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## **Armed conflict, the agrarian question and rural development in Colombia: An introductory view.**

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## Abstract

The agrarian question has been the main cause of the armed conflict in Colombia for more than six decades. The armed conflict has weakened the social tissue of rural populations, leading to a land concentration and increased poverty in rural and urban areas. Currently, the returning of displaced communities to their territories requires guarantees of non-repetition of violent events to prevent these populations from being victimized again. Marginal and failed strategies for agrarian reform have been led since the early 1960s. Some traditional political parties and the federations have obstructed and co-opted the weak attempts of an agrarian reform, even when it was supposed to be carried out through the land market. The agrarian question and rural development dynamics present challenges associated with the manifestation of producers' uncertainty facing the crisis of the rural society. As result in recent years, the continuous social manifestation could be the reflection of a failed rural development model and the nefarious social and environmental consequences of the current crisis regarding the perception of unsustainability of the hegemonic agrifood system and globalization. Capital accumulation, deterritorialization, commodification and territorial sovereignty loss are the results of multidimensional structural changes and the emergence and transformation of power relations within a context of neoliberal globalization and the current wave of "global land grabbing". If the State recognizes the conflicts of interest between social groups with different articulation and engagement capacities, so it can provide the guarantees for social participation, negotiation and respect to the rights of all citizens. The focus should be on the power settings and not only on the right settings, establishing the principles for an effective control over the land resources. In Colombia, the State actions have been unable to adequately mediate the prolonged conflict situation. However, the State's position for not having the intention of generating a change in the development model generates uncertainty. There is a high probability of the neoliberal model being intensified and the peace agreements being co-opted and instrumented in favor of the agro-export model in detriment of the local dynamics that emerge from the rural communities. The main objective of the study is to analyse the process of land grabbing in Colombia, investigating the controversies around the different perspectives on the rural development model. Initially, the historical evolution of the agrarian conflicts in Colombia will be summarized. Subsequently, the context of the political conflicts around

the land grabbing mechanisms and the role of the State and Society after the signing of the peace agreement will be presented.

**Keywords**

State-market-society nexus; actors and institutions; political conflicts; land grabbing.

## 1. Introduction

Colombia has not yet solved its agrarian question, in the same way that the market did not solve the conflict for land and natural resources access and use. The state absence and inability to regulate the forced displacement phenomena, the armed conflict and the alliance between illegal armed groups (paramilitary) and the power elites exacerbate these problems. Additionally, mining and power megaprojects models intensify social conflicts and are against the interests of rural communities and populations (Machado, 2009).

The institutionalizing policies for increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector and promoting rural development by national and foreign capital investments have fomented the phenomena of land ownership concentration and the reproduction of multiple forms of violence (Margulis, Mckeen and Borrás, 2013).

Colombia is the most unequal country in Latin-American in access to land. The Gini Index has increased since 1984 and reaches 0,897 in 2014. The area of properties of more than 500 hectares has increased in 940% between 1970 and 2014. This area was duplicated between 2002 and 2014 when reached 47'201.700 hectares (Oxfam, 2017). This phenomenon is result of the armed conflict that have stripped off the peasants of 6 million of hectares and have displaced the 10% of the total population in Colombia. Additionally, the violence has influenced for an extremely unequal the land property. The properties of more than 200 hectares represent just 0,1% and controlled 58,7% of total area while the properties of less than 10 hectares are the 81% and controlled just 4,9% of total area (Oxfam, 2017).

Following Orlando Fals Borda, if agrarian reform is to be effectiveness, it is not just giving a piece of land. it must improve the life quality and to settle the historical debt and let social justice for rural communities. The agrarian question has been an unfinished revolution in Colombia. However, the dominant groups have used social mechanisms to maintain the old structures in risk, still using the military and international support. Additionally, some inefficient strategies like some public programs of colonization and the adjudication of small plots are used to defuse the passive population to subversion. This these immediate solutions to the medium term continue to encourage land grabbing (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2010).

In November 24, 2016, the peace agreement was signed after more than 4 years of negotiation between Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia- - People's Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia- FARC-EP) and a failed peace agreement referendum. The NO won with 50.21% of the votes against 49.78% of the YES. The abstention was high (62.59%). The largest cities were decisive for the victory of the NO: Medellín, Bucaramanga, Cúcuta and Pereira. The capitals Bogotá, Barranquilla and Cali, as well as the municipalities predominantly rural and more affected by the violence, the YES

made the majority. So, the most peripheral regions, the most rural areas, the areas with less access to markets and public services, the poorest and most unequal municipalities and the regions that have suffered the conflict voted emphatically in the YES; while the central departments, the most urban areas, the areas with greater access to markets and public services, the richer and most developed municipalities and the regions that have not lived conflict voted NO (Muñoz and Henao, 2016). What are the main explanations given for the high abstention and the defeat of the YES? The disbelief in democracy, the low legitimacy of traditional politics; the strong Uribeism militancy, the monopolized ideas supported by the media and social networks around an anti-communist ideology (against the "Castro-Chavismo") and retrograded moral thinking (sexism and homophobia), the silencing political force (including the murders of social leaders) and others.

The peace agreement has 6 main items: integral rural reform, political participation, finish the bilateral ceasefire and hostilities and the abandonment of arms, solution to the problem of illicit drugs, victims and implementation and verification mechanisms. With the peacebuilding process, there is a political ground for the formulation and implementation of public strategies for rural development and the improvement of the living conditions of the populations with the Integral Rural Reform, the creation and the System for the Progressive Guarantee of the Feeding Right and some public institutional restructuring. Additionally, the agrarian question also remains the hard core of the Colombian social conflict and its current unfolding aspects of rurality in an increasingly urbanized society are central to achieving the noble objective of a "stable and lasting" peace in the post-agreement period.

The large agrarian property continues to be a basic source of economic and political power - now in a context of capitalist integration and internationalization of "agribusiness". Consequently, the termination of the conflict is suffering shocks between a comprehensive rural reform policy program includes issues such as access to and use of land, development with a territorial approach, infrastructure, social development, the stimulation of food production and consumption and the neoliberalism development model that threat to intensifies the agro-export model with heterogeneous and negative results in rural communities because the high concentration of land and the absence of democratization of rural property have characterized the rural dynamics.

This paper is an early attempt to reconstruct the discussions about the agrarian question in Colombia, which reveals the unsustainability of the current model of rural development, based on the "agro-extractivist" strategy, and its effects on the process of land concentration in the country, investigating the controversies around the different perspectives on the rural development model.

## **II. Historical evolution of the agrarian conflict in Colombia.**

In Latin America, discussions on agrarian reform have had different trends throughout historical periods. Between the 1960s and 1970s, land distribution promises were only partially fulfilled in some countries, as the processes of capitalist transformation of agriculture and extractive activities were the main trend. Later, in the 80's and 90's, agrarian reform agendas were dismantled, and counter-reform processes arose. In the mid-1990s this agenda was retaken, however the fulfilment of the social demands were been still facing strong barriers because the limitations of state power and the rise of the neoliberal project (Kay, 2007).

In Colombia, land concentration and the absence of democratization have been the trend since the late nineteenth century, while strong social mobilizations accompanied important theoretical discussions and legal changes. The public land distribution between 1827 and 1931, properties greater than 1,000 ha corresponded to 76.3% of the total, while properties with less of 20 ha accounted for only 1.2% (Arango, 2014). During this period, there was a process of intensification of internal colonization and dispossession of ethnic communities, including some mechanisms of control of squirearchy through the purchase of their lands and subsequent indebtedness of the indigenous (Fals Borda, 1954). On the other hand, between the 1920s and 1930s, violent actions and massacres occurred to suppress social manifestations in response to labour exploitation and injustices in the banana crops in Magdalena and rubber extraction in Putumayo, which declined in the face of the international economic crisis. In this context, Law 83 of 1931 was promulgated. It provided state guarantees for the formation of agrarian leagues and unions. And with the consolidation of Law 200 and Law 34 of 1936, the peasant economy and social function of land achieved institutional space. However, strong elite reactions restricted its application for facing the great land concentration problem.

The so-called the violence period took over the country between 1946 and 1966 as the result of the reforms failure, the murder of Jorge Eliezer Gaitán and the subsequent state persecution of social leaders. In the period between 1945 and 1956, the accumulation of capital was intensified because of abundant cheap labour, the land usurpation enacted by the social conflict and, in the coming years, the intensification of US-induced modernization policies through the Alliance for Progress Program. Unfortunately, after 20 years only 4.36% of the landless families were favoured by the National Agrarian Fund (Arango, 1994). Therefore, rural landowners assured their control over the more productive lands and the landless were only able to access less productive, public lands. In the first case, landowners avoid the social function of land and the productivity law. In the second case, it caused the advancement of the agricultural frontier by colonization processes.

The democratic process for arising a modernization of agriculture in Colombia was frustrated through armed violence at the end of 40's. It was the hugest



violent phenomena in recent years on the western hemisphere (Hobsbawm, 1983). A result was an increasing of capital accumulation in the agriculture, industry and services (Fajardo, 2014 apud Kalmanovitz, 1985, p. 44).

Additionally, the US “National Security Doctrine” increased repressions and persecutions against peasants. In contrast, the civil society organizations proclaimed a response with the “Leyes del Llano”, which gained strength in the agrarian program of the Marquetalia guerrillas, as well as the creation of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia- FARC-EP), the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional- ELN) and the Popular Liberation Army (Ejército Popular de Liberación- EPL). Further on, in 1971 it was created the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca- CRIC), and the National Association of Peasants Users (Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos- ANUC). Alfredo Molano has related profoundly and enriched the stories of life of people from territories of armed conflict. His relates present a cruel reality from isolated rural areas where the weak State presence and (sometimes allied with) some armed groups have been profited from the natural resources and the labor of peasant, indigenous and afro communities (Molano, 2005; 2014). The social conflict with its origins in the Violence period continued advancing with violent groups particularly with a party orientation who supported the land grabbing through forced displacement and threats, and even with public credits for purchase. The origin of guerrillas was the form to protect for their self and face others armed groups for surviving (Molano, 2000).

In 1972, the traditional political parties and the federations completely obstructed and coopted the weak attempts of an agrarian reform through the “Chicoral Agreement”. It limited land redistribution and promoted “agricultural modernization”. Along the 1970s, the creation of the “Integral Rural Development Program” (DRI) and the subsequent introduction of “technological packages” increased productivity and competitiveness. Consequently, the agrarian reform debates were excluded, the social construction of the meanings of development was omitted, and the productive dynamics of agriculture have changed (Escobar, 2007).

In the 80’s, the Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform (INCORA) reactivated agrarian reform policies through land purchases (the World Bank “market and reform”). Multiple factors were unfavorable for the public policy operationalization, such as the unfeasibility of the projects due to the low soil quality, the high credit rates, the absence of technical assistance, the great difficulties to market access, as well as corruption among landowners and some public officials, who negotiated at high prices and made it feasible to purchase land through public subsidies (Fajardo, 1999). So, the impasse of the limitation of access to land, services and markets specially in colonization territories was a fundamental element for the first gear for the international insertion of Colombia in the illegal drugs chain (Fajardo, 2014).

In the 1990s, the economic liberalization policy was implemented and affected productive, fiscal, tax, labour and social assistance sectors. Colombia has been more dependent to world food market and the price competition induced by the decrease in tariff barrier has affected directly the peasant production. This panorama is critical for basic food basket like rice, barley and wheat (Lopez, 2012). The agricultural and agroindustrial imports have increased being more representative in the periods 1990-1996 and 2006-2012, and reaching US \$5.934 million in 2017. Excluding coffee, agricultural imports exceeds exports in US \$809.590 (Fajardo, 2014, SAC, 2018). On the other hand, some crops as african palm, sugar and banana have been expanded in the areas where the peasant agriculture have been dispossessed. Consequently, temporary crops area was reduced from 51,1% to 30%, while permanent crops increased from 26,9% to 70% between 1990 and 2016 (Fajardo, 2014, SAC, 2018). The public policies have boosted the production of tropical agro-exportable goods in counterpart by the dependency of some basic foodstuffs.

Additionally, the conception of rationalization of the State was strengthened since the 90's. The premises are the State is more inefficient than the market and the necessity to open to external markets to allow capital accumulation and overcome the stagnation in economic growth. Despite the multiple and expensive restructurings of the agricultural sector in 90's, the private sector has assumed some responsibilities of the State, while the State assumes a role of partner with associations without assuming direct public responsibilities, what Machado (2000) has identified by the neo-corporativism. This phenomenon has contributed to the appropriation of public resources in the private sector while the peasant force labor without be associated has been push out to informal activities in other sphere of economy, to the colonization zones or to the vulnerable urban areas.

In recent years, some social manifestations could be seen as the reflection of a failed rural development model. At the national level, peasant, ethnic and popular organizations supported by rural and urban inhabitants have demonstrated their social skills by calling up the National Agrarian Strikes between August and September 2013 and April and May 2014, as well as the Jornadas de Indignación in 2015 and the mobilizations of January and March 2016, consolidating their demands in the Pliego Unitario de Exigencias that has promoted the Mesa Única de Interlocución y Participación- MIA (Equipo nacional dinamizador de las constituyentes por la paz con justicia social, 2015). The MIA recognizes the necessity to strengthen the peasant economy and renegotiate free trade agreements through regulatory frameworks. In addition, on the one hand, there are requirements to access inputs, credit, markets, land and crop insurance, and, on the other hand, there are demands to strengthen agroecological initiatives, illicit crops substitution, the Peasant Reserve Zones, artisanal mining, native seeds protection, indigenous and collective territories and rural communities' participation. According to Beltrán, et al (2016), the crucial challenge for the State is the strengthening of public institutions that allow for social movements

participation in the formulation and implementation of rural policies, as well as the creation of strategies for solving public problems in rural areas related to other policies and initiatives that go against the peace agreements.

The last agrarian reform via land market was institutionalized by the Law 160 of 1994. It promotes the public subsidized credits for land purchase. However, it has not been effective because the rural context explained above leads to the peasant incapacity to pay the credits, the lack of formal registration of property rights and the conditions of insecurity in conflict areas (Machado, 2009). On the other hand, this law included the Peasant Reserve Zones (Zonas de Reserva Campesina - ZRC) for regulating the public land occupation and use, giving preference for peasants with scarce resources. However, this legal figure faced several challenges. While the total land demand corresponds to more than 10 million hectares, the total actually legalized ZRC area has been of only approximately 800,000 hectares, and more 1.5 million hectares are currently under process. Additionally, military forces and rural elites allied with paramilitary armed groups have stigmatized ZRC and its inhabitants have been subject to frequent persecution and violence (Molano, 2014). Violence has been the mechanism of control to silence and weaken the social relations in rural communities during more of 8 decades.

In the two last decades, the land restitution and victim's laws have allowed some normative and operational framework advances. However, there are still difficulties, such as the ineffectiveness for attending the increased demands of victims, the persistence of illegal armed groups, the presence of antipersonnel mines, and the lack of infrastructure and productive projects, which limit the permanence of families in their territories (Fundación Forjando Futuros, 2016). Furthermore, the returning of displaced communities to their territories requires guarantees of non-repetition of violent events to prevent these populations from being victimized again (Beltrán et al, 2016).

In contraposition, State actions also have tried to legitimize and legalize the public land grabbing by national and foreign actors. In 2012 and 2014, two Projects of Law were not approved by social confrontations and political clashes in legislative arenas. However, the Zones of Interest for Rural, Economic and Social Development were sanctioned in Law 1776 of 2016. In March, it was considered unconstitutional because promotes a strong asymmetry in the relations between peasants and entrepreneurs, as well as it sought to transfer the State's responsibilities for ensuring the right of access and use of land to third parties. However, in May 2018, the Constitutional Court of Colombia allowed its creation and asserted that they are a key tool for agricultural development, productivity and legal security in the country. This mechanism reverses the defense of land right for rural communities because it settles the juridical protection for transnational while continues supporting the State submission to private sphere, in this case external capital.

The food and economic crises and the constant increase in the demand for food and energy in a context of globalization and market opening, international investors are looking for vast tracts of land in countries with abundant natural resources (Álvarez, 2012). However, this strategy does not solve the problems of internal food supply in these countries, but rather intensifies them. As a result, developing countries have increased their dependence on external markets and are more vulnerable to changes in international prices (Borras and Franco, 2010). Additionally, several private economic groups reap the benefits of the Productive Partnerships Model (Modelo de Alianzas Productivas) in agricultural associations by ensuring the promotion of regional groupings and the utilization of public goods. However, this model have generated asymmetric alliances, the intermediation of entrepreneurs in the management of credits from public funds to finance private productive activities increases the risk of local food insecurity because of the access restriction to natural resources, the reduction of food supply and the subordination of peasant organizations (Ojeda et al, 2015, Uribe, 2013). Furthermore, the land speculation mechanisms are promoting price increases to the advantage of large landowners and investors, but restricting peasants' access to land (Oxfam, 2013).

### **III. Conflicts over land concentration and the rural development model**

The Colombian countryside corresponds to 75% of the municipalities and retains 31.6% of the population (UNDP, 2011). It is characterized by the increasing diversification of its activities and presents major challenges related to low income, aging population, rural exodus and the rural-urban gap (DNP, 2015). The Third National Agricultural Census indicates that 45.5% of the population living in rural areas are poor and the public infrastructure shows alarming results: 94%, 57.4% and 17.4% of occupied households have no connection with sewage, piped water and electricity, respectively. Regarding the land structure, the census shows that agricultural production units (UPAs) of less than 5 ha represent 70.9% of the total and occupy 2.4% of the area, while UPAs of more than 500 ha represents 0.4% of the total and occupy 61.1% of the area. One of the main challenges of rural and urban areas in Colombia continues to be overcoming hunger. Colombia did not achieve the goal of reducing hunger in the Millennium Development Goals. It is estimated that this goal will only be reached by 2020. It has also not achieved the goal of the World Food Summit (FAO et al., 2015).

The land concentration generated by a long historical trajectory of employment of violence and illegality mechanisms, as well as cunning strategies within the existing normative frameworks, have propitiated the increase of landowners' power and the territorial control of armed groups, paramilitaries and opportunistic third parties, which at the same time are backed by macroeconomic policies and the conjuncture of the armed conflict (Álvarez, 2012). Likewise, the current rural

development model has employed peasant labour as settlers, taking advantage of its aggravated economic and social vulnerability and the absence of the State to boost the expansion of the agricultural frontier on public lands and its consequent concentration, speculation, and unproductive or inefficient use. According to UNDP (2011), the model does not promote human development, as it intensifies the population vulnerabilities and social inequalities, allows the land grabbing and speculation, as well as the concentration of capital. Additionally, it conceives the rural in a limited and undemocratic way, because it weakens the rights and participation of the most vulnerable populations. Finally, it protects the interests of the elites and leads to the unsustainability and misuse of natural and human resources, compromising the institutional capacity of the State and the sector competitiveness of agriculture itself.

Other authors concluded that the model of economic development marked by neoliberal ideology since the 1990s has sustained changes such as the reduction of state intervention and the dismantling of public institutions (Ocampo, 1992, Quintero, 2010). This model has had radical impacts on the agricultural sector in Colombia, the reduction of state capacity to drive the development of rural areas and the elimination of tariff barriers have produced price swings in the food market and placed the peasants and national agricultural in an unequal competition. According to Bourdieu (1998), neoliberalism incites a model of destruction of collective projects through techniques that weaken collective solidarity.

The proliferation of coca crops is a product of the contradictions of the applied economic development model. Meanwhile, the State assumes a repressive behavior, accusing coca producers like illegal, delinquent and off the law. However, the context of the failed agricultural model and the real impossibility of productive generation reinforces the action of illegality, based on the limitation of livelihood which obliges farmers to plant coca crops (Codhes, 2007, Lopez, 2004). A study in 1992 showed that the gross inflow from coca cultivation corresponded to 29 times more than the cultivation of corn, 4.7 times more than the cultivation of cassava and 7 times more than the cultivation of banana, representing an average income of 5 million pesos per hectare in one year (Ruiz, 1992). Coca represents a source of income for many population groups including non-agricultural workers who depend on the coca economy (Lopez, 2004). After multiple strategies implemented to eradicate and replace coca, Colombia continues to be the largest coca leaf-producing country in the world (UNODC, 2017).

Coca tends to follow a specialization process of labor increasing the exponential gain in advancing through the productive chain. This lucrative activity has created resistance strategies to actors reach their interests and overcome the mechanisms of control that including the use of some specific coca varieties, the coaptation of public resources to finance their own crops and alliances with other State groups, including the public force. On the other hand, some recent



pressures suggest an impasse in the reduction of the profit from coca production in some regions. These pressures are: the falling of the international cocaine price, the increase in the cost of agricultural inputs and the pressures of armed groups for taxing, as well as some government programs to replace illicit crops. However, the migration and proliferation of coca crops in rural areas in Colombia will continue to occur while the primary necessities of rural communities are unsatisfied and prevail the hegemony of groups of actors who participate and benefit from the processing, transformation and marketing of cocaine.

It should be noted that land and territory are fundamental human rights of peasant family farmers for their social reproduction and life quality in the countryside (Sauer and Leite, 2012). However, as Long (1996) points out, there are struggles and contradictions within the fields of dispute that need to be clarified through the recognition of social heterogeneity and conflict resolution must be propelled by the institutional presence of the State. In this way, promoting the social and economic development of rural areas cannot ignore realities such as the inequality of rural land ownership in Colombia, nor can it omit the serious conflicts that have endured in the national territory, giving rise to authoritarian regimes that have co-opted the conditions for collective action in seeking to resolve the conflict (Reyes, 1987). There are also serious local territorial conflicts, especially in cases of mining and energy concessions, due to state interference in land titling, enormous institutional weakness, corruption, state bureaucracy and great difficulty of articulation between different institutions (Uribe, 2013; INCODER, 2013).

In Colombia, there has been a permanent and prolonged armed conflict that involves control and resistance to land, labor force and natural resources. The absence and weakness of the State in remote and colonized rural areas, as well as the complex network of power that influences the territorial control. These components have shaped Colombia to convert it into an archipelago of violence (Santos and García, 2004). Armed groups have been creators of multiple norms within their territories. The power given by the capacity for intimidation has attributed to them the ability to dictate norms of conduct that determines what can or cannot be done in the territory. In times of greater conflict and armed confrontation between the groups, food was also a field of control and social dispute because certain actions of armed groups made impossible the exchange of inputs and products in rural areas as forms of pressure to force the displacement of families or stigmatize and accuse individuals or groups of people for being collaborators of the other groups.

Some actions to finish the armed conflict could solve or intensify the current problems, giving rise to several future scenarios. Formulation of an integral rural reform policy that includes issues such as access and use of land, territorial development, infrastructure, social and productive investments, production and consumption stimulation, can allow the rural development of the more affected places by the armed conflict. However, the State's position for not having the intention of generating a change in the development model generates uncertainty.

Additionally, fundamental rights violations could be intensified, and land concentration could increase under legal frameworks that reinforce the current illegal mechanisms by the multiple and persistent social conflicts, such as productive partnerships and land grabbing through concessions of public land to national and foreign companies, among others (Salinas, 2011).

The most evident change after the signature of the peace agreement was the partial withdrawal of the FARC-EP. However, the communities express that this emptying was not replaced by the State and some spontaneous phenomena of reorganization of other groups have occurred. So, a tense peace accompanies the day-to-day life of rural communities due to the uncertainty of the reorganization and the emergence of new armed or criminal groups. Additionally, the murders of social leaders have increased in recent months due to the reorganization of paramilitary groups in rural areas. In the colonization regions, deforestation is evident not only by the withdrawal of the FARC-EP, but also by the overvaluation of land. Thus, the colonist families with help from outside investors continues to expand the agricultural frontier into the virgin forest.

Finally, many solutions have been planned from a technicist perspective giving greater value to the competitive production chains than the organizational forms of the communities. These forms of planning have made invisibly the communitarian capacities and processes and have generated conflicts for the exclusion of some groups of actors, the dispute over their recognition and the resources and the form that projects have led to results that are opposite to communities have expected. So, the interventions are reduced to disconnected and sporadic cross-stitch repairs, which benefit the most empowered social groups with greater access to information and resources, what have stirred up conflicts between groups. It has led to clientelist political outcomes or have created disinterest and repudiation to the public sector.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Since the 1990s, primary extractive sectors have been considered potential for economic growth and international integration in developing countries. Their modernization has been driven by neoliberal policies, looking for the incorporation of new technologies for the promotion of competitiveness and a better positioning in international markets (Álvarez, 2012). As an unintended consequence, there have been manifestations of producers' uncertainty facing the crisis of the rural society, expressed in the productive, demographic, management, environmental and institutional fields.

The emergence of new theoretical discussions and the overthrown myths of the traditionalist conceptions of the rural as a space backwardness and exclusively dedicated to agricultural activities are being glimpsed. The public policies should

integrate the urban and rural spaces through strategies of land access to prevent rural and urban poverty, to raise and distribute the incomes, and to strengthen human resources through the development of non-agricultural and environmentally sustainable activities (Silva, 2001).

When analyzing the current context of Colombian rural development, it is recognized that strategies integrating the supply of public goods such as health, education, infrastructure, rural credit, technical assistance, innovation and technology transfer, must be formulated and implemented. The public policies should prioritize the well-being of the most vulnerable populations seeking to reduce the polarization between landowners and peasants (Machado, 2009). Even because the State has historically ignored the social and political conflicts regarding the peasantry existence and its participation spaces (Beltrán et al., 2016). Therefore, it is inescapable to ensure a decent standard of living for the rural population and to integrate them into agrarian reform discussions on multidimensional territories, including cultural, environmental, ethnic and gender issues (Kay, 2007).

According to Borras and Franco (2010), the protection and distribution of wealth and the political empowerment of the poor are essential, considering also elements such as class struggles, historical evolution, social rights, gender and ethnic groups protection, and the productivity increase based on the intensive use of land and labour. Finally, it could be argued that if a new democratic and participatory rural development dynamics is not institutionalized with guarantees, public policies in Colombia will continue to favour capitalist agriculture, while assistentialistic policies will be directed to peasants and family farmers, which does not conduct to sustainable rural development or land and food sovereignty.



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