traditional forms of land ownership and push peasants towards the agricultural frontier to valorise non-cultivated lands and become labour-power. There is a social logic that is reproduced in the situations of both the expropriator and the expropriated. The pressure of landowner's hoarding expels the lower layers of the peasant strata, turning them into settlers exploring barren lands for subsistence; once the lands have been rendered productive by pioneer peasants, homesteaders, large estate owners or *latifundistas* launch monopolising attacks to appropriate the new plots.

> "The settler has arrived in the mountain to redeem from his recent property and possession loss. He has worked to rebuild control over his working conditions. However, he is dispossessed of his effort and damned to start from the bottom of another mountain the arduous domestication of a wealth that will be again grabbed. The owner, either merchant or landowner, represents the same capital that once in the city or the countryside decomposed the living and working conditions of the settler, who now in the jungle awaits again to prosper at the expenses of the alien effort, determined, as always, in his own valorisation. Thus, the new expulsion of the settler closes the circle, organic and necessary, starts from the moment in which the capital faced, competitive and defiant, the weakest forms of organisation of property and labour. It is this thus how the colonisation turns in the end, for a significant part of the actors of that

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[25] This work distinguishes colonisation from Spanish colonisation. The latter is the social, political and economic regime whereby the Spanish crown was extracting profit from the inhabitants of the Americas. The former refers to the process of settlers' movement to find profit in unexplored, unexploited or non-capitalist areas.

illusionist drama, in a simple chimaera of promised land whereby the man believes to affiliate, with his individual effort and his abnegated pioneer faith, in the club of capital accumulators" (Ramírez Tobón, 2001, p. 65, translation by author).

2.1. The Original Sin: 18th and 19th Century

Antioquia's colonisation started in the 18th and 19th centuries, when private property and capital accumulation reached unexplored, non-capitalist areas - or, Marx's words, when the "original sin" occurred in Antioquia (Marx, 1981). As established in the previous chapter on private property, the conflict originated in the epoch when ownership, driven by competition to produce profit and enabled by primitive appropriation, was institutionalised as private.

Antioquia's socio-economic change during the 18th and 19th centuries precedes Urabá's colonisation. The department's economy is a synthesis between two models of development: one, promoted by homesteaders or *colonos,* which sought profit in the colonisation of non-exploited areas; the other pursued profit within the capitalist enterprise, as miners, merchants, and industrialists, and led the regional economy's growth and transformation. López Toro (1968) explains that both trajectories were interdependent for Antioquia's development. Its colonial economy was consistent with the presence and evolution of a social class that, despite lacking capital and land, found economic subsistence in the extraction of mineral resources—escaping the labour-capital relation as tenants or labourers in the haciendas or mining crews. In this context, labour and entrepreneurial resources were highly specialised in the extraction of minerals. Thus, this social group's influence within the economy contributed to creating a merchant class with two functions; to gather the mines'

mineral surplus, and meet consumers' unsatisfied demands such as provisions or clothing. López Toro argues that the historical imbalance of growth between the mining and agrarian sectors generated the displacement of the economic and political power from the *latifundista* class to the merchant class. This process was also an expression of the Spanish colonial regime's economic and legitimacy crisis, which was consolidated in the Republic's foundation (López Toro, 1968).

Combined with generating more intense colonisation, these circumstances fostered demographic growth, and widened and strengthened the merchant economy. López Toro argues that, up until the late 19th century, the articulation between the *colonos* groups and the monetary market was not very strong, the *colonos* and Medellin´s bourgeoisie (the capital city in the department of Antioquia, where the sub-region of Urabá is located) formed a significant alliance to protect their interests. So, the administrative and economic policies imposed in the centre also benefited the periphery. As profit and social welfare came together, the merchant class' political control of the province improved the Antioquenian population's living conditions (López Toro, 1968).

Gold extraction and land hoarding by *latifundistas* brought misery and idleness to Antioquia in the 18th century. White men extracted gold and hoarded land and slaves. Eventually, when gold profit decreased and slaves' maintenance became too expensive, slaves were released, but not liberated. They remained attached to their former master's lands as tenant farmers. However, most of the freed slaves did not receive any land.

Mulattos owned less than white and mestizo people. They became political allies, clienteles of landowners or merchants in roles such as sub-lieutenants, captains or sergeants of the mestizos' armies, helping to contain and neutralise social conflicts.

These clienteles (an amalgamation of attached free slaves, tenant farmers, mercenaries, salaried workers, poor settlers, landless settlers, and displaced persons, among others) facilitated the economic and political domination of classes like *latifundistas*, merchants, miners, judiciaries, and clergymen from the colonial period up to the current time (Franco Alzate, 2009). Franco Alzate argues that Antioquia's history during this century is marked by the violence of the rivalry over frontier lands between *latifundistas* and poor settlers, as well as the struggle between indigenous populations and the *colonos*, invaders of their reservation lands.

Primitive appropriation in Antioquia was an ensemble of violent, illegal, legal and legitimated practices whereby territory and people were turned into land and labour - the capitalist means of production. This practice played with geographic and demographic conditions, the institutional apparatuses inherited from Spanish colonisation and the development of the capitalist classes in Antioquia.

Antioquia's demography was mostly poor white, mestizo and mulatto people. Only a quarter of the total population was employed in agricultural labour and a further fifth in stockbreeding. The amount of land hoarding pushed poor settlers to colonise new lands. Behind them, rich white people, *colonos,* also migrated to expand their family businesses. The *colonos* followed landless people to prevent them from occupying communal plots for subsistence farming. The scarcity of money in the urban areas drove colonisation. However, capitalists came as *colonos* pursuant to the

colonisation of new land, once settlers cleared the jungle, in order to seize their ploughed land.

Land monopoly and high taxes were economic causes for emancipation in the independence as well as causes for the later colonisation. The land market primarily benefited influential people, with *Latifundistas* and merchants often receiving land favours as indulgences from government or cabildos politicians and bureaucrats.

The Spanish crown favoured land privatisation for *latifundistas*. A royal document from 1751 stipulated that landowners were required to present their deeds and ordered authorities to protect compliant owners. Lands without deeds had to be returned for use at the authorities' disposition. This measure had the fiscal purpose of allowing people without property deeds to pay a settlement to legitimate their situations. An earlier royal document of 1735 urged colonial authorities to request land deeds, although it would only become effective from 1754. This document ordered the confiscation of agricultural properties starting with indigenous lands, while lands owned before 1700 could remain in the possession of current owners (M. González, 1984).

The royal document preserved the status quo of land ownership, except in relation to indigenous people. It let local authorities decide on indigenous properties when required. So, to solve conflicts between mestizo peasants and indigenous people over land occupancy, some authorities recommended privatising indigenous reservations and making them openly available for haciendas to work. The Viceroy Manuel de Guirior, in 1776, stated that "this poor peasantry should establish in lands of "legitimate owners" with the obligation of payment to owners equal to the value of

the used area" (M. González, 1984, pp. 362–363). Through the Royal Document of 2 August 1780, the crown introduced the legal concept of *claimant*[26] , which enabled the eviction of poor illegal settlers working the land. Paradoxically, this move was intended precisely to avoid the holding of not exploited land. As for unclaimed land (*baldios*), which at the time were a royal patrimony and therefore alienable, the viceroy decided to assign them to farmers or entrepreneurs willing to clear them, according to the prosecutor's criteria. Accordingly, lands had to be cleared, sown, grown appropriately, and always kept cultivated, except during the fallow period. If claimants failed to do so, they would lose their rights and the land would be reassigned. The mandate ordered against the assignation of excessive land portions, stipulating that people should simply receive enough to be able to work (Villegas Arango et al., 1978, p. 19). However, this mandate was not obeyed, and so the crown later acted, through efficient and peaceful means, to ensure that the legitimate holders of baldio land made them productive, let them or sold them. The Republic inherited the uncultivated latifundium to form the base of its agrarian structure (Franco Alzate, 2009).

Indigenous reservations were another hoarding source for *latifundistas*. *Colonos*, who trespassed onto the reservations with cattle, launched continuous lawsuits to lay claim to the lands. The expansion of the agricultural frontier to the west, allowing for the commodification of new lands, was proportional to reducing the number of

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[26] See Machado: the interested in the unclaimed land (*baldios*) file a claim making the desire location known and setting a first bid. Then, the authorities sent a commissioner to inspect the unclaimed land. The neighbours were summoned to denounce if any portion was not unclaimed. Afterwards, the land was offered by the heralds for thirty days. Then an auction was carried out and the land was assigned to the highest bidder—in many cases the only bidder (Machado Cartagena, 2009, p. 28).

indigenous people in the Chocó. Religious missions were set up to "maintain and keep them in peace" in the face of general indigenous unrest.

Franco Alzate (2009) explains that it was convenient for merchants and *latifundistas* to support colonisation advancement. The rent was differential between production in the frontiers and the traditional terrains which provided logistical support to colonisation. The monetary return from the frontier land — given the cheap workforce, the procedures of burning to plough up the soil, and the extent of the cultivated surface — made it much more profitable than the lands of poor settlers. In the frontier land, there was an available workforce of both *colonos* and settlers. Merchants, *latifundistas* and crew miners benefited most from the rent of the frontier land. With the reduction in foodstuff prices, to support gold exploitation which was in crisis at the time, owners could also use their original lands for stockbreeding until the agricultural workforce employment prices on their land dropped.

Franco Alzate (2009) explains land dispossession of poor and displaced settlers through the juridical qualities and colonisation modalities employed. First, colonisation functioned at both the individual and communal levels. Land occupation was classified either as a royal concession, capitalist colonisation or *baldios* (López Toro, 1968).

Royal concessions were lands granted by the crown to influential people as an award for a certain service. They required a commitment of occupation or improvement of the land. However, authorities did not enforce this obligation in the cases of land assigned to speculators.

Capitalist colonisations were lands obtained through the negotiation of agrarian bonds. The owners of these bonds were the largest hoarders; a small group of people with the cash flow necessary to buy lands at insignificant prices when nobody else could. The ample supply reduced its value by 90 or even 95%. These lands were mainly controlled by a partnership group of three capitalists and speculators: Messrs. Echeverri, Uribe and Santamaría. This group recruited workers in several municipalities and created a system whereby the governor's commuted prisoners were "exiled" to work their lands. Some of the partners of these concessions were members of the Society of Friends of the Country, created by the Governor of the province, Francisco Urdaneta, and included the most important merchants of Medellín. Several influential merchants solicited Governor Urdaneta to authorise the purchase of *baldios* between the San Juan and Arquía rivers—adjacent to the Cauca River. The government auctioned these lands in 1835; merchants bid 1$/fanegada in public debt bonds, and the bids were approved. The expedient arrived in Bogotá, where the promissory notes of the consolidated debt were settled. Thus, bidders earned 3% profit. Once examined by the Government Council, the General himself, Francisco de Paula Santander, approved them. Twenty days later, one of of the group's partners, Mr Santamaría, was designated as Governor. The company bought 67.000he through government bonds, as well as land belonging to many settlers and the concession of 102.717he of *baldios*. The owners auctioned these lands off, selling over half of them to Uribe, Santamaria and Echeverri. This last, as Governor, founded the district of Caramanta on his land. This situation displays the close connection between *latifundistas* and the political and military power, and how the land was

progressively hoarded progressively by landowners as they (and those close to them) occupied political positions and received concessions of land from the state.

Finally, _baldios_. These lands that once belonged to the crown were passed to the Republic after independence. Since 1833, the government used the _baldios_ to build roads, establish colonies and pay public debt. These lands generally favoured the wealthiest people because the government conceded large tracts as payment to construct public works and provide services. Large tracts of land were sold in exchange for internal and external public debt bonds. The people investing in these bonds sought to link the peasants (as attachés, in a sense) to the land to clear the wilderness and turn them into tenants. Franco Alzate explains that the common denominator in colonised land ownership was the coalition of interests between pioneer _colonos_ and merchant politicians. The _colonos_ provided their workforce, while the bourgeoisie provided some financial resources and exerted influence upon the government (Franco Alzate, 2009).

2.2. Colonisation in Urabá: chasing the promised land

The promised land was nothing to the Antioquenian bourgeoisie but the new source of supply for capital production. Its development and colonisation had only one goal: capital accumulation. The colonisation in Urabá coincided with the Thousand Days' War (1899-1902)—a civil war caused by the ideological confrontation between Liberals, Conservatives and Nationalists over models of development and administration. This war caused the displacement of peasants and indigenous populations, who were pushed out to unoccupied lands.

The region of Urabá was annexed to the Antioquia department in 1905 by President Rafael Reyes. Due to the jungle's harshness, the Antioquenians were unable to access much of these territories, however the departmental government insisted on the need for them to be colonised. Moreover, after the secession of Panamá, the region gained national interest for its position enclosing the Darien Gap. This gap forms the border with Panamá, and the government considered it a duty to defend it from the U.S (due to the country's role meddling in the Panamanian secession). Urabá thus became the "promised land" for its vast natural richness and colonisation came to be seen as a patriotic act. Stainer quotes an Antioquenian entrepreneur writing in a newspaper:

> "… let us widen the entangled jungles of the natives so across them, may the triumphant carriage of trade enter, and patriotism outcomes to defend the national integrity. Yes, let us head to the west to civilise and civilise ourselves. To repel barbarism and to attract healthy elements of morality and labour. (…) Let us do, in a word, everything that the audacious Spanish conquerors could not: to submit and exploit that promised land." (Arbelaez, 1905, cited in Steiner, 1991, p. 8, translated by author)

The governmental campaign created an ambiguous perception of Urabá among the Antioquenians. They considered solving social conflicts by sending the unemployed and convicted thieves to remote territories. On the one hand, Urabá was perceived as the "pantry" of future wealth for Antioquia—once the "Antioquenian element" had appropriated and, under its tutelage, carried the path of development through. On the other hand, Urabá represented a remote place where persons who disrupted the peace in Medellin—the centre of order and tradition—could be sent (Steiner, 1991).

The province of Urabá was officially inaugurated on 15 June, 1905. During the first years of the 20th century, Urabá was the site of great expectations for Antioquia. However, few entrepreneurs risked investing in the region as they depended on the government's infrastructure construction to transport products to the department's centre. Antioquenian investments also relied on the "people from the mountain" — peasants already known as honest workers and religious people — living in the zone.

Roads to cross the dense jungle were necessary to colonise Urabá. To create this network, there were two options: 1) to continue opening the western road, which started in 1846; or 2) to build a railroad, as proposed by Governor Velez. In 1886, Velez sent the Zapadores Battalion to the western territories to announce the launch of the Frontino-Pavarandocito road.

Steiner (1991) argues that until the 1930s, the railroad's construction was attractive to the ruling classes because it fostered the productivity of industry, both natural resource and capital and labour investment based. However, given the costs of the railroad, this project failed several times. In search of profit, foreign engineers often went into Urabá to develop infrastructural projects: Henry D. Granger, for instance, arrived in 1890 working in an engineering expedition in the Alto Andagueda mines and became a consultant on the railroad. However, the project failed and after said enterprise returned to exploit around 200 gold mines in the Urabá river. Examples like this show that Urabá welcomed a myriad of entrepreneurs throughout its history. They went into the region seeking profit without committing to the "real" development of Urabá. They had the technical experience, capital, and the Antioquenian authorities' blessing to produce profit at any cost. The façade of

development often concealed their intention to commodify the wild jungle and take advantage of the region's potential for capital accumulation.

Steiner (1991) denotes the features of the Antioquenian pioneer: white, influential and entrepreneurial, with an intention to integrate Urabá into the national and international market. This description applies perfectly to Juan Enrique White. Given the railroad's failure, the government pursued a new attempt to conquer the sea, this time with a road. White was an English man working for the Frontino mining company, who was appointed to oversee the project. The design and foundation of the Dabeiba municipality is attributed to White as one of the leading promoters of Urabá's development. White was portrayed as an "Antioquenian English-man", and his family, an influential representative of the Liberal party, was targeted during La Violencia. He worked in mining and in 1909 claimed gold mines in Chigorodó, delegating the adjudication of the Jundo mine to his son Alfredo and Mr Julio Gamba. In another expansion, he requested the el Congo mine, located in Guapá in Turbo. Ernesto, another of White's sons, also had an 11-year concession of 11000he of *baldios* in the region. White was married to a sister of General Uribe, an influential character linked to the region through a society founded in 1905 to invest in the zone dedicated to agricultural colonisation and mining. Steiner explains that to set an example of what entrepreneurs had to do in the region, the Governor supported this society and extolled its patriotism from a foreign policy perspective.

Ballvé (2020) explains how the imaginary of statelessness became and remains a powerful ideological and material force in the country which produces a frontier to meet the needs of capitalism. He focuses on Urabá and explains the imaginary of the

defenders of the capitalist society amongst the pioneers that built Antioquia — in this case, through the testimony of the former paramilitary chief Gonzalo Mejía - "El Alemán". Mejía was a famous businessman from Medellín, an "Antioquenian visionary" and the leader of the commission to colonise Urabá. He helped to establish different modern industries in the country, including aviation and automotive. He was one of the frontrunners in the construction of a road connecting Medellin to the department's only outlet to the sea, the Urabá Gulf. The project, which contributed to the region's exploitation, was promoted with elaborate marketing and public relations campaigns. Ballvé shows how the media portrayed the "Highway to the Sea" as Antioquia's "magnum opus" and a "redemptive public work"(Ballvé, 2020, p. 16).

Figure 2 A magazine was announcing and advertising the project. "To the Sea!" Feb 1927

Source: (Source: Ballvé, 2020, p. 17)

According to Steiner, the reasons to attract these "promoters of development" were related to capital accumulation. The main reason was to extract the territory's

natural richness, ready for transportation to the trade centres and the sea connected through the Urabá Gulf. However, few investors perceived the region as profitable, and very few poor peasants were willing to battle against the dense jungle to settle in the area. In 1930, only 30 settlers were in Urabá.

Catherine LeGrand (2016) explains that the colonies were part of the Ministry of Industry's colonisation plans. It would turn the region into a pole of attraction to peasants and contribute to the borders' development. Urabá was a dream to be constructed by the progressist Antioquenian elites, mostly engineers or visionaries seeking economic opportunities after the civil war.

Stockbreeding and agriculture grew exponentially, and new commercial activities began to concentrate on the "warmer and milder lands" in response to the growing demands of Europe and the U.S. (LeGrand, 2016). For any potential investor, the territory, scarcely populated and virtually disconnected from other areas, had to go through a process of valorisation. Colonisation was the primary strategy to valorise the region through access to land and labour.

Map 5 Colonisation and Foundation of Municipalities in Urabá
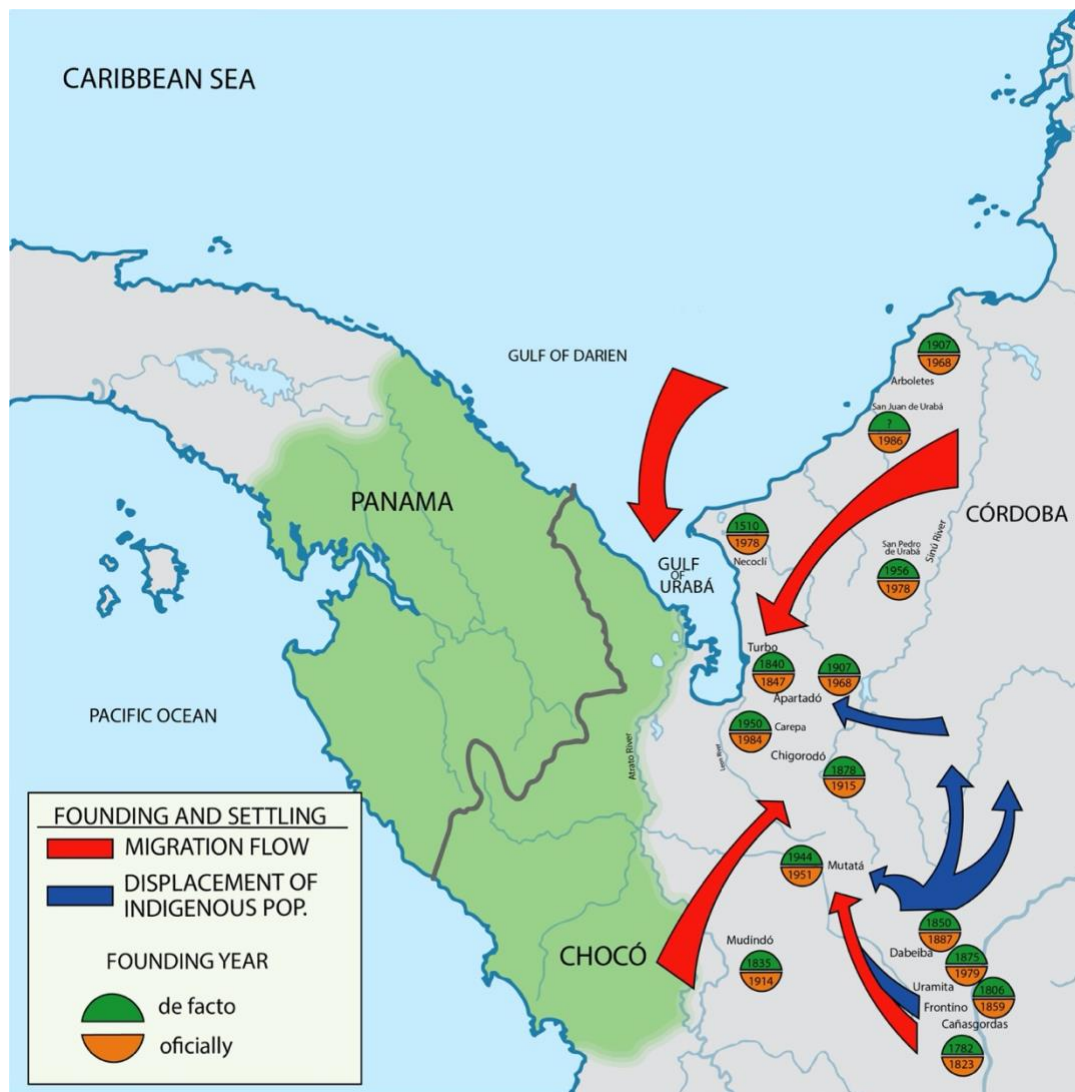
(Source: Steiner, 1991)

The map shows the process of colonisation and foundation of the different municipalities of Urabá. It shows where people were migrating from and how indigenous people were displaced to the region.

2.3. Urabá and the International Market

The colonisation of Urabá was not exclusively strategic for local capitalists or the national government. It was also strategic for foreign investors who saw the region's

potential for-profit production. Its mineral resources, climate suitable for cultivating many crops, fluvial connection between regions and access to the Caribbean Sea through the Urabá Gulf are Urabá's best geographical features. Since the period of the Spanish colonisation, Urabá projected itself as a commercial hub. However, it would not flourish as such until the early 20th century when national and foreign capital arrived in the region.

Harvesting tagua nuts and ipecac syrup were the region's main activities in the 20th century and led to the arrival of migrants from the Sinú savannahs and the Atlantic coasts. Tagua nuts grow from a fern palm and, when dried, harden into a product known as tagua or vegetal ivory which can resist up to 100 years and was used as the raw material to manufacture buttons (which Europe and the US were the primary purchasers of). Despite tagua being one of its most important raw material exports during the 19th century, Colombia imported buttons instead of producing them—unlike Ecuador, where they were produced in 23 factories (Steiner, 1991).

Table 12 Exports in Antioquia from January to October 1874

Exports in Antioquia from January to October 1874		
Goods	**Type of Parcel**	**total**
Cotton	Packs	6842
Cocoa	Bags	4
Coffee	Bags	36409
Rubber	Packages	27
Tagua	Bags	11654
Leather	Packages	574
Taken from the Statistical Yearbook of Foreign Trade. Years: 1875-1980 DANE		

Urabá's jungles were rich in fine woods, especially tagua. In 1907, President Reyes issued decree 1540 regulating tagua exploitation in the forests of the Atrato and León river basins and the Urabá Gulf coasts. Individuals or private entities could exploit resources with no authorisation or concessions if and when they fulfilled certain requirements such as paying export rights and customs duties and contributing to conservation of the forest.

Gatherers depended on contractors who sold the tagua to merchants exporting it to Cartagena. Merchants, in turn, depended on the demands of international trade. In Cartagena, big export companies purchased tagua and other products from the jungle such as ipecac syrup, rubber, canime balsam, smilax, carob syrup, tortoiseshell and divi-divi. The first shipment of tagua from Urabá was in 1845 and the first export in 1875.

In the context of the second half of the 19th century, intra-class conflicts began to emerge between capitalists in different regions. The scarce population of Urabá was involved in the gathering economy. Capitalists in the rubber, tagua, indigo plant, tropical wood and ipecac syrup trades —products in high international demand— employed poor peasants from the coast and Chocó. (Botero Herrera, 1990, p. 23). Most merchants with political-economic power and control over the territory, particularly in Turbo municipality, were from Cartagena (Cartageneros). Therefore, Antioquenians started to displace the Cartageneros, their capital, and their labour forces.

In 1905, the territory spanning from the right bank of the Atrato River to the Arboletes outlet was annexed to Antioquia. Subsequently, Antioquenian bureaucrats

appointed themselves to occupy all the influential administrative positions, deepening conflicts between merchants over control of production and commerce. Garcia Estrada details the example of Manuel Marulanda, a capitalist who moved into the region to claim a *baldio* plot. He used his influence to communicate concerns about the control of the market by four Cartagenero merchants to President Carlos E. Restrepo directly and advocated for Antioquenian control of the administration of Turbo. The four Cartageneros controlled the municipality's administration and were growing rich from corporation wages. The main difference between the bourgeoisies of Antioquia and Cartagena was their efficient control of the means of profit production in the territory. Antioquenians reported a lack of efficiency and communication between the port of Turbo and the rest of the country. Turbo depended on maritime communication with Cartagena, but this connection was extremely irregular. The Cartagenero merchants, on the other hand, exploited tagua supplies under the conditions of a monopoly over labour-power and a regime that García Estrada characterises as precapitalist (1995, p. 2). All the commercialisation of essential products, most of them imported, were controlled by the same tagua owners. The Cartagenero merchants had posted overseers throughout the region who hired gatherers, primarily Afro-Colombians from Chocó, and remunerated them in advance with money, provisions, aguardiente and clothing. Resource owners consequently indebted workers and prevented them from having any economic surplus by then charging high costs for said provisions (García Estrada, 1995).

The extraction of tagua was volatile, and its production relatively quickly stopped being profitable. By 1915, the dependency on extraction and the

manufacturing industry became more prominent. Until the 1930s, tagua remained important in Urabá, however commercialisation collapsed with the discovery of plastic which revolutionised button production. Tagua crops became somewhat defunct and started to be viewed as obstacles to the colonisation of the Leon River area. However, despite its decline, the trees could not legally be cut down.

Overall, the forests were part of concessions to particulars to stimulate development and colonisation, but the management of these concessions was unregulated and created conflicts between owners and settlers. Owner seldom used the lands, as exemplified by the 20-year concessions granted to Ernesto White which covered 1100he and were worked by around 2000 gatherers. White only exploited eight of the twenty concessions of over 50he, and the remainder of the *baldios* had to be returned to the state. This situation pushed capitalists to advocate for agriculture to be recognised as a profitable sector so as to counter dependency on tagua and wood, hold up agriculture, and create benefits for (mainly foreign) companies. However, the government depended on foreign capital investment to enable local capitalists to produce profit. For example, foreign companies were established in the Sinú to extract wood from San Juan and Mulatos which the government contracted with the Bostonian investor Mr Herbert C. Emery from 1918 until 1931. This contract garnered criticism for its indiscriminate depredation and prerogatives for foreigners who profited at the national forests' expense. However, these companies also helped to build roads and supported workers from the Sinú who settled in the area (Steiner, 1991).

It was within this context that the first attempt in Urabá was made to cultivate bananas and develop the crop's commercial export potential. The Hamburger Albingia consortium contracted with the government through law 66 of 1909, which allowed the consortium to develop banana cultivation for export on the eastern coast of the Gulf and licensed it to build a railroad and a dock in Puerto Cesar. In exchange, the government allocated baldios in the form of concession deeds for 4997he and provided a fifty-year guarantee ensuring the exclusivity of their dock within a three leagues' radius, giving the consortium the right to exercise sovereignty (García Estrada, 1995). All steamboats transporting goods for the consortium were tax-free for ten years, and all necessary construction supplies would be exempt from import fees. Garcia Estrada argues that the Colombian state expected to enter Urabá on the German company's back so as not to "flood their feet" (García Estrada, 1995, p. 3). The agreement comprised the government using the company's telephone and telegraph lines and even their facilities to control and police contraband in the transport of commodities. The company was also obliged to purchase all bananas produced by individuals and other companies in the region for five years, collecting and transporting the product aboard its trains and fluvial ships. Although the company repeatedly breached the clauses of the contract, it was never declared void. García Estrada explains that this might have happened to avoid international conflicts with Germany.

During this period, the Antioquenian capitalists led in economic, political, and social terms because of the coffee boom and the industrial take-off, and elected one of their representatives to be President. Given the secession of Panamá, Colombia and

the U.S. were going through a rough patch and the national elites therefore focused on Europe (and particularly Germany) as an ally. German investors contributed to improving industry, commerce and education in Colombia, especially in Antioquia. In addition to economic relations, they also established strong, familiar ties, creating a small German settlement in Antioquia associated with industrial production and international commerce. Thus, Germans and Antioquenians controlled Urabá, avoiding any annexationist interest by the U.S. The success of any government development plan depended entirely on German investments' success. Local leaders saw German investments as the chance to keep control of a promising land for capital production.

At first, the German management approach was characterised by relatively good relationships with its employee—Colombian engineers even occupied some executive positions. This was important because it contrasted with the experience of working with English companies. Local authorities and owners had a better relationship with the Germans which translated into more prerogatives for the company. In 1910, Albingia had around three hundred workers. By 1912, the company employed around eight hundred employees working in the banana plantations in Sinú and across the Darien coasts. The level of production prompted workers' settlements to be considered a village within Turbo's municipality. In 1911, to address the conflict arising from overcrowding in the plantations and the dock, Turbo created a police force headquarters. José Maria Uribe, the prefect of Urabá, noted that public disturbances were frequently causing worker-boss conflicts, leading to production standstills and contributing to the company's financial problems—it was in these

matters that the police would be required to intervene (García Estrada, 1995, p. 12). The conflicts between the company, the workers and German employees, and local authorities were frequent. The standstills in production motivated some workers to protest—creating concern among the departmental government. The workers involved in the unrest were laid off and exiled to tagua-gathering hubs. In this context, we can start to see the initial inter-class conflicts in the region.

With the start of WWI, Albingia presence and endeavours in Urabá affected Colombia's relations with other European countries. Germany was a close ally of the government and an essential guarantor of the country's military, economic and infrastructural development. Due to Urabá's strategic positioning, any German construction, especially communication infrastructure, was considered a threat to the Allies. To keep its neutral position in the war, Colombia had to let American and British authorities monitor the German company's operations. In this context, the Albingia consortium started its decline on top of the company's liquidity shortages due to infrastructure project investments linked to the concession.

Albingia's most direct competitor, the United Fruit Company, kept a keen eye on the company's decline. This American company arrived in Colombia in 1901 by way of Santa Marta. By the end of the Thousand Days War, their plantations extended for over a hundred kilometres and used the Santa Marta railroad to transport their goods. In 1901, it produced 263.193 banana bunches, which increased to1'397.388 bunches in 1906 and four times as many in 1912. United Fruit exported most of the bananas to New York and England, for further distribution to Europe. The company had modern ships that could transport 70.000 bunches—a tremendous competitive

advantage over Albingia's old steamboats. By the time Albingia was established in the country, the United Fruit Company already held the worldwide monopoly on banana production and commercialisation. Thus, when Albingia's decline began, German investors and national leaders tried everything to avoid the American company acquiring its plantations. However, after many attempts to attract other capital and find ways to keep the region in German investors' hands, Albingia failed (García Estrada, 1995). Parsons explains that the Germans left the consortium's lands to the Yabur family who then passed them on to Medellin and U.S. capitalists. They then sold those lands to an African Palm company called COLDESA in 1960 (Parsons, 1996).

In the 1960s, banana crops boomed in Urabá after the United Fruit Company abandoned Santa Marta and entered the region through its subsidiary, Sevilla Fruit Company. This company concentrated on granting credits for cultivation and drainage system construction to landowners in Urabá (Parsons, 1996, p. 102).

Steiner explains that there was a contrast between colonisation discourse and reality. The real presence of Antioquia in the region was limited to the institutional representation of the department. State presence consisted of only a few servants living in Urabá. The Antioquenian presence would depend on how the region's economy effectively articulated back to Antioquia through capital investment and it thus became necessary for investors to convince the state to finance the construction of penetration roads. In a letter from 1930, the former Minister of the Treasury expressed that "Urabá could be the major banana emporium in Colombia", referencing the possibility of Antioquenians exporting bananas independently from

the United Fruit Co. and other foreign companies. In 1931, the government issued

decrees to exempt all new banana plantations from taxes (Steiner, 1991). In 1937, the

Antioquia Departmental Assembly stimulated agricultural development in Urabá,

offering subsidies of 5 cents for each banana plant cultivated, and started calling an

area in the region "the banana zone". It issued a similar subsidy for cacao crops. To

take advantage of the subsidies, growers needed to prove Colombian citizenship and

produce using the local authority's favoured agricultural technique. However, there

is no proof of people taking advantage of this incentive system, and the local

cultivation of bananas never happened on a grand scale (Parsons, 1996).

The Highway to the Sea is the quintessential symbol of Antioquenian

colonisation to the west. The colonisation created a myriad of symbols linked to the

development project for the department. For instance, the Highway to the Sea was not

a road to benefit Urabá; it was for Antioquia. The constructers did not even consult

settlers and early colonisers before the project began.

Besides the geographical conditions, the main problems of colonisation were

the cultural differences linked to the native way of living. There was a tendency not

to recognise the existence of social groups with alternative social or economic

organisation. Furthermore, conflicts started simmering as Antioquenians proclaimed

themselves the only redeemers in a region were "savagery and barbarism" prevailed.

The colonisation was, therefore, more than the physical occupation of the territory as

religious, patriotic and civilising elements would also play an essential role in this

process (Steiner, 1991).

The colonisation of Urabá marked the onset of capitalist relations in the region. Urabá turned into a hub of capital production championed by local and foreign capital from a scarcely populated jungle with a precapitalist form of ownership. The "miracle of Urabá" was the start of the conflict. Up to this point, we have seen that the original sin was only the beginning of a long-standing conflict in which the control of land and capital accumulation prevails as a cause of pro-capitalist violence.

3.   The Outbreak of the Perfect Storm

The conflict did not start in Urabá, but it was one of the places where the conflict overflowed due to its strategic positioning in the struggle over control of productive assets. Gutierrez Sanin et al. (2007) argue that Colombia is not only a country with persistent armed violence but is also one which has had a profoundly competitive polity since its onset. Electoral competition between the elites, organised in Liberal and Conservative Parties, and the rotation of power are constants. Moreover, Colombia experienced successive periods of stagnant growth. Contrary to the neighbouring countries' trends, Colombia was growing better than other countries. Gutierrez Sanin presents a puzzle that is worth bearing in mind when thinking about the outbreak of the conflict in Urabá: how has Colombia had such a long coexistence of macro-institutional stability (democracy, markets, growth) with war, violence and organised crime (Gutiérrez Sanín et al., 2007, p. 4)? On this question, this thesis argues that the war, created in the conditions of "macro-institutional stability", enabled capital accumulation and profit production which underpins democracy, the market and growth. It means that so-called "macro-institutional stability" is a dysfunctional

social, political, and economic configuration that supports social formations within capitalism while reproducing its underlying conflictive social relations. It is functional to capitalism's operative logic, but dysfunctional as it jeopardises the social fabric. In Urabá, we can see it in the outbreak of the conflict, which occurred in an internally damaged enterprise of constant development and growth.

At first, the colonisation did not go as expected. Ballvé explains that despite the government's efforts to bring *colonos* into Urabá, the Antioquenians always deemed the region to be nothing more than a periphery. Its rain-drenched climate renders the land unsuitable for coffee growing and makes the soil challenging for ploughing into pasture land.

The region was always a small fort of the Liberal Party within overwhelmingly Conservative Antioquia. The amount of afro, mulatto and mestizo people clashed the imaginary of the Antioquenian archetype of development. With capitalists like Gonzalo Mejía, who created lobby groups to influence the government to support the colonisation, projects like the Highway to the Sea were made possible. The Medellin bourgeoisie built its wealth first through mining, slave exploitation and the commercialisation of goods from abroad, and later by profiting from the coffee boom and using its surplus to create industry—rendering Medellin a 'Capitalist Paradise' (Ballvé, 2020, p. 25, citing; LIFE Magazine, 1947). By this time, colonisation was the next step in their capitalistic enterprise, and its symbols would meet several of their interests. Ballvé argues that:

> "It would afford them a long-term place to park the large amounts of idle capital they had accumulated from coffee and textile manufacturing. In addition, once finished, the road would ensure Medellín's continued success as a capitalist paradise by granting it better access to global markets, especially

via the adjacent the Panama Canal. Finally, it would open up Urabá, a wholly undercapitalised frontier, to lucrative investments in land and agriculture" (Ballvé, 2020, p. 25).

Ballvé argues that projects like the Highway fit Harvey's "spatial fix" concept (Harvey, 2001, 2006). Investors use unproductive surplus capital and make it profitable by moving it into new spaces and fixed objects, especially infrastructure. This practice was fundamental to building Urabá and its conflict context, in which the capitalist classes moved excess capital from the centre, enacting a discretionary movement of capital back and forth, which perpetuated uneven development (Ballvé, 2020).

Since settlers arrived in Urabá in the Thousand Days' War, the region turned Liberal in a country ruled by Conservatives. The settlers lived off harvesting and fishing—activities with high mobility, compared to the static, family exploitation-based coffee economy. These dynamics made Urabá essentially different from Antioquia. It delayed the Antioquenian colonisation, which would only arrive at pace as Liberals forcibly displaced during La Violencia in 1948 began to arrive in the region and was entrenched when work on the Highway to the Sea was concluded in the mid-1950s.

3.1.   Into La Violencia

La Violencia is the most critical peak of intra-class conflict and the immediate antecedent of the inter-class conflict and the event that consolidated the conflict in Urabá and the entire country.

The year 1930 was one of the most bloody in the country's history. Events occurring in Boyacá and the Santanderes were echoed in Antioquia, Cundinamarca and certain places in Caldas. Guzmán Campos (1962) explains that conflictive 1930 was one of the first historical antecedents of La Violencia. It was the year of government change. Olaya Herrera was elected as President by the Liberal Party after over 40 years of the *hegemony* of the Conservative Party (which began in 1886).[27] This hegemony left a deeply confessional country managed by Conservative bureaucrats and servants. Conservatives' persecutions of Liberals, supported by the local governments, were common and the new Liberal government therefore compelled its militants to revenge all the violence suffered. This year was a bloodbath for the Conservative people punctuated by massacres, executions, destruction of churches and party headquarters. Azula Barrera, a Conservative, says that 1930 was a year of violence against poor Conservative peasants. Liberal squats displaced them, leaving behind abandoned properties. Conservatives' properties were occupied or acquired at rock-bottom prices by liberal rural landlords, who threatened to kill any peasants refusing to comply. The National Police and the Departmental Guards were co-opted by delinquents and felons who arrived in traditionalist villages to persecute and kill all persons disagreeing with their Liberal positions.[28]

The partisan violence before and during La Violencia transpired in a confrontation between the country's two capitalist elites over political and economic

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[27] Do not confuse the bourgeois hegemony with *conservative hegemony.* The latter is a term used in the literature on the Colombian history to refer to the period of continuous and total conservative rule from 1886-1930, first with National Party in power and then under the Conservative Party itself.

[28] Azula Barrera, De la revolución al orden nuevo (Bogotá, 1956), p. 30., cited in Guzman Campos et al., 1962, p. 26

control of the means of production and profit and their respective clienteles became heavily entrenched in retaliations against members of the other party. Guzmán Campos explains that the violence of 1930 did not transcend that year, but that there remained "something" indelible "left from it" (Guzman Campos et al., 1962, p. 27).

In 1946, there was a new change of government and a switch in the party in power. Ospina Perez, a conservative, suceded the unpopular government of his liberal predecessor, Lleras Camargo. Lleras Camargo's government incited mob actions in the streets which caused the election campaign to happen in an agitated context. The partisan violence provoked a wave of strikes and demonstrations throughout the country, affecting the maritime, transport, oil and communication industries. Between September and November of that year, the country's situation took an extremely conflictive turn after the deaths of influential leaders from different sectors.

In 1947, a general strike erupted and was sustained in the transport sector, destroying infrastructures such as roads and bridges. The government declared this strike illegal and voided the legal status of the Colombian Workers' Confederation (CTC).

The following exemplifies a discursive conservative trend to create associative clusters between liberals, communists, and subversives. Azula Barrera argues that the 1947 strikes were an attempt by the government to take control of a subversive movement internationally inspired by revolutionaries and supported by liberal factions, while liberals were at the same time trying to paralyse the country so as to overthrow the conservative government[29]. The year 1947 also coincided with the Fifth

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[29] Azula Barrera, De la revolución al orden nuevo (Bogotá, 1956), p. 271., cited in Guzman Campos et al., 1962, p. 30

Communist Congress in which the central premise was: to critique the government of President Ospina Perez for its ties to the liberal and conservative bougeoisies of Colombia, where reactionary forces predominated.[30]

Meanwhile, liberals and conservatives were killing each other across the country. Conservative media reported that liberal mobs entered into cities to attack the police, whereas liberal media conversely stated that the police force was conservative and that the dead and wounded people were liberals. In some areas, conservative gangs started to acquire weapons: the *Pajaros*, for example, were a conservative gang organised by a prestigious political leader whose *modus operandi* was to displace liberal people to capitalise on rural areas to change the political composition of these localities (Guzman Campos et al., 1962). These confrontations were only one example of the tensions rising in the country.

1948 was also an agitated year with the tension playing out in acts of strikes, demonstrations, and massacres. Consequently, the government declared a state of siege and assigned militaries to control different areas of the country. However, control was far beyond the militaries' capacity to intervene in the bloodbath between liberals and conservatives. As usual, the media continued to recriminate the adversary side. On 9 April 1948, the event that caused the outbreak of La Violencia occurred: the assassination of Jorge Eliecer Gaitan. Gaitan, a liberal leader and congressman with a history as a labour lawyer, earned his reputation when he investigated and held congressional hearings on the Banana Massacre.[31] Gaitan had massive support from

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[30] Central Committee of the Colombian Communist Party, 30 years of struggle of the Colombia Communist Party (Bogotá, 1960), pp. 81-82., cited in Guzman Campos et al., 1962, p. 31

[31] The Banana Massacre refers to the assassination of striking United Fruit Company workers near Santa Marta in 1928. The government declared the state of emergency and sent the military to control the strike. They then

the working class, both in the cities and among peasant populations. He carried the banner of the rural population and represented a hope of solving the agrarian question, as he was likely to be elected President in the upcoming 1950's election (Guzman Campos et al., 1962). The immediate reaction to his assassination was the lynching of the shooter, an event that was followed with the worst riots that Bogotá has ever known in an episode called the *Bogotazo.* In a melting pot of political repression and persecution, the violence quickly spread throughout the country. The following years would be the bloodiest that the country had known up to this date - termed La Violencia, it was the worst chapter of the intra-class conflict.

3.2.   La Violencia in Urabá

During La Violencia, the first guerrillas emerged in Urabá. They appeared in response to capital accumulation and competitive profit production, wherein capitalists sought total social, political, and economic control of the region through violent primitive appropriation.

La Violencia started as a conflict between the capitalist classes and their clientele over state control and ownership of the profit production model. Its end marked the conflict's evolution into an institution that secured the bourgeois hegemony through the National Front's pact.

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turned their machine guns on four thousand workers. Ballvé references a cable from the U.S. Embassy noting the following: "I have the honor to report that…the total number of strikers killed by the Colombian military authorities during the recent disturbances reached between five and six hundred." However, the total number of strikers killed remains unknown to this day. (Cable to the Secretary of State from Jefferson Caffery, Legation of the United States of America, Bogotá, December 8, 1928., Cited in Ballvé, 2020, p. 27)

By 1948, Urabá had around 50.000 inhabitants. The region became important during La Violencia because it disturbed Antioquia's access to the Caribbean Sea and therefore the world market. Urabá became a key area through which goods, people, arms, and public forces moved. Gaitan's death elicited a combination of partisan rage and local resentment against regional governments' historical neglect and authority achieved through impositions without consultations or negotiation (Roldán, 2002, p. 174). Despite being in Antioquia, an almost entirely conservative department, Urabá was predominantly populated by black people who tended to be anti-conservative. While the population was mainly liberal, conservatives ran local governments. However, when the news of Gaitan's assassination reached Urabá, they came through Turbo—the largest town in the region at the time. Liberal leaders dissolved the conservative municipal government and declared a Revolutionary Junta. Urabá devolved into a supply corridor for contraband arms from Central America to emergent insurgents, especially around the Highway to the Sea. Conservatives immediately communicated with Medellin, asking for help from the Governor of Antioquia (Ballvé, 2020, p. 27).

In 1949, elections were held; for local representatives in June, and for the President in November. Naturally, the bipartisan tension resurfaced. Both liberals and conservatives intimidated each other and lodged accusations of harassment and persecution. In the June local elections, liberals conveniently won in Urabá while *gaitanistas* won majorities in local town councils in Turbo, Dabeiba, Peque and Frontino (Roldán, 2002). In November, the election took place within a climate of intimidation. Roldán documented the case of a conservative *Laureanista* politician who

confessed that, by stripping liberals of their identification cards and smacking them with the back of their machetes, they aimed to boost the victory of Laureano Gomez. Gomez did win in Urabá, but the election was met with feelings of fraud and ballot manipulation.

Urabá's public force was also very politicised, a precedent to counterinsurgent groups' foundations. The army troops deployed from the northern coast, Cartagena and surrounding areas, tended to be recruited form black communities and were therefore essentially liberals. The transportation of and communication between troops was more manageable in coastal areas than in Antioquia's inland. The personnel deployed from Medellin and the rest of Antioquia tended to be more conservative, but transport of these reserves was costly. *Colonos,* mostly conservative Antioquenian landholders, suspected that the Army troops deployed from Cartagena were colluding with the liberal guerrillas and distrusted their willingness to protect conservative lives.

Police officers were deployed from traditional and indigenous departments such as Boyacá, Cundinamarca, and Huila where the conservative party was more dominant. "Long-term cultural, ethnic, and regional differences (whether perceived or real) thus intersected with partisan differences to create the sense of an alignment between specific sectors of the government's forces and the populations over whom they were sent to exercise authority", explains Roldán (2002, p. 177). The departmental government first tried to dissipate the perception of partisanship among the forces. However, the government's refusal to send inland police officers so as to avoid a violent reaction from the primarily liberal citizenry soon disproved this strategy. To

settle this situation, in 1950, Antioquia's Governor Berrío purchased weapons to improve the region's defences. He privileged their distribution to forces whose cultural and partisan proclivities leaned more towards the conservative side . Berrío distributed weapons to locally constituted, volunteer anti-subversive conservative groups (*contrachusma)* and "culturally acceptable" police forces.

The first signs of peasant's arming emerged in 1949, when the National Army murdered Luis Manco, a well-known liberal peasant, in Urabá (Steiner, 2019). Given that the public force was mainly conservative-leaning, in contrast to the liberal affiliation of the population, they were vulnerable and persecuted. The difficult geographical conditions and restricted access to Urabá played in favour of liberals who sought refuge there after fleeing from inland territories. It also facilitated the creation of guerrilla cores with high mobility. These characteristics similarly legitimised the anti-subversive plans enacted by conservatives against liberals.

In Urabá, the guerrilla's initial goal was to overthrow the conservative government. However, they quickly started to acquire capacity and local support to mount attacks against the state, its representatives, and the Conservative Party members. In the 1930s, besides the agrarian colonies, various penal colonies were created in different areas of Urabá: one in Titumate, in the Chocoan part of the Urabá; another in the region of the high Sinú, in Cordoba; and one in Antadó, in the municipality of Ituango. Allegedly, some prisoners from these penal colonies were founders of the guerrilla groups in the region.

The most prominent guerrillas operated in a different zone of the region. The Camparrusia guerrilla, led by the so-called Captain Franco, operated in Dabeiba,

Frontino and Uramita—the frontier between the Antioquenian subregions Occidente and Urabá, in the foothills of the Paramillo Massif. The guerrilla led by Mariano Sandón operated in Tierralta and Valencia, in Cordoba. Julio Guerra's guerrilla operated in the village of Juan Jose, Cordoba. Marcelino Bravo's guerrilla was known as the Urabá Guerrilla (Monroy Álvarez, 2013; Villamizar, 2017). The most important of these was the Camparrusia guerrilla. Its members Arturo Rodriguez Osorio and Anibal Pineda Torres built a headquarters where hundreds of men and many displaced liberal families sought refuge. The guerrillas of Dabeiba, Chigorodó and those along the Sinú River in Bolívar forged an armed resistance as members of locally based family clans. The guerrillas, *chusma* (rabble) or *bandoleros* (bandits), initially started as defensive organisations. However, their isolation, access to contraband weapons, and the regional government's weakness enabled them to attack the government. Within the two subsequent years, some of these groups expanded their activities to primarily serve influential individuals' political and personal interests in the region. Gradually, an informal market of stolen articles and animals flourished, of which the guerrillas formed an integral part (Roldán, 2002). Until this point, the guerrillas were only armed groups which primarily defended the liberal population and gained power on the side.

3.3.   La Violencia and its Social Function

The partisan violence in Urabá fulfilled an important social function to consolidate local *latifundistas* and militarise their interests, regardless of their partisan identity. This period shows a very complex interaction between owners, partisan militias, and

legal and illegal armed forces—all of which acted according to logics of capital accumulation. The permanent state of disorder created possibilities for profit for both liberals and conservative capital investors, while working-class people, also from both parties, were caught between either fighting each other or becoming displaced or dispossessed victims.

The guerrillas started to have a more economic interest in their actions. They partook in "all kinds of business deals" and received assistance from merchants and liberal political leaders. There was significant interaction and intersection between local civilians and the guerrillas. The guerrillas guaranteed their supporters and patrons the capacity to move in the contested areas. Roldán talks about a guerrilla supporter in Dabeiba who rented out properties left behind by displaced conservatives for insignificant prices, out of pure fear of the guerrillas. In some other cases, the guerrillas acted as enforcers or hitmen, eliminating or displacing unwanted squatters, workers or rivals. Sometimes, the guerrillas would act as bodyguards for local landowners. Liberal politicians and capitalists instrumentalised the guerrillas at this point in as much as they could strengthen their interests in the region. In return, the guerrilla groups built up economic and military capacities to secure territorial control (Roldán, 2002, p. 181).

This thesis aims to show how the war has been an enabler of capital's interests. Although these interests do not necessarily sympathise with violent actors, they have enough incentives to lend support to their practices. Roldán illustrates this through examples of merchants, landowners and non-combatants, who did not support the overthrow of the conservative government, but had enough incentives to support the

guerrillas if their profit was secured (Roldán, 2002, p. 183). Even some factions of the public force saw few incentives to combat the guerrillas because the state was unable to enforce its laws and policies. Due to lack of state capacity, the guerrillas continued to attack the public forces, displace conservative peasants and workers, and occupy valuable estates. Therefore, members of the national police and conservative volunteers started to collaborate to counterattack. There was still a sense of distrust in the army for allegedly collaborating with the guerrillas and local liberals, all of which led to fragmentation between the police and the army and to mutual accusations often being exchanged.

The local government and authorities could not tackle the guerrillas' actions with permanent forces of their own. Antioquia's government hoped to pin down the concrete threat in the region, but it was hard to find among the inhabitants of Urabá. The army noted a relationship between economic interest and class and the perception of the guerrilla threat in the region. The wealthiest citizens were more likely to perceive the threat of a guerrilla attack and latifundistas, in particular, sensed the presence of bandits everywhere (Roldán, 2002, p. 188). Class played a fundamental role in the state of public order in the region. Despite their political affiliation, landowners found ways to justify protecting their lands by supporting guerrillas or compelling the government to allocate more public forces to conservative populations. It also shows that the government's interests in Urabá were almost exclusively related to its function in capital accumulation.

"[Urabá] represents for the national economy one of the most promising sources of future development; and if it attaches itself to Antioquia, the economic features represented by such faraway corners of the department will be of critical and of incalculable value in the future interests of Antioquia."[32]

By the mid-1950s, the governments' perception of Urabá had not changed much from the old fantasy of extraction and wealth. The presence of guerrillas ceased to be only a regional problem, and the national authorities started to play a more active role in dismantling them. In December of 1950, armed disturbances occurred in Turbo, and the guerrilla invaded several conservative-owned farms. The Caja de Credito Agrario, Industrial y Minero, reported that guerrillas occupied valuable areas and led invasions of public lands dedicated to rubber development in plantations which were jointly operated by a US-Colombian consortium. These invasions generated economic loss and insecurity for investors. As a solution, the government offered to pay fifty soldiers to safeguard the area and funds and assistance for the Red Cross to provide medical and humanitarian aid for *colonos* in the area.

By January 1951, there were reports of a squad of 700 bandits in El Carmelo and Turbo. The conservative press reported that, due to their actions, many people were forced to relocate to Montería in Cordoba, where the "Laureano Gomez Committee aided them". The liberal bandits appropriated the properties that the displaced left behind. To the army and the conservatives, everyone sheltered in the area was considered a guerrilla member. Many settlers, poor peasants and some *colonos* were

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[32] Personal Archive of the Governor of Antioquia, 1951, Vol. 5, ''Informe de Comisión Región Urabá,'' 16 Oct. 1950. Cited in Roldán, 2002, p. 189.

targeted as helpers of the guerrilla groups. Even priests who rejected acts of armed violence were dismissed from their positions and transferred. The rulers, all conservatives, upheld that the banditry mobilised around the construction work on the Highway to the Sea. To avoid the suspension of the road works, they requested the removal of those engineers that were hardly conservative and favoured the bandits by hiring them. To manage the situation, the government determined that military engineers would take over the works, develop the construction project and pacify the zone. The region turned into a military zone, and the Governor suspended the transport of food between Dabeiba and Chigorodó to starve the guerrillas to death. A decree determined that all trade had to be controlled by the conservatives, under the army's supervision (Steiner, 1991). However, the guerrillas managed to secure supplies through theft and smuggling, meaning that the most affected demographic was the civil population. Investors complained that food shortages raised the prices of goods, creating labour problems in the area's mines and producing negative repercussions in the economy and on the state of public order. The National Forests inspector suggested that the partisan conflict thinly disguised the struggles between competing economic interests in the region (Roldán, 2002, p. 195).

The partisan affiliation often did not correspond with economic interests. Not all conservatives agreed with extreme repression of liberals, nor with a total partisan militarisation of the region, for they had common economic interests, and the guerrillas occasionally protected their capital. The existence of illicit economic networks among colluding parties depended on the state of the public order. The conservative government sought out consent to use force to impose a conservative

hegemony, but was unable to find it because economic interests were at stake. The civil unrest benefited profit production for some owners in the region, regardless of their partisan identity.

The impact of the armed violence on the property and economic interests of owners in western Antioquia, the rising civilian death toll, and the government's inability to curtail the guerrillas' actions prompted conservatives to request weapons from the regional government. Local mayors supported *contrachusmas*, insisting that local armed citizen volunteer forces were the only effective means to eradicate guerrillas. *Contrachumas* from other municipalities offered to support local militias. Ballvé argues that counterinsurgent *contrachusma* forces strongly correlated with violent forms of accumulation through land dispossession and speculation. Urabá's economy around land, labour and capital were most intense wherever *contrachusma* militias were most active (Ballvé, 2020, p. 30). Land speculators and rural elites, despite their partisan affiliation, also forced peasants off their farms. Ballvé says that this emergent class of *latifundistas* used their political connections to formalise and legalise the lands of dispossessed peasants. Due to the intensification of the armed violence in western Antioquia, the private sector looked for ways to protect their productions. In September 1951, the Federation of Coffee Growers signed an agreement with the Governor to forestall the sector's production losses—a leading export commodity in Antioquia. Any producer who feared that their crop would be affected by the violence could request the assistance of public force troops to collect the harvest (Roldán, 2002, p. 205). However, due to the historical mistrust of the public

forces' different factions, many locals preferred to rely on unofficial armed groups, which were perceived as more efficient and less corrupt.

Roldan argues that the violence that was initially waged in defence of partisan interests or protection of party members against attacks from the opposition evolved into a "free-for-all" in Western Antioquia. These conditions allowed pro-capitalist violence and the pursuit of personal accumulation among armed members of both parties and the government's forces. By directing pro-capitalist violence against opposition members from the same class, local authorities deflected aggression away from the stark economic and social inequalities of cattle ranching and large haciendas (Roldán, 2002, p. 211).

Authors pinpoint 1953 as the year when La Violencia ended and a new cycle of violence began (Guzman Campos et al., 1962). Conservative Laureano Gomez had been the President of the country since 1950. Gomez had close ties with the Axis powers during WWII and arrived in government with a goal to establish a corporatist regime, like those of Franco in Spain and Salazar in Portugal. He outspokenly proposed the persecution and elimination of communists, franc masons and liberals as part of the melting pot in which conservatives persecuted liberals and private militias organised to defend and advance capital's interests. Gomez also opened the country up to foreign investment and supported national capital. One of his government's main goals was to reform the Constitution, however, due to health issues, Gomez had to relinquish his chair to Urdaneta Arbelaez—whom the authors describe as Gomez's puppet—before achieving this. In 1952, the government commissioned a group to propose the basis of the constitutional reform. Among the

members of the commission were liberal representatives who refused to concur with the proposals. In theory, the Constituent Assembly was supposed to be installed on 15 June of 1953, however, on 13 June, the head of the National Army, Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, carried out a coup d'état with the blessing of several sectors within the Conservative and Liberal Parties. Melo explains that, over time, Gomez's projects affected interests within his party, and soon after it ceased to support him. Some members of the financial and industrial bourgeoisies stopped supporting Gomez's fascist government which paved the way for Rojas Pinilla to arrive in government with a conciliatory attitude to end the partisan violence. He offered amnesty to the Liberal guerrillas and helped to cease the "intestine" violence of the Conservative Party (Melo, 1996).

A *visitador,* an administrative inspector, was sent by the government to advise on the region. In 1953, his report unveiled an Urabá that Roldan conveys as: "a sordid, corrupt, divided, and violent society riven by factionalism, family feuds, local animosities, personal jealousies, vindictiveness, greed, conflicts between haves and have-nots, and struggles over power" (Roldán, 2002, p. 212). The report detailed a complicated political scenario in which violence mixed with corruption, nepotism, and collusion between local economic and administrative powers. Meanwhile, the partisan violence on the streets kept aggravating, and *contrachusma* violence kept mounting, leaving a trail dispossession and displacement in its wake. The *visitador* reported that *latifundistas* and merchants supported *contrachusmas*, because they represented vehicles for expanding their influence as well as opportunities for considerable profit (Roldán, 2002, p. 214). However, local conservative committees

were divided on supporting the *contrachusmas,* creating polarisation and violent intimidation against the opposing conservatives. The local party committees in different municipalities were rife with competition over private interests and petty rivalries. Those defending the organisation of armed conservative civilian groups were also those who benefitted most economically during La Violencia. They purchased stolen goods and cattle and resold them while using the *contrachusma* as private armies to terrorise and eliminate any obstacles to their interests. The *visitador* also reported that the groups supplying the guerrillas were weak but entrepreneurial conservatives (Roldán, 2002, p. 217).

As the conservative government toppled in 1953, the state of Urabá's public order was as critical as in previous years. One of the primary sources of profit came from cattle-rustling and guerrillas had consolidated power, attacking civilians, rural workers, and state officers, despite the increase in public force troops in the region. *Contrachusma* was even more entrenched in Urabá's society and began to be enacted against conservative patrons. The conservative *latifundistas* who initially supported the government's efforts to counter liberal guerrillas started to lose trust in the local authorities. Some private citizens offered to fund the cost of public defence to protect their economic interests.

Other conservatives decided to create their own private militias to fulfil the government's responsibility to protect private property and lives. Ultimately, capitalists from both parties colluded to defend their interests. The disorder that started because of the partisan conflict in 1949 became endemic to Urabá by 1953.

For working-class conservatives and liberals, partisan interests soon started to be superseded by economic corporate interests— which had been more evident for the capitalist classes before. Roldán explains that poor conservative farmers, settlers, and day labourers started to participate in *contrachusma* militias out of self-interest rather than partisan motivations because the government increasingly failed to protect them. Poor liberals, who initially supported the guerrillas, could eventually see no difference between them and the *contrachusma* as both taxed, assaulted and stole from them indiscriminately. The disorder simply created an opportunity for owners' to resort to dispossession and displacement to clear lands and properties of unwanted squatters and tenants who obstructed profit production. At the same time, the local merchants who remained in the region capitalised on the emergence of the market of stolen goods. Working-class people joined private armies, political offices, and party committees established by the new powers in the region, seeking economic survival. Roldán argues that although "it is impossible to draw an absolute correlation between paramilitary violence, land concentration, the growth in property values, and the expansion of large-scale commercial production of sugar and cattle in western Antioquia because of La Violencia. Some data does suggest, however, that violence supported by powerful economic agents in selected western municipalities and parts of Urabá affected by *contrachusma* violence had long-term repercussions on local land markets and forms of production" (Roldán, 2002, p. 224).

4.   Conflict, Hegemony and Capital Accumulation in Urabá

The history of Urabá is situated between capital accumulation, continuously enabled by displacement and dispossession, and the imperative to accumulate capital through land colonisation, its commodification and the proletarianisation of its peasants. Today, capital accumulation, which caused displacement, assassination, and subordination of populations to a dominant class, is legitimised; working-class organisations promote the continuation of capital accumulation. The newly institutionalised conflict reorganised social relations and undermined the class structure with its vested interests. Former working-class subversives are now protectors of the capitalist system of social relations. Capital accumulation, in turn, has created material and ideational conditions for them to pursue their economic corporate interests. The conflict in Urabá, as in the rest of the country, is the intersection between protecting the capitalist system of social relations and reproducing the bourgeois hegemony as the only social order committed to capitalism.

Before the National Front, the central conflict was over who led the hegemony. As we have seen, different factions of the capitalist class used the political parties as platforms to advance their interests while cornering working-class people into traditions, values and ideologies that functioned to support them. Before the second half of the 20th century, partisan violence concealed a dispute over the hegemony - the vehicle of capitalism in Colombia. Each party had its nuances. While the conservatives were more attached to the *latifundista* model with its traditional values, some liberal faction adopted more socialist and secular values to mobilise the working-class for

their cause. However, up to this point, any form of anti-capitalist subversion was minor and limited to anti-capitalist resistance from more traditional subjectivities such as peasants, and indigenous populations or ethnic groups. It would not be until the threat became more palpable that the hegemonic classes would start framing the conflict differently. While it is true that new social forces had gained relative power since the onset of La Violencia, in the following chapter on the counterinsurgent strategy, this work shows that the revolutionary guerrillas' timeline was not to first launch a communist revolution and then practice state repression. It was the way around; from Conservative repression, *autodefensa Campesina* organisations were created and immediately repressed by the state, causing their reorganisation into mobile revolutionary guerrillas.

After the creation of the National Front, the conflict was framed differently. The central conflict would be a conflict over capitalism's existence, waged between society's current institutions and antisocial subversion sponsored by international communism. However, the conflict never changed; it remained a determined hegemonic class' struggle to maintain its domination conditions at any possible cost.

4.1.   The Capital Boom in Urabá

The second half of the 20th century changed the configuration of the Colombian economy. The circuits of capital accumulation expanded from the Andean Region to regions developed though colonisation such as Orinoquia and Urabá. Import substitution also promoted exports, especially those related to commercial agriculture. Melina Lombana explains that this new configuration also reconfigured

new regional spaces according to the dynamics and requirements of capital accumulation and profit production, leading to the incorporation of non-capitalist spaces into the dynamics of accumulation and production. With spatial reconfiguration, social relations were forced to change (Lombana Reyes, 2012).

From its origins as a quarry of capital, Urabá was reconfigured as a fully capitalist space in the 1960s with the arrival of transnational capital to cultivate and commercialise bananas. The second section in this chapter documented the arrival of foreign capital brought by the Albingia Consortium - the first attempt to turn Urabá into a banana producing zone capable of competing with the northern coast. However, due to its isolation and the harshness of its geography, developing Urabá in the 1920s was a titanic investment. Albingia's lands went into litigation and were barren for thirty years in the hands of the Yarbur family (which was already hoarding great extensions of unproductive land). The Yarbur family sold the lands to the Mora brothers and Louis Coulsen, an American banana producer, who then resold the lands in 1960 to the pioneer company in cultivating African Palm in Urabá. A few banana plantations had survived from the Albingia era and provided the seed to relaunch crop exploitation in the 1960s.

Turbo was viewed as a promissory land for the commercial cultivation of bananas. In 1937, to foster this agriculture in Urabá, the Antioquia Department Assembly offered to subsidise every plant cultivated in the so-called "banana zone". However, this effort was fruitless.

The United Fruit Company, which already dominated the banana business, was aware of Urabá's potential, but it was not until 1959 that the company decided to

bring its capital to the region. It did this through its subsidiary in Santa Marta, the Sevilla Fruit Company. In Turbo, the company's explorers found an almost continuous tracts of suitable, well-drained land that would not require extensive irrigation. They concluded that the port of Turbo would not be suitable for loading big ships; instead, they would have to dock in the gulf. The company even contemplated the construction of three channels towards the plantations to facilitate the shipment of bananas. It shipped the first load in 1964. By 1966, two ships a week stopped in Turbo to load between 30.000 and 70.000 bunches of bananas for the European market. The banana soon became Urabá's best source of profit.

Map 6 Banana Plantations in Urabá 1966
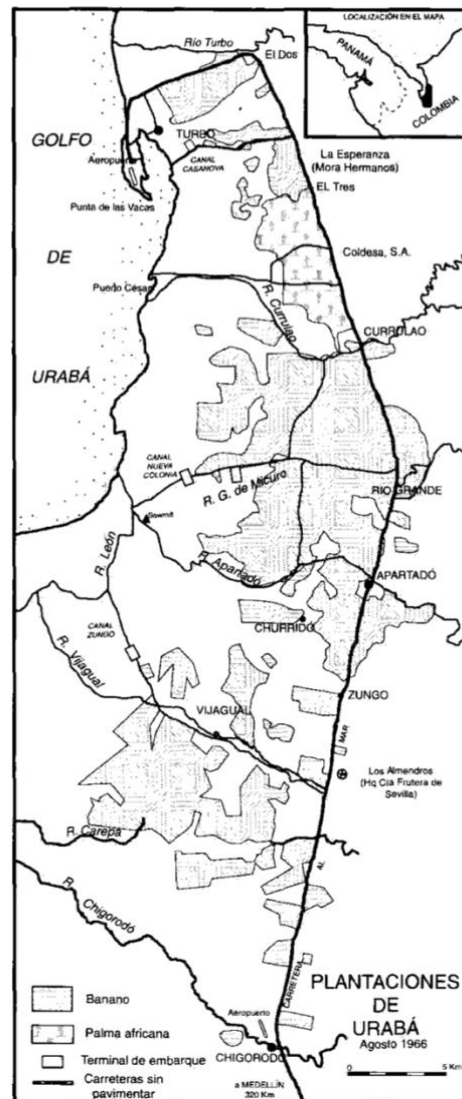
Source: (Parsons, 1996)

Parson explains that the basis of the Banana Boom was the program of associate

producers. The company did not own the banana producing land in the region.

Instead, it worked with a bank in Boston, giving low-rate loans administered by the

Financial Corporation for Industrial Development to producers along with supplies,

technical assistance and a market. It assured a minimum payment of US$2.50 per 100

pounds. The loans were granted to landholders with appropriate conditions, according to the company's criteria.

Due to the Banana Boom, "the Urabá Miracle", banana workers (mainly from Santa Marta) arrived in the region. It also attracted Antioquenian capitalists, who bought up land in Urabá, to profit from its valorisation. Many even made agreements with the company to plant bananas. Thus, in a six-year period, the price of land multiplied by up to tenfold. By 1965, there were around 235 hired producers who each held an average of 50he, except for the two biggest companies which had around 500he. Although experts exhorted Colombia to attract other companies to stimulate competition, the development of the United Fruit market discouraged other competitors (Parsons, 1996).

Although important, bananas were not the only regional product. In 1960, a Colombian-Dutch company, COLDESA, bought some former Albingia lands to plant African Palm. By 1966, COLDESA had planted 2.600he, and in late-1966, it established a powerful, modern processor machine in one hacienda. COLDESA was the only company producing palm oil because this venture needed high amounts of initial capital. Production took up to five years and required expensive equipment to extract the oil from the pulp and process it. In addition, transportation of the final product was somewhat complicated.

Another commercial culture was livestock breeding for which the region had ideal conditions, including its geography and meteorological profile, soil characteristics and access to the market. In 1964, there were an estimated 120.00 heads of livestock. This number multiplied quickly due to the governments' loans made

available for stockbreeders. This injection of capital coincided with the conclusion of the Road to the Sea connecting Turbo to Medellín.

The 1960s was the period of Urabá's integration into both international and national capitalist markets. The region had previously been relatively isolated and served only as a reception point for peasants during La Violencia. However, with the banana and African Palm trades, as well as the profit generated by the Road to the Sea, people soon began to migrate from Urabá's surrounding areas in search of better living conditions; capital accumulation and the imperative of competitive profit production, despite its violence, provided life chances. Urabá went from being an isolated region which provided no incentives to working-class people to one which they actively moved to in search of decent wages and employment.

4.2.   Commodification, Proletarianisation, Displacement and Dispossession

Since the 1970s, multinational capital financing and extracting profit from the banana industry was the principal driver of the economy; but none of the transformations that accompanied it promoted social welfare. Violence, theft, and overexploitation are elements that articulate the history of Urabá after this point. Lombana Reyes argues that the violent dispossession of peasants from their labour conditions enabled the "original accumulation" to set the aforementioned capital into motion. The land was dissociated and turned into a commodified means of production (Lombana Reyes, 2012, p. 47). The success of the banana trade also caused a forced proletarianisation of landless peasants and subsistence farmers into overexploited wage labour working in fruit production (García, 1996).

Garcia explains the peasantry as territoriality transformed by the process of production in the region, and characterised by its interculturality, fundamental relationship with land, and subsistence economy. This explains the constant struggle for access to land and property deeds. With the development of the banana industry, this changed. Beginning in the 1980s, a peasant economy of banana exportation, supported by paramilitary groups, was created. The peasant territoriality started with the migration of Sinú settlers — black communities who moved between their ancestral territories in the Atrato, where they worked as sawyers, farmers, fishermen, -- and Antioquenian agriculture and livestock workers who arrived seeking smallholdings to settle. All these settlers competed with resource exploiting companies, investors, companies working on the construction of the Road, *colonos* and political parties over available land, with the latter distributing unused lands among their clientele. However, most of these people had no interest in cultivating or settling in the land. In the 1960s, the banana producers entered into the competition for land. They established agri-businesses that, between 1964 and 1973, caused a fourfold increase in population size, thus worsening the struggle for the soil. This conflict was solved in favour of the companies through political and juridical tools, as well as deceptive strategies and violent actions which banana producers and investors used to evict the peasants from the banana axis (García et al., 2011).

Lombana describes this process as the violent dissociation of peasants from their living means to liberalise assets (Lombana Reyes, 2012, p. 48). It benefited both the banana and *latifundista* livestock breeding industries which, through displacement and dispossession, brought Urabá's territoriality fully into the capitalist system of

social relations. This process had two sets of characteristics: one violent, encompassing threat and the effective use of force, often supported by the National Army; and the other, Lombana calls "formal" which involved moving fences to expand lands, the purchase of land at low prices taking advantage of peasants' lack of awareness about actual prices, and the creation of companies by foreign investors to claim land from the state as *colonos* (García, 1996, pp. 42–43).

Alienating peasants from their lands produced a precarious group of people lacking living means who were available to be proletarianised as wage labour in agri-businesses while their lands were commodified. In Marx's words, a "reserve army of labour" was created that kept wages low and favoured the accumulation conditions for banana capitalists (Marx, 1981).

In the 1960s, Urabá's banana industry became an engine of capital accumulation and profit production for both national and foreign capital. Capitalist social relations thoroughly permeated the region and turned it into an international hub for capital, which explains Urabá's strategic economic value for nationals and foreigners. In these cases, we can see the operative logic of capitalism, capital accumulation, in action —and its susceptibility to conflict and pro-capitalist violence. National capital had to compete with its foreign counterpart. Botero explains that it was the latter that benefited most from the configuration of banana production. National capital's profit was almost exclusively restricted to the surplus value extracted from wage labour. On the other hand, the United Fruit Company, represented by its subsidiary Sevilla Fruit Company, focused on defining production and commercialisation conditions. It was here, in commercialisation, that profit

margins were the highest. National capital, invested in growing the bananas, was at a disadvantage because it was obliged to sell the produce to Sevilla at a fraction of its exchange value. Moreover, Sevilla was the only company to transport the bananas into high-value markets (Botero Herrera, 1990, p. 68).

With the capitalist entrenchment in the region, the spatial configuration changed to meet the needs for constant profit production. One way to change the layout of space was to reduce the time of capital return by unifying the different stages of production. In Urabá, this process reshaped the landscape in several ways; banana fields were established in the rural areas of the municipalities close to the gulf so that the time and cost of transportation between growing, collection, packaging and transferral to the ships were reduced. This change caused a concentration of capitalist economic activities and growth in the settlements of people surrounding them. This area is called the "Banana Axis". This capitalist core also produced a regional periphery which was relegated to the traditional peasant economies and was where the big livestock breeding haciendas were located, hoarding significant tracts of land. The second way was through the concentration of labour in urban centres or municipalities. However, until these municipalities were formed, banana labourers were obliged to live within the banana haciendas in improvised and precarious dwells.

Garcia explains this process of spatial reconfiguration as "entrepreneur territoriality". This refers to the 30000he used to produce bananas in the central zone of Urabá and the corresponding institutions based on private norms of interaction typical to agro-industrial economies with no state regulation. It transformed the

traditional regional agrarian structure as it changed patterns of demographic growth and concentrated settlers in the urban centres. It also changed the productive structure around the transitory crops of survival peasants, replacing them permanent commercial crops, and improved the productive and service infrastructures around the banana farms to facilitate agroindustry's vertical integration (García et al., 2011).

Urban concentration and imbalanced growth between industrial cores and peripheries, in addition to the arrival of the guerrillas in the 1960s, allowed for the advancement of labour unions of partisan and guerrilla leftists which impacted the region's traditional capital accumulation process. However, this threat only garnered a reaction from capitalists in later years. One such reaction was the formation of paramilitary structures to eliminate any subversive organisation or practice. Paramilitary action enabled the banana economy to keep up high growth rates throughout the 1960s and 1970s and to create new fronts of capital accumulation. Lombana explains that the new fronts were born in the organic imbrication of legal and illegal capital accumulation circuits (Lombana Reyes, 2012, p. 59).

4.3.   Paramilitarism, Accumulation and the Hegemonic Role of Violence

The conflict between capitalists for hegemony in Colombia transformed into a conflict between society and subversive forces. Materially, it meant the expansion of capital accumulation against subversive resistance. This thesis argues that, enabled by dispossession and displacement, the conflict advanced capitalist social relations into an Urabá populated by refugees of the capital accumulation process. Once capital had commodified lands and proletarianised peasants, the very process of capital

accumulation created the material conditions for a landless and precarious proletariat to be exploited as wage-labour in the pursuit corporate interests. It created life chances and occasional profit. The conflict created a situational logic whereby people started to understand the role of conflict actors differently: subversives, who were seeking to improve material conditions for the working-class became disruptors of the social order and obstacles to the status quo; capitalists, who held peasants and workers down to accumulate capital, were enablers and champions of the counterinsurgent enterprise. The intensification of the conflict and some ill-advised decisions on the part of guerrillas further contributed to this duality. Capital accumulation, for the working-classes, the state, and capitalists, became legitimised under this framework. The conflict had never been more functional to capitalism; it legitimised counterinsurgency actions, enabling accumulation and strengthening the bourgeois hegemony in a region embodied by the counterinsurgent bloc's rule. This process happened predominantly from the 1990s onwards, during the worst period of conflict in Urabá.

During colonisation, settlers shared a feeling of regional belonging. Peasants from different regions willingly cooperated, seeking out better conditions in the territory (in spite of their encounters often resulting in conflict and contradiction). They distributed lands, established forms of cultivation and water management, classified fauna and flora, and built up integrated organisations, among other things. Peasants developed a way of participating in institutional politics, often supported by organisations that occupied rural and urban properties. These organisations planned and carried out invasions of private lands for settlement. Although the invasions

resulted from the settlers' own absence of land, the public force always identified the perpetrators as guerrillas hidden within peasant organisations.

In the 1960s, revolutionary guerrilla groups reached Urabá: FARC-EP to the south, and the EPL to the north. Both the EPL and FARC-EP saw the peasantry as key actors in their revolutionary projects, supported the colonisation of lands and consequently promoted coordinated armed colonisation. Many of their members even belonged to the old liberal guerrillas of Urabá or were decedents of former guerrilleros. Their motivations in the 1960s and 1970s were to identify settlers' grievances and support land seizures and settlements. Thus, they created strong links with other actors in Urabá.

In the 1980s, FARC-EP and EPL expanded into the Banana Axis, zones of high economic productivity and entrepreneurial development. These tactical changes widened their networks of interaction, which had previously been concentrated on the peasant populations to now include agro-industrial workers. The groups tried to influence political and ideological practices in the urban centres and the most developed areas, where there were new social bases to be co-opted, and strengthen their social anchoring to expand the revolutionary project. So, the guerrillas leant their political force and participated in the unionist movements (the EPL with Sintrago and the FARC with Sintrabanano). They voiced labourers' grievances, taking advantage of capital preventing the organisation of unionist forces. The rural transition into the urban sphere was not an abandonment of agrarian struggles but the consolidation of new revolutionary identifications with the labour base and their grievances against capital and the banana entrepreneurs who were extorsive toward them. Bejarano

(1988) explains that the influence of the guerrilla caused unionist persecution: dismissals, detentions, threats or even assassinations. It also caused the militarisation of the banana plantations, hiring of strike-breakers, collective deals made without the union participation, unfulfillment of the collective conventions and even subornation on bids of specifications.

During this same decade, Colombia acquired an intermediate position in the Latin American context. Despite being much less industrialised than Brazil, Mexico or Argentina, the country had a more diversified economy which was built upon antiquated modes of producing integrated into an economy oriented to export and interact with international markets. In Colombia, several systems coexisted: extensively exploited traditional latifundium; labour-intensive farming monoculture; transnational modern mineral exploitation, especially mining and petroleum extraction; and national industry. The latifundium model was not an obstacle to modernisation in Colombia. Zelik explains that it configured specific forms of capital accumulation and facilitated integration into markets. Latifundia power systems merged with modern forms of investment and production, as in the case of African Palm cultivation or the burgeoning flower industry (Zelik, 2015). Colombia, furthermore, had a relatively stable economy compared to other countries in the so-called "lost decade" of the 1980s. Although some authors argue that this stability was partly due to the drug traffic's positive role (Lessmann, 1996; Rocha García, 2011), diversification also played a vital role that should not be overlooked. Colombian exports are predominantly primary products such as petroleum, coal, bananas, flowers, gold, emeralds, and vegetable oils—exploitations that are mostly managed

by foreign capital. Thus, the neoliberal "economic opening" of the late-1980s in fact helped the process of capital accumulation despite perpetuating the dependency conditions of the economy (Agudelo Villa, 1998). Colombia consolidated its role in the market as a sales country of raw materials and buyer of goods. This role, when perpetuated, negatively impacts both the social fabric and the environment, causing relentless exploitation of labour and nature.

Zelik analyses how paramilitary groups have effectively been an engine of the economy since the 1980s. They have contributed to imposing socioeconomic reforms, established export economies in their areas of influence, and accelerated land hoarding (Zelik, 2015). In the 1980s, paramilitarism, which has always combined economic interests with political violence as a counterinsurgent strategy, entered a new stage when movements began to configure as "autodefensas" - taking on roles as militias supported by the state, helping to adjust the counterinsurgent struggle, and local capitalists' private armies. In 1982, in Magdalena Medio, an alliance was forged between political and economic sectors that felt threatened by subversion (i.e. social movements, the political left and the guerrillas) to promote paramilitarism. These sectors included the bipartisan political establishment, livestock breeders, the Texaco Oil Company, and regional merchants (including the Medellin Cartel's drug traffickers). A stockbreeder association, ACDEGAM, was created as the organic articulation of these interests. It configured as a hybrid between an economic union, political movement, and military organisation—controlling private vigilance groups and death squads acting against unionists and peasant leaders. ACDEGAM co-opted key departmental and municipal administrative positions, allowing for

embezzlement and the diversion of state funds earmarked for improving conditions for the local population (Medina Gallego, 1990).

Since 1985, the drug traffic mafia grew in relevance in the Magdalena Medio paramilitary alliance. After the Medellin Cartel intensified its operation against state members who supported extradition laws, some state sectors started to act increasingly aggressively which caused the Cartel to take refuge in rural areas, and thus bringing their money to Magdalena Medio. As in any social conflict, drug trafficking often underpinned the activities of stockbreeders and merchants. Soon they merged their private armies with the armed structures of other capitalists. The drug traffickers sought to protect their accumulation practices and influence national policies to be more permissive with regard to this illicit trade. Zelik explains that drug traffickers adopted three strategies to cover their interests: co-opting institutions with subornation, blackmailing the state through terrorist acts that questioned the state capacity, and offering support to the state's struggle against the guerrillas (Zelik, 2015). In 1987, paramilitarism entered Urabá, dominated by the Maoist Frente Popular and the communist Union Patriotica. A new phase of violence consequently began.

Garcia argues that in this new chapter of the armed conflict, paramilitary groups' appreciation of the different social groups depended on how functional they were to their own economic interests. As a counterinsurgent project, paramilitaries targeted the territories where guerrillas had developed societal or partisan links while protecting those territories where the guerrilla committed most of their attacks. The strategy was to attack the friends of the guerrillas and defend their foes. As an economic project, paramilitaries controlled ethnic groups' territories, such as

reservations and collective territories. They used these territories for drug trafficking or incorporated them into the national productive structure (García et al., 2011).

Between 1988 and 1998, Urabá experienced one of the bloodiest wars when paramilitaries entered the territory and started disputing the guerrillas' territorial control. The new violence was extraordinary and its penetration tactics consolidated when the paramilitary groups arrived in the Banana axis in the mid-1990s, announcing their objectives. These groups formed in the north, and settled in Valencia and Arboletes in 1992 and 1993 until they could occupy the centre. With an outpost to gain territorial control, they reached the most remote parts of the territory, exterminating anyone considered to be a FARC member or sympathiser, eliminating the Bolivarian Militias (mainly in the Axis) and achieving their withdrawal to the limits of the region. By 1991, the EPL had demobilised, meaning that this offensive in Urabá was exclusively directed against FARC-EP.

Justified by the manifest objectives of the counterinsurgent struggle, the defence of the state, and the protection of the agro-industrial production, they pursued the domination of the productive, rich, and strategically located lands, with multiple connections to the inland. With the arrival of paramilitaries, the extortions and kidnaps of entrepreneurs, politicians, and ranchers suddenly ceased. They started to take over the contraband weapon and drug routes and coerced regional politicians. The paramilitaries copied the guerrillas' coaction and domination methods and even recruited deserter guerrilleros to help identify other guerrilla fighters and collaborators.

On several occasions, the paramilitaries worked as hitmen for capitalists in the region and the wider country. With increasing social mobilisation, influenced by guerrillas and parties on the left, profit production was also affected. Strikes, invasions of haciendas, and guerrillas action were obstacles to production, and capitalists soon decided to settle these disturbances with the help of paramilitaries. One example of this is the payment of paramilitaries by Banadex to protect Chiquita Brands and the former United Fruit Co. According to an investigation, from 1997 to 2004, Chiquita Brands paid the paramilitary group AUC a monthly sum that reached U$ 1.7 million. Aka HH, a paramilitary leader, said: "the banana producers always paid contributions. The idea was that the banana economy reactivated there" (*Factual Proffer*, 2007).

Madariaga argues that besides breaking the subversive social relations in an area with influential social movements, leftist parties and guerrillas, and paramilitary violence also reshaped those relations (Madariaga Villegas, 2006). Urabá was a significant area of subversive politics. Organised political structures advanced working-class grievances in the context of banana production. Workers' unions carried out several significant strikes to improve conditions that were necessary for hacienda workers. A region characterised by its organisation around class interests and resistance to the dynamics of capital accumulation turned into an armed peace where the bourgeois hegemony was embodied by the counterinsurgent actors. Madariaga speaks of a more violent transformation of social relations, but Romero (2003) explores the instrumentality behind paramilitary consent. However, both are

equally important and characteristic of the bourgeois hegemony and the capitalist system's resilience in an armed conflict context.

In his work, Romero uses two analytical tools to explain the hegemonic consolidation of the counterinsurgent bloc in Urabá — the conflict's ultimate operation as a vehicle to secure the bourgeois hegemony. The first is the strategic interaction between social actors. This includes the ensemble pressures of the main political actors to modify other main actors' organisation and behaviours, or to modify the whole ensemble. Within this, the actions of one actor provoke reasonably calculated reactions from the others which may include the use of violence. The second is political identities and their relationship with large social networks. The changes in the dynamics between collective subjectivities and new networks promote transformations in their identities. Romero uses these changes to explain the evolution in actors' strategies due to political interactions (Romero, 2003, p. 101).

As previously mentioned, to augment profit margins, the banana companies kept labour conditions intentionally low. In the 1970s and early-1980s, workers were living in camps within the haciendas. Capitalists ignored the legal working standards, doing nothing to comply with them. The capital-labour conflict was latent. In this context, the subversive forces founded unions. At first, the companies' reaction was to dismiss or even incarcerate any union members, but then Conservative President Belisario Betancur started a negotiation between the state and different subversive forces which meant that workers' unions, which were related to the guerrillas, started to be recognised. This created new spaces of negotiation between the government, unions and capitalists. However, these spaces did not exist for long as the change of

government pursued a different relationship with the subversion. Guerrillas responded by starting coordination with each other, and so did the two banana unions in Urabá.

In spite of the new government, negotiation spaces were revived and contributed to improvements in labour rights and the funding of urban dwellings for workers. This motivated massive migration toward urban areas and the foundation of workers' neighbourhoods with the guerrillas' support. The reallocation of urban space stabilised workers' living conditions and changed land rights' grievances (Ramírez Tobón, 2001, pp. 42–45). Nevertheless, the problematic relationship between the government and guerrillas was reignited by the killing of unionists. In Urabá, the guerrillas called for a "partial insurrection" in 1987 and a "popular uprising" in 1988. However, the local militants and union leaders disagreed because they wanted to consolidate the conditions established in 1984. In other parts of Colombia, unions participated in insurrection attempts and the government therefore voided their legal licenses and militarised said regions. In Urabá, a military commandant was designated who concentrated military, political and civil powers. However, the unions managed to stay afloat and merged to create Sintrainagro and consolidate their actions. This new union abandoned the armed struggle and any previous insurrectional goal.

Sintrainagro sought different ways to deal with capital-labour conflicts. Mario Agudelo, a political leader of the EPL, explains that instead of exerting pressure, the new strategy was to create détente, to open up consultation spaces and dialogues. The union preferred working with the companies under a unilateral truce (Villarraga &

Plazas, 1994, pp. 389–390). The union also wanted to avoid a potential regional crisis that could happen if capital was withdrawn from Urabá. Agudelo said: "We see the danger of the disappearing of the Banana Axis, the potential weakening of the worker, and the payback against us if that happened". Thus, the workers were, this time, working to protect banana production. "We thought of allying with the banana capital for the problems related to economic development, social problems and the human rights. […] it was our decision" (Mario Agudelo cited in Villarraga & Plazas, 1994, p. 391). The EPL and Sintrainagro abandoned their subversive practice and worked to protect companies against any social disturbance. The banana capital naturally accepted the support of the EPL and funded peace initiatives with this guerrilla group.

The 1980s was a decade of changes in the power balance of Urabá. After the 1984 peace talks between the government and FARC-EP, this latter participated in the foundation of a legal, political movement called Union Patriotica (UP). UP became the most important political force in Urabá, but its power declined after the state, in alliance with paramilitary groups, targeted its members and sympathisers at the national level. The result was a genocide of around 4153 of its members between 1984 and 2002 (Centro de Memoria Histórica (Colombia), 2018b). The Liberal Party, the main rival of the UP in Urabá, recovered the political power lost to the UP. The EPL, which influenced a significant part of the banana industry's workforce through the Sintrainagro union, started to ally with the paramilitaries in counterinsurgent practices against FARC-EP. Romero explains that one reason behind this change of strategy was the "accommodation" of groups considered to be weak.

The assimilation of the workers (EPL) and their allies into a regional political arrangement has impacted different social sectors in Urabá. Romero argues that "the workers and the political sector that finally prevailed within this arrangement are not only "victims" of that order in construction, they also have achieved a position that bestowed them social, political and economic advantages, as well as influence in the character of that concurrence of forces" (Romero, 2003, p. 103). In this thesis' words, the conflict created the situational logics whereby the workers who survived consensually embraced the paramilitaries' rule out of fear. Such an arrangement entailed the support of the counterinsurgent bloc against any disturbance to the social order. The strategic alliance between legal and illegal capitalists, central state sectors such as the Army, and regional politicians linked to the Liberal Party also enabled this arrangement. The banana companies accepted the presence of strong unions and created other unions linked to the Liberal party.

In 1991, the EPL embraced the conditions of the state to legalise and participate publicly in politics. Romero argues that this military weakening broke down subversive actions and ceded space to paramilitaries. It exacerbated existing political competitions between EPL and FARC-EP, which still existed as insurgent groups. EPL's renouncement of the insurgent line drove both groups to dispute the other's strategy and resulted in attacks by one subversive group on the bases of the other. Paramilitaries and security forces took advantage of this dispute to eliminate insurgent actors, regardless of their affiliations. Esperanza, Paz y Liberal, the EPL's newly founded political movement, decided to approach ancient foes to confront FARC-EP and its unarmed sympathisers. The army, banana companies and

paramilitaries became the new allies of the EPL. Romero notes that for the private sector, regional politicians and the counterinsurgent forces, the coalition with the workers (through the EPL) neutralised any potential disturbance of the local political regime. The interaction between EPL and the banana union with counterinsurgent politico-military and social networks facilitated the change of strategy and political identities (Romero, 2003).

One dimensions of the consent to the system of social relations in Urabá was established and consolidated after the 1990s. This chapter presented the issues related to capital accumulation. It examined two stages of the conflict: first, the arrival of the capitalist system of social relations in Urabá, a non-capitalist space enabled by dispossession and displacement practices during the first half of the 20th century; and second, the consolidation of the counterinsurgent conflict aiming to protect capitalism and the bourgeois hegemony from communist subversion. During this second stage, we have seen how the conflict reorganised the working-class's interests by creating situational logics in which their life conditions were bound to the continuation of the social order. In this context, working-class subversion is no longer the champion of the class' interests but its worst enemy—this reorganisation, referred to as the institutionalisation of the conflict, restructured Urabá's social relations. The consequence of this is that the conflict acquires and recasts its social function to expand and protect the capitalist system. The mobilisation of working-class grievances against capitalist exploitation is portrayed as the conflict of a society and its counterinsurgent rule against antisocial terrorist groups. In Urabá, people embraced the paramilitary rule as the custodian of social relations and social order; a

social order that, despite perpetuating labour exploitation and endless capital accumulation, provides some degree of acceptable living conditions for a working-class committed to disregarding its class interests and pursuing its economic corporate interests within the framework of competitive profit production.

Chapter 5: Armed Peace in the Best Corner of America

1. Introduction: The Relational Dimension

This thesis understands hegemony as a process in motion, requiring constant maintenance and reproduction. Its legitimacy partly depends on how it adjusts to crises and provides material and ideological conditions to different members of society. Hegemony is shaped differently in each context. Each context demands specific institutions to create the situational logics that enable the hegemony. We

argue that the conflict in Colombia is one of these functional institutions that enable the bourgeois hegemony to endure. The conflict is a hegemonic vehicle. It has enabled the expansion, legitimation, and endurance of the capitalist system of social relations encompassing all social classes. In short, its own protraction through its function to shape situational logics in which the working-class chooses to disregard class interests and consent to the hegemony. This chapter explains how the conflict in Urabá completes the relational dimension of this process.

This chapter shows how the armed conflict started legitimising inequality and the dominance of the counterinsurgent bloc among the people of Urabá, and how they, in turn, disregarded their class and vested interests to consent to reproduce the hegemony. The counterinsurgent bloc in Urabá, which includes paramilitaries, public forces, state institutions and capitalists, created a unit to protect profit production and capital accumulation (Watts, 2004). It established a paramilitary rule in Urabá that protects capitalism through consent and coercive practices.

The relational dimension Is associated with the trajectory of domination whereby actors are subordinated to others due to the asymmetrical distribution of material and ideational resources (Azmanova 2018, 4). In this thesis, this dimension explains the most subjective dimension of the conflict, the clash between subversive and anti-subversive practices over access to different resources.

We observe that the unequal access to these resources made Urabá a hub of subversive practices. However, the establishment of the paramilitary rule also motivated many of these subversive actors to consent to the hegemony, although said inequality did not lead to more mobilisation. We argue that the conflict, in its

relational dimension, undermined the uneven distribution of resources and instead created situational logics that condition people to choose to embrace the rule of the counterinsurgent power bloc.

2. The Institutionalisation of the Conflict: From Intra- to Inter-Class Conflict

From being a historical phenomenon caused within the repertoire of capitalism, the conflict in Colombia became a functional institution structuring social relations according to capitalist imperatives and favouring the bourgeois hegemony. In Urabá, we have seen how competitive profit production motivated displacement and dispossession between capital and labour. This ongoing process institutes the material conditions of the bourgeois hegemony stemming from different legal and illegal practices. Capital appropriates the means of production, enabling them to install the material conditions to sustain consent among subordinate classes. Moreover, capitalists turn certain contextual practices into secondary structuring institutions favouring their needs and conditions. We call this the institutionalisation of the conflict (North, 1991; Zucker, 1977).

The historical phenomenon, in which two factions of the capitalist classes entered into confrontation over the means to produce profit, developed into a conflict in which subversive working-class groups attacked a counterinsurgent bloc attempting to protect society. Ballvé boldly conveys this change quoting Roldán (2002), who traces "the subtle yet pivotal shift: by the end of 1952 economic interests, both licit and illicit overshadowed the partisan divisions in determining the course of violence" (Ballvé, 2020, p. 30).

2.1.   The National Front

In the previous chapters, we saw that the capitalist classes disputed over capital and power. We argue that the National Front ended this confrontation as the conflict became a hegemonic vehicle, opposing a legitimate capitalist counterinsurgent bloc to anti-social subversive groups. This change is fundamental to explain the conflict's protraction. The conflict enables the production of material conditions and legitimises the system, even among those most affected by the unequal distribution of life chances. The conflict's institutionalisation started with capitalists' eventual disregard of partisan interests and was consolidated with the installation of the National Front.

It is important to recall that La Violencia, in which clienteles of the traditional parties were brutally killing each other, had been ongoing since the late-1940s. As a consequence, in 1953, a military government was put in power to pacify the public order situation in the country, but was only short-lived because Rojas Pinilla tried to establish a power base independent of traditional parties. In some instances, Rojas Pinilla allied with *latifundistas* and the growing commercial agricultural sector; meanwhile, however, he increased the size of the state by nationalising companies, invited large-scale foreign capital investment, appealed to the middle-class workers by creating small-scale credit, and attempted to establish a base in the working-class by setting up a new trade organisation (P. Wright, 1980, p. 245). He ultimately failed in this endeavour because his political project needed a popular support base which had disappeared after Gaitan's assassination in the late 1940s.

The traditional parties reacted quickly. The Catholic church, a key conservative advocate, urged believers to condemn Rojas Pinilla's project. Rojas Pinilla also earned the antipathy of the coffee and merchant trade unions (Federacion de Cafeteros and ANDI, respectively) after he tried to adjust the structure of protection, increased the coffee export tax, and introduced a tax reform to increase public expenditure. Even within the army, he lacked a solid base because there was no resilient bourgeois tradition in the Colombian army, which had been trained to remain 'above politics' and defend the state's interests in general. The army, for its part, has consistently served the interests of the parties in power (P. Wright, 1980).

In early 1956, liberals foresaw that Rojas Pinilla sought to self-perpetuate his power. To topple the military-conservative coalition and achieve national unity, they proposed to run with a conservative candidate. Lleras Camargo, the head of the Liberal Party, was chosen as the only politician that conservatives would support to lead a liberal-conservative coupling to beat the opposing coalition between the people and the armed forces—despite the relatively low opinions of some of the most radical conservatives in respect of the actual candidate.

Lleras Camargo managed to reach an agreement with the conservative leader Laureano Gomez (who was in exile in Spain at the time). The leaders released a joint statement, known as the Pact of Benidorm, in which they both stated the need to defeat the military dictatorship and hence suggested a bipartisan government. In the meantime, Rojas Pinilla's Tercera Fuerza was having trouble gaining any ground in relation to his re-election. He even adopted a more socialist nuance in his discourses and tried to modify the Constitutional Assembly to favour his representation.

In 1957, both parties supported the candidature of conservative León Valencia. Meanwhile, the coffee boom was declining as economic conditions worsened. Rojas Pinilla's successive plans consequently failed and he increasingly employed arbitrary repression in response, causing his isolation and eventual ousting due to a general strike organised by ANDI. In May, ANDI's managers ordered the closure of banks and factories at the same time that students of Catholic universities organised riots against the police and blocked public transport. On 10 May, Rojas Pinilla resigned and established a military junta of five trusted conservative Generals to conduct the return to civilian rule. Wright argues that capitalists have tolerated the violent struggle for political powers in so far as it did not interfere with the capital accumulation process. "However, Rojas Pinilla had to interfere in order to assure his political future and, lacking a social base, he was quickly disposed of" (P. Wright, 1980, p. 246). Marco Palacios also argues that Rojas Pinilla fell for the same reasons as Gomez; both men disregarded the interests of the primary estates which back the regime up (M. Palacios, 2008, p. 215).

The "fall" of Rojas Pinilla was smooth and negotiated, reflecting that the civil tension on the streets was not to back up a real social change but merely for a change of government (M. Palacios, 2008, p. 215). The military junta had to re-establish legitimacy while clearing the name of the outgoing regime. The militaries created a *quid pro quo* favouring the transition and protecting their hierarchy. Very few legal actions against military crimes thrived.

Meanwhile, in Sitges, Lleras and Gomez signed a bipartisan government pact that garnered support from the people through a plebiscite which implicated a call for

executive and legislative elections. The military junta agreed to the plebiscite, withdrew any civil-military opposition, and entered into the pact called the National Front.

Among other things, the National Front established; equal political rights for men and women, parity between liberals and conservatives in all state positions, a two-third majority vote for specific law projects, administrative careers for public servants, immovability for Supreme Court and State Council's justices, and the creation of guaranteed judiciary careers. In other words, the National Front set the conditions for and legitimised the reproduction of the capitalist classes' power through the traditional parties. People refer to these as the *ruling class*, professional representatives of the estates reproducing the capitalist system of social relations.

2.2.   Communist Subversion and Revolutionary Guerrillas

The most significant achievement of the institutionalisation of the conflict - turning a historical phenomenon into a hegemonic vehicle - was to re-designate the word "subversion" as something immoral, which is to say practices that go against society. This obliterates the historical context in which many subversives do not act merely "just because", because they intend to destroy society through blind actions, but because they intend to reconstruct society according to innovative philosophies, following ideals or utopias that question tradition. Fals Borda defines subversive consciousness as a foundational condition of the new man and new people, which originates from the need to reconstruct society entirely. They are the rebels who promote the counter-movement of things, explore unexplored paths, think reflectively

and raise doubts, and who acquire consciousness as a vital condition. Rebellion is built upon this consciousness, and the rebel subversive exhibits a positive attitude towards society: they cannot live with resentment and therefore demand change. The subversive actor makes sacrifices for the group and thus becomes a great altruist, creating collectivist consciousness that promotes a unique, shared existential adventure (Fals Borda, 1968, pp. 3–4).

The National Front formalised the social and economic homogeneity of the ruling class. It allowed them to act with coherence to make concessions and ensure the reproduction of the social order. The ruling classes conceded on factors that stabilised the situation: promoting the socialisation of previously-achieved development, legitimising the coercion of the new government, reinforcing the ideological justification in the media by the authorised representative of the order, and fostering technical support for the government system through privileges and advantages offered to entrepreneurs and industrials - "thus, it is articulated a true bourgeois compulsion to maintain 'the system'" (Fals Borda, 1968, p. 146).

This new phase of the bourgeois hegemony was, unsurprisingly, met with resistance and subversion. However, this occurred within the newly-established social order in which peace and stability depended on people embracing national unity. It is in this context that the new phase of the conflict began.

At first, the subversive wave of violence did not reach Urabá. This wave started in the departments of Tolima, Huila, Caldas, Valle, and Cauca. In south Tolima, a movement of armed peasant self-defenders or *autodefensas campesinas* started to organise. They were created following the conclusion of the Central Committee of the

Colombian Communist Party in 1949, changing the popular *autodefensas'* spontaneity

into a political orientation of communist off-shoots:

> We must organise, immediately, everywhere, committees, commandos and brigades for the defence of citizen's lives and liberties, in neighbourhoods, factories, transports, mines, haciendas, mills, veredas, so the working and peasant masses can respond effectively and overwhelmingly to the aggressions of the reactionaries. (Cited in Medina Gallego, 2010, pp. 146–147, Translation by author)

Different social organisations, including agrarian unions, peasant leagues, organised indigenous communities, *gaitanistas* and communist cells already existed in peripheral areas. Communist led *autodefensa* commandos of peasant hacienda workers started to organise. They operated as cells, defending delimited territories. Among these groups, the historical guerrilleros such as Mayor Lister, Richard, the Loaiza group, Charronegro, Ciro Trujillo, the General Peligro and the future founder of the FARC-EP, Manuel Marulanda Velez were operating.

During La Violencia's onset, some guerrilla leaders had to abandon their activities and escape from conservatives and *Chulavita* police attacks. Some of them joined liberal civic guards, learned combat tactics, and acquired weapons. In specific contexts, they joined forces and fought together, as in the case of the guerrilleros established in 1949 in the hacienda El Davis, a peasant and guerrilla settlement with over 2000 inhabitants. El Davis was a "free zone" organised by the South Joint Chiefs of Staff, composed of liberals and communists, whose people soon came under attack from the army due to a Government Ministry order.

The precarious conditions for coexistence and the latent harassment of the conservative government created internal tensions between communists and liberals.

However, both sides established communal farms, healthcare services, residential areas, and lookout posts. The young guerrilleros, equipped with old weapons, confronted the police, gaining tactical experience and seizing guns and uniforms. The communist fighters started to distinguish themselves from the liberals. Communists held communal control of the weapons and were characterised by their discipline, solidarity, hard work and political orientation. (Villamizar, 2017).

Tensions continued to grow. Communists intended to have more control and discipline mechanisms while liberals, more accustomed to individual action, refused to be directed by anyone. Therefore, the liberal side divided, with some factions joining the communists.

This division would be known as the wars between *Limpios* (liberals) and *Comunes* (communists). The police, army and *Chulavitas*, allowed the war between *Limpios* and *Comunes* to continue. In 1952, the guerrillas definitively separated, and the *Comunes* stayed in El Davis. In a joint meeting of his group, Loaiza, the *Limpios'* leader, said: "The goal of this meeting is to study the possibility of developing a further struggle against the Communists because they are threatening the country and, in Colombia, there cannot be communism. That is fine for Russia, but here there is no place for those foreign and atheistic doctrines" (Avila, 2016).

The army augmented its repression on the communist detachments while the *Limpios* allied with the National Directory of the Liberal Party and helped the Party in the fight against the communists. Therefore, the El Davis group also made efforts to unify with other guerrilla groups. In August 1952, the *Conferencia de Boyacá* gathered 33 delegations of the country's main guerrilla fronts and created the National

Coordination Commission of the Guerrilla Movement. The Commission produced a document in which it was stated that guerrillas would struggle for a Democratic Popular Government. Its programmatic points were democratic liberties for the people, agrarian reform, nationalisation of natural resources, adequate living conditions and social justice, education and culture, national sovereignty, amended foreign policy, as well as the proposal of a Constituent Assembly to write a new constitution. However, this program's content unsettled the elites, especially the National Liberal Directory, whose ultimate goal was for the liberal guerrillas to overthrow the Conservative government and re-establish the Liberal Party's power.

While the elites made institutional arrangements to protect profit production and their continuity in power, violence proliferated in the peripheral areas. In 1953, Rojas Pinilla released a communication inviting subversive actors to put down their arms in exchange for amnesty, freedom, protection, and reintegration. Several guerrillas and *contrachusmas* responded to the call. Groups from Tolima, Cundinamarca, Santander, Antioquia and the Eastern Planes ceased their activities and gave up their weapons, curtailing the violence in several regions. Guzman Campos (1962) argues that most demobilised combatants were poor people living either in the mountains or who had been displaced to poverty belts of cities and municipalities.

Due to the lack of resources to fund them, reinsertion plans started to fail, and the conditions for violence were renewed. On top of this, McCarthyism started to become a central doctrine in the country. In 1954, Rojas Pinilla, who was outspokenly anti-communist, banned communism and sent any people advocating for or

implementing its political activities to jail. In the end, the amnesties and presidential pardons could not meet their promises.

Partisan hatred never diminished. The army entered into conflict with the population again, and this time in a bloodier way than before. The violence reignited after the national army massacred a group of peasants on 12 November 1954. In 1955, some municipalities in Tolima and Cundinamarca were declared "zones of military operations". In June, the army occupied Villarrica and, using air and land attacks, displaced 30.000 people to nearby settlements. At the same time, the government assumed a scorched-earth policy while counterinsurgent *antichusma*, *pajaros and chulavitas* troops, who were fighting in favour of the conservative government, moved into the Tolima region. Simultaneously, in response to the aggression, *autodefensa Campesina* cells were reactivated, this time with more participation of members of the Communist Party.

In a new negotiation attempt in 1955, the government demanded the guerrillas' unconditional rendition and the surrender of their arms. Simultaneously, the armed forces enacted indiscriminate air raid attacks in some areas and besieged the population, causing starvation and shortages in medical supplies. It displaced the population and guerrilleros, who then undertook armed colonisation to the south. Around 20.000 marching peasants, escaping from the government's violence, founded the peasant zones of Pato and Guayabero in the following months.

After a brutal war against peasants, workers, and students, some liberties were re-established by the National Front. In the endeavour to reach pacification, the Lleras government approached the remaining guerrillas to start new negotiations. Guerrillas

from the south of Tolima committed to turning their groups back into *autodefensa* movements and organising the Communist Party's civil structures. Once demobilised, the guerrilleros worked their own lands and colonised *baldio* lands. The former communist guerrilla leaders worked in different areas.

Meanwhile, the *Limpios*, many of whom worked for the army and local chieftains, received far greater benefits from the government but kept attacking the agrarian communist movements. In 1958, the government issued an amnesty. However, the majority of the reintegration resources benefited only a few and never reached the areas most in need. Decree 0328 suspended the prison punishment conditioned to reintegration. However, this decree developed and relocated liberals and conservative local chieftains (Alape, 2018). Villamizar explains that amid peace and pacification, a new face of armed violence emerged, characterised by vendetta practices, treachery, hatred, and looting. Some demobilised combattants rejoined the war because they were persecuted and betrayed; they joined those guerrilleros that did not embrace Rojas Pinilla's amnesty in 1954 nor Lleras' later attempt in 1958 (Villamizar, 2017).

In 1960, Charronegro, former commandant of the *Comunes*, was assassinated by Mariachi, a guerrillero *Limpio.* Mariachi's men were, at the time, working with the army and the police. The other former leaders of the *Comunes* decided to report the event to the authorities. However, the government's response was to send the army in to occupy the region. Due to the death of Charronegro, Manuel Marulanda took charge of the communist peasant *autodefensas*. He ordered the old weapons left in Marquetalia to be found and organised a small guerrilla, known as "*la Movil*", with

thirty members who soon undertook the first offensive actions to capture the Army's weaponry. In the urban areas, the army kept harassing demobilised guerrilleros.

In 1960 Congress elections were held. Among the left, there was a heated debate over participation. Some, mainly in the Communist Party, argued for their participation as it could be used as a platform to denounce the government's anti-popular policies. Others favoured abstention and the organisation of other forms of struggle, especially the armed struggle.

The triumph of the Cuban Revolution impacted the social reality of all Latin American countries. In Colombia, it inspired the creation of social movements, some of which saw armed struggle as the only way forward. This was the case of the MOEC on 7 January (Worker, Student and Peasant Movement). This organisation's most radical wing advocated for the immediate organisation of guerrilla fronts in Urabá, Vichada and Cauca. Among the MOEC 7J, there were two tendencies. One that focused on the immediacy of the revolution and the other, with more Marxist inspiration, prioritised the militants' political formation, social work, and the preparation of the ground for the revolution. In 1961, this movement declined due to the image of "political recklessness", "caudillismo", and lack of discipline. In May, the leader of the insurrectionist side, Larrota, was assassinated. However, the people of this wing focused their efforts on the strategic region of Dabeiba in Urabá. In mid-1962, they established a small guerrilla *foco*. However, due to several military defeats by the government, the guerrilla disbanded.

The government intensified the war against the settlements of the communist peasants and agrarian movement, arguing that they were "independent republics"

that threatened national security. The government saw these places as a potential

melting pot for revolutionary war and the overthrow of its order, as happened in

Cuba.

The U.S. also did its share by designing a military offensive encompassing the

zones of the rural movements. The first attack was carried out in 1962 and set a series

of attacks in motion that would take a high human toll on peasants and members of

the public force. In 1964, Manuel Marulanda Velez, Isauro Yosa, Isaías Pardo, Jacobo

Arenas and Hernando Gonzalez founded the South Guerrillero Bloc; and in 1966

renamed as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). FARC helped to

evacuate families in the surrounding regions and assumed a mobile guerrilla strategy.

After Operation Marquetalia finished and the situation became calmer, the

Communist Party assessed their options and ratified the "combination of all forms of

struggle", celebrating the start of the guerrilla warfare:

> Between the mass and the guerrilla struggles, there is no contradiction. Guerrilla
> warfare is one of the most elevated forms of mass struggle. It only consolidates
> and advances there, where it has mass character, sprouting materially from the
> mass, expressing its immediate and historical interests. […] In the zones attacked
> by the official policy of *Sangre y Fuego*, deployed justified by the extinction of
> alleged "independent republics", the guerrilla struggle has become the main form
> of struggle ("Thesis on the Armed Movement, XXXI Plenary of the Central
> Committee of the Communist Party", cited in Villamizar, 2017, translated by
> author).

FARC officialised its foundation with an Assembly on 20 July 1964 and

approved the "Agrarian Programme of the Guerrilleros". It contemplated, among

other things: a revolutionary agrarian reform changing the social structure of the

Colombian land, confiscations of latifundia property land and free allocation to

peasants working it; formalisation of land deeds to the landless peasants working for

latifundistas; the planned development of the national production in benefit of the people, respecting the land used according to its social function; the alliance of workers and peasants and the construction of a broad front to change the main structure of the social order, namely the latifundia structure (FARC-EP, 1964). FARC aimed to transform the social relations as they were conceived. It differed from the old Liberal guerrillas, whose only goal was to establish the Liberal Party in power, and was attached to the political direction of the Communist Party, whose primary goal was to overthrow capitalism and establish communism in Colombia.

The other main subversive actor in Urabá was the Popular Liberation Army (EPL). The Sino-Soviet split echoed within the Colombian Communist Party causing an internal fragmentation. This quickly led to the dismissal of some Party leaders who founded an organisation called the Colombian Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) (PCC-ML). Its constitutive conference was in 1964 in a municipality of Antioquia and sent some cadres to prepare, what they called, *warzones.* In 1965, the PCC-ML congress approved the structure of the EPL. Villamizar highlights how easily the PCC-ML and the EPL developed internal divisions due to lack of coherence in the ideological lineament, political theses and social practices (Villamizar, 2017).

The PCC-ML pursued the development of Mao's thesis of the protracted people's war. Therefore, it structured the *Frentre Patriotico para la Liberacion* and the EPL so as to complete the three-stage strategy for the revolution: party, broad front, and army. However, at first, the EPL developed more as a guerrilla *foco,* isolated from the population in small disparate cells and supported by alliances of the old Liberal guerrilleros. It would not be until 1966 that they tried to go back to the popular war

and thus entered Antioquia and Cordoba, specifically through Urabá in Carepa, Chigorodo, Turbo and Ituango. There they formed the Juntas Patrioticas with peasants and old Liberal guerrilleros. Although less cohesive an organisation than FARC, the EPL was the first revolutionary guerrilla in Urabá. It arrived to launch uprisings in the land struggles and create the first guerrilla bases with peasants, schoolteachers, day labourers and leaders of cooperatives and *Juntas de Accion Comunal*. The EPL was also a revolutionary insurgency, expressing the communist subversion of the second half of the 20th century. Their goal was the transformation of the mode of production and the transformation of social relations.

Both EPL and FARC would be the most visible target of the social order's reaction - we say most visible because the counterinsurgent bloc was targeting anything associated with this subversion, including its non-violent expressions. The creation of the revolutionary guerrillas gave the ruling classes the justification for using the state's forces to protect the capitalist system. This event is the consolidation of institutionalisation of the conflict operating as a hegemonic vehicle.

2.3.   Capital Accumulation and Counterinsurgent Bloc

Neither practices of capital accumulation nor counterinsurgency were new by the end of La Violencia in Colombia. However, both had acquired a new dimension. Vilma Franco (2009) conducted a thorough study of the counterinsurgency in Colombia. This work embraces her analysis to explain how the bourgeoisie sought to protect and reproduce the capitalist system of social relations and hegemony. Franco argues that in the context of *civil war*, the purpose of conserving the structure of political

domination, as a condition to fulfil economic corporate interests, drives the formation of a counterinsurgent power bloc.

> [the counterinsurgent power bloc] is the articulation of the ruling bloc (or the political unity of the dominant classes and the centralist state apparatus), the coalitions politically dominant with subaltern sectors, and imperatives to suffocate all the forms of opposition—armed and civil—which affect the domination and its conditions and any grievance that affect the current or potential profit rate (Franco Restrepo, 2009, pp. 221–222).

The counterinsurgent bloc includes paramilitary groups and national armed forces. It also includes actors whose political and economic powers enable the bloc's operation. The counterinsurgent bloc seeks to protect rule and profit, or in our words: hegemony and capitalism. In the rest of this chapter, we will focus on how the counterinsurgent bloc protects the latter.

The counterinsurgent bloc articulates on a national level but reproduces and acts locally, allowing an intersection between private and political practices and identities for joint action. The bloc differs and is shaped according to each context's specificity. The bloc in Urabá would not be the same as in Medellín or in Bogotá, however their conjoint action is related to the protection of hegemony and capitalism. Franco talks about the two scales of the bloc, the major or national, and the minor or local.

On the major scale, she locates the articulation of the interests for capital accumulation. These include economic groups, trade associations, the media oligopoly acting as ideological apparatus, multinational corporations, the U.S. government and the Colombian state. These actors maintain the "fiction" of legality and exteriority throughout the conflict.

On the minor scale, the bloc reproduces through the articulation of national and foreign mercenaries in the counterinsurgent struggle. These include regionally dominant political coalitions, the public force, merchants, transport entrepreneurs, mining entrepreneurs, rural entrepreneurs (coffee farmers, floriculturists, banana farmers, rice growers, among others), unproductive landowners, drug-traffickers, guerrilla victims, lumpenproletariat and precarious people simply seeking out survival. This scale displays more clearly the use of illegal practices and their articulation with central actors. It is also the site of the reproduction of the conflict as the war allows and enable local conflicts; it is where people are being recruited, where information is gathered and resources retrieved, which allow for control over the population and is where counterinsurgent actors mobilise (Franco Restrepo, 2009, pp. 223–224).

Franco argues that the state apparatus play a key role in the counterinsurgent bloc due to its cohesion and regulation functions, its role to procure the unity of the social formation and assure the reproduction of the production relations, and its part in organising the bourgeois hegemony and keeping subordinate groups at the economic corporate level (Franco Restrepo, 2009, p. 226). This is precisely why it was fundamental for the liberal and conservative capitalists to unite around the state. It was the primary motivation to restore the state apparatuses through the National Front. The National Front was instrumental in Colombia's social formation as it failed to produce a unique hegemonic group. Faced with this lack of unity, it was unlikely that the state would intervene to change the balance of the accumulation process by

taking over productive activities. Thus, the state's role was limited to fostering the existing accumulation process under the surveillance of economic groups.

Wright explains that the state was institutionalised as "low profile" in the National Front through this position which was confined to ensuring capital accumulation. In the late-1950s, the accumulation process focused on the development of industry in the country. With the stimulus of foreign capital, industry was moving into the second stage of import substitution. The supply of wage goods to the urban areas was guaranteed by expanding the commercial agricultural sector. The rural areas' capitalist dynamic started to have the beneficial effect of stabilising trade's internal terms (P. Wright, 1980, p. 247). The National Front tried to reorganise and improve the relationship between industry and large-scale commercial agriculture by keeping taxes low for nationals, stimulating internal consumption, and providing markets for goods. This guarantor's role worked relatively well until the 1960s when the National Front faced the contradictions of the accumulation process. First, the price of coffee - the main commodity at this time - fell while the import exigencies of a more complex industrial structure kept increasing thus putting the economy in an unfavourable balance of payments. Second, unemployment in urban areas spiralled, creating grievances and unrest which met the subversion's nascent context.

Renan Vega (2015) explains that Colombia's counterinsurgency has developed in the interaction between the capitalist elites' local interests and a subordination policy to U.S. interests. He traces its origin to what he calls a "native counterinsurgency" in which communists, even before the foundation of the Communist Party, were deemed the primary threat to the nation's "sacred values".

This form of counterinsurgency concealed actions against any threat to capital accumulation. Between the 1910s and 1920s, the counterinsurgency strategy targeted workers mobilising labour grievances as well as indigenous populations, settlers and landless peasants mobilising land rights grievances. The Banana Massacre was the most famous event in this counterinsurgent strategy. In the 1930s, capital accumulation began the ongoing dependency on foreign capital. It started with exploiting petroleum and other resources but eventually included military dependency, particularly in regard to the U.S. In the 1940s, military dependency caused the concession of part of the national sovereignty to the U.S.'s interests, including the right to exploit and import strategic resources (such as rubber and various types of minerals) to contribute to the "hemispheric defence".

From the 1940s onwards, anticommunism ceased to be an exclusive concern of the Conservative Party and evolved into a state doctrine, following the U.S.'s recommendations during the Cold War. In 1953, Dwight Eisenhower determined that economic assistance to Latin America depended on the continent's commitment to the anti-communist struggle. A year earlier, a CIA report signalled the possibility of losing the bourgeois hegemony and capitalism due to the upsurge of subversive forces and deterioration of objective conditions. Military assistance was therefore intended to develop national forces focused on attacking the communist subversion, including intellectuals, labour unions and social movements. The goal was to carry out "preventive" actions, from the detection of communists to detentions and the implementation of judiciary measures against them.[33] In 1957, the Overseas Internal

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[33] NSC Staff Papers 1290d, Feb 18, 1955, OCB Central File Series, Box 16, OCB 014.12 Internal Security File #1 (3), cited in Vega Cantor, 2015.

Security Programme focused on more security and military operations to defeat the communist subversion. However, with the Cuban Revolution, this programme was perceived as a failure, and the focus turned towards civic-military strategies, aiming to solve the structural and material conditions of subversion with a core of military action.

The Alliance for Progress is one good example of this kind of strategy that aimed, for example, to create roads in subversive areas to grant public forces easier access. After the institutionalisation of the conflict from the late-1950s onwards, a new counterinsurgent doctrine was adopted which did away with conventional methods such as permanent states of emergency, psychological warfare, torture as a systematic practice, sabotage and fake propaganda, the use of paramilitary groups and siege tactics. Based on the doctrines of the French military officer Roger Trinquier, who justified any means to repress subversion, the national army adopted several forms of "state terrorism" in its repertoire of counterinsurgency. In 1962, General Yarborough reported the army's obligation and responsibility to create, support and train counterinsurgent forces. The report implied reinforcing technical, training and material assistance and added, in a Secret Supplement, a recommendation to create paramilitary groups to "execute paramilitary activities, of sabotage and or terrorist actions against known communists". It emphasised that the U.S. needed to support these groups in a consolidated way.[34]

The Marquetalia Operation, which was linked to the origins of the FARC, or the Latin American Security Operation, are examples that belong to the state's

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[34] John F. Kennedy Library. National Security Files. Box 319. Special Group; Fort Bragg Team; Visit to Colombia, 3/1962, «Secret Supplement, Colombian Survey Report», cited in Vega Cantor, 2015.

counterinsurgent strategies (Villamizar, 2017). Vega Cantor argues that the political arrangement whereby the elites excluded alternative expressions on political grounds provided motivation for subversion (Vega Cantor, 2015). The National Front used repression, sieges and counterinsurgency to manage and contain social grievances, reflecting the growth in military expenditure. In spite of these measures, this period was one of high social activity which served as a material condition for the subversion to grow. Its critical point was the National Civil Strike of 1977, known as the most crucial social mobilisation in the country when the ruling classes felt their hegemony was under threat and decided to approve the 1978 Security Statute. This imposed preventive measures accompanied by repressive actions enforceable against popular, peasant, worker, and student's legal organisations within the counterinsurgent logic of fighting the "internal enemy".

The conflict in Colombia, which is as old as the social groups which organised to advance their interests before and after independence, acquired a new form when the conflicting capital elites of the Liberal and Conservative Parties decided to unite to protect their hegemony as the bourgeoisie and to consolidate capitalism in Colombia against the burgeoning revolutionary context in which the communist subversion was developing. This change between inter- and intra-class conflict is when the conflict started to behave as a hegemonic vehicle, i.e., when it behaves as an institution structuring social relations according to the needs of capitalism and the bourgeois hegemony. The following section explains how the conflict consolidated the hegemony in the specific context of Urabá.

3. Inequality and conflict

This chapter on the relational dimension of the conflict is concerned with the question of the unequal allocation of material and ideational resources. In the previous chapters, we have established that the capitalist system of social relations entrenches inequality - inequality is not the cause of capitalism's social conflicts, but a consequence of them, and is a factor that contributes to violence (Stewart, 2008). Unequal access to resources has motivated actors to subvert the status quo. We can see this in the communist subversion but also in the bourgeois subversion against the stately Spanish order or in the liberal subversion during the early 20th century (Fals Borda, 1968).

However, the paradox of the conflict is that, as a structuring institution, it created what Richani calls a "war system" in which war and order self-perpetuate. He argues that "the war system survives as the product of a precarious balance of forces among the antagonists" (Richani, 1997, p. 38). Instead, we argue that the war system survives due to its function in the social order. The pro-capitalist violence is reactionary to any possible social change, and the conflict creates situational logics whereby people access living conditions under capitalistic social relations. In the case of Urabá, as a reaction to these subversive forces, anti-subversive actors attempted to protect the society and bound subordinated actors to a rule that legitimised inequality.

This chapter shows how, in Urabá, the people's political alliances alternated between subversive and counterinsurgent actors. We contrast the subversive tradition of Urabá with the current paramilitary control established using a series of practices fluctuating between force and consent.

Paramilitaries act to enforce the hegemony in their influence areas through practices that are functional to the interests of capitalism in Urabá. Their control, accorded with state awareness, is therefore accepted in exchange for *armed peace* (Madariaga Villegas, 2006). An armed peace means a relatively stable situation of policed control of the paramilitaries in which people can continue to have some life chances. Finally, armed peace entails consent or subjection to the paramilitary rule in which subordinated actors disregard their class interests—which, objectively, should be concerned with the unequal access to production means.

In Urabá, many services and life-chances of the population have been neglected. In spite of the economy's dynamism, inequality is rampant. We argue that the conflict diverted people's interest from subverting the sources of inequality and embracing the current rule that provides life chances but not equal access to material and ideational resources. The conflict operates as a hegemonic vehicle that reproduces the hegemony, although it simultaneously its own foundational conditions. In the case of the relational dimension, this entails the conflict helping to legitimise the perpetuation of inequalities in exchange for relative control over the armed violence. This situation evidences the popular acceptance of the paramilitary rule, support to the counterinsurgent bloc and the abandonment of the class interests of peasants and workers that once supported the subversives toward generally more right-wing leaning actors.

3.1.   Urabá: The Best Corner of America

The Best Corner of America is not only an institutional motto to re-establish the imaginary of Urabá. Every visitor and settler arrived in Urabá, envisioning tremendous economic and social potential. Every development plan, tourism advertisement, advert, and reference to the region uses this phrase, which has been peppered throughout local language for decades. It is not, however, just an endorsement of the local imaginary — Urabá does have promising features.

Since the end of the 20th century, the Spanish Crown as well as French and English navigators voyaged in the Gulf of Urabá. They became extremely interested in the region and the path through the Atrato river towards the Chocó. Its wilderness provided a plethora of valuable woods and plants such as ivory palm and ipecac. In the early 20th century, the German Albingia consortium arrived to sow banana plants in Currulao and Puerto Cesar and with the intention to penetrate into Acandí on the Gulf of Urabá, near Panamá. In the 1950s, American entrepreneurs went to Urabá to plant bananas to replace the banana crops affected by the Panama disease[35] in Central America. Dutch investors also went to Currulao to plant 5000he of African palm. Investors and governments sought to connect Turbo to with Medellin through the Road to the Sea. There were Spanish, French, American and Colombian companies exploiting and exporting wood via the Atrato, Sucio and León rivers. In the 1960s, Fedearroz arrived with the goal of introducing rice crops to the region (on lands which are today primarily employed in stockbreeding). In the agro-industrial axis and on the

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[35] The Panama disease is a fungal wilting disease that affects banana plants. In the 1950s, the first outbreak almost entirely ruined the commercial production of the "Gros Michel" banana species, the dominant cultivar at the time.

hillside of the Abide, Urabá was also a cocoa producer. It even had fishing potential that Central-American boats did exploit for a period of time (Hinestroza, 2015). Urabá has all the conditions to be an agricultural power, even when only taking legal crops into account (because Urabá is also a key corridor for exporting cocaine to the U.S. and Europe).

Since the "discovery" of this corner, entrepreneurs and explorers have been coming and going trying to exploit its treasures, and along with them came the conflict. The contrast between Urabá being the *best corner of America* and at the same time a *red zone* elucidates why this region is at the centre of the conflict: its topographic, climatic, biological, demographic and hydric characteristics have turned this area into a strategic hub for armed groups, legally established companies, and mafias, making it one of the most disputed sites during the armed conflicts. Urabá is a prosperous region with a tremendous capacity for producing profit and accumulating capital.

Historically, agriculture has been the driving sector of the region's economy. It generates employment, is a source of income, produces food for the rest of the country and is a fundamental pillar in the export regime. Although the banana is the emblematic product of the region, international market conditions have forced strategies and processes for expanding the agricultural frontier through diversification in the production of commercial agricultural and stockbreeding products. Producers in the region have successfully promoted the cultivation of African palm, cocoa plants, manioc, tropical flowers, pineapple, and different varieties of wood, and another a significant portion of Urabá's lands is used in stockbreeding.

Besides agriculture, other vital sectors in the region are tourism and port activities. In terms of tourism, the region can sustain different kinds of tourism due to its geographical characteristics. Municipalities such as Necoclí and Arboletes have become hotspots for visitors from all around the world. However, this sector still needs investment to improve road access, public services, and public security.

In the last decades, successive governments have tried to improve the port facilities to meet to the region's needs. This project has come together with projected works such as the construction of a double-lane road to Urabá and the Boqueron del Toyo tunnel, which would reduce travel time from Medellin from seven to four hours. Below is a list of port development projects in the pipeline:

Table 13 Port Development Projects in Urabá

Name of the port	Location	Estimated Investment	Job by 2030	Capacity	Projection/year
Darien International Port	Necoclí	USD 1000 million	Up to 16000 direct jobs and 300 indirect jobs	Post-Panamax ships	8.5 million tons.
Antioquia Port	South-East of the Gulf of Urabá	USD 350 million	Between 3000 and 10000 direct jobs	Merchant boars	7.5 million tons.
Turbo Port	Colombia bay, Turbo bay and in the Zungo and Nueva			Ship wharf	2.5 million ton of banana and 0.5 million ton of other products

	Colonia channels				
Pisisi Port	South-West of the urban centre of Turbo	USD 500 million		Post New Panamax ships	500000 containers

Source: (Camara de Comercio de Urabá in ICP, 2018)

According to its Chamber of Commerce, by 2019, 11.961 companies were established in Urabá. In all the municipalities, there was an increase in the number of companies compared to 2018. Although Apartadó remains the centre of the commercial activity, representing 40,4% of the region's total, other municipalities such as Necoclí, Mutatá and Arboletes also underwent important expansions in this regard. The following chart shows the growth in the number of companies per municipality from 2018 to 2019 (Camara de Comercio de Uraba, 2020).

Figure 3 Number of Companies by Municipality Urabá

Figure: Number of Companies by Municipality 2018 - 2019
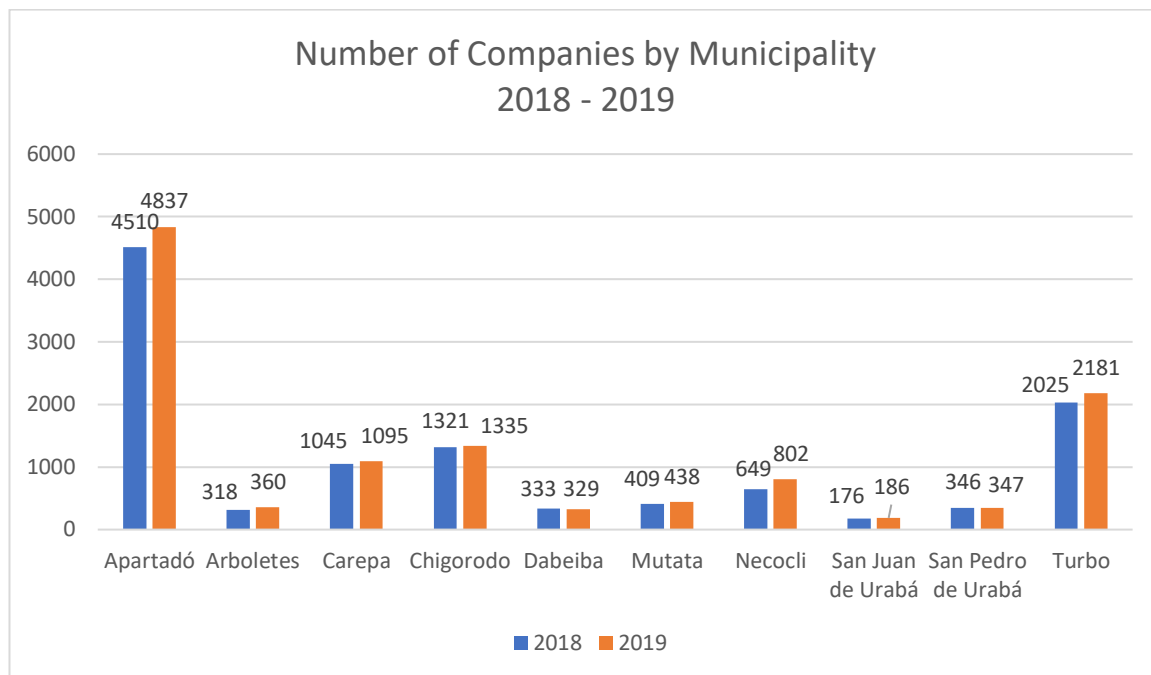
Source: (CC URABA 2020, 21)

The most important business sectors[36] in Urabá (banana production aside) are the commercial (45%), hotel and tourism (13.1%), manufacturing (7.2%), agricultural and stockbreeding (4.7%) and construction (3.9%). According to the Chamber, the construction sector is considered to be fundamental to the region's economy as it helps accelerate growth, create formal employment, and stimulate the consumption of goods, services, and supplies. Accordingly, favourable conditions were put in place for merchants and investors associated with the new road infrastructure and port system projects.

In addition to banana profits, capital generated by other imports and exports was also significant. Trade accounted for approximately 46.5 million tons and the

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[36] The importance is weighed according to the percentage of companies in each of these sectors as a percentage of the total number of companies of the region.

equivalent of USD 276.108 million: USD 263.925 million in imported goods and 12.1 million in exported goods. However, despite being a productive area, Urabá's commercial balance mimics Colombia's deficit trend. The following table shows the weights and values of the six most exported products.

Table 14 Exports in Urabá

EXPORTED PRODUCTS	TONS	VALUE in USD $
Food	1.443,7	$ 5.151.919,8
Feminine Hygiene (Finished Products)	1.031,5	$ 4.752.521,4
Dressmaking	49,1	$ 1.306.253,0
Metal	71,5	$ 298.829,2
Feminine Hygiene (Raw Materials)	58.3	$ 226.348,4
Immunised Wood	258	$ 191.146,0
General Total (Including other products)	3.107,4	$ 12.182.401,4

Source: DIAN Urabá (CC URABA 2020)

According to the Colombian Banana Association (AUGURA, 2020), in 2019, Urabá exported 65.5 million boxes of bananas, valued at USD 538.9 million. 35.083he of land is used for banana production; each hectare, on average, produced 1871 boxes. The companies that exported most boxes of bananas were: Uniban (50,23%), Banacol (21,21%) and Banafrut (11,20%). The main international destinations for the bananas were: Belgium (21,2%), Italy (20,5%), the UK (13,7%) and Germany (8,6%). In Urabá, the banana industry surpasses the exports of all the other sectors by 4423%, making it, by far, the region's most important sector.

According to Antioquia's Statistical Yearbook of 2017 (the most recent available), the region contributed 7,21% of the department's total GDP.

Table 15 Contribution to Antioquia's GDP by Municipality (2017)

MUNICIPALITY	GDP for 2017 in USD $ (Approx.)
Apartadó	$640.882.404
Arboletes	$90.387.328
Carepa	$263.391.238
Chigorodó	$195.725.014
Dabeiba	$62.878.025
Murindó	$12.150.525
Mutatá	$73.851.652
Necoclí	$134.633.832
San Juan de Urabá	$68.872.677
Turbo	$501.511.426
Vigía del Fuerte	$22.097.725
Total Urabá	$2.066.381.847
Total Antioquia	$33.931.336.907

Source:(Corpouraba, 2020)

Urabá continues to be a development focus and an essential source of profit for the country. People are interested in the region and invest capital in propelling productivity. All this information, which does not take the direct impact of the drug traffic into account, shows that there are enough founded economic reasons to call Urabá: *the best corner of America.*

3.2. Social, political, and economic inequality

Landless and displaced peasants settling to find their means of subsistence founded the Antioquenian sub-region of Urabá. The process of latifundia expansion expelled them from their lands. Once settled in the new lands of Urabá, landowners and *colonists* came after them and, by violent and legal means, dispossessed their lands to continue with the process of capital accumulation. The clashes between owners and

producers primarily in three departments - Antioquia, Chocó and Cordoba - created the region. These clashes were the breeding ground for the consolidation of armed actors fighting in the neighbouring areas.

Urabá could provide that which almost everyone lacked, namely the economic means to consolidate a fair "distribution of life-chances" to the extent that people would not have to engage in armed violence to improve their conditions (Mousseau, 2010). However, in Urabá, capitalism's social relations created and reproduced the conditions that incentivise pro-capitalist and armed violence.

The inequalities in Urabá include access to different financial, human, social and natural resource-based assets (Stewart 2009). Previously we established that the region has high levels of land availability, high productivity, and significant wealth production potential. Thus, economic inequalities in the region are marked by extensive land hoarding, lack of formal employment or unemployment for much of the population, and uneven income distribution.

The Unit for Rural Agrarian Planning (UPRA), the entity in charge of defining the criteria for the social regulation of ownership of rural lands, uses several indicators to evaluate the distribution of rural private property. Historical factors that affect the distribution of rural property in Colombia include dispossession and the forced stripping and abandonment of the land. Urabá fits within these characteristics and is one of the regions with the highest level of rural land dispossession (UPRA, 2016, p. 31). The following table shows the indexes of rural property distribution in each municipality of Urabá.

Table 16 Indexes of Distribution of Rural Property per Municipality Urabá

Municipality	Gini Index	Theil Index	Inferior Disparity Index	Superior Disparity Index	Validity of Rural Cadastre
Apartadó	0,6428 (High)	0,1160 (Med.)	0,0453 (High)	5,030 (Med.)	2014
Arboletes	0,7815 (High)	0,1925 (High)	0,0111 (High)	6,641 (High)	2009
Carepa	0,7176 (High)	0,1576 (Med.)	0,0209 (High)	5,742 (High)	2009
Chigorodó	0,8102 (High)	0,2236 (High)	0,0103 (High)	6,976 (High)	2008
Dabeiba	0,7664 (High)	0,2336 (High)	0,0079 (High)	6,430 (High)	1998
Murindó	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2012
Mutatá	0,7043 (High)	0,1437 (Med.)	0,0071 (High)	5,772 (High)	2007
Necoclí	0,7950 (High)	0,2192 (High)	0,0019 (High)	6,868 (High)	2005
San Juan de Urabá	0,8180 (High)	0,2575 (High)	0,0114 (High)	7,403 (High)	2006
San Pedro de Urabá	0,6854 (High)	0,1325 (Med.)	0,0201 (High)	5,519 (High)	2008
Turbo	0,7782 (High)	0,1955 (High)	0,0143 (High)	6,639 (High)	2003
Vigía del Fuerte	0,5597 (Med.)	0,1508 (Med.)	0,1413 (Med.)	3,199 (Med.)	N/A

Source: (UPRA, 2016)

The UPRA's calculations show an overall trend of inequality in income distribution and land ownership. The average of the Gini index was 0,7203, showing high inequality in the distribution of income. We highlight the case of the Banana axis

(especially Turbo, Carepa and Chigorodo) in which much of the region's wealth is concentrated. Apartadó has slightly lower inequality than the other banana axis municipalities because it is the most populous and offers most job opportunities.

The Superior Disparity Index, which shows how much land is concentrated in the hands of the top 10% of the wealthiest owners, is also on average high. In places like San Juan de Urabá, 10% of the wealthiest owner's hoard around 60% of the available land. Turbo, which is the largest municipality in the department of Antioquia, also evidences that 10% of the wealthiest owners possess around 50% of the available land. Necocli and Arboletes exhibit the same tendency. These are some of the municipalities where the oldest paramilitary control was established in the 1990s.

The Inferior Disparity Index, which shows the amount of land that the poorest 10% of people own, also shows high inequality in access to land. In most cases, the most deprived demographic do not even own 0.3% of the available land. The numbers in the cases of Necocli, Turbo, and Arboletes are equally notable as they are high in relation to land hoarding. This phenomenon is also likely related to the historic presence of the paramilitaries. Apartadó also has low numbers which could be linked to its status as the municipality with the highest concentration of poor people.

Vigía del Fuerte and Murindó are particular because, being the most remote municipalities of the region, they have a weak institutional presence. Inequality appears lower in Vigía del Fuerte than in the rest of the region. However, as this municipality shows alarming numbers in other social inequalities, it seems that the information is simply outdated. In general, another factor that shows social inequality

is how outdated the information on the region is. The source taken for this work was the latest available UPRA information, which is from 2016, and the Unit is known to work with departmental cadastres' information, which is also outdated and obsolete, in order to calculate the degree of economic inequality in the region clearly.

Another measure that indicates economic inequality is the rate of unemployment. According to the Chamber of Commerce of Urabá, there are noticeable differences between municipalities. It draws particular attention to the fact that the wealthiest municipalities, those of the banana axis (Apartadó, Carepa, Tubo and Chigorodó) and Arboletes, have the highest unemployment rates—this is another indicator of inequality and a factor that may attract people into the illegal economies of drug-traffickers and paramilitary groups. The table below shows the rate of unemployment in each municipality in 2019.

Table 17 Rate of Unemployment by Municipality in 2019

Municipality	Rate of Unemployment (2019)
Apartadó	15,19%
Arboletes	22,4%
Carepa	6,03%
Chigorodó	9,69%
Dabeiba	7,77%
Murindó	N/A
Mutatá	3,09%
Necoclí	5,49%
San Juan de Urabá	1,43%
San Pedro de Urabá	3,69%
Turbo	18,26%
Vigía del Fuerte	N/A

Source: (Camara de Comercio de Uraba, 2020)

Another indicator to assess the degree of inequality is the index of Unsatisfied

Basic Needs. This indicator helps to identify the critical shortages experienced by a

population and to characterise poverty. It considers indicators related to people's

basic needs: housing, sanitary services, primary education, and a minimum income.

The following table shows the percentage of people with unsatisfied basic needs per

municipality, broken down according to people living in the urban centres and people

living in the rest of the municipality (mostly rural areas).

Table 18 Percentage of People with Unsatisfied Basic Needs by Municipality

Municipality	People with Unsatisfied Basic Needs (UBN)		
	Proportion (%)		
	Urban Centre	Rest of Municipality	Total
Apartadó	21,18	44,26	24,53
Arboletes	44,74	90,84	72,40
Carepa	36,74	60,45	43,17
Chigorodó	34,88	69,45	40,15
Murindó	98,23	96,65	97,08
Mutatá	43,24	74,85	60,74
Necoclí	62,40	76,67	68,13
San Juan de Urabá	58,40	83,93	75,86
San Pedro de Urabá	70,13	92,57	82,50
Turbo	57,49	73,67	67,38
Vigía del Fuerte	58,74	74,50	68,35
Total Antioquia	15,90	47,48	22,96

Source: (Camara de Comercio Medellin, 2014)

The next table shows the proportion of the population living in poverty and

extreme poverty, according to the Unsatisfied Basic Needs (UBN) index. Poverty is

qualified as a household in which one indicator (housing, sanitary services, primary

education and minimum income) is lacking. Extreme poverty denotes a household in

which two indicators are unmet.

Table 19 Population in Poverty and Extreme Poverty Conditions

Municipality	People with Unsatisfied Basic Needs (UBN)					
	Proportion (%)					
	Poverty			Extreme Poverty		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Apartadó	19,51	17,23	34,42	1,73	1,73	0,89
Arboletes	27,34	23,54	30,13	8,70	8,83	8,61
Carepa	15,56	12,25	27,14	5,33	2,62	14,81
Chigorodó	22,60	21,09	33,42	5,48	3,09	22,56
Murindó	50,92	57,93	49,16	28,77	22,46	30,34
Mutatá	25,85	14,62	37,02	11,11	10,39	11,82
Necoclí	42,76	17,36	51,13	10,52	1,48	13,50
San Juan de Urabá	39,29	21,74	47,59	20,44	8,68	26
San Pedro de Urabá	39,97	27,42	50,55	14,78	6,60	21,68
Turbo	24,69	15,96	30,97	2,05	1,13	2,67
Vigía del Fuerte	41,34	34,62	45,39	16,20	9,29	20,37
Total Urabá	25,82	18,19	37,56	5,71	2,65	10,43
Total Antioquia	11,40	7,25	26,14	2,07	0,84	6,73

Source: (Gobernacion de Antioquia & Departamento Administrativo de Planeacion, 2017)

Both tables show that there are critical shortages in the region and that the

satisfaction of basic needs is very low. The tendency is to see livelihoods being much

less favourable in rural areas than in urban areas. The living conditions of Urabá's

population are also much worse than those of the rest of the Antioquia department.

Considering that Urabá plays such an essential role in producing wealth, the high

indexes of unsatisfied basic needs show the region's qualitatively high levels of inequality.

3.3.   "Urabá Better Than Ever"

According to the Horizontal Inequalities (HI) theory of conflict, perceived inequalities between social groups increase the probability of armed conflict (Stewart 2009). First, HI literature identifies inequality as a precondition for violence; and second, establishes perception of inequalities as a motive for people to engage in violence to redress them. In Urabá, this theory does not apply quite so neatly. The region's history shows an evolution in territorial control from subversive groups supporting the grievances of peasants and workers to control of paramilitary groups that use violence and consent to "pacify" those grievances.

Urabá was an important bastion of the left until the 1990s. In the 1950s, many liberals arrived and settled in the region to escape the violence of the conservatives; in the 1960s and 1970s, the guerrillas helped to organise and mobilise the unionist movements, especially those related to banana production; and in the 1980s, Urabá was one of the highest support regions for the Union Patriótica, a leftist party politically akin to FARC-EP. All this political activity and mobilisation of social grievances transformed into obedience and resignation when paramilitaries arrived in the 1990s.

One of the main features of the paramilitary control in Urabá is the use of consent in conjunction with the force. Day-to-day life in Urabá and its dynamism concerning production and businesses embody this type of consent. The region is

prosperous and filled with promise, according to its inhabitants, and conditions are very favourable in the eyes of investors and businesspeople. When people do not feel constrained by the rule of any of the armed actors, they see the region as being in its best times. Madariaga (2006) explains this in her ethnography of the region: "The statement which many people agree upon is that currently everything is very quiet, that there were very complicated times but now everything is fine" and adds: "In the [Army] Brigade, in front of the road, there is a metal billboard announcing with big letters: "The Urabá people and its Army, united for the security of all, we cannot repeat the past""(Madariaga Villegas, 2006, p. 85). This spirit prevails among the people of Urabá. In their narratives on the conflict, they often express that the current conditions are a breakthrough as compared to darker past times.

The paradox is that in terms of indicators of equality, the region's situation is less than ideal. In rural areas, both landlessness and conversely levels of land hoarding are extreme. On labour rights, the situation is not better. Informality and unemployment are prevalent within the banana plantations. Workers must accept work contracts that provide no guarantees for them or their families and opportunities for the youth are also extremely limited. Education is increasingly less appealing as an alternative to the easy route that the drug business offers. Although figures show that Urabá is socially stagnated, to the people the current circumstances are better than the war that haunts their imaginary and memories.

People are aware that the conflict is still there, but they perceive that the conflict has changed in its forms: from a very generalised territorial dispute between guerrillas and paramilitaries to an armed peace. The counterinsurgent bloc deployed

paramilitaries and the army to take back the territorial control from the guerrillas and secure profit and capital. Then, the paramilitaries established a deal: they would cease their violence against the community if they shared information about any practice associated with the guerrillas, leftists and communists. Inequality became a much better option than the cruel assassinations at the hands of the paramilitaries. This trade-off has shaped the image of the people into a belief that today Urabá truly is the best corner of America.

4. Cycles of armed violence in Urabá

Capital accumulation motivated forced displacement and land dispossession that caused unequal access to resources. The inequalities that unfolded from capitalist production relations and the availability of unused means of production in Urabá exacerbated antagonistic social relations. Since early times, the hegemonic power sought to establish institutions and laws to favour private property, owners and productivity. The enactment of the systemic dynamics and the protection of its structuring institutions created cycles of armed violence (García et al., 2011). Although violence had been a reality since the 18th century with the indigenous resistance, we here refer to cycles of violence since the 20th century, after the conflict institutionalised as a hegemonic vehicle. According to the understanding of hegemony which entails the domination and leadership of one social group over the others, indigenous people would not have sought to exercise hegemonic power but rather to establish control

based on their definition of *life plans*.[37] Therefore, the cycles of armed violence that we consider are predominantly situated in the 20th century, in confrontations between subversive actors and the counterinsurgent bloc.

4.1.   I Guerrilla control (1950s-1991)

In Urabá, insurgent groups arrived in the 1950s when old liberal guerrillas organised to defend against the conservative police amid *La Violencia*. The key actors were the guerrillas of Camparrusia and Juan José, led by Julio Guerra, and the guerrillas of Mariano Sandón and Tiburcio León (composed of tenant farmers and sharecroppers) that arrived in Urabá after being expelled by the expansion of the latifundia. These guerrillas had agrarian profiles and mobilised the grievances of migrant peasants. They redistributed lands and tools, provided justice, solved conflicts, supported colonisation and defended settlers from the army and the police's incursions as well as anti-subversive armed groups, founded by the region's conservatives and landowners (Uribe de Hincapie et al., 1992, p. 241).

In the 1960s, leftist and communist movements, seeking to widen their social bases, co-opted the remaining liberal guerrillas and founded FARC-EP and EPL. In Urabá, FARC-EP operated to the south, in Mutatá and the planes of the Atrato river

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[37] "Traditionally the *life plans* have been designed and transmitted orally by the indigenous peoples. […] These plans display deep reflection and participation processes in the communities, favour the cultural reaffirmation and allow to assume different positions regarding the social, economic, political and cultural phenomena that affect their lives. The different proposals and preoccupations scripted in the life plans, in the long term, articulate the basic principles of the territorial revindication and cultural autonomy, axes that determine the survival of these peoples." (García de la Torre and Aramburo Siegert 2011, 283)

near Murindó. EPL was founded in 1967 near Urabá and operated between the Sinú and San Jorge rivers, in and around the Córdoba department.

For both guerrillas, the peasantry was a key actor in their subversive projects. Both supported the colonisation of their lands and coordinated armed land invasions. In the 1960s and 1970s, the guerrillas supported the settlers' grievances, carried out land take-overs for them and created political and social links with different actors in Urabá.

Leongomez (1991) describes the behaviour of the guerrillas and their interaction with the population as having three forms. Firstly, a societal interaction in which the guerrillas aimed to represent specific social sectors, thereby defining themselves as armed social movements aiming to be an organised social actor. Secondly, a partisan interaction in which they seek loyalties based on ideological identities. This interaction subordinates all the social and military actions to the political project. Both the societal and partisan interactions create legitimacy among their social bases, through interests and ideology respectively. Lastly, a military interaction characterised by a relation of subordination of the social bases to the dominant military branches. Adhesion in this interaction is often the outcome of intimidation (Pizarro Leongomez, 1991, p. 11). According to the context, one guerrilla group could take on these different roles, and adapt their tactics to the historical conjunctures.

The interaction of the guerrillas with the Urabá people was a combination of all the above. The guerrilla interaction with the people was trifold. Guerrillas represented the people, created an ideological base but also controlled them through

coercion. Eventually, people understood how to behave in different circumstances, times and places; they knew how and when to talk and when to stay silent, act, proceed or even gesticulate to be safe. The guerrillas also had ways to get on with the people according to their tactics and strategic deeds.

In the 1980s, both guerrillas expanded into the banana axis, the area of highest economic productivity, entrepreneur development and urbanisation in Urabá. This new influence area meant more interaction with the people, primarily agro-industrial workers. Their primary tactics in urban areas were to create both societal and partisan interactions for potential new social bases and to strengthen their social anchoring to support their revolutionary projects. Therefore, the guerrillas participated in the unionist movements and helped to build up Sintragro (EPL) and Sintrabanano (FARC-EP). The unions aimed to channel the grievances of the labour-power with regard to owners' and entrepreneurs' reluctance to allow the organisation of a unionist force. These are some of the ways in which unions were persecuted: dismissals, detentions, threats, assassinations, the militarisation of banana plantations, hiring of strike-breakers, collective deals excluding the unions, unfulfillment of corporate conventions and subornation to unionists (Bejarano, 1988).

The rural transition into the urban sphere did not represent an abandonment of agrarian struggles - it was a consolidation, through actions of extorsion, of new revolutionary identifications with the labour-power within the struggle against the capital and the banana entrepreneurs. Ortiz (2001) identifies four forms of relationship between rural inhabitants and guerrillas:

o **Political adhesion:** it was, for more or less programmatic reasons, linked to collective interests and the people's conditions. This form was more common in smaller towns than in the municipal centres — in places where a party or a movement had undertaken political work. They were the political strongholds of the Communist Party and the Union Patriótica (UP), closer to FARC-EP. For example, the UP had widespread support in San José de Apartadó during the 1980s.

o **Programmatic or convenience adhesion:** in cases where the guerrillas supported collective actions, not without demanding compensation or even imposing economic conditions. For example, in Urabá, both FARC-EP and EPL were functional to Sintragro and Sintrabanano's actions. Wages improved during these unions' strikes, but the guerrillas asked for tributes from the unionist funds.

o **Adhesion out of fear:** it was when people interacted with the guerrillas as a result of intimidation. Once an armed group has settled in a region, most of the inhabitants accept or even embrace their authority based only on coercion; this process aims to delegitimate the local institutional powers.

o **Utilitarian adhesion:** this adhesion form is based on individual strategies and a utilitarian rationale(Ortiz, 2001).

For territorial control, the guerrillas constructed three apparatuses: a military apparatus to protect the access to their zones from the enemies; a justice or police

apparatus to maintain internal order, solve conflicts and prosecute those breaking

their laws; and a tax

apparatus to define the contribution of each member of the zone to the maintenance

of the power structure (Pizarro Leongomez, 1991, pp. 16-17).

Map 7 Territorialities in Urabá Before the Paramilitaries
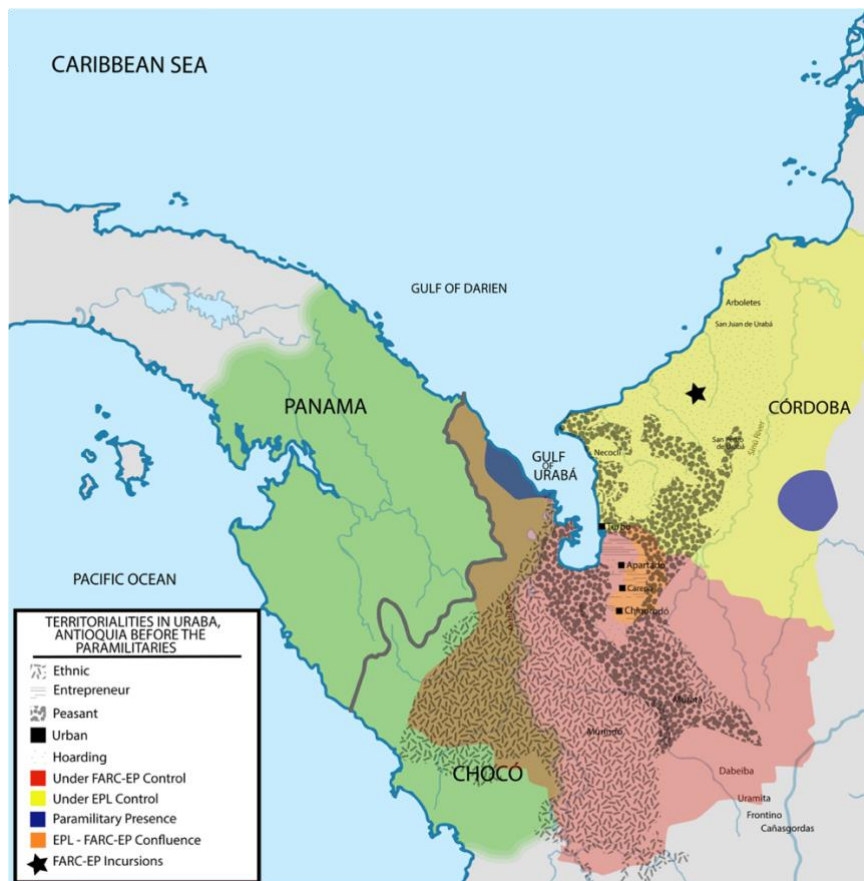
Source: (García de la Torre & Aramburo Siegert, 2011, p. 310) (Credit: Author)

Between 1988 and 1991, the two guerrillas clashed over the control of the

territories. As the maps shows, EPL had influence in northern Urabá (Necoclí,

Arboletes, San Juan de Urabá, San Pedro de Urabá and the north of Turbo) and the

limits of Córdoba (Los Córdobas, Canaletes, Tierralta and Valencia). FARC-EP

influenced the adjacent area of Chocó (Acandí, Riosucio, Unguía) and southern Urabá

(south of Chigorodó, Mutatá and Vigía del Fuerte). In central Urabá, the banana axis, they converged and the political-military limits between guerrillas operated locally. Plantations were under the influence of one or other guerrillas, according to the unionist membership of the workers. The paramilitary groups started to establish themselves in the surrounding areas of Valencia and Darién.

In the early 1990s, the government and the different guerrillas started peace negotiations. In the same years, EPL demobilised, and FARC-EP co-opted their former territories in the Great Urabá. EPL's demobilisation provoked antipathies among some of their dissidents and FARC sympathisers (UP and the Bolivarian Militias). The demobilised EPL created a political movement called Esperanza, Paz y Libertad. This movement was supported by the Comandos Populares and competed against the UP for control of local powers. Each party had social, peasant and unionist adherents, and several political and partisan sympathies spread around the region. In this context, a war began between members and sympathisers of both EPL and FARC-EP. In 1992, 60 members of Esperanza, Paz y Libertad were murdered and, between 1991 and 1994, a further 160 members lost their lives (Ramírez Tobón, 2001, p. 100).

4.2.   II Overtake of the Paramilitaries (1992-1998)

Figure 4 Total Armed Conflict Events 1988-2007
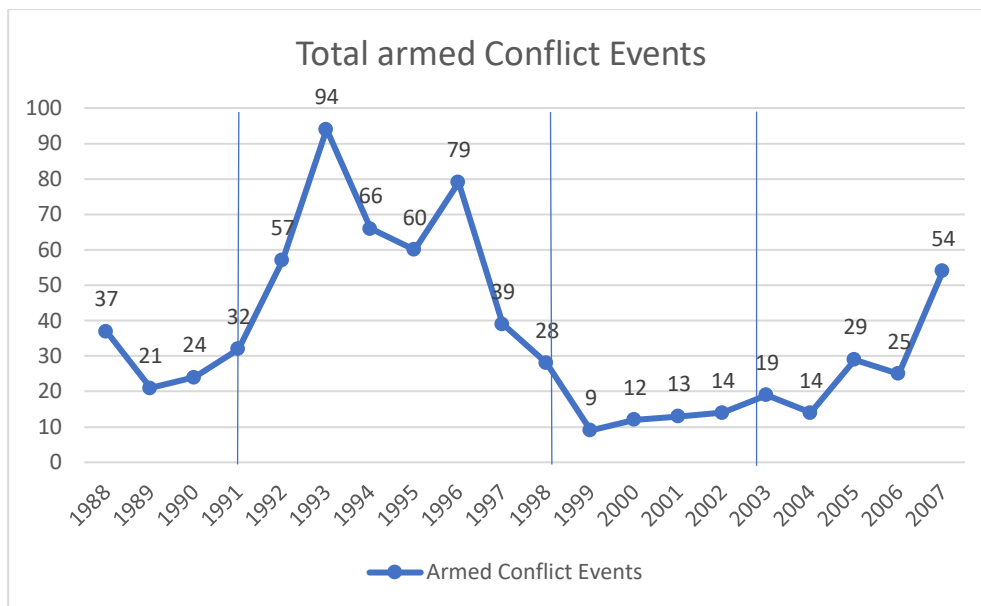
Source: CERAC, Worked by Iner 2008 (García de la Torre & Aramburo Siegert, 2011, p. 340)

During this cycle (1992-1998), the armed conflict escalated, as shown in the graph. The first escalation ended the control of the FARC-EP in the territories previously controlled by the EPL, in the North of Urabá.

The dynamics of this cycle were somewhat heterogeneous across the region. There were two different trends with their own particularities in the zones: the spatial movement of the armed conflict actors and the reconfiguration of the respective territorial controls of guerrillas and paramilitaries. At the beginning of the escalation in 1992, the northern and central zones display an increasing trend in armed events, occurring more suddenly in the north than in the centre. In the north, in only two years (1991-1993), the number of events went from 7 to 27—an increase of roughly 280%. In the centre, in five years (1991-1996), the violence multiplied from 23 to 76 events—

around a 230% increase. In relative terms, the increase of conflict in the centre was less intense than in the north, despite more numerous events occurring in the centre. Since the previous cycle, the centre experienced more political conflict than the north, where the conflict only intensified with the arrival of the paramilitaries disputing territories with FARC-EP.

The period with most events and worsening of the conflict coincides with the definitive settlement of the paramilitaries and the intensification of the state's action to take back the territories left under FARC-EP's control by the EPL. Paramilitary groups often supported state action. Testimonies and the fact that there were almost no combats between the National Armed Forces and the paramilitaries evidence their joint actions, as shown in the chart.

Figure 5 Combats and State Actors' Actions (1988-2007)
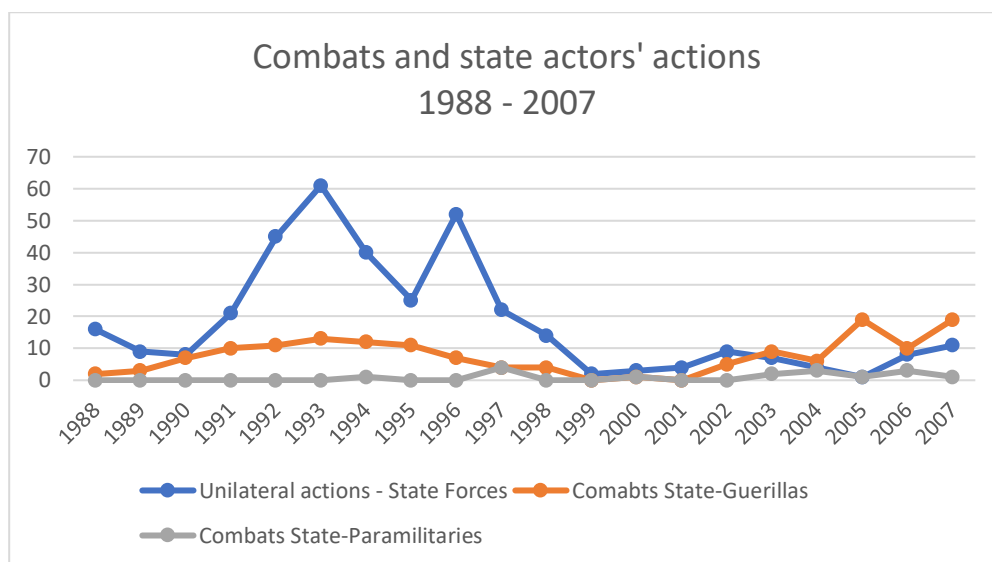
Source: CERAC, Worked by Iner 2008 (García de la Torre & Aramburo Siegert, 2011, p. 343)

In the expansion to the north of the region to co-opt the territory left by EPL, FARC-EP encountered the recently arrived paramilitaries. Paramilitaries started to

infiltrate through the northern flank, attacking the guerrilla and their supporters and displaced peasants accused of colluding with the insurgents. Paramilitaries seized their plots and pushed forward the property hoarding agenda of their main sponsors, the landowners. Meanwhile, in the dispute with the FARC-EP for the north zone, the paramilitaries quickly took over control of the municipalities of Arboletes, San Pedro de Urabá, San Juan de Urabá and Necoclí.

Map 8 Conflict and Armed Actors Urabá 1996-1998

Source: (García de la Torre & Aramburo Siegert, 2011, p. 360) (Credit: Author)

In the centre zone, the paramilitary project was also significant, but in a much more developmental phase. The conflict started in 1992 and its dynamic peak was in 1993, and ever since, it declined. When the armed activity in the centre reached its peak, the dynamic in this zone matched that of the wider Urabá region. This trend is explained because the paramilitaries dominated the north, the FARC-EP the south, and the centre remained a disputed territory. During this cycle, the first retreat of FARC-EP from the north took place (1995-1996). The conflict in the centre expelled the guerrilla fronts towards the Occidente of Antioquia and Chocó in early-1998.

Between 1996 and 1998, the armed conflict in the centre zone decreased rapidly, compared to the levels from the beginning of paramilitary control, as paramilitaries gained control of the centre and north zones. In the same period, the intensity of the conflict changed, and the zonal hierarchies transformed. While in the north and the centre the conflict receded, in Chocó (the municipalities of Acanadí, Unguía, Riosucio and Carmen del Darién) and the adjacent region of the Occidente of Antioquia (the municipalities of Dabeiba, Frontino, Urrao), the conflict increased. This is the area to which the army, coming from the banana axis, ejected the guerrillas.

4.3.   III Paramilitary rule (1999-2003)

From 1999-2003, paramilitaries consolidated their project in the central zone after cornering the guerrilla in the Occidente of Antioquia and Chocó. In spite of their control in this zone, the armed events continued, unlike in the north.

In the centre, there was more innate violence due to local dynamics beyond the confrontation between the FARC-EP paramilitaries. These dynamics were due to: i) the depredatory and symbiotic relations of the armed actors with the banana

agroindustry to secure funding; ii) the ineffectiveness of the formal institutions, which were replaced by the armed control order. (although one of the armed groups had control, they struggled to keep the law current and the maintain the state's sovereignty); iii) the entry of armed actors into institutional political life to ensure social control. Despite all these characteristics, unilateral actions and combats speak to paramilitary control - their domination is unquestionable (García et al., 2011).

After taking control of the north and centre zones, most of the action of the paramilitaries was carried out in the Occidente region of Antioquia and the Chocó departments.

4.4. IV "Neo-paramilitary" action (2004-2012)

In 2003, paramilitary rule was consolidated, not only in Urabá but in a good part of the country. In the Great Urabá – Antioquia, Chocó and Córdoba –the paramilitary blocs Bananero, Héroes de Tolová and Elmer Cárdenas were operating and settled in the territories shown on the map below. In this year, these paramilitary groups started to speak of the possibility of demobilising, which happened in 2004, 2005 and 2006, respectively. These demobilisations revived expectations that the violence and forced displacements would cease, dispossessed lands would be returned, and victims would receive reparations. However, six years after having finished the process of demobilisation, an old actor would reappear in the scenario under the new and euphemistic denomination of criminal bands or BACRIM. The peace process with the paramilitaries was a failure. Ever since this process failed, the governments have been reluctant to acknowledge these BACRIM groups as heirs of the paramilitaries —

denying them belligerent status and overlooking their political and economic burden as restored paramilitaries.

Paradoxically, paramilitaries' demobilisation aggravated the armed conflict in Urabá. During the first year of demobilisation, there was a slight reduction in the number of armed events, down from 19 to 14. However, the trend quickly changed in 2007, and the numbers increased rapidly from 14 to 54.

Map 9 Paramilitary Structures Urabá 1999-2003
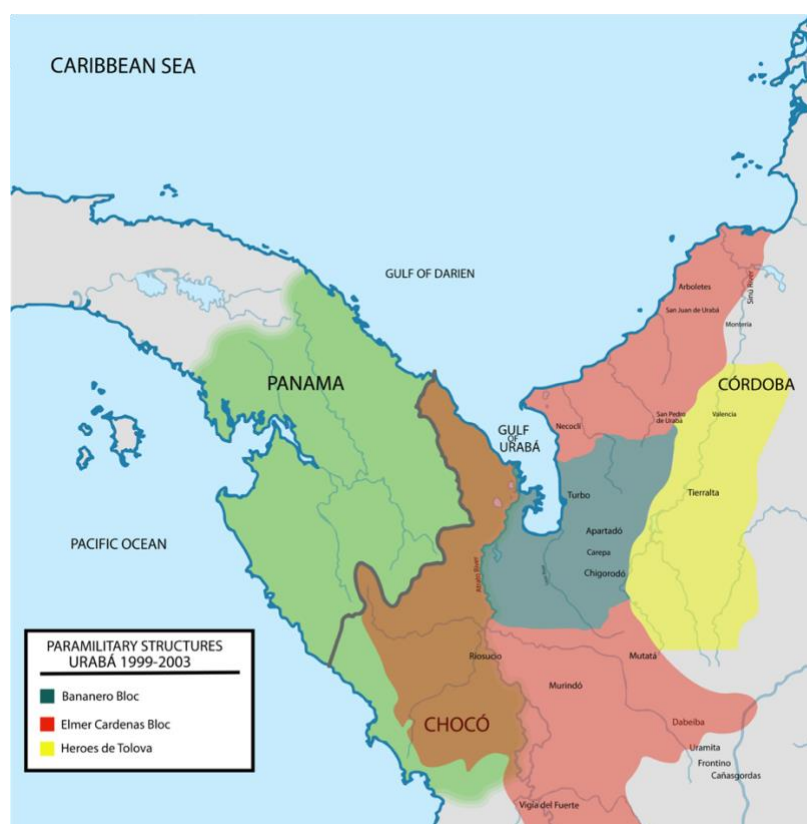

Source: (García et al., 2011)(Credit: Author)

In Urabá, the demobilisation rather than the extinction of the paramilitaries entailed the consolidation of their territorial, economic and social order and the arrival of new paramilitary groups committed to preserving the old strategy under its new

name. This change created a false sense of the restoration of the state's sovereignty and opened up opportunities to promote extensive African palm, cocoa and rubber crops and practice intensive forestry exploitation, reinforcing the dynamics of capital accumulation (Lombana Reyes 2012).

The new groups, more prominently, rearmed and co-opted other groups using a narco-paramilitary strategy (Posso Gonzáles, 2010). Paramilitary's actions and continued existence are related to control of the drug business and Urabá became a critical point for the traffic of drugs in the international market. Moreover, they are also organically related to the protection of palm crops, the ownership of lands acquired through dispossession by frontmen of the paramilitarism, and the maintenance of a political environment free from leftist actors and therefore favourable to their own powers.

4.5.   V Post-peace agreement violence (since 2012)

Even though there has been a peace agreement with FARC-EP and an alleged demobilisation of the paramilitary groups, Urabá still registers high numbers of victimising events related to the armed conflict. The chart below shows the number of violent events reported by individuals or communities between 2012 and March 2020. The recent violence in the region is related to political war over the new peace constituencies, the process of land restitution of, the operation of new paramilitary groups, the absence of the public force and intrinsically linked to Urabá's strategic location as a corridor to illicit export drugs.

Figure 6 Events of the Armed Conflict in Urabá
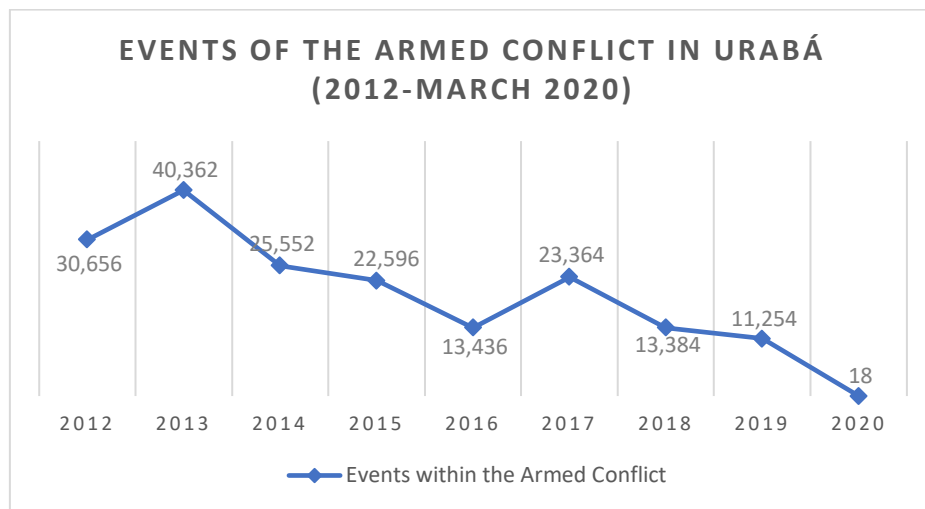
Source: Unidad de Victimas y Restitución de Tierras (2020)

The "Victims and Land Restitution Law" of 2011 established a set of judiciary, administrative, social and economic, and individual and collective measures to support the victims of the "internal armed conflict" (Ministry of the Interior 2012). This law marked an important precedent as the state moved forward in recognising the conflict and the reparations due to its victims with, among other things, a cluster of codes on the restitution of dispossessed lands.

Since 2012, the government entered peace dialogues with FARC-EP. Among the expected outcomes of these dialogues, and the subsequent agreement in 2016, were the de-escalation of the violence, expansion of the state's presence in the territories left by the guerrilla, resolution and reparations for the victims, dismantling of the paramilitarism, solutions to the illicit drugs issues, reallocation of lands to landless peasants and development plans with a territorial focus for the prioritised municipalities. Concretely, the agreement designated eight municipalities of Urabá

as prioritised for being historical sites of the armed conflict: Apartadó, Carepa, Chigorodó, Dabeiba, Mutatá, Necoclí, San Pedro de Urabá and Turbo. The peace agreement acknowledged the need for structural change to solve the armed conflicts in the country's different regions. However, since the times of the dialogues, governments have lacked the political will to fulfil the agreements thus creating new cycles of violence.

The armed conflict in Urabá re-configured. Before demobilisation, the 57 Front of the FARC-EP operated in Urabá. Since the end of 2015, the ELN guerrilla, which had not previously operated in Urabá, arrived in the region. In addition, since 2014, hundreds of combatants from the paramilitary group Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC) regrouped in the area and have been expanding since 2015. The AGC is also known as "the Gulf Clan", "the Urabeños", or "the Úsuga Clan. By designating these names, the state aims to treat them as a criminal group instead of acknowledging their paramilitary legacy.

The peace agreement created 16 Special Peace Constituencies to improve the situations in areas affected by the armed conflict and the weak institutional presence. Each of the constituencies would have a chair in the Representative Chambers for a two-period mandate. One of the constituencies covered the departments of Antioquia, Chocó and Córdoba, in several of the municipalities of the Great Urabá. These new conditions have ignited political disputes in the region and have produced threats. Peasants' associations, land claimants and the communal councils of Urabá have their sights set on these chairs. However, it clashes with the paramilitary project and their political participation, leading to the assassinations of social and political leaders.

Moreover, on the question of land restitution, during the armed conflict in Urabá between 150.000he and 170.000he of land were dispossessed. Dispossession created social organisations of land claimants whose integrity is jeopardised by illegal landowners. Since the beginning of the peace agreement's implementation in 2016, several leaders of land restitution processes have been assassinated (¡PACIFISTA!, 2020). In the period between the issuance of Law 1448 in 2011 and 2016, 52 social leaders were murdered. Between the signature of the peace agreement and March 2020, 71 social leaders were murdered in Antioquia, 12 of whom were in Urabá, as the following table shows.

Table 20 Total of social leaders assassinated in Antioquia (2012-March 2020)

Total of social leaders assassinated in Antioquia (2012-March 2020)									
Subregions	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Urabá	2			1	1	4	2		2	12
Bajo Cauca		1		1	6	4	15	3	2	32
Valle de Aburrá	10	2		5	2	7	1	1	1	29
Oriente			1	2		3		1	1	8
Occidente					1		1	2		4
Suroeste		1	1			2				4
Norte	2	3		1	2	2	7	2	1	20
Nordeste	3	1			2	2			1	8
Magdalena Medio		1					2	2		5
Total	17	9	2	10	14	24	28	11	8	122

Source: (Gómez, Montoya Suárez, & Nanclares Márquez, 2019) (Indepaz, 2020), (Pacifista, 2020)

5. The Paramilitary Rule

After decades of armed violence, the paramilitaries established their domination in Urabá. Through different means, paramilitaries have extended their domination into a rule that implicated various actors in the region throughout time. The paramilitary groups do not restrict their action to territorial control; they intervene in different aspects of social life.

As earlier suggested, to reduce paramilitaries to mere criminal groups is to disregard a fundamental facet of their existence—it reduces the conflict to the need to eliminate the outlaw. Paramilitaries have clear political and economic goals. Not coincidentally, anti-subversive action reflects the interests of their supporters. Hristov (2014) explains that paramilitarism is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which is simultaneously economic, political and military in nature. In the economic dimension, paramilitaries' goal is the generation of profit through legal and illegal businesses. Legal businesses include rent over land, agriculture and livestock production, mining companies and other investments. In illegal businesses, the primary sources of profit are the drug-trafficking structures. In the political dimension, paramilitaries are pro-state right-wing forces that embrace and promote an anti-subversive ideology. Therefore, they aim to have representation at all levels of the government across the country. In the military dimension, their goals are to eliminate insurgents and their collaborators and protect their existence. They are involved in selective killings, massacres, acts of torture, disappearances and combats and operate with *Sicario* structures in partnership with state agents (Hristov 2014, 140).

5.1.   Anti-Subversive Control

In an interview with "Francisco"[38], a former paramilitary, he explains that the paramilitary groups' existence was fundamental to protect the people from the action of the guerrillas. Although currently in prison, he says that he would go back to fulfil their goal to end the insurgent groups once released. He clearly states that the paramilitary has entirely ideological bases for all their actions:

> "[…] we defended capitalism because without capitalism there is no development, and communism is a lie […] our goals were to protect the private property and the democracy" (Francisco, personal communication, 12 March 2020).

The paramilitary groups advanced their objectives by combining the economic, political and military dimensions to establish their rule in Urabá. Anti-subversive control has been one of the main strategies of the paramilitaries for territorial domination. The previous section presented some of the dynamics of the paramilitary's expansion until ultimately gaining control of Urabá. This section addresses massacres and selective killings - the paramilitary's primary methods of eliminating subversion in Urabá (Uribe de Hincapíe 1992). The following pie charts show lethal paramilitary violence in Colombia between 1975 – 2005, broken down according to modality. The percentage of actions in the modalities other than 'Massacres' and 'Selective Killings' is negligible.

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[38] Francisco is a former member of the paramilitary groups AGC and AUC. His name has been changed.

Figure 7 Paramilitary lethal violence in Colombia between 1975-2005
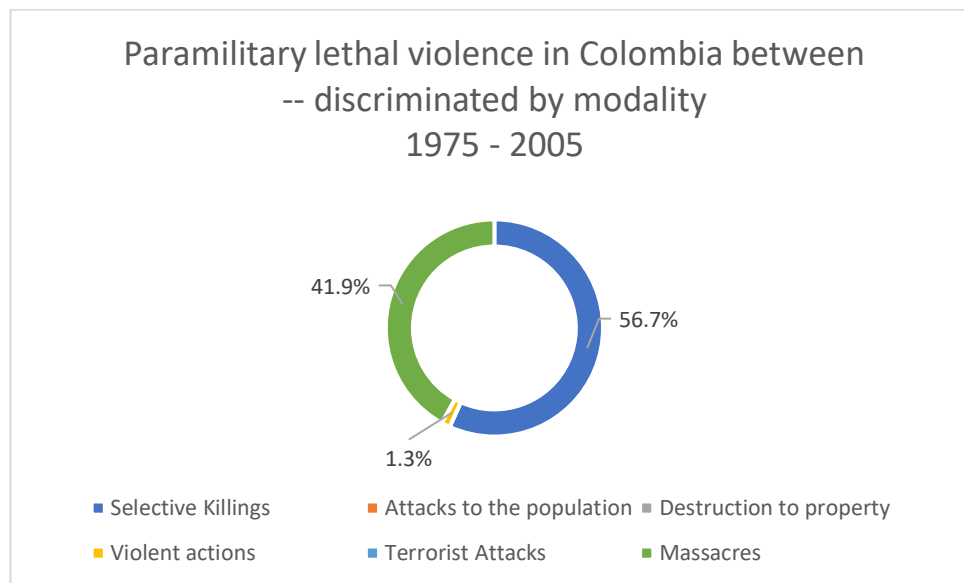
Source: (Centro Nacional de Memoria Historica 2016, Centro Nacional de Memoria Historica 2018)

Figure 8 Paramilitary lethal violence in Colombia between 2006-2015
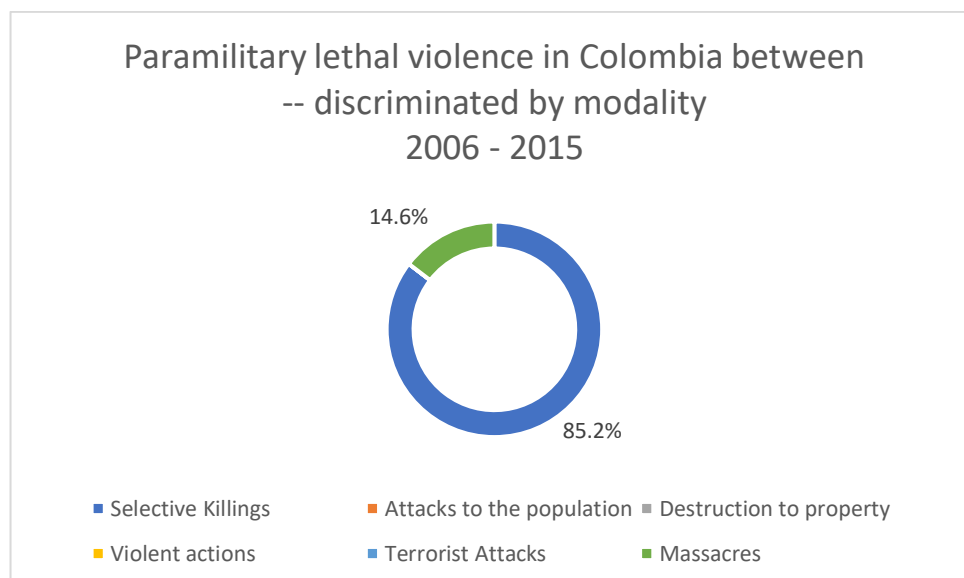
Source: (Centro Nacional de Memoria Historica 2016, Centro Nacional de Memoria Historica 2018)

Massacres

In Urabá, armed actors generally employed the massacre strategy as a way to eliminate other actors and gain control. Both guerrillas and paramilitaries have deployed massacres in plantations, camps and squatter neighbourhoods, seeking to weaken their enemies by eliminating the other's social base. In Urabá, up to 2001, 52 massacres were registered; 32 in the banana axis and 11 in the South zone (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013). According to other estimations, some 103 massacres associated with the conflict took place in Urabá between 1988 and 2002(Suárez, 2008).

Massacres would become common practice with the arrival of paramilitarism under the Castaño brothers' structure in 1988. In just two months, they carried out two massacres: one in the north of Urabá in the "Honduras" and "La Negra" plantations, and the other in Punta Coquitos near Turbo. Following these massacres, Fidel Castaño launched a plan of territorial consolidation of his ACMM structure in Urabá, targeting San Pedro de Urabá and Arboletes as inroads to the region (Ramírez Tobón, 1997, pp. 133–134). From March to September of that year, five massacres occurred in places with two characteristics - plantations controlled by guerrilla's unions and invaded lands - and in which members of the armed forces and the banana sector participated (García, 1996, p. 158).

The massacres became one of the paramilitaries' primary practices in the repertoire of domination in a strategy of more significant scale. However, they were not alone in the use of this practice. FARC-EP perpetrated various massacres, especially against the social bases of the EPL, as a reprisal for their demobilisation.

The impact of the FARC-EP's massacres against the civil population, remarkably primarily targeting demobilised combatants, legitimated the paramilitaries' retaliations in the people's eyes and even motivated a former bloc of the EPL to join the AUC (Rutas del Conflicto, 2020).

Massacres were the primary tool to "clean" Urabá and pushed the people to reject subversive actors. After having accomplished this primary goal, a new modality began to develop in which the violent mechanisms of territorial and social control were more specific and targeted. It helped make Urabá attractive and improved its image in the country (Madariaga 2006).

Selective killings

According to the CNMH (2013), selective killing is the modality of violence that has claimed the most victims in the conflict. They calculate that around nine out of every ten civilians killed within the armed conflict succumbed to this modality. Selective killing is a strategy that can obscure the reach of the violence against civilians, given the difficulty of assigning definite responsibility due to the individual character of each killing and the multitude of attack patterns. This modality complements a terror regime that silences victims and secures the unpunishable nature of the crimes. The procedure of these killings involves two kinds of responsibilities: a mastermind and a perpetrator. Often, the latter is identified since their actions—assaults, Sicario actions and retention-execution—are easier to prosecute, whereas the mastermind, who provides the motive and funding, often goes unpunished. Moreover, this modality is frequently underreported and undermined by the local authorities as the killings are

classed as conventional crimes. This practice has been used, primarily, to hide illegal alliances between the public force, paramilitaries and drug traffickers.

Urabá is one of the regions with the highest numbers of selective killings. Like massacres, this modality is based on the goal of intimidation, however selective killings mainly target political and social leaders. After the demobilisation of the paramilitaries, many of their leaders confessed to carrying out this practice before tribunals. "HH", the leader of the Bananero Bloc between 1994 and 1997, gave testimony admitting to subduing the banana unions to benefit production by preventing strikes and compelling the workers to work under threats. Paramilitaries also went into municipalities and towns to assassinate unionist leaders and persons allegedly collaborating with the guerrilla. Paramilitaries forced many workers to either leave the region or to join the employer's unions.

Selective killings have mostly targeted political members of the subversive parties, unionists, social leaders, and land claimants. An effective genocide against the UP party was carried out through selective killings during the 1980s and 1990s. Many of the killings happened in Urabá. In 1996, in Turbo, for example, the bodies of four banana plantation workers were found after they were kidnapped by a group of men wearing public force military uniforms (El Tiempo, 1996). "HH" confessed to the killing of 19 unionists and 13 UP leaders in Urabá, as well as at least 88 other crimes against leaders of workers' movements (Verdad Abierta, 2009). The AGC, opposed to land restitution and the return of victims of forced displaced, uses selective killings to intimidate claimants. Between 2008-2010, 18 leaders were killed, most of whom were land claimants. The Regional Process of Guarantees in Antioquia estimates that

between 2010 and 2011, 29 people were threatened, 18 assassinated, 13 displaced, and 37 other violent actions were perpetrated (CCEEU, 2012). On 29 February 2020, the final day of field research for this project, the social leader Amado Torres was assassinated in Apartadó, allegedly by paramilitaries. Torres was the treasurer of the local administration (JAL) in the town of La Miranda, and his assassination coincided with an official visit of the President of Colombia to Apartadó (Semana 2020).

There is no consolidated data on selective killings because of the nature of the practice and the state's neglect to acknowledge its occurrence. However, this counterinsurgent modality is more discrete and less alarming than massacres, particularly for those people who lived through that specific period in Urabá. To date, both practices are still very much current.

Figure 9 Assassination of Amado Torres

Parapolitica

Parapolitica is the systematic phenomenon of alliances linking politicians and public servants with paramilitaries and drug traffickers. It is one of the most important

explanations for the persistence of the capitalist hegemony in Colombia's regions, especially in those where the state is present in the form of control of counterinsurgent groups (Ballvé, 2020), or where subversive actors are more popularly legitimate. Within the legal framework, para-politicians provide resources, information, and personal data to the paramilitaries and facilitate their activities.

Parapolitica was a scandal that went public in 2006 when several congress members of the government party and allies were accused of colluding with the AUC from the mid-1990s onwards. This revelation added to previously-documented knowledge of political caciques having links with violent groups within a political system protected by clientelist practices (Leal et al., 2010). The *parapolitica* is one episode of a long-standing counterinsurgent strategy in which owners, local powers and criminals ally to control threats from subversive actors—combining the armed apparatus, the economic unions and the political movements (Gutiérrez Sanín & Baron, 2006).

The alliances between paramilitaries and politicians, owners, and public servants were neither tacit nor spontaneous; they were based on a program with guidelines on influencing the electoral scenario. To give one clear example, the *Plan Birmania* was a specific political strategy of the AUC in 2001 to co-opt political spaces to get national representation by using the resources of the illegal economies. This plan created a division within the paramilitaries: on one side, those who wanted more economic power and control of the illegal economies; on the other, those who saw the paramilitaries as a political-military movement that ought to influence the political realm. Carlos Castaño, a representative of the latter group and a founder of the AUC,

urged the other commanders to identify as defenders of the state and its laws. For

Castaño, allegedly, the revindications to the drug traffic were out of place.

The AUC self-defined as a "political-military movement with an anti-subversive character, exercising the right of self-defence, which demanded transformations within the state but does not attempt to harm it" (Centro de Memoria Histórica (Colombia), 2018a, p. 143). Under the basic guidelines of this plan, the historic *Pacto de Ralito* meeting took place. This pact, signed by some paramilitary commanders, regional politicians (members of the parliament, mayors, governors and councilmen), and stockbreeders and landowners set the goal to "re-establish the motherland under a new social contract". It established working commissions for a second meeting and determined some fundamental aspects of the model of society that they intended to implement, among which were the defence of private property and respect for constitutional prerogatives (Centro de Memoria Histórica (Colombia), 2018a, p. 160).

The *Pacto de Ralito* set a general position among the paramilitary groups to actively participate in the political realm. The CNMH explains that in the case of Urabá, under the leadership of "El Aleman" and in alliance with local politicians, the paramilitaries achieved: 1) a high level of coordination in the paramilitary structure through the negotiation of accords with different leaders; 2) a strategy to incrementally create political power by co-opting the local powers, leading to influence at the national level; 3) the configuration of sophisticated electoral strategies; and, 4) a high level of commitment from the politicians supported by the paramilitaries (Centro Nacional de Memoria Historica 2018, 161).

"El Aleman", commander of the Elmer Cardenas Bloc, led the creation of the Regional Political Movement for a Great Urabá in Peace, in which historically antagonistic political forces, converged. The political movements covered territories of the Antioquenian and Chocoan Urabá and the Córdoba municipalities of Moñitos, Canaletes, Los Córdobas and Puerto Escondido. This movement was launched in 2001 in Necoclí under the watchful eye of powerful paramilitary commanders, influential members of civil society, and political leaders of the municipalities of Urabá. During the presentation, a closed list for the elections for the Chamber of Representatives in 2002 was drawn up. Several members would serve in the Representative chair for one year and rotate to meet the different interests of the participants. The list obtained 25,976 votes and secured one seat in the Chamber.

The paramilitary commanders decided to find a candidate "complying with the liberal spirit of the movement" to run for a seat in the Senate. Rubén Darío Quintero, who did not have the economic resources needed to run, signed the *Pacto de Urabá* in which, in exchange for economic funding and electoral support from the Elmer Cardenas Bloc, he would: 1) appoint a candidate trusted by the paramilitaries as his replacement; 2) allow the paramilitary representation in the Senate for a time proportional to the number of votes they secured him; 3) manage projects in the zones under paramilitary control; and 4) secure the participation of a candidate appointed by the paramilitaries. According to "El Aleman", his movement contributed 2'000.000.000 pesos to the benefit of several Senate candidates; candidates to the Congress each received 200 million pesos, while the candidates for governors and mayors received 50 million pesos (El Espectador, 2009).

5.2.   The Task of Self Defence

The paramilitary groups were protected by the right of self-defence "in reaction to the guerrillas' threat" to private property[39]. In his book, Castaño states that they, as self-defence armies, advocate for and support capitalism that respects and guarantees the freedom of markets, entrepreneurship and the right to private property (Castaño, 1999, pp. 35–37). Thus, one of their key strategies is protecting private property, the key structuring institution of capitalism, and other associated institutions within the Colombian context such as liberal democracy, freedom, productivity, the state and the status quo—counterinsurgent practices against any subversive actor are based on political, economic and social interests. Consequently, paramilitaries act as defenders of capitalism and employ all their political, social and military apparatuses for that task.

In Urabá, the paramilitary's staunch defence of capitalism brought them closer to many actors whose property and capital was endangered by the subversion. Paramilitaries were fundamental actors for the region's social order and for sustaining capitalism in Colombia. They enabled the productive use of the lands in Urabá, which included the production of mineral resources, raw materials and agricultural, stockbreeding products and drug traffic.

One of the most famous cases is the banana industry, in which banana companies have a long record of using illegal groups to secure productivity. In Urabá,

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[39] Many of the paramilitary groups, instead of being called paramilitaries are referred to as United Self-defenses. AUC (Autodefensas Unidad de Colombia) means United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia; AGC (Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia) means Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia.

the CONVIVIR[40] Papagayo served as an intermediary for the Chiquita Brands International Fruit Company to pass payments to the AUC in exchange for securing their products. Chiquita , as well as several other banana packers and retailing companies, paid Papagayo US$3 per box in exchange for protection. In 2008, "HH", commander of the Banana Bloc, declared that the CONVIVIR in Urabá served to legalise the money that the banana companies gave to the paramilitaries and the money used to strengthen their military structures. The Office of the General Attorney calculates that banana entrepreneurs gave Papagayo around USD 1.2 million, helping to intensify the conflict in the region. In his appearance, "HH" also declared:

> "Yes, we carried out military actions to benefit the banana production, by preventing strikes and compelling employees from working under threats" (Verdad Abierta, 2009).

Another notable case was protecting the owners of violently dispossessed and hoarded lands from old settlers and peasants. Between 1996 and 1997, the usurpation of land had led to the assassination of 226 social leaders and the disappearance of over 2000 people. In the 1990s, the paramilitaries expelled communities from their territories, and, in the following years, business people started to arrive and buy up these lands. They used the land for agribusinesses such as palm, stockbreeding and banana. Currently, with the Victims and Land Restitution Law, the old settlers are

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[40] The CONVIVIR (Special Vigilance and Private Security Services) were private security cooperatives, legalised in 1994 through a Ministry of National Defense decree, that allowed owners and companies to create private armies to self-defend from the actions of insurgent groups. Under this legal figure, paramilitary armies reorganised, collaborating and coordinating with military forces.

claiming back their lands. However, between the ineffectiveness of the state institutions and intimidation from paramilitary groups, they have not been able to return. Even local authorities prosecuted land claimants who, having the sentences on their cases, are accused of forced displacement and conspiracy to commit a crime by the current holders of the usurped lands (Semana Rural, 2019). Land claimants are intimidated and assassinated by the AGC in the different municipalities of Urabá. People are keen to have their lands returned to them, but are reluctant to give their information over to avoid being identified. The AGC has sent several pamphlets advising claimants to cease their activities under penalty of being murdered (¡PACIFISTA!, 2017).

Another achievement of the anti-subversive task is related to its legitimacy among the people. When the paramilitary groups arrived in Urabá, they claimed to defend the people from the guerrillas. In reality, the people see Urabá's history as divided in two: before and after the paramilitaries arrived.

During the 1990s, the guerrillas adopted kidnapping and extortion into their political and economic tactics. Kidnappings mostly targeted landowners, businesspeople, politicians, and public servants and either demanded ransoms or were intended to exert political influence. On the other hand, extortion also targeted workers, peasants, and small merchants. Amid the confrontation for territorial control, many people were intimidated and accused of collaboration with the other party. Many people lost their properties or small business or simply had to leave the region. When the paramilitaries were established, these practices declined. Since big owners, companies and politicians sponsored paramilitaries, they did not rely on that

kind of money. Because extortion and kidnapping decreased, people's perception of the paramilitaries was relatively positive.

Although paramilitaries set stricter rules and acted more brutally, they only target "misbehaving" people. "The good people" benefitted from their control by being secure, free, and able to profit from their properties. Since the banana, palm and drug businesses were the primary economic sources in Urabá, defending capitalist institutions gained legitimacy among the people. It also affected the way people perceived the parties in conflict and the ways in which they would advance their grievances.

5.3.   The rule of the streets

The rules of the streets are the spoken and unspoken codes that guide civilian conduct and behaviour, enforced both by consent and force by the paramilitaries. Compliance with these rules guarantees peaceful communal living but, on the contrary, failing to follow them can result in threats, intimidation, displacement, killing, social cleansing or even massacres. The rules presented herein come from an ethnographic observation exercise, which was not exhaustive due to the conditions but still allows some conclusions to be drawn. As outsiders, students coming from inland, the researchers are somehow above the inhabitants' daily rules. Also, due to the popular desire to improve the region's image, they avoid mentioning rules that do not pertain to visitors. Therefore, a more consolidated and long-term ethnographic study would result in a more comprehensive explanation of the rules of the street.

At first sight, Apartadó, Necoclí, Carepa, and a number of other places, seem like any other Colombian municipality. People's lives go by peacefully and calmly: shops, restaurants, schools, bars, everything works as usual. Urban areas of Urabá are entirely calm places. However, people are aware that living in Urabá also entails being under strict paramilitary rules.

The first thing one realises is that people quickly spot outsiders. People are very friendly with visitors, especially with foreigners and people from inland. However, they have learned to be vigilant with outsiders. While we were travelling on the bus from Montería to Apartadó, a German couple came onboard. The couple was going to Turbo, where the port to go to the Carpurgana beaches—a tourist hotspot for backpackers - is located. Curiously, the couple were wearing t-shirts emblazoned with images of communist leaders. The woman had a tattoo of the figure of the Virgin Mary with Lenin's face transposed on it and a hammer and a sickle as the heart. In an area controlled by a violent far-right group, such a look could be considered somewhat dangerous. However, while the couple attracted everybody's attention, nothing happened. Later, in a conversation with a local person, we learned that people are free to wear whatever they want and to say (almost) whatever they want if they are only visitors. Tourists are exempt, to a certain extent, from the rules. Furthermore, if they are crossing a line, locals would usually offer friendly advice to change certain behaviours. On the beaches of Arboletes, it is common for bartenders and waiters to give some recommendations about what to avoid— "just in case".

Their looks often give outsiders away because locals tend to look alike—no long hair for men and no piercings or tattoos. Women, due to the weather, wear

tropical clothing that is neither discrete nor extravagant. People say that this is the appropriate way to look in the region and that locals should respect this. Doing further research, this is a significant issue. Explicitly or not, it is crucial to maintain a uniform pattern in locals' appearance to be able to pick out strangers. Infiltration is a common practice in the region. In his book, Castro Caycedo (2017) explains that the police have created all sorts of strategies for outing agents undercover to catch drug traffickers. Therefore, even if people claim to work for NGOs or governmental organisations, or to be researchers, people are suspicious of talking to them about the conflict and certain other subjects.

It is common to see people hanging out on the corners of different neighbourhoods, seemingly loitering. However, after some investigation, we learned that they are paramilitary informants who report people's activities and any suspicious action. The paramilitary groups employ many people to survey different areas. In small shops, restaurants, bakeries or bars, people on the streets are paid over one minimum monthly wage to be informants. People are vigilant of any comment and are very reserved about what they say or how they behave. "You never know who is listening" is a common phrase to hear.

Neighbourhoods have invisible borders, and people from one place are usually forbidden from going to other areas. Although unclear exactly why, we suspect that it has to do with the networks of drug distribution and the local gangs operating in the different areas of Apartadó. People need to ask permission to enter into specific neighbourhoods. The same thing happens in rural areas, outside of urban centres.

Nightlife and leisure are other activities that the paramilitary rule regulate. The nightlife in Urabá is vibrant and busy. On Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, people go out in a somewhat controlled and calm atmosphere. However, bars are only open until a particular hour, and it is not advised to be out after a specific time. Marihuana is banned, and people condemn its consumption. People associate this drug with leftism, social decline and crime. The paramilitaries regularly use pamphlets to announce social cleansings for marihuana users (as well as people loitering, stealing, or practicing other undesirable activities). Demonstrations of homosexuality and gay bars are prohibited - members of the LGBTQI community simply go to the same places as their friends.

Personal relations are "transactionalised", remarked a lawyer working in Apartadó. In his five years living in the city, he has learned that the drug trafficking culture has changed the way people relate to each other. He explains that women try to stay in shape and look "attractive" because that can enable social mobility. "You cannot simply moralise something connected to the amount of money and capos that you can find in Urabá. Women are often raised to find a drug worker who can give them a good life. Some of them, as single mothers, have very few choices others than to use their bodies to find their way", explained the lawyer. Men are expected to show off their luxury belongings - watches, clothes or cell phones - to show that they have means. Women might tend to relate to men who they feel have money that they can benefit from. Although it is not law, it is relatively common to see relationships between men and women as a transaction, and the paramilitary control has contributed to shaping personal relations in this way.

Whether or not people agree with or like the rules, they comply with them because they secure the armed peace. People say that when society behaves well, then Urabá is a tranquil place where they are pleased to live. They like the current situation and are happy that the war has "stabilised". Many people are aware that "[bad] things could happen", but assume that it would not be as bad as before in the times of the massacres and the war with the guerrilla.

"Francisco" explained that the paramilitaries do not need to continuously intimidate the people because they are the best law enforcers and peacekeepers. He says that if something happened in the area, if someone infiltrated it, the community would be to blame. Because the community knows that what happens in their territory is their responsibility, they would necessarily be held accountable. That is why people, either because of intimidation or their own willingness, embrace the paramilitary rule. They know that times are better now than before and that they must make sure everything stays that way. Paramilitaries dominate Urabá, and people are well aware of that.

6.   Resistance, Resignation and Cohabitation

Thus far, the history of Urabá, its population and territories, is the history of capitalism in the northwest of Colombia. Decades of waves of landless peasants displaced by landowners, thousands of indigenous and black populations banished from their communal lands, and hundreds of entrepreneurs pushed by the need to expand their businesses precede the conflict in Urabá.

The current paramilitary control is just another episode of the conflict, and their rule but another form of a relation between the people and the hegemony. Lombana

Reyes (2012) asserts that the geographic, territorial and spatial configuration in Urabá is not only the outcome of the processes of capital accumulation and the imposition of the interests of the dominant classes; "counterhegemonic" processes mobilised within social and popular sectors and from the processes of social and political resistance have also contributed to configuring the region.

We do not address the counterhegemonic processes because they exist within the premise that a class position implicates a will to counter or support a social order (Hyug Baeg, 1991). In Urabá, it would not be fair to undermine the rationale of thousands of people who had to embrace the paramilitaries to survive their rule or of the victims of the guerrillas' excessive actions. Instead, we highlight the different ways in which people have related to paramilitary rule. Taking the notion that capitalism entails precarity but also concessions and that the capitalist hegemony secures a "material base of consent" for Urabá's inhabitants (Przeworski, 1985, 2002), we observe that the working-class not only resists or engages in the building of a "counterhegemony"; it also resigns itself to and even learns to cohabitate with the paramilitaries.

Madariaga explains that the paramilitary authority is established and consolidated through the coercive capacity conferred by weapons and from a series of offers to the local population that submits to the limitations they impose. At the same time, it also takes advantage of them to the extent that it is convenient (Madariaga Villegas, 2006, p. 71). Thus, the relation of the people to the paramilitary rule has a cost-benefit rationale: on the one hand, they condemn the effects of their rules if they are directly affected by them; on the other, they acknowledge the concessions of their

intervention as they supply solutions more efficiently than the state. Madariaga notes a third position that emerges from the "lesser of two evils" logic used by the people living under the influence of an armed actor: if people survive and, somehow, meet their needs, people tend to justify the current condition by arguing that it could be worst if things were different. During the guerrilla control, the entire counterinsurgent bloc besieged the inhabitants, which meant a more constant and intense armed conflict. Once the paramilitaries imposed their rule, the only real defiance to it came from weakened guerrillas in the region, thus the situation was relatively peaceful.

We will present the forms how people relate to the paramilitary rule.

6.1.   Resistance

The population of Urabá's territories has been resisting successive violent actors since the Spanish. This history of resistance reflects how strategic the region is (Montoya Guzmán, 2013). Different social movements agree that resisting the control of the paramilitaries is not an easy task, because resistance, not only survival, in Urabá also entails a quest to transform the region's reality. This key element distinguishes resistance from resignation. García explains that resisting in Urabá means social and political actors finding margins of autonomy from the armed actors and constructing a political space that develops society's views (García, 2004, p. 105).

The beginning of the conflict in Urabá coincides with the processes that configured the region: colonisation and urbanisation, the development of an export banana economy, the configuration of plantations and peasant economies, the establishment of workers and peasant's organisations and the administrative

delimitation of municipalities. Social and labour grievances and the struggle over land matched the competition for political-military control. Thus, the limits between grievances and war were blurred, causing the deinstitutionalisation of the state; it was neither neutral nor a mediator of these conflicts. The guerrillas and paramilitaries also instrumentalised the grievances and intervened, advancing their interests and needs accordingly. In the 1980s, the struggles for worker union's rights, mobilisations for human rights, and the peasants' exodus enabled the guerrillas to advance their agendas by supporting the people. However, their support did not prevent them from carrying out actions against the people when needed (García, 2004).

In the 1990s, during the war between guerrillas and paramilitaries - when massacres were generalised, systematic annihilations of the towns and people occurred, and thousands of persons were forcedly displaced - the region's situation became ungovernable, and the local people reacted to defend themselves. Supported by local and municipal leaderships and by the Apartadó diocese and Monsignor Duarte, several initiatives were launched. During these decades, the UP mayors in Urabá tried to stop the guerrillas' destruction of the electric and communication infrastructures. Although belonging to a party related to FARC-EP, mayors organised strikes to set some margin of political autonomy. The mayor of Apartadó, Gloria Cuartas, for example, was a militant of the UP party and a symbol of the collective attempt to construct a public space in which the different social actors could reach minimum agreements around the local government. Cuartas represented a trend of resistance to armed actors in the urban space, and was therefore threatened by the paramilitaries and FARC-EP. During her mandates, 17 members of her office were

assassinated, and she experienced countless actions to intimidate her. In the end, she had to leave the country and lived in exile for almost a decade.

In 1997, a number of settlements in San José de Apartadó self-declared as a *peace community*. They issued a declaration stating that they lived in a *humanitarian zone,* expecting to change their situation within the armed confrontation. Peace communities are a resistance model guided by the transversal principles of struggle over territory, self-determination, exclusion from the armed conflict, independence from the armed actors and a refusal to help any parties in the conflict (García et al., 2011, p. 437). They are not to be confused with the *neutral zones,* defined by the IHL as places where the parties are obliged to refrain from trespassing, adopt a passive attitude and inhibit any action. In the peace community, the community is neutral, and in the humanitarian zone, the community designates a territory to be war-free and thus community adapts to it. Peace communities declared a new notion of neutrality that entailed refraining from participating in any war action and adopting actions favourable to peacebuilding and the elimination of the conflict(Benavides & CINEP, 2001, p. 24).

San José de Apartadó often finds itself at the centre of the conflict because of its characteristics: geostrategic location (at the foothills of the Abide Mountain range), its population's multicultural peasant composition, being the point of departure of several social mobilisations, the area's overall sympathy for leftist organisations (Communist Party and the Union Patriotica), the historical presence of the FARC-EP, and being the site of formation of leftist self-defence groups (Defensa Civil in 1977 and the Bolivarian Militias between 1980 and 1985).

San José de Apartadó became a military target in the joint strategy between the National Army and paramilitaries to annihilate any leftist force, expel the guerrilla groups at any cost and control this critical military passage. This strategy led to the exodus of settlers to the urban centre of Apartadó to demand government guarantees for the right to life, peace and work in their lands. The authorities accused the civilian mobilisations that developed of being organised by the guerrilla.

The government and people agreed to protect the area from conflict. Combat between the army's XVII Brigade and guerrillas nevertheless continued in the following months, causing new forced displacements. Therefore, the communities organised strategies calling for humanitarian instruments and a dialogue between the different parties to create a special statute protecting Urabá's population. However, the armed actors did not comply and so, in 1997, the peasants still resisting the violence in their territory, decided to declare as a peace community. The army and paramilitary's response was to bomb the rural hubs and displace the peasants toward the centre of the village.

The village's status as a new space of war forced communities to change their way of living and confined them to a limited area because not all inhabitants embraced the peace community initiative. This initiative required agreeing to rules securing peace and neutrality, and developing independent systems of education, political representation, production and ownership. However, the peace community became a target of the paramilitaries. "The Peace Community has been a victim of a strategy of extinction which includes more than 1000 violations of its members' fundamental human rights, including more than 300 assassinations," explains Father Javier

Giraldo, who has accompanied the community since its foundation (PBI Colombia, 2018). In 2005, between 21 and 22 February, AUC paramilitaries, with the army's complicity, murdered eight community members, including three children (PBI UK, 2014).

Finally, other forms of resistance are enacted through forms of cultural expression. An example of this in the urban landscape of Apartadó was the rise of dancehall music, which became a sort of soundtrack for the streets. The banana axis, with its port, is exposed to different music trends coming from abroad. In the 1990s, music from Jamaica provided a vehicle for the youth to resist the war. The documentary "Bulletproof Dancehall" (¡PACIFISTA!, 2018) explores how collectives of worker and peasant musicians in Urabá tried to bring communities together around their *soundsystems* to endure through the periods of the massacres. Local DJs and radio hosts organised integration parties called "Rumba Caribe" for the populations of Turbo, Apartadó, Chigorodó and Carepa. Digna Gutiérrez explains that these parties were not only for entertainment; people also used these parties to sell things to meet their economic needs. Therefore, these parties attracted the masses from the banana axis. In 1994, during one of these parties in the neighbourhood of La Chinita, the FARC-EP (initially targeting demobilised members of the EPL) carried out a massacre that killed 35 persons. Since then, the parties became the scenes of violence between armed groups and were therefore banned by the local authorities (including paramilitaries). However, dancehall became a form of resistance for the youth showing that it is not the parties but the presence of the armed groups that created the

violence. For example, in Carepa, music and parties around the *soundsystems* became a way to foster the peaceful integration of young people involved with violent groups.

6.2.   Cohabitation

In 2004, in an intervention in the zone of the banana axis during the demobilisation of the paramilitary Banana Bloc, the Bishop of Apartadó noted that the demobilisation process was a real opportunity to pacify the region and overcome the state of "armed peace" of the last decades. He described armed peace as a situation in which the paramilitaries control all practices within the region's civil, political and economic life. Although this period was relatively peaceful, policed intervention was maintained in the inhabitants' lives (Madarriaga, 2005). An armed peace is a bold definition of the current status in Urabá. In the region - which is attractive, friendly and appealing at first sight - a paramilitary rule still lurks which is enforced through daily practices and underpinned by latent violence. Currently, people cohabitate within an armed peace.

Living as a civilian under paramilitary control requires adaptation to their rules and the concerted development of ability to discern danger and respond to it — power cut-offs, strange vehicles or people in one's neighbourhood, and curfews are indicators of potential or imminent violent events. People have learned how to identify paramilitary members, to know when they are being followed, and where and when to avoid discussing certain topics. Material items such as radio devices, guns, and vehicles can provide good clues. However, the attitude of people is often more revealing. People live under a sort of constant "prisoner's dilemma" in which no one knows who works for whom. This situation pushes people to be deliberately over-

transparent about personal relations and activities. Public places have become much safer since people have privileged openness in their actions and intentions, instead of leaving motivations up to the imagination or to be gossiped about.

People began to play the role of enforcers of paramilitary rule, becoming a network of informants spread across municipalities providing information to the paramilitaries. But this means that they are held accountable if they fail to inform about any suspicious behaviour or threat to the region's security ("Francisco" 2020). The population's role as enforcer is underpinned by the common perception of conditions being better than they were in the past, and the possible return to said previous conditions which people fear in general. Paradoxically, we perceive that people do not fear the guerrillas' control, to which we did not hear many objections, but the violence connected with disputing territorial control. This dispute was long-lasting, and its "solution" was the massacres, which "cleaned" Urabá and announced a new phase where violence was more selective and discrete (Madariaga Villegas, 2006). People claim to be happy instead of being living in terror. In perspective, and with the amount of violence that Urabá has experienced, this makes sense: from constant indiscriminate massacres to the occasional killing of "misbehaving" people, the community sees an improvement.

We do not claim that everybody sympathises with the paramilitaries, rather that people are aware of the consequences of threatening their control. Thus, in the cost-benefit calculation, people embrace and submit to the paramilitary rule, given that they are the ones who thereby secure their living chances.

6.3.   Resignation

Although the paramilitary authority is not broadly contested, small demonstrations of disobedience and distancing from the behaviour patterns commonly happen. People are aware of lacking the physical and political capacity to break the paramilitary rule, but are simultaneously aware that paramilitaries would be unable to kill everybody that deviates from their rule. Therefore, some people behave within the range of action, taking risks but assuming that the paramilitaries will be constrained by certain rules too (Madariaga Villegas, 2006, pp. 77–78). These forms of defiance or disobedience do not equate to resistance because they do not openly aim to change the status quo in the region. Instead, they are ways for people to bypass a rule when they cannot tolerate it. We define this as resignation. These are the practices of people who still want to have a say and some degree of individuality, so instead of giving this up, they play with the limits and struggle to create new ones.

Paramilitary control has altered the public and private spheres. In place of using the public space as a transmitter and amplifier of social grievances, people had to give it up and bring their demands into private spheres. While we could interpret this as resistance, it is also resignation. People may not be willing to give up certain practices, but they are not prepared to fight for them either. An example of this is the consumption of marihuana. People can find dealers, and people have not stopped consuming. They just gave up the use of public spaces, preferring their homes as safer places to smoke. In the case of marihuana, something remarkable happens. In some cases, people would have to literally hide in their own houses because the neighbours would not be comfortable with someone smoking in the vicinity.

Similar things happen with other "behaviours", which is how the rule typifies certain practices and identities. For instance, people have not ceased to be leftist or communist, militancy just passed into an almost clandestine realm. Well-known leaders of the Communist Party and FARC have almost disappeared from the public sphere. It was therefore impossible to contact members of SINTRABANANO[41] as they were banished from the political arena by the paramilitaries and the control of SINTRAINAGRO.

Another example is that of sexual identities. LGBTIQ people have not given up their identities; they have just learned how to bring them into the private sphere, where they are safe. However, in Urabá, this safe place would not likely be their homes because their families would not tolerate such "behaviours".

People in Urabá have learned how to carry out subtle disobediences which test the limits. Increasingly, teenagers have piercings or hidden tattoos. Occasionally, people say more than they should or let an inappropriate comment slip. Some people defy the paramilitary rule not through overt confrontation, but by elusively provoking and testing the limits. This behaviour is common among the youth and consists of small actions that defy the rule within the remit of resignation rather than resistance. For instance, it is common to see high school students outside smoking and wearing earrings or young men street-racing motorcycles.

While walking in the *Parroquial Cemetery* of Apartadó, we noticed that most tombs belong to young people. In Urabá, people typically adorn tombstones with pictures of the dead person or with images relating to their interests or passions:

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[41] SINTRABANANO is the union that has historically been closer to the political views and practices of the Communist Party and the FARC-EP.

football teams' crests, motorcycles, or cartoon pictures. All these ornaments attract attention and make observers remark that a lot of young people are dying. An explanation for this is the lack of chances open to them. Young people either become successful artists or athletes—some of the best Colombian athletes were born in this region—or join the criminal structures of the paramilitaries or other gangs either as informants, dealers or Sicarios. Some people normalise this situation by saying that they die doing what they do: being young. Hence, paramilitaries pay special attention to their development, as evidenced in the strict control of adolescent delinquency. However, their control among the youth is increasingly less effective. Madariaga spells it out clearly: "[…] young people have increasingly less to lose: if they could be killed as a consequence of all kinds of misunderstandings, small infractions, or simply for "being in the wrong place", to take the risk consciously for something significant to them—although to others appear that is banal—does not seem like a wrong decision" (Madariaga Villegas, 2006, p. 79).

Figure 10 Picture of the Parroquial Cemetery, Apartadó, Antioquia 2020.

"There are those who have lost everything. Me, so complete, I have lost my existence in a labyrinth called war" Paula Andrea Velazquez. (Credit: Author)

7.   An armed peace

The last section of this chapter addresses the choice of Urabá's people to accept or submit to the paramilitary rule, which is the form that the bourgeois hegemony takes in Urabá. People embrace this rule, disregarding old grievances and giving up some interests inherent to their social positions. This work conceives human practices, through which people produce their existence, as essential and we intend not to reduce them to mechanic determinations of any sort of reified structures. The conflict, although structurally conditioned, is an ensemble of practices that allows different social groups to produce material circumstances—the circumstances for capital production. The social practices are agency deployed under certain structural

conditions, affecting but not determining their outcome. Thus, people have quite a strong capacity to be able to choose, according to situational logics. The shaping of such situational logics is precisely the goal of the hegemonic vehicles, which are not the fundamental structuring institution of society but accessory institutions that help deploy the hegemony in a particular context; in other words, if we were to understand the Conflict as a hegemonic vehicle, i.e., an institution that helps to create situational logics related to the needs of the hegemony. This could explain the conflict's protraction.

7.1.   Structural conditioning and Situational Logics in Urabá

We introduce the notion of situational logics into the argument that structuring institutions "explain" social practices. Similar to structural conditioning, this notion is a mediatory process that we could view as an "objective influence which conditions action patterns and supplies agents with the strategic directional guidance" (Archer, 1995, p. 196). This condition is created by defining the objective situational logics which people are in or will enter through their daily lives. "It is the situations to which people respond which are mediatory because they condition (without determining) different course of action for those differently placed, by supplying different reasons to them" (Archer, 1995, p. 201). Creaven (2012) explains three aspects of the mediatory process of structural conditioning through which "directional guidance" is conveyed to the social practices of different members, and consequently to the dynamics of the Conflict. They are involuntary placement, vested interests, and opportunity costs.

In this model that interprets social practices as structurally conditioned, we present the case of the workers' unions in Urabá under paramilitary rule. We approach this case to understand people's preferences which, despite being under a specific placement with specific vested interests, these choose to forego due to an opportunity-cost calculation conditioned by the situational logics that the paramilitaries created. In this way, using force and consent, the paramilitary rule in the Urabá creates situational logics that affect people's assessments of the opportunity costs.

According to its dynamics and balance of power, the Conflict serves as a structuring institution that shapes situational logics to fit the hegemony. In the case of Urabá, the deployment of the paramilitary groups in the zone responded to the need to take over an area controlled, militarily and ideologically, by subversive actors. Furthermore, it turned the Conflict into an institution that punished the working-class' support for the subversive position and rewarded the adoption of capitalist interests via social concessions.

The situational logics in Urabá reflect the region's colonisation and the origins of land hoarding through the dispossession of land and displacement of indigenous and native settlers. These practices constituted the first landholders of Urabá: foreign families who were allocated land deemed *baldios* although it was inhabited by indigenous communities and peasants. For decades, the law was issued to authorise the concession of *baldios* to foreigners willing to develop them into productive land. Since 1940, the entitlement of land is characterised by authorising state entities to expel small peasants and oblige them to work for big landowners.

In Urabá, primitive appropriation consolidated in the 1960s around banana production. The banana, which before 1959 had primarily been cultivated small-scale by peasants and traditional settlers, became an agroindustry product with the arrival of Frutera Sevilla. Due to its functionality, the government incentivised national entrepreneurs to buy the land to enter into business with the big banana companies. This acquisition of land happened through several modalities: through "speculation joint with the eviction of old settlers, often through legal subterfuges (…); others through direct intimidation obliging the smallholder to sell or abandon the zone" (García, 1996, p. 42). Amid unfair land transactions, the conflicts between holders and settlers against buyers grew. However, agroindustry development continued, not only with the banana but also expanding into African palm and stockbreeding. In Turbo and the banana axis, the consolidation of agroindustry was a process of rescinding the land entitlements of small peasants who were the beneficiaries of agrarian reforms and processes of parcelling, and selling them on to banana producers.

This consolidation process generated an extraordinarily unequal land ownership structure with high levels of hoarding. The conflicts over land in the region intensified, and the peasants and settlers' grievances started mobilising strikes and invasions of properties through their organisations. Meanwhile, businessmen received state prerogatives, like the possibility to acquire more land to expand their projects and access the geostrategic benefits of Urabá to develop an enclave economy. In this way, it configured a pattern of businesspeople arriving in zones with "weak" state presence to seize lands for their productive projects, all arranged with local

authorities also interested in consolidating agroindustry. Instead, the state abstains from settling land conflicts and protects the production process by providing security through its public force and targeting workers' unions to remove obstacles to production.

In the 1970s, the EPL and FARC-EP leftist guerrillas were created and consolidated. These armed groups arrived in a context of precarious working conditions, violent repression, and unionist assassinations. From the 1970s until the 1990s, the pro-capitalist violence against unionists was generalised. The state, protecting production, used the public force to repress unionist activities, and the guerrillas, seeking to expand their social base, started to support the unionists while competing against each other. This rivalry between the two guerrillas created inter-unionist confrontations that motivated the creation of the two strongest in the region: Sintrabanano (FARC-EP) and Sintragro (EPL).

In 1984, the critical conditions in Colombia motivated a truce between the state and the guerrillas. Urabá became one of the scenarios to find agreements. It was the site of the constitution of the first committees of the Union Patriotica (UP), a political movement akin to the FARC-EP, in 1985. The peace process failed and broke down in 1987, unleashing a confrontation between the all the different fronts of leftist political organisations: formal politics, unionists, peasants and guerrillas. Despite this, Urabá was a crucial political bastion for the left, especially for the UP. These leftist movements were winning in the popular elections and support for the guerrillas threatened the process of accumulation of capital in Urabá (Lombana Reyes 2012, 51). The different capitalist actors in the region - banana producers, stockbreeders, drug-

traffickers – reacted and employed Sicario structures to control the subversive organisations. This "counterrevolution of Urabá" consisted different business sector members' strategy to justify the practice of pro-capitalist violence as a way of defending their properties and interests (Semana, 1989).

In 1985 Fidel Castaño organised a group of self-defences in the department of Córdoba. From the south of Córdoba towards Urabá, they expanded a paramilitary project with around 100 men in an initial group called the National Socialist Worker Student Movement (MOENS). Along with the army's XI Brigade, they carried out massacres, selective killings, and forced displacements to extend their power from Valencia (Córdoba) to Turbo (Antioquia). Banana producers benefited the most from the paramilitary expansion since they besieged subversive actors, including unionists and political leaders, especially those of the UP. In 1987, the Castaño brothers formed the Peasant Self-Defences of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU), which sought to protect Urabá against the guerrilla presence and the politicisation of social movements and to support the institutions of production and private property.

The relationship between agroindustry and the paramilitaries in Urabá is a close one. Both actors had common goals to contain subversion and insurgents gaining political recognition in the region. "Francisco" explains that the paramilitaries had to authorise every business in Urabá obliged them to collaborate, either in monetary or informational terms. In return, the paramilitaries protected the businesses from any disturbance from unions, common delinquents, or the guerrilla ("Francisco" 2020). In Urabá a synergy between owners and paramilitaries emerged. In the late-1980s, Chiquita Brands International (the former United Fruit Company) began to operate in

Urabá and would years later be found liable for funding paramilitary groups by a civil court in the US. Chiquita acquired lands in the region, drove production directly and created the Colombian Association of Fruit Exporters (Banadex) for their commercial operation.

"HH", the leader of the Bananero Bloc, explained in a declaration that businessmen were at the centre of their paramilitary practices:

> "I have publicly denounced. I have said, the banana producers are as, or even more, responsible than us for everything that happened in Urabá because we went from plantation to plantation forbidding the workers to do armed strikes. One went in a uniform with a knife in hand, warning them that they would be assassinated if they disobeyed. Why? Because we were seeking the benefits of the banana companies — they were who benefited from the war, them, and none of them is paying. None is prosecuted, none is being investigated, none has given a peso for reparation, and they were who really benefited."[42]

In the version of the paramilitary "Monoleche", we can also see how the paramilitaries were functional to the capitalists' interests:

> "[…] not only the banana producers asked for the presence of the paramilitaries, but the stockbreeders also asked Castaño for support to repel the FARC guerrillas that were co-opting the territories in which the EPL were before. Moreover, the stockbreeders designated men to lead the actions in the zone" (IPC, 2020, p. 18).

The situational logics of people in Urabá are paramilitary rules based on capitalist interests that concede living conditions. Interdependent anti-subversive actors, leaning toward capitalism and protecting the status quo, constitute the counterinsurgent power bloc in Urabá (Franco Restrepo, 2009). They are the group

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[42] Tribunal Superior del Distrito Judicial de Bogotá - Sala de Justicia y Paz, 2013, Oct 30, Sentence to the accused Hébert Veloza García, No: 11-001-60-00 253-2006 810099, p. 224

deploying the hegemony in Urabá, and this is how, through force and consent, conditions undermining the social and political grievances and the pursuit of objective interests of the working class were established. Workers and peasants have traded grievances off for material conditions secured by the paramilitary armed peace and the productivity of the agroindustry.

7.2.   Trade of Interests

This chapter concludes by talking about the population of Urabá's political shift. Urabá shifted from being politically active and leaning to the left into a region dominated and led by the traditional parties, right-wing politicians, and the rule of the paramilitaries. The case of Urabá is remarkable because, since it became a sub-region of Antioquia, it was a historical site for resistance practices, subversive actors and social movements. The guerrillas not only had military control but were also highly supportive of the social grievances of peasants and workers. However, since the end of the 1980s onwards, a population that was very engaged in pursuing working-class interests became increasingly supportive of the rule of the paramilitaries and chose to forego their class and vested interests. We can explain this shift of interests through two kinds of practices: those associated with force and consent.

The use of force is related to both the practices of the paramilitaries and the guerrillas. We have broadly addressed paramilitary violence by examining the multiple cycles of violence which played out since they arrived in Urabá up to the present. In relation to their violence, we can think about how practices such as

massacres, selective killings, forced displacements and threats, among others, created a state of terror among the inhabitants of Urabá, to the extent that people with subversive leanings were assassinated, expelled, or left the region. The violence of the paramilitaries enforced anti-subversive ethics and created a negative association with any political mobilisation or grievance. Urabá's original subversive spirit was tortured, displaced, and killed.

The other fundamental actor using force to shift the interests of the population were the guerrillas, most notably FARC-EP. FARC-EP arrived in Urabá in 1971 with a commission of about ten men established in San José de Apartadó, where the Communist Party had a social base composed of peasants and workers in the nascent banana agroindustry. Due to the old history of political grievances, the presence of liberal guerrillas in the region during the 1950s and the widespread acceptance of the Communist Party, FARC-EP quickly settled in the region and developed their political and military project. Before the arrival of FARC-EP, the EPL was already present in the region.

The guerrillas in the Urabá maintained a constant rivalry among themselves to expand their social bases with the support of unionist projects within the banana agroindustry and to strengthen their military structures by gaining money through extorsion and the kidnapping of banana businessmen. In the following years, the competition between the guerrillas went from disputing local power in the region to a bloody military confrontation (Verdad Abierta, 2012). Two insurgent actors with similar social goals preferred individual strategic interests in the war and eventually jeopardised the entire subversion in the region.

With the 1984 truce, the different branches of the guerrillas openly participated in politics. It helped to consolidate unionist organisation which had previously been illegalised and overlooked by the state and business owners. The participation of both groups, within their political parties and their unionist organisations, grew and allowed them to carry out popular actions such as social mobilisations and urban invasions. This latter practice was indispensable for the workers because, before, companies had indirectly forced them to live in the banana plantations. The urban invasions consisted of land grabbing and establishing settlements for people in need. Through this practice, both subversive groups helped create new neighbourhoods that were also bastions for their social bases. FARC-EP founded Policarpa, while the EPL founded the La Chinita neighbourhood. Another practice of both guerrillas was the deployment of urban militias mainly operating in the banana axis. The militias were chiefly dedicated to proselytisation actions, unionist activism and the security of the different social leaders.

The rivalry between guerrillas for territorial control escalated. One of the firsts outbreaks happened when FARC-EP killed several Sintrabanano workers after accusing them of treason. After this point, the confrontation turned into a constant cycle of assassinations of each guerrilla's alleged members and traitors, targeting family members or workers affiliated with their branches. Mario Agudelo, a former member of the EPL and former mayor of Apartadó, explains that the so-called unionist war consisted of attacks between unions, claiming many victims from both subversive groups (Verdad Abierta, 2012).

In 1988, the government declared Urabá an emergency zone, allowing a new deployment of public force to the region. This situation intensified combats between the army and the guerrillas and motivated joint retaliation actions between EPL and FARC-EP. The new balance of power pushed both guerrillas and their branches to work together within the Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Coordinating Board (CGSB), a national initiative of all the insurgent groups to join forces to support social actions across the country. In 1989, both unions merged and created Sintrainagro.

The arrival of the paramilitaries in the region started a new wave of attacks against unionists and subversive groups. It also changed the tactics of the guerrillas in order to strengthen their military fronts. These new tactics coincided with the peace process between the different guerrilla groups which began in 1991. The EPL demobilised and created a political movement called Esperanza, Paz y Libertad or simply the *esperanzados*. FARC-EP, which did not enter into the agreement, pushed back against their demobilisation and started a persecution of the EPL's political movement. FARC-EP also supported a dissident front of the EPL that did not demobilise.

In the 1990s, the actions against FARC-EP intensified, and the war demanded new sources of funding. During this period, this guerrilla entered ino the business of controlling drug-traffic routes, weapons trading, and the contraband, taking advantage of the proximity of Urabá to the Panama border. Consequently, FARC-EP started to launch attacks, often indiscriminately, against the state and paramilitaries' joint actions, which unduly affected civilians. They declared any person collaborating with the paramilitaries a military target. Under this threat, FARC-EP undertook

several actions and killed numerous alleged collaborators. This practice claimed the lives, peasants, indigenous peoples, unionists, community and political leaders and forced the displacement of hundreds more people.

The persecution of the *esperanzados* by the dissidents of the EPL and the FARC-EP was continuous. In the early hours of the morning of 23 Jan 1994, during a street party, the persecution resulted in a massacre in La Chinita neighbourhood in Apartadó. 35 people were murdered with only two *esperanzados* amongst them. This massacre was the worst of the 1990s and spelt the beginning of one of the worst periods of bloodshed in the region. FARC-EP committed massacres in plantations under *esperanzados* influence, and the paramilitaries replied with massacres in the lands under FARC-EP influence. Within this dynamic, massacres such as El Aracatazo, Los Kunas, and Bajo del Oso, among others, were perpetrated (Verdad Abierta, 2016).

Some EPL's dissidents joined FARC-EP, and others rearmed with the support of the Castaño brothers. The latter group, known as the Comandos Populares, wanted to defend themselves from their old fellow combatants and became the new allies of the paramilitaries. "We created the Comandos Populares to self-defend from the attacks of the guerrilla", explains Jesús Guisao a.k.a. "El Tigre", a member of this group (Verdad Abierta, 2011). Quickly, this group started to recruit peasants and *esperazados* to expand its military base. Many old workers left their jobs at the plantations and organised different fronts to track guerrilla members. Other members kept working during the week, and every one or two weeks met the Comandos to

carry out military tasks. The owners of the plantations started to pay these people. "Lucho", another member of the Comandos, explains:

> "I do not know if they knew what we were doing, but we used to leave two, three, four days to where the Comandos, and in the plantation, we would receive the regular payment as if we had worked all the week. I do not know how that was managed, but it worked that way with many people. All Urabá knew" (Verdad Abierta 2011).

Moreover, between 1992 and 1995, the public force did not combat the Comandos Populares. When something happened in the plantations, the people did not seek help from the police but the Comandos. They became the enforcers of the laws in the plantations neglected by the police and thearmy. Years later, many members of the Comandos joined the paramilitary group the ACCU, which became the AUC and finally the AGC.

In the context of paramilitary control after the 1990s and the military actions of the EPL and the FARC-EP, the leftist groups' reputations came into question. The legacy that the FARC-EP actions left up to date on the civil population of Urabá a bad image of any political and social leadership related to them. The shock of the massacres shifted the way people perceived the guerrilla actions and made many people embrace the new rules after the paramilitaries were established. The military practices of the FARC-EP in Urabá during this period harmed the working-class subversion. They motivated a reorganisation of the subjective interests of many workers and peasants who were their victims.

The second set of practices that shifted people's interests in Urabá relate to consent from the counterinsurgent bloc. This consent consisted of various elements, from steady economic conditions that met the needs of the people to the extension of rights that enabled an almost peaceful cohabitation in the region: an armed peace.

In the interview with "Francisco", he explained how the paramilitaries achieved this consent once they arrived in a region. "Francisco", who before becoming a paramilitary was a Sintragro union leader and after a coordinator in a banana plantation, claims that the paramilitary groups arrived with a friendly disposition to meet the peasants and convince them to support them. The paramilitaries, he recounts, worked with and for the people, and despite the massacres and the murdering of innocents, they were offering better opportunities for everyone. The AUC had a military and a political branch to teach the troops the organisation's political and ideological principles and objectives. Francisco says:

> "We considered ourselves an anti-guerrilla, anti-subversive organisation whose only goal was to defend the country from a potential seize of power on behalf of the guerrilla. As self-defences, we were against the arrival of communism to our country, the arrival of socialism, because we were always defenders of a free and democratic country." ("Francisco" 2020)

The paramilitaries started to organise meetings in the banana plantations to spread these goals among the population. At first, the paramilitaries would address the people in intimidating ways. However, this eventually changed.

> "Me, as a union leader, had a different concept on how to address the population. Because, sometimes, it is more important to be followed by conviction and not, maybe, by fear. […] Therefore, I understood that there was

a need for a change on this, knowing how to attract the people, by convincing them that what was being done from the Self-defences was truly to seek expelling, ending the guerrilla, which was, then, the one harming the country and the civil population" ("Francisco" 2020).

The people, who had become familiar with guerrilla practices throughout the 1990s, felt constant and legitimate incertitude for their lives. As several people echoed, the banana plantation workers did not know "if they were going to come back home alive". Thus, the paramilitaries had to pave the way for their project to meet with acceptance. "Francisco" explains that once the paramilitaries controlled the region, their relationship with the people improved considerably.

> "It was a very harmonious relationship. Because the Self-defences were an organisation that transmitted [a good vibe] because it was a group that, after its military interventions, came with ideological and political work done directly by us, the political members of the organisation. We divided the work into three phases: the first was when we entered a zone […] for the first time. We called that *romper zona* (break into the zone). Then came the second phase that was the rising awareness of the civil population. What was this about? Well yes, as I said to you, to spread the ideology of the organisation among the public, the why we confronted the guerrilla, the why we were enemies of the guerrilla, what was the harm of the guerrilla to the people, but most importantly we gained the civil population through social works. Because we taught the civil population how to join, how to organise, how to develop projects, how to talk and, most importantly, we had a really good relationship with the leaders of the communities […] to know how to address the big politicians to obtain things for the community, because our priority was the welfare of the population. We always said that an organisation with the civil population on its side is the only one that can win the war. [The organisation] that turns the population into the enemy is destined to disappear. And I believe that is why we start to win the territory to the guerrilla. We start doing social works […] that reflected in better roads. Where there was no school, we tried to help to build it. That is, all the mechanism to have better welfare for the civil population. That was how we started winning the civil population. […] The third phase was the consolidation when we had already the control" ("Francisco" 2020).

The paramilitaries met with the population to address their needs and wants, and to find out what was obstructing their life chances. One of the main problems was the armed violence they were experiencing due to the presence of the guerrilla. With the promise of expelling the guerrilla, the paramilitaries won the attention of the people. The other problems, mostly related to the effects of the war and state abandonment, were somehow addressed using their political influence and economic capacity. Ballvé (2020, p. 83) calls this paramilitary populism which includes the reinforcement of political capacity to rebuild a Great Urabá and in which they claimed to be acting in defence of the region. Within this strategy, the *parapolitica* was deployed to infiltrate different political spheres of the state's institutions and advance their interests. Under the guise of good Samaritans, Paramilitaries engaged in a state-building strategy to undermine the practices and grievances of the different subversive actors and legitimise the lands and businesses that they had built up illegally.

Sintrainagro, a union created by the left and subversives, now works with the companies. Amin Palacios, former commander of the EPL and union leader of Sintrainagro, spoke at a public event:

> "I am not going to say that we are in the glory, but the conditions for the banana worker and the worker's union are much better. We have better wages and better contracts. […] The people now are tranquil. Everything has improved" (A. Palacios, 2020).

Palacios, explaining to the people, argued:

"Sintrainagro changed the unionist practice and became a role model of concertation with the employers. Before, everything was against rich people. But now we seek to protect the companies, so there is employment"(A. Palacios, 2020).

Figure 11 Amin Palacios, former commander of the EPL and union leader of Sintrainagro, in an event to construct historical memory of the worker union in Urabá.

Source: (Sintrainagro, 2020)

Sintrainagro is an example of a union that put the objective interests of the working-class aside and embraced the interests of the capitalists. The current rule offers employment, security and minimum rights for workers. People of the region say that the paramilitaries control this union and have been trying to undermine and expel union members linked to FARC from the plantations. The union works closely with the National Government and receives financial support from the European Union and USAID.

In conclusion, the anti-subversive bloc, which included capitalists and paramilitaries, had more to offer than fear alone. They have been creating situational logics that enforce their control while offering concessions to the people. In exchange for equality, they create legal and illegal jobs; in exchange for social justice, they provide security; and in exchange for the freedom to differ, they perpetuate an Urabá free of subversion.

In Urabá and Colombia more widely, the conflict has become an institution that, in the relational dimension, has shaped situational logics in which people choose to disregard their objective interests. The acceptance of the anti-subversive rule strengthens the hegemony of the capitalist actors in the region and the country. People with no property, unequal access to the means of production, victims of the state or the paramilitaries who once had enough grievances to support the subversion have chosen to embrace, support, and even protect the current social order. Today, Urabá is a promising land. It is a paradise for those willing to bring capital and commit to the current rule. In spite of the dormant armed conflict and the latent violence that shadows every settler in this land, Urabá is what now what it promised to be: the best corner of America.

Conclusion

The ongoing conflict in Colombia has been a roller-coaster of experiences for the Colombian population as it constantly fluctuates between waves of peace and war. Not a single living Colombian can pride themselves in having lived in a conflict-less country. Arguably, the conflict is part of the Colombian national identification, even more than its cultural or natural richness, which is always affected transversally by the conflict. This thesis has sought to re-think the conflict, approaching it not simply as a historical phenomenon but as something embedded in the nature of Colombian society. The conclusion of this research is that the conflict in Colombia is a hegemonic vehicle. It is an institutionalised historical practice that structures the situational logics which enable and reinforce subordinate classes' consent for the capitalist hegemony. This thesis claims that the conflict is an institution that has emerged throughout history to influence the way Colombians interact and behave and to lead to their rejection of any transformation of the society. This thesis argues that the influence of the situational logics created within the conflict explains the continuous lack of support to alternative political projects challenging the social order of the capitalist classes, and could also explain the negative imaginary around anything related to the subversion of the current social conditions.

This thesis sees the conflict not as an episode of war between guerrillas and the state or as a collection of different armed conflicts, but as a complex unit, a social institution composed of both social and armed dimensions. This thesis has shown that to solve and even understand the conflict in Colombia, we must investigate the historical process of becoming of the social order. We argue that the conflict is

embedded in the current social relations in the country, which were not created spontaneously but developed over time since the primary structuring institution of private property was imported to the pre-Columbian territory by the Spanish Crown. Since then, the ground has been ploughed for the consolidation of the social order that transformed from the stately order of the colonial power of Spain, to the current social bourgeois order existing in the country. The latter is embodied in the capitalist system of social relations and enabled by liberal democracy.

The causes of the conflict have evolved, protracted, and become complicated and convoluted, but we can trace them to the primary imperative of the capitalist system, namely capital accumulation. Capital accumulation, also discussed throughout the research as the imperative of competitive profit production, has conditioned social relations to be conflictive. Even before the consolidation of armed subversive groups in the 20th century, intra-class conflicts emerged over the control of the means of production and power institutions. The current violence dynamics cannot be solved or even understood without considering the precedent wars among sectors of the capitalist classes in the 19th and early-20th centuries. Capital accumulation has conditioned the capitalist classes to control the institutional power at the different levels around the country and to appropriate, through various ways, the means of capital production. The research focuses fundamentally on the land, a vital means of production in Colombia. Moreover, the enterprise to accumulate capital has created practices of resistance that range from self-defence to the active subversion of the country's structural and systemic conditions of capitalism. In sum, this thesis' interpretation of the conflict recognises its embeddedness in the system of social

relations and the social orders that have developed historically. These systemic and structural dynamics of the conflict, those associated with capital accumulation and private property of the means of production, is what we have depicted as the social dimension of the conflict. The social conflict in other societies does not necessarily translate to violence in practice, but in Colombia it did underpin a protracted war that we explained as the product of historical specificities and the essential nature of the antagonism of capitalism.

The phenomenological dimension of the conflict - its apparent level - which is experienced in everyday practices by society members, is the armed dimension. It is the conflict embodied in the dynamics of armed violence surrounding the different social groups throughout history. Since this dimension has been the most researched, divulged and discussed, the conflict is today often considered to have arisen with the communist guerrillas in the 1960s - this is the "common sense" on the conflict. Therefore, we tend to associate the conflict exclusively with names such as FARC-EP, EPL and ELN, disregarding the many different actors who have contributed to the wars. Through the lens of the *longue-durée*, this research shows that the conflict's armed dimension has been experienced through waves of violence. Noteworthy are the common polarisations experienced in the different stages of the armed conflict that we choose to define ultimately as subversive and counter-insurgent blocs.

One of the main arguments of this thesis is that the conflict turned into a hegemonic vehicle at a specific point in history. That point is during the consolidation of the Frente Nacional in 1957. This thesis attributes central prominence to the social agency as conditioned by systemic and structural factors. Therefore, we argue that the

different sectors of the ruling classes (different factions of capitalists) institutionalised the conflict in order to settle their disputes and as a strategy to legitimise their hegemony, which was threatened by the advancement of communism in the region. It became a structuring institution after classes that had so far had historical disputes over institutional and economic power, allied to protect the fundamental pillars of the social order. The institutionalisation of the conflict created a notion of "us against them", depicting any effort of social transformation as anti-social and a threat. Moreover, the ruling classes enforced this new "common sense" through force and consent among the population.

Applying this framework, this thesis focuses on the case of the sub-region of Urabá in Antioquia. It dedicates itself to demonstrating how the hegemonic vehicle of the conflict has operated in this emblematic region, providing a detailed case study. Urabá is a region with a history spanning centuries in which the development of capitalism is relatively recent. Due to its geographical characteristics, it was isolated from the intervention of capitalism. For many governments, it was an unexplored jungle with the potential to become a capitalist hub because of its richness in resources and strategic location. This research traces the origin of private property in the region to the multiple efforts to settle the region by forcedly displaced workers, peasants and ethnic minorities, and by entrepreneurs chasing the promised resources concealed in the jungle. By tracing the "colonisation to Urabá", we have demonstrated how the conflict entered the region and marked a milestone by creating all the conditions of the confrontations between settlers, colonisers and the indigenous people. Urabá has

been a repository of raw material for capital accumulation, and has become a strategic region for the subversive or counter-insurgent projects to develop in.

This thesis develops the case study in three chapters, each dedicated to explaining how the conflict enabled the protection of capitalism in its three different dimensions; structural, systemic and relational. Each dimension forms a constitutive and complementary part of the *repertoire of capitalism*. The capitalist system of social relations is based on the operative logic of capital accumulation and enabled by primitive appropriation, thus structuring institutions such as the private property of the means of production, which is enacted by people through everyday practices. Consequently, asymmetrical social relations among social members may create antagonisms and conflicts. This thesis' vision of the social conflict is historicised within the capitalist system of social relations and argues that there was a unique configuration in Colombia, not because every capitalist society must experience the same kind of armed violence, but because of the historical development of the social relations in the country. Therefore, we have presented a necessarily detailed, yet not exhaustive, historical account of the conflict in Urabá and the country.

As this thesis has demonstrated, the structural dimension of capitalism, concerning the structuring institutions of capitalism, is manifested in the case of Urabá through the introduction of the private property of the means of production and their further institutionalisation through legal and illegal means. The institutionalisation of private property transformed land from its pre-capitalistic use into a means of production that became ownable, exchangeable and exploitable, thereby affecting the social relations of social actors such as peasants and indigenous people who used the

land differently. At first, it created conflicts between users and owners, with the state weighing in in defence of the latter. Owners, as owners of the means of production, are committed to produce and accumulate capital and thus play a favourable function for the current social order. From an intra-class conflict (i.e., between different factions of the capitalist class confronting over the control of land and political institutions), the conflict turned into an inter-class conflict in which a united capitalist class decided to protect the social order and its fundamental institutions. This change in the nature of the conflict, during the mid-20th century, is what we have defined as the institutionalisation of the conflict. We have argued that this new institution of the conflict has enabled the protection of private property to be of the utmost interest to the social order. Private property allows capital accumulation, profit production and labour exploitation. Before the process of colonisation of Urabá, inlanders' endeavour to "discover" and exploit the unknown region, the land was unappropriated and unexploited. Before the colonisation, indigenous people inhabited Urabá with no capitalist appropriation in the use of the land. However, the need to expand capital accumulation motivated several institutional attempts to put Urabá to the service of the rest of society. This was done by bringing in several social institutions for control, ranging from the police to the legal figures of the *baldios* plots of land. Land in Urabá acquired a fundamental public interest to be productive, therefore owned and exploited. The allocation of the land already created disparities that translated into antagonistic social relations. The state, ruled by capitalist classes, allocated the land strategically according to the interests of the social order. The ruling class employed the state's monopoly of violence to protect the fundamental institution of private

property. It did so during the colonisation of Urabá, during the different episodes of partisan violence, and since the creation of communist subversion in the latter part of the 20th century. To date, the state protects owners and entrepreneurs seeking to competitively produce profit, to the detriment of ethnic communities and the working class.

The second dimension we have developed in this thesis is the systemic dimension. We argued that the conflict has protected capital accumulation enabled by primitive appropriation. We have operationalised primitive appropriation through forced displacement and land dispossession, two by-product practices of the war. Capital accumulation in Urabá is better illustrated through Urabá's colonisation history, starting in the 19th century, and consolidating in the mid-20th century. We have presented the colonisation of Urabá as the displacement of peasants amid the partisan violence of the turn of the century and the subsequent dispossession of their explored and worked lands by capitalists seeking to expand the space of capital accumulation. While locally there were conflicts between capitalist *colonos* dispossessing and displacing peasant settlers, nationally, the state legitimised the capitalistic land tenure. We have displayed how land acquired a capitalistic function instead of a social function. Given this conception of the land, local and national governments started to allocate land to local and transnational capitalists seeking to turn Urabá into a hub of capital accumulation. Within these dynamics, we find the establishment of productive crops and the arrival of corporations seeking to clear Urabá's jungle to produce capital. While the intra-class conflict has always had a component of control of the means of production, capitalists were confronting each

other to accumulate capital; with the institutionalisation of the conflict amid the consolidation of the inter-class conflict, capital accumulation has been challenged and endangered by subversive actors. The subversive actors in Urabá, including guerrillas and leftist parties, helped workers and peasants to resist the havoc of capital accumulation and thus consolidate their social and political base in the region. The conflict has legitimised using the state's monopoly of violence and private armed forces to protect private property and secure the continuation of capital accumulation. According to the logic of "protecting society from its enemies", the ruling capitalists have employed everything to further capital accumulation through the continuous displacement and dispossession of members of society who threaten or slow down capitalism. The conflict also has enabled Urabá to evolve into that *best corner of America*—the one which capitalist *colonos* and the Antioquenian bourgeoisie always dreamt of.

The last dimension we have presented is the relational dimension. We have argued that the conflict legitimised the asymmetrical social relations of capitalism to the extent that subordinate actors (working-class members) consent to the capitalist hegemony. We have argued that the hegemony in Urabá took the form of paramilitary rule, the rule of the counterinsurgent power bloc that included local and regional authorities, and capitalists and paramilitary groups, among other actors. The war in Urabá, which peaked during the 1980s and 1990s, left a turmoil that changed the social relations in the region. We have shown that Urabá was characterised by being a stronghold of subversive actors through strong social and political movements, powerful workers unions, the presence of the liberals and, later, that of communist

guerrillas. Paradoxically, the war of the counterinsurgent bloc against the subversive actors, which has left an extremely high death toll in the region, changed people's preferences with regard to their class and vested interests. We have also argued that this change in preferences was related to the guerrillas' attacks on workers, peasants and ethnic communities. The war among different subversive actors' factions caught the unarmed population up in the middle. All these factors, in conjunction with the paramilitaries' violent war to retake the region's control which led to massacres and selective killings, changed the population's framing of the subversion. Since the paramilitaries have had the military and political control of Urabá, the region has been living in an *armed peace*—a latent situation of war and continuous coercive paramilitary control within a prevailing context of peace and tranquillity. The *armed peace* has enabled the operation of capitalism and the creation of life chances for the population. Moreover, the paramilitary rule has employed both coercion and consent to provide for the capitalists' interests while conceding to some of the people's needs and demands. The conflict has legitimised the rule of the counterinsurgent bloc in the region and has motivated a change in the people's preferences. Today, the population is not primarily pursuing class or even vested interests, but focuses on corporate interests, including enhancing their life chances by consenting to the capitalist hegemony.

This thesis is an effort to contribute to the question of the protraction of the Colombian conflict. The evidence that we have presented here suggests, and has therefore allowed us to argue, that the conflict in Colombia is not simply a war of society against its anti-social enemies. We have tried to show that the conflict acquired

a fundamentally social function to enable the reproduction of the current social order and, in turn, of capitalism. The thesis' contribution is twofold. We present a systemic critique of the Colombian conflict that aims to explain its embeddedness in the capitalist system of social relations. Thus, we would argue that in order to change the conditions of conflict and achieve a durable peace, Colombian society must not only transform its distribution of resources, but must also scrutinise the current structuring institutions and the logics whereby its society operates. So viewed, the historical effort to subvert the social relations in the country acquires a different meaning to the one which capitalist hegemony has assigned to it. Moreover, it offers an understanding of the lack of willingness on behalf of the ruling classes to solve the structural causes of the conflict; through the conflict, the ruling class has gained and maintained their legitimacy and consent among the 'losing side' in both capitalism and the war. This enables us to explain the protraction of the conflict.

The other contribution of this thesis is theoretical. We have created the conceptual device of hegemonic vehicles to characterise and critique historical structuring institutions that enable the reproduction of capitalism and protect the consent of the capitalist hegemony. We have devised this concept with an intention to replicate an analysis of it in different societies. We hypothesise that historical institutions are operating to structure social relations favourably toward capitalism in every society. However, we can only hypothesise because one of the fundamental tenets of our concept is historicism, and we cannot assume *a priori* the existence of such institutions in other societies. One of the further uses of this research could be to replicate our analysis elsewhere. This thesis also offers a contribution to the use of

historical materialism as a methodology that enables us to critique and transform society—an imperative endeavour for those who want a more just society, the emancipation of the working class and, subsequently, of wider humanity.

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