

“La promoción y la defensa de la resistencia territorial de las comunidades negras en el Chocó”

The historicism of a counter-hegemonic project.



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‘pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will’

(Romain Rolland paraphrased in Crehan, 2002: 26)

Image front page: The riverside in Napípi, Medio Atrato, Chocó, Colombia (photo: author)

Abstract

This thesis describes why and how the Claretian Missionaries have been engaged in a process of rural Afro-Colombian community organisation, visibilisation and empowerment in the Colombian Atrato-Region since the 1980s. Furthermore it describes how this process has been influenced by the context of structural violence in which it operated. This thesis analyses: the socio-political vision of these missionaries; the actions that this vision generated; their interaction with the rural communities; the wider context of socio-political marginalisation; the neoliberal interests in the lands upon which these communities were living; and the escalation of internal conflict in the region. The thesis is based on an ethnographic study in which church representatives, community leaders, and organisational representatives that had been historically involved in this process have been interviewed. The study was supported further by participation in various workshops and events, and by the analysis of local organisational and state documents. I use a Gramsci-inspired analysis in which his method of ‘historicism’ forms the basis for the analysis of the interaction between different structural forces and their political responses in this particular ‘place’ (the Atrato-Region). This thesis argues that the Claretians were able to promote an alternative socio-political vision –a ‘Counter Hegemonic Project’- that found resonance with the community members. This resulted in the institutional recognition of Afro-Colombian minority rights and the right to collective territories. This institutionalisation has conditioned the scope and content upon which the Afro-Colombian community leaders were able to exercise their authority and rights. The Colombian State had been able to limit the scope and content of the rights that could be claimed and further continued the consolidation of neoliberal interests by using legal and illegal mechanisms. This institutionalisation had been a crucial tool as it gave the rural Afro-Colombians a form of legal recognition that enabled them to use their political authority at different spatial scales in order to create international support for their political cause. Consequently, they are able to put pressure on the hegemonic state project.

Key words: *Gramsci, Neoliberalism, Internal Conflict, Counter-Hegemony, Politics, Afro-Colombian rights.*

Resumen (castellano)

Esta tesis describe cómo y por qué los misioneros claretianos han participado en un proceso de organización, visibilización y capacitación de la comunidad afrocolombiana rural en la región del Atrato en Colombia desde la década de 1980. Además, esta tesis describe cómo este proceso ha sido influenciado por el contexto de la violencia estructural en el que operaba. Este tesis analiza: la visión socio-política de estos misioneros; las acciones que esta visión genera; su interacción con las comunidades rurales; el contexto general de la marginación socio- político; los intereses neoliberales en las tierras en las que esas comunidades vivían; y la intensificación de los conflictos internos en la región. La tesis se basa en un estudio etnográfico en el que se ha entrevistado a representantes de la iglesia, líderes comunitarios y representantes de organizaciones que habían sido involucradas históricamente en este proceso. El estudio fue apoyado por la participación en diversos talleres y eventos, y mediante el análisis de documentos de las organizaciones locales y del estado. Yo uso un análisis inspirado en Gramsci en el que su método de 'historicismo' [*historicism*] constituye la base para el análisis de la interacción entre las diferentes fuerzas estructurales y sus respuestas políticas en este 'lugar' concreto (la región del Atrato). Esta tesis sostiene que los Claretianos fueron capaces de promover una visión socio-político alternativa –‘un proyecto de contra hegemonia’ [*a counter-hegemonic project*]- que encontró resonancia con los miembros de la comunidad. Esto resultó en el reconocimiento institucional de los derechos de las minorías afrocolombianas y el derecho a los territorios colectivos. Esta institucionalización ha condicionado el alcance y el contenido en el que los líderes de las comunidades afrocolombianas pudieron ejercer su autoridad y sus derechos. El estado colombiano ha sido capaz de limitar el alcance y el contenido de los derechos que pudieran sido reclamados y más continuó de la consolidación de los intereses neoliberales mediante el uso de mecanismos legales e ilegales. Esta institucionalización había sido una herramienta fundamental, ya que dio los afrocolombianos rurales una forma de reconocimiento legal que les permitía utilizar su autoridad política a diferentes escalas espaciales con el fin de crear apoyo internacional para su causa política. Por lo tanto, son capaces de ejercer presión sobre el proyecto hegemónico del estado.

Palabras Clave: *Gramsci, Neoliberalismo, Conflicto Interno, Contra-Hegemonia, Políticas, Derechos de los afrocolombianos.*

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations of local organisations

ACIA	Asociación Campesina Integral del Atrato
AFRODES	Asociación de Afrocolombianos Desplazados
ACADESAN	Consejo Comunitario General del San Juan
ACABA	Asociación Campesina del Alto Baudó
ACAMURI	Asociación Campesina del Municipio Riosucio
ACNUR	Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados (UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (paramilitary organisation)
CEB	Comunidades Eclesiales de Base (Christian Base Communities)
COCOMACIA	Consejo Comunitario Mayor de la Asociación Campesina Integral del Atrato (Afro-Colombian ethno-territorial organisation in the Medio-Atrato region)
COCOMOPOCA	Consejo Comunitario Mayor de la Organización Popular Campesina del Alto-Atrato (Afro-Colombian ethno-territorial organisation in the Alto-Atrato region)
CODECHOCÓ	Corporación Autónoma Regional para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Chocó (state institution)
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (guerilla group)
FARC-EP	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo (guerilla group)
IIAP	Instituto de Investigaciones Ambientales del Pacífico Colombiano (regional environmental research institute)
INCORA	Instituto Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria (state institution incorporated in INCODER in 2002)
INCODER	Instituto Colombiano del Desarrollo Rural (state institution)
M-19	Movimiento 19 de Abril (guerilla group)
OBAPO	Organización de Barrios Populares y Comunidades Negras de Chocó
OCABA	Organización Campesina del Bajo Atrato (Afro-Colombian ethno-territorial organisation in the Bajo-Atrato region)
OREWA	Organización Regional Embera Wounaan– OREWA (Indigenous regional organisation representing the Wounaan, Embera Dobida, Katío, Chamí and Tule)
PCN	El Proceso de Comunidades Negras

Works of Antonio Gramsci cited in secondary sources

SCW	Antonio Gramsci: Selections From Cultural Writings
SPN	Selections from the Prison Notebooks

Chapter 1: Introduction and Theoretical Outlook

This chapter provides the reader with a broad introduction to this MSc-thesis. The chapter starts with introducing the research topic in general. This is followed by a detailed problem description (section 1.2) that is meant to provide the reader with an overview of the context in which the research question and objectives emerged (section 1.3). Section 1.4 summarises relevant literature and a discussion of the intended contribution of this research. These are the justifications for the choice of my research questions and objectives. Section 1.5 will outline the theoretical outlook that will form the basis for the analysis of my field data. Lastly, section 1.6 will provide the reader with an overview of the content of this thesis.

1.1 Introduction

The main research questions of this research are: *“How has the Claretian Missionaries’ approach promoted a counter-hegemonic project in the Colombian Atrato-Region; and how has this project been influenced by the context of structural violence?”*

The thesis is based on five and half months research in Colombia. Three and a half months were devoted to actual fieldwork in the Chocó Department (mainly focused on the *Atrato Region*¹). The fieldwork has been mainly concentrated in the department’s capital city of Quibdó. The internal security situation restricted the researcher’s mobility. Primary qualitative methods of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, including observations during workshops and events, were used to collect data. The first two months were spent learning the language and secondary data collection of documents in the Claretian library.

This research follows a Gramsci-inspired analysis, ultimately manifested in his method of historicism that analyses how different historical processes are able to define a particular reality at a certain point in time by the coming together of structural conditions and their political and economic responses. Gramsci offers a relational, spatial, and processual account of the construction of a hegemonic *‘philosophical’* and material ordering of the world. However, this hegemonic situation can be challenged as every conception of the world is based on a combination of coercion and consent. Furthermore, a hegemonic project is always spatially uneven, which implies that alternative conceptions of the world can emerge and gain power in those segments of society where the inequalities of the hegemonic project (on a material and ideational level) leave space for alternative visions to develop. If these alternative visions get sufficient strength a new class can arise that is able to challenge the dominant situation of class hegemony.

This thesis analyses the actions of the Claretian Missionaries as being a counter-hegemonic project. Being the product of an alternative worldview that aims to challenge the hegemonic social patterning in the Atrato Region. Here the Claretian ‘conception of the world’ criticised the social form (the discrimination and neglecting of the Afro-Colombian citizens) and economic content (the identification of a neoliberal export oriented model based on resource extraction) of the state’s ‘hegemonic project’, and aimed to create a more aware, politically organised and educated ‘social class’ to be able to increase the Afro-Colombian’s visibility and property rights within the current state-formation. This thesis aims to investigate the historical evolution of this ‘counter-hegemonic project’, how it has been able to create a new social class and how this project has been interacting with the hegemonic social order. It follows a time span that begins with the start of an ‘intellectual project’ in the Atrato Region (the early 1980s) that forms the beginning of the attempt to disseminate a critical world view within the ‘masses’. Then, this

¹ When referring to the Bajo, Medio and Alto Atrato Region I follow the local custom to refer to specific parts up and downstream the river by adding ‘bajo’ (lower) ‘medio’ (medium) or ‘alto’ (higher) to the river’s name.

thesis follows this process and describes some crucial situations in time in which organic and conjunctural phenomena dialectically interacted and have changed the context in which the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces operated.

This thesis describes how ‘new leaders’ were created by the Claretians that were meant to continue the counter-hegemonic processes that they had started, but faced several internal and external challenges that have influenced the possibility to continue this counter-hegemonic project since the mid-1990s. This thesis concludes with offering an analysis of the continuation of this counter-hegemonic project after its institutionalisation and its interaction with the dominant social patterning of the Colombian State. It ends with a discussion that evaluates this counter-hegemonic project from a Gramscian perspective and offers some recommendations for further research.

The thesis is based on the collection of primary and secondary data, primarily grounded in the semi-structured interviews conducted with the people (historically) involved in this counter-hegemonic project. Because of the regions’ security situation, it was not possible to obtain much information within the rural communities. Therefore, the accounts presented are based on an organisational level –interviewing religious leaders, community leaders and organisational representatives- supported by document analysis of state-documents and legislations, and locally available literature.

1.2 Problem description

This section provides a detailed problem description that is meant to contextualise the research question formulated in section 1.3. Section 1.2.1 will outline the context in which the ‘*Claretian counter-hegemonic project*’ emerged based on a particular ‘*conception of the world*’: a) the marginalised position of the Chocó Department—and its inhabitants- within Colombia; b) the emergence of a black emancipation movement in the 1980s and the role of the Claretian Missionaries herein. Section 1.2.2 introduces the contours of the ‘hegemonic’ social patterning of the Colombian State that have influenced the scope, content and development of the counter-hegemonic project by outlining the a) the (historical) interaction between the state and the department –especially emphasising the state’s interest in the department since the early 1980s; b) and Colombia’s history of internal conflict.

1.2.1 The contours of a ‘counter-hegemonic project’

1.2.1.1 Chocó: a historically marginalised department

The Chocó Department is situated in the north-west of Colombia. It is the only department that borders on both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, and strategically connects South America with Middle America. The department is mainly made up out of rivers, swamps, and jungle. It contains one of the highest levels of biodiversity in the world. The region is located in the Intertropical Convergence Zone, being one of the most humid regions in the world, reaching an average of 8000 - 12000 mm rain per year. Historically, governmental institutions had little presence in the department, which can be explained by the urbanism under Spanish colonial rule in which cities served as tools of military and administrative control. The rural areas were mainly used for the extraction of resources and were largely left up to the ‘savages’

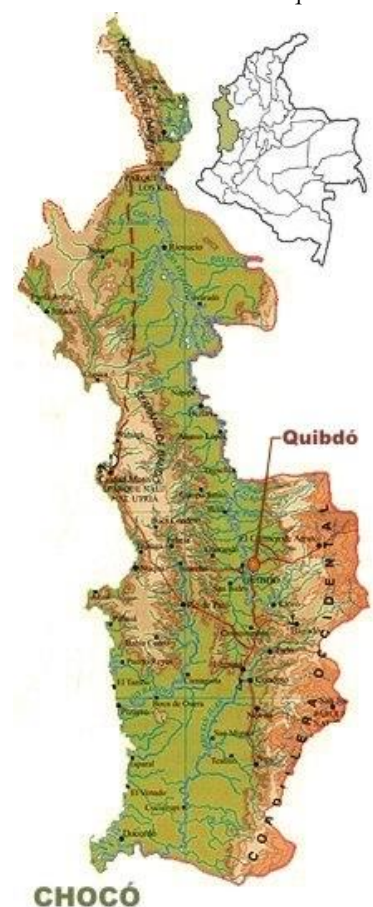


IMAGE 1: THE CHOCÓ DEPARTMENT
(SOURCE: WWW.COLOMBIA-SA.COM)

to control (Escobar, 2008; Mendieta, 2011; Taussig, 2003). The pattern of colonial administration left its legacy on the way in which the independent Colombian government would control its territory and would be relatively ineffective at imposing its political sovereignty over specific parts of its territory (Mendieta, 2011; Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007; Taussig, 2003). The region is isolated due to its natural geography and lack of infrastructure. Transport is mainly via the region's rivers, of which the Atrato, Baudo and San Juan are the biggest. Today, only two roads enter the Chocó connecting the department to the departments of Antioquia (Medellín) and Risaralda (Pereira), with a third road connecting the villages Bahía Solano and Tribugá (on the Pacific coast).

The Chocó Department has been politically neglected for centuries, being geographically isolated from the rest of the country, and having large segments of minority groups living in this specific area. 90% of the approximately 500.000 inhabitants in the Chocó Department considers themselves to be Black/ Afro-Colombian, around 4% are Amerindians², and 6% are Mestizos (Gobernación del Chocó, 2012). The majority of the Afro-Colombians live in the urban centres of cities in the Pacific coast region. However, 40% still live in relatively small hamlets along the various rivers that cross the Pacific region (Oslender, 2007). During colonial times –since in the 16th century- Africans were brought to the region as slaves mainly to work in the gold mines, agriculture and some as domestic workers. Run-away-slaves and the ones that were able to buy their freedom began to settle themselves mainly along the river banks (Oslender, 2002). The freed slaves continued to mine, in addition to their work in agriculture and fishing. After the abolition of slavery in 1851, the black population spread along the river banks “...in a longitudinal and discontinuous pattern” (Oslender, 2002: 92). The distribution of residence areas of the black communities were for an important degree linked to their ‘aquatic space’, describing the community’s dependence on the tide of the river for transport, fishing, mining, agricultural activities and social interaction (Oslender, 2002). Because of the area’s remote character –and distance from cities as Bogota- the area became a refuge for freed slaves after the abolition of slavery in the 19th century (Mendieta, 2011; Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007; Wouters, 2001).



IMAGE 2: THE CHOCÓ SEEN FROM THE AIR (PHOTO: AUTHOR)

The Chocó Department is considered to be one of the poorest of the nation, 68 % of the ‘*Chocoanos*’³ live in poverty (DANE, 2013). Illiteracy rates are at least three times as high as in the rest of the country⁴, infant mortality before one year is 37.51%⁵ (PNUD, 2012). Life expectancy is 58,3 years (compared to 70.3 year for Colombia as a whole) (Gobernación del Chocó, 2012). The department lacks a basic infrastructure and services: 79% of the population lacks ‘basics services’ (compared to 27.6 % at a national level) (Gobernación del Chocó, 2012), educational possibilities are of a low level, and the department’s only hospital is located in Quibdó. Only 22.7 % of the department’s population has access to an aqueduct, while only 16% possesses a sanitary sewer (PNUD, 2012). The distribution of income within the Chocó is highly unequal with a growing GINI-index of 0.616 (compared to 0.539 at a national level) (DANE, 2013).

² In the Chocó Department various Indigenous Communities have their presence: Wounaan, Embera, Dobida, Katío, Chamí and Tule

³ Popular name to refer to the inhabitants of the Chocó department: chocoanos (plural), chocoano (male), chocoana (female)

⁴ Measured for Children between 14 – 25 years old (for the elder generation the numbers will be even higher) (measured in 2005)

⁵ Statistic from 2009, infant mortality children younger than 1 year.

1.2.1.2 The emergence of Afro-Colombian community organisation.

In the 1970s a black social movement emerged –originating in the urban centres of the Southern Pacific- in order to support black consciousness and to fight racial discrimination in Colombia. It directed itself against the official ideology of the ‘racial democracy’ in which the movement fought for the integration of the black people in economic, political and social domains. The black population had been relatively invisible in these domains for a long time, and the dominant governmental ideology had been based on the practice of *mestizaje*⁶ and whitening, consequently this had reduced these emancipatory efforts for a long time in their potential for solidarity (Escobar, 2003; 2008; Oslender, 2007; Wade, 1991; Wouters, 2001). In comparable fashion with other ‘indigenous movements’ in the 1970s, the organisations started to use an ethnic discourse to demand a recognition of their rights.

At the same time –in the 1980s- various peasant organisations started to emerge in the rural Chocó Department and focussed on territorial rights. Various organisations were established –with help from the Catholic Church- in order to raise awareness among the people that would affirm the necessity of the recognition of these rights. The argument was used that the traditional practices of the community were important to preserve the ecology of the region, whereas access to land was also considered to be crucial for subsistence of the communities (Oslender, 2007; Restrepo, 2008; Wouters, 2001). This territory-based rural movement is said to have been responding to the emergence of governmental interest in the region’s ecological potential. While the Chocó had –historically- hardly seen any form of government influence and interest. Since the 1980s the interest in the region’s high economic potential and political importance has been growing, because of the enormous biodiversity found in the jungle, the various metal resources underground, and its’ strategic location connecting Colombia with two oceans and middle America (Escobar, 2003; Escobar, 2008; Mendieta, 2011; Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007; Oslender, 2007; Wouters, 2001). However, the government’s emphasis on grand-scale resource exploitation for the international market did question the benefits the community would have from this ‘new form of development’. At the same time, the increased interest in the value of the lands upon which the communities had been living posed a threat to their right on this land. As the Afro-Colombians were not officially recognised as Colombian citizens and consequently did not have any form to claim territorial rights, an ethno-territorial discourse would develop in course of the 1980s. That connected an ethnic distinctiveness of the Afro-Colombian population to a particular defined territory (and its use) in order to obtain land rights. Various scholars mention the important role of the Claretian Missionaries in the establishment and promotion of these peasant organisations and their role in promoting the rights of minority groups in the Chocó Department (Escobar, 2003; 2008; Oslender, 2007; Wouters, 2001). Even though they are often referred to, not much is written about the specific contribution, projects and mission of these Catholic missionaries.

In the end of the 1980s, the concept of ethnic minority was introduced –based on the ILO covenant on minority rights ratified by the Colombian government (in 1989)- to reinforce its strategy towards the government. The struggle for land rights has led to “...one of the most advanced constitutional frameworks for the empowerment and citizenship rights and ethnic rights in particular” (Wouters, 2001: 498). As, in the new constitution of 1991 Colombia recognised its nation as being multi-ethnic and multi-cultural, and the constitution asked for a new legislation for Afro-Colombians on which they could reclaim their collective territories. Furthermore, *ley 70* [law 70] –passed in 1993- defined the right to protect culture and traditional production practices of the black communities, and promised a greater political participation in local decisions (Oslender, 2007; Wouters, 2001). *“It promised a departure from previous regimes of ‘invisibilisation’ of Colombia’s black populations, by creating conditions of access to governing institutions for Afro-Colombians, calling for a*

⁶ Mestizaje is a term that describes a kind of racial mixing, in which Blacks and Indians (and whites) lose their specific colour by the mixing of ‘racial stocks’. However, when embedded in a discourse of national identity, the practices of Mestizaje in Colombia implied ‘whitening’ a way to create nationhood by creating an uniform population (Wade, 1991). This latter notion is based on a perceived hierarchy of races. As such a contradiction exists between the more ‘neutral’ use of the term and its use in nationalist rhetoric.

more ethnicity aware educational syllabus and in general promoting a wider participation of Afro-Colombians in the country's political life" (Oslender, 2007: 752). The law solely focussed on the Pacific coast region, following the argument that 90% of this region its population is Afro-Colombian. Whereas the identification as distinct ethnic group led to a change in constitution in the beginning of the 1990s, Eduardo Restrepo (2008) problematises the use of 'blackness' being "...a culturalist othering shaped by expert discourses of anthropologists and historians. The ethnicization of blackness implies that the political subject and the subject of rights are based on the notion of an ethnic group defined by the possession of a particular culture which is different from the group of the Colombian society" (Restrepo, 2008: 118). Restrepo warns for the problematisation of blackness based on different systems of power/ knowledge and attempts to "capture different articulations of blackness in their positivity, singularity and dispersion" (Restrepo, 2008: 380). Whilst the implementation of the new constitution and *ley 70* promised a form of empowerment for the black communities, and collective land titles were granted to various peasant movements that had been evolved into 'ethno-territorial organisations' recognised by the Colombian government. This time of hope became distorted –at the time that the first collective land titles were granted- by the military-offensive 'Operation Genesis', that led to an era of terror and displacement in the Pacific region (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007; Oslender, 2007; Wouters, 2001). Thus, putting the collective land titles under threat (Wouters, 2001). Furthermore, the continued neoliberal orientation of the Colombian government in which the strategic relevance of the Chocó's location and natural resources started to affect the territorial autonomy granted by the *ley 70* (further explained in section 1.2.2).

1.2.1.3 The role of the Claretian Missionaries in the process of community organisation

Different authors have written about the important role of the Catholic Church in establishing and supporting the emergence of a rural Afro-Colombian movement –in the Pacific region/the Chocó- in the 1980s in order to defend and control the territory from the destructive effects of natural resource exploitation (Escobar, 2003; 2008; Oslender, 2007; Wouters, 2003). At the same time, the Claretians are said to have implemented projects to defend the community against human rights abuses, and to cope with the escalation of violence since the mid-1990s. It is said that the Church was able to go into dialogue with various armed groups (Wouters, 2001). Nevertheless, no research so far has actually made these missionaries the object of scientific research, whilst they are often referred to as having been of profound importance. No research has studied their exact contribution in this emancipation process and questioned their motives.

The Claretian Missionaries base their theology on the teachings of Saint Anthony Mary Claret and are part of the Roman Catholic Church and the 'liberation theology' that has emerged in Latin America since the 1960s (Missionarios Claretianos; 2007; Missionarios Claretianos; 2010; Missionarios Claretianos; 2011; Klaiber, 2009; Mackin, 2010). Their theological orientation is on the teachings of the Bible and specifically Saint Anthony Mary Claret. Their specific emphasis is on social concerns and issues of justice and peace. By their focus on the poor, their missions in the Chocó Department have contributed to social development (Missionarios Claretianos, 2007; 2010; 2011; 2012; Wouters, 2001; Escobar, 2003; 2008; FUCLA; 2012ab; 2013a). The Claretians started in Spain in 1849 and are currently present in 61 countries all over the world. Their presence in the Chocó dates back to 1909. It is said that their role in fighting injustice, human rights abuses and meeting the needs for the poor has had a profound influence in the Chocó Department for the last decennia. The integration of both theology and social issues and their programs specifically focussing on the education of the different ethnic groups in the department have made a greater contribution than 'religious teachings alone'. Escobar (2008) argues that the influence of the Catholic imaginary is significant "...yet Catholic representation are transformed and inscribed in local models of knowledge" (Escobar, 2008: 116). However, not much is known about how and why their approach has promoted this process of community organisation: To what extend they have been involved?; What have these missionaries been doing exactly?; How has this process been evolving since 'territorial rights' were

granted? In this thesis, their efforts within this ethno-territorial emancipation process is the object of study.

1.2.2 The contours of the ‘hegemonic (state) project’

This section introduces two major aspects of the State’s hegemonic project that interacted with the Claretian Missionaries’ ‘counter-hegemonic project’. These two (sub-) sections introduce the two major determinants that have affected the scope and content of the efforts of the Claretian Missionaries during the whole time-span covered in this thesis and is meant to provide the reader with a broad introduction into the emergence of a neoliberal export oriented model in the Chocó Department (section 1.2.2.1) and the role of (internal) conflict in the process of (Colombia’s) state formation (section 1.2.2.2). Comprising the two main determinants in the ‘context of structural violence’ described in this thesis’ main research question.

1.2.2.1 Chocó: a new frontier for development

In the course of the 20th century the Chocó Department saw various governmental policies entering its territory to find ways to ‘develop’ the region. Previously the region had been seen as a region to be ‘conquered and colonised’ and there had been no emphasis on development. Furthermore, the government has been hardly present in the region, reflecting a lack of interest and its geographical and political isolation and marginalisation. The main cycles of growth in the department were based on concessions of the state toward national and foreign investors who were able to privatise some parts of the territory under “*semi slavery*” conditions (Escobar, 2008: 160). This development discourse was mainly based on an economic rationale that did not take the local perspectives in mind, and as such had not led to an improvement of the living conditions of the local populations. In the 1980s the Pacific area became “*a new frontier for Development*” under the Betancour administration (Escobar, 2003: 158). Unlike before, governmental institutions started to see the potential of the region, and as such the region became base of governmental policies and plans; and different international institutions and companies started to enter the region.

However, these public interventions were based on four different perspectives on the region’s function: the Pacific region (including the Chocó) became defined as: 1) a producer of primary materials; 2) a platform to access international markets; 3) a transport corridor for goods and services; and 4) a potential site for natural resource extraction (Flórez López & Millán Echeverría, 2007).

Betancour’s “*Plan de Desarrollo Integral para la Costa Pacífica (Pladeicop)*” (1982-1992), advocated that the region’s marginal position was to be overcome by the implementation of productive projects that would make use of the region’s natural resources. It proposed to implement productive projects in agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, tourism and to develop the region’s infrastructure (roads, airports, energy and communication services) (Flórez López & Millán Echeverría, 2007: 101). In this decade the first grand-scale projects were implemented and the first companies would enter the region based on governmental concessions, starting with the exploitation of wood in the *Bajo Atrato* Region. Pladeicop got replaced by ‘*Plan Pacífico*’ in 1994, when the Colombian government was negotiating with the Inter-American Development bank, UNDP, World Bank and Global Environment Facility. Different institutions promoted a vision that recognised the region’s genetic potential by advocating sustainable development. Pladeicop’s merely economic rationale prohibited its further implementation. As a result of Colombia’s negotiations with these institutions the government needed to emphasise the region’s ecological potential in terms of ‘sustainable development’. Here the Colombian government designed a new plan as a baseline for its credit negotiations with the World Bank (Flórez López & Millán Echeverría, 2007).

Plan Pacífico was meant to promote a sustainable development of the region, understood as amplifying “*...the productive opportunities and capacities of the population that contribute to a better and bigger formation of social capital*” (Programa Plan Pacífico (2001) cited in Flórez López & Millán Echeverría, 2007: 104). The plan

was meant to promote a form of modernisation that would respect the region's social, ethnic, cultural and natural diversity whilst promoting a closer collaboration between different actors at a national and regional level. On paper the plan seemed to be positive but in reality local perspectives were hardly taken into account and the living conditions of the communities did not significantly improve. The '*Agenda Pacífico XXI*' (1998) was a reaction on the Rio Summit of 1992 and was meant to promote a greater political participation of local actors, that recognised ethnic, cultural, social, economic and environmental reality of the local population. The agenda sought to establish a new sort of relationship between the state and the region "*...by recognising the ethnic groups and respecting diversity, encouraging peaceful intra- and inter-ethnic co-existence, promoting the conservation of the cultural and environmental patrimony of the region and trying to increase the living standards of the population and the process of collective titling of their lands*" (Flórez López & Millán Echeverría, 2007: 106). The agenda recognised the population's leadership in developing regional development plans that would "*...construct their appropriate development amid the increasing globalisation of the societies, taking the diversity principle as a starting point*" (Flórez López & Millán Echeverría, 2007: 106). The Agenda favoured the implementation of the rights obtained by the Afro-Colombian communities (*Ley 70* of 1993).

A clear neo-liberal agenda came forward with the implementation of the '*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2002-2006*' of President Álvaro Uribe that aimed "*...to attract foreign investment in order to overcome the gaps in the strategic infrastructure, based on a regulatory and institutional reform of the mining, oil, public services, transport and telecommunication sectors. This implied also aiming to protect the economic infrastructure in order to diminish both the costs of insecurity as the risks for private investment*" (Flórez López & Millán Echeverría, 2007:109). Here a combined neoliberal / democratic security doctrine was adopted, meant to secure international investments in the region to enter the global market. Uribe meant to strengthen Colombia's relationships with the United States, the European Union and Asia, by "*...seeking to promote the commercial and economic interests, encouraging investments by attacking the cooperation towards prioritised programmes of the national government and territorial entities*" (Flórez López & Millán Echeverría, 2007:111). As such, next to market-driven reforms, combatting the guerrilla, controlling illicit cultivations and promoting 'peace' were main pillars of the development plan. The security doctrine had begun in 1998 when Colombia adopted '*Plan Colombia*' -in collaboration with the United States. It was meant to secure "*...the disarticulation of the networks of the narco-trafficking and the financing of the subversion by the eradication of the use of illicit crops, especially in the south-west of the countries, the border regions, strategic corridors for the illicit commerce of alkaloids, arms, etc.*" (Flórez López & Millán Echeverría, 2007: 113). The provision of alternative employment and social services in these 'risk areas' were seen as the key to eradicate the illegal activities. The WTO free trade agreement adopted in the beginning of the 2000s, the development of unilateral commercial agreements with US as part of the Andean Trade Preferences Act - that later became replaced by the '*Ley de Promoción Andina y Erradicación de Drogas*'- and the Free Trade Agreement with the EU (signed in 2012) further reinforced the neoliberal/ democratic security doctrine (Flórez López & Millán Echeverría, 2007; Higginbottom, 2005). Different national laws and development plans would become inspired by this development model.

In short, the main governmental policies implemented since the 1980s were grounded on two guiding principles. The first principle was that neoliberal trade liberalisation identified the region as strategic site for new forms of capital accumulation. In this line of thinking, various sectors were identified being the 'locomotive' for growth and this growth became framed as being a way for the local communities to get out of poverty. A second assumption within this principle was that -since the 1990s- the discourse of 'sustainable development' opened up the potential for a respect for cultural, social and natural diversity. However -following Goldman- these discourses provide a basis for a 'green neoliberalism' by the power of the World Bank's agenda that is able to link "*...the finance ministry agenda' of neoliberalism and 'the civil society agenda' of social justice and environmentally sustainable development*" and provides the basis for major policy shifts and world bank loans at a global level (Goldman, 2005: 5). A second principle that started to guide Colombian policies was the (democratic) security doctrine that emphasised the need to stabilise the region from its insurgency and (related) illegal activities, to promote peace, dismantle the drugs routes, stop the

violence and to provide a secure environment for investment. The different policies had different emphases. However, they all were grounded in a belief that facilitating economic growth could facilitate international trade relations and benefit Colombia's global trade position. Ultimately aiming at "...*guaranteeing the optimal conditions in order to have free play between the commercial supply and demand*" (Flórez López & Millán Echeverría, 2007: 121). Security was seen as a necessary condition to guarantee the profitability and integrity of investments, whereas the improvement of the living conditions of the communities in the region is said to be facilitated by the growth of productive capital.

These different policies, however, have led to contradicting results at a local level. Economic development and sustainable practices do not always coincide. Furthermore, the World Bank-inspired rationale that economic growth and trade liberalism is eradicating poverty is widely questioned (Murray Li, 2011). National Development Plans that favour grand-scale resource exploitation contradict the obtained land titles of minority groups, by separating rights on soil from rights on subsoil and promoting unequal negotiations between multinationals and local communities. Instances of land grab by multinationals – with paramilitary support- further complicate the situation (Grajales, 2011; 2013). The spraying of the drug cultivation –as part of *Plan Colombia*- affects the health and livelihoods of local communities. Local (small-scale) agriculture becomes less profitable due to import of agricultural products, and further diminishes employment opportunities. Farm land is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small group of people, leading to a bigger inequality, unemployment and displacement. Agro-industries face little institutional pressure to commit themselves to environmental standards. The escalation of violence, criminal involvement in the mega-projects (to white wash illegally obtained money or to offer 'armed protection'), and the proliferation of (semi-) illegal forms resource extraction: cocaine or marijuana cultivation, mining, palm oil plantations etc. further complicate daily life at a local level (Asher & Ojeda, 2009; Ballvé, 2011; Flórez López, 2004; Flórez López & Millán Echeverría, 2007; Oslender, 2007).

1.2.2.2 Generalised violence in Colombia

Colombia has a long history of violent conflict that in the most common-sense understanding is being framed as a counter-insurgency campaign of the Colombian government against the guerrilla movements of which the FARC-EP is the most well-known. However, a more in-depth study of Colombia's internal conflict reveals a more complicated picture in which a diversity of armed actors is engaged in a struggle around political, military and territorial control in order to pursue a range of different objectives. The boundaries between the different actors –mainly characterised by a three-fold distinction between the paramilitaries, guerrillas or national military- have become increasingly blurred in the course of the 20th century. The Colombian government is frequently characterised as a 'para-state', implying a close engagement with the paramilitary forces to pursue a range of political objectives. Following Jacobo Grajales (2011; 2013), Colombia's violence forms an integral part of a "...*historical process of state formation and market reconfiguration*" (Grajales, 2013: 211). This section provides a historical overview of Colombia's history of violent conflict and provides a short introduction of the escalation of violence in the Chocó Department in the 1990s that would become part of the 'context of structural violence' in which the Claretian 'Counter-hegemonic project' needed to operate.

A short history of armed conflict in Colombia

This escalation of violence in Colombia has to be understood in the wider context of what Daniel Pécaut labels '*Generalized Violence*' that has left almost no part of the country unaffected (Pécaut in Wouters, 2001; Pécaut, 1999; 2000a). Whereas the occurrence of violence is nothing new in a country that has faced different cycles of internal violence already for more than 100 years, the particular manifestations, actors and underlying motivations have been changing in the course of time, towards a state in which the boundaries between its political and non-political manifestations became blurred, and the use of (localised) terror against the civilian population is a common phenomenon in various urban and rural areas (Oslender, 2008; Pécaut in Wouters, 2001; Pécaut, 1999; 2000a; Restrepo, 2004). The Civil War which is

known as '*La Violencia*'—which peaked between 1948-1958- is often seen as a crucial point in history that has contributed to the evolution of the violence until present day (Mendieta, 2011; Oslender, 2008; Pécaut, 2000a). This civil war led an age-old ideological struggle between the conservatives and liberals - that dominated the bipolar power structure of Colombia and erupted into mass violence. At this time (the 1940s/1950s), the liberals dominated the cities—except Medellín-, whereas the conservatives held the countryside and the southwest of the country. Mendieta (2011) describes how the geographical manifestation of these political parties left a political vacuum in the largest regions of the countries -those regions that would become the most significant in the project of agricultural and industrial growth. Furthermore various segments of society had not found a political voice in the official parties. This violence simmered for a couple of years until 1948, when one of the Liberal candidates (Jorge Eliécer Gaitán) was assassinated. Immediately violence erupted throughout the whole country and the nation entered a violent civil war in which conservatives and liberals killed each other "...*simply because they belonged, or where thought to belong to the opposite party*" (Mendieta, 2011: 175). This war lasted for ten years and killed between 100.000-200.000 Colombians. Different factors have been fuelling the ten year conflict. In addition to the political antagonism of the two political parties, the political exclusion of organised political positions that were silenced by the liberals and the conservatives also contributed to the escalation (Murillo (2004) in Mendieta, 2011). At the same time the violence became a tool in the dispossession and appropriation of land (Mendieta, 2011; Pécaut, 2000a). '*La Violencia*' had mainly a rural character. In 1958 the leaders of the two parties agreed upon '*the National Front*' (1958-1974). According to many scholars 'a political lock out' was established which specified a compulsory 50% sharing of the elected and appointed positions in which each party would alternate the heading of the presidency (Leal Buitrago, 2004; Mendieta, 2011). This meant that the country would be ruled by the elites 'from the cities', without granting other political sectors a voice. This became further reinforced by the anti-communist sentiments and the doctrine of National Security that steered the actions of the National Military (Leal Buitrago, 2004; Brittain, 2010). During the National Front period the regime did not approve new arenas for opposition, whether peaceful or not (Brittain, 2010; Leal Buitrago, 2004). In various segments of the country other collectives emerged to serve the interest of specific segments of civil society. The FARC-EP ('*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo*') was created in 1964, with aid from the communist party and as a result of the intimidation suffered by the peasant self-defence groups. The '*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*' (ELN) was created in 1965, based on a student movement and the union of oil workers. Owing to a split with the FARC, and the nationalist '*Movimiento 19 de Abril*' (M-19) was created out of a radical wing of the ANAPO party (Brittain, 2010; Gutiérrez Sanín & Jaramillo, 2004; Leal Buitrago, 2004; Taussig, 2003). The concept of national security became the dominant guideline for the military, that out of anti-communist sentiments tried to safeguard the country from a communist threat. Consequently, the dissidents were treated with armed force.

The emergence of paramilitary associations dates back to the beginning of the 20th century when private armies were created to defend the social order (Rozema, 2008). In the 1960s the Colombian government legalised the existence of the paramilitary groups, to confront the guerrillas and support the national army in their counter insurgency campaigns (Holmes et al., 2008). From 1987 onwards the paramilitaries were considered illegal. However, paramilitaries continue to be one of the most important violent actors in Colombia. Paramilitary associations have different origins. The (big) land owners established small paramilitary armies to defend themselves from the guerrilla since the land distribution project of the 1970s (Brittain, 2010). At the same time, the emergence of the drug trade in the 1970s/1980s encouraged the drug traffickers to establish their own armies, as Pablo Escobar and the Cali Cartel did in 1981. This is to safeguard drug routes, avoid Guerrilla taxes or keep their (territorial) influence (Brittain, 2010; Holmes et al., 2008; Taussig, 2003). Another big paramilitary association was the one of the brothers Castaño in the department of Antioquia. In 1997 the '*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*' (AUC) was created, a national paramilitary association that aimed to defeat the guerrillas. Whereas the AUC confronted the guerrillas in many parts of the country, the organisation itself committed many acts of terror against the civilian

population and is known to have perpetrated many massacres. It is said that the AUC operated (relative) independently from the state and is involved in the drug trafficking (Holmes et al., 2008; Rozema, 2008). although the paramilitaries often claim to be an alternative to the guerrilla and assume the counterinsurgency role of the military (Holmes et al., 2008). Internal rivalries within the AUC related to the question of whether involvement in drug trafficking was or was not desirable. The negative public opinion led to its disbandment. Whereas the AUC disbanded in 2002, and since the beginning of 2003 various peace talks have been started with different paramilitary organisations, various paramilitary organisation with different origins and networks are still operating and are held accountable for many human rights abuses (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007; Oslender, 2007; 2008; Rozema, 2008).

Whereas in the 1980s the political component of the guerrillas was still recognised, various peace negotiations did not work out, and violent clashes between the national army, the guerrilla groups and paramilitaries started to become common place. At an urban level, there has been mass migration to urban areas due to the violence of the 1950s when peasants were driven off their land, and were attracted by better living conditions. Urban unemployment and a lack of integration also led to various sorts of crime that in the course of time erupted in gang warfare, or linkages with one of the violent actors (Ceballos Melguizo, 2001; Restrepo, 2004; Taussig, 2003). The trade liberalisation of the 1980s, combined with land reform policies that favoured the elites created dissent at the local level (Brittain, 2010; Mendieta, 2011). Historically the government had already neglected large parts of the country by their bipolar power structure, in which only a limited amount of (influential) voices were heard. Whilst the guerrillas originally seem to have originated from ideological origins with a militant character, and the paramilitaries served to protect particular (elite) interests (Brittain, 2010; Guetiérrez Sanin & Jaramillo; 2004; Rozema, 2011). In the course of time the regular eruptions in violence between the different actors, the blurring of boundaries when individuals started to switch between the different parties, and the linkages that started to exist between the drug lords, the paramilitaries and guerrillas combined, led to an harshening of violence (Ceballos Melguizo, 2010; Holmes et al., 2008; Mendieta, 2011; Rozema, 2011; Taussig, 2003).

Many sources confirm the relation between the eruption of violence and the quest of territorial control by the various military actors (Brittain, 2010; Oslender, 2007; Pecaut, 1999; Wouters, 2001). Some argue that the control of the areas related to primary production coincide with the eruption of violence (Mendieta, 2011; Pecaut, 1999). At the same time, the inability of the various governments to combat these violent actors, and the linkages observed between official state institutions (police/ military) and illegal forms of policing undermine the search for a peaceful solution (Holmes et al., 2008; Kruijt & Koonings, 2004; Koonings & Kruijt, 2004; Reenen, 2004; Taussig, 2003). There exists an oligopoly of sovereignty, i.e. “...a competition between alternative powers with different symbols and capacities” (Ceballos Melguizo, 2010: 111). While in the beginning of the 1990s the government still started peace talks with various parties, in the course of time combatting the ‘terrorists’ –as the Guerrillas were called under the US banner in their ‘war on drugs’ and later the ‘war on terror’- undermined any political legitimacy for the guerrillas (and on a later stage also condemned the paramilitaries) (Leal Buitrago, 2004; Rozema, 2008; Taussig, 2003). In the mid-1990s violence intensified to unprecedented levels. The initial focus on drugs enabled the guerrillas and paramilitaries to expand. Corruption and clientalism was profound. And the boundaries between state actors and illegal paramilitary groups were thin (Grajales, 2011; 2013; Leal Buitrago, 2004; Reenen, 2004; Taussig, 2003). The increased presence of US-policy and investment in Colombia, combined with the massive financial support to combat first the drug cartels and later the ‘terrorists’ further supported the militant strategy in which the political character of the movements were neglected⁷ (Brittain, 2010; Haugaard et al.; 2008; Mendieta, 2011). Violence accumulated in massive displacement, a high amount of

⁷ One has to acknowledge the militarisation of the strategies of all actors involved, whereas it is hard to claim that any ideological component disappeared in the course of time. It can be observed that the failing of peace negotiations and the use of violence seems to redirect the attention of the actors and public opinion away from any ideological component that might be (originally) underpinning the actors of the Guerrillas, Paramilitaries and state.

civilian casualties, the use of terror, and a lack of state authority and capacity to combat the violence (Brittain, 2010; Guetierrez Sanín & Jaramillo, 2004).

The escalation of violence in the Chocó

Whereas the political conflicts of the 20th century were for an important degree linked to economic interest and control over land (Brittain, 2010; Mendieta, 2011; Oslender, 2007; Wouters, 2001), the Pacific region has been relatively excluded from this violence for many years until the paramilitaries entered the Chocó Department in 1996. Since then violence has been intensifying. The local population has been put in the crossfire between paramilitaries, national military and guerrillas; and became the victims of widespread violence, terror, and forced displacement (Oslender, 2008). The paramilitary forces entered the municipality of Riosucio in North Chocó on the 20th of December 1996 in order to combat the FARC-EP guerrillas (Oslender, 2007; Wouters, 2001). The attack was coordinated by the Colombian Army and the paramilitaries and succeeded in forcing the Guerrillas away from this region but led 15.000-17.000 people fleeing their home (mainly Afro-Colombians and Indigenous people) (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007; Oslender, 2007; Wouters, 2001). This event marked the beginning of a period of intense violence, displacement and terror in the Chocó Department, in which many people fled their homes, lost their lives or have been living in circumstances of profound insecurity (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007; Oslender, 2007; Oslender, 2008; Pécaut, 1999; 2000a; Taussig, 2003; Wouters, 2001). Whereas the major armed clashes ended in 2002, the human rights abuses have not stopped. The Norwegian Refugee Council reports that in the period of 2001-2005 the paramilitary and the national army collaborated and intensified their direct attacks against the Afro-Colombian and Indigenous population across the Department (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007). Whereas the paramilitaries are particularly condemned for the human rights abuses and mass displacement, the guerrillas also employ destructive tactics. Both parties “...pursue terror strategies of intimidation, massacres and displacement to gain control of territories that are rich in biodiversity, natural resources and mega-development projects” (Escobar, 2003: 159). Whereas the violence has to be understood in terms of the situation of ‘generalized violence’ in Colombia at a national level, it is said that the eruption of the violence in the Chocó is for an important degree linked to the competition over territorial control between the armed actors (Escobar, 2003; 2008; Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007; Oslender, 2007; 2008; Wouters, 2001). Various sources confirm the intimate relation between the escalation of violence in the Chocó Department and its relation with the department’s biodiversity and development potential. Soon after ‘Operation Genesis’ African palm plantations settled themselves on the abandoned lands, to start to expand the palm frontier in the region. Other forms of dispossession are also documented (Escobar, 2003; Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007; Oslender, 2007; 2008; Wouters, 2001).

1.3 Research questions and objectives

Following the preceding problem description and the identified contribution of this research (next sections). The main research questions has been formulated as follows:

Main research questions:

“How has the Claretian Missionaries’ approach promoted a counter-hegemonic project in the Colombian Atrato-Region; and how has this project been influenced by the context of structural violence?”

Sub-questions:

1. How has the Claretian Missionaries’ approach promoted a *counter-hegemonic project*?
 - a. What has been the *‘philosophical’* content of this project?
 - b. What kind of hegemony was this counter-hegemonic project meant to challenge?

- c. How did the Claretian missionaries attempt to create this counter-hegemonic project?
2. How has the context of *structural violence* influenced this project?
 - a. How has the context of structural violence influenced the scope and content of this project?
 - b. How has the context of structural violence influenced the spatial-temporal development of this project?

This thesis focuses on the process of Afro-Colombian community organisation, visibilisation and empowerment, as part of a ‘counter-hegemonic project’ initiated by the Claretian Missionaries in the 1980s (described in the problem statement presented before). Initially, this thesis focuses on the efforts of the Claretian Missionaries and how their approach has contributed to the development of a ‘counter-hegemonic movement’ that aimed to challenge the hegemonic social ordering in the Colombian society. At a later stage, the ethno-territorial organisations COCOMACIA and COCOMOPOCA become part of the analysis. As the community leaders that were educated by the missionaries were supposed to continue this ‘counter-hegemonic project’ as the representatives of the communities in the *Medio* and *Alto Atrato* regions. This research follows a time span that begins with the start of the ‘counter-hegemonic project’ (the early 1980s) and analyses the development of this process until the present day (2013). This research follows a Gramsci-inspired analysis (explained in the theoretical outlook presented in section 1.5) that studies the scope, content and development of this ‘counter-hegemonic project’ and its interaction with the state-initiated ‘hegemonic project’. The concept of *structural violence* is used to exemplify the relationships of exploitation in the wider socio-economic structure (the state’s hegemonic project). It encompasses all sorts of inequality within the ‘normal’ state-society relationships –further explained in section 1.5.

Research objectives:

The aim of this research is three-fold. Firstly, it aims to document the ways in which the Claretian Missionaries’ approach has promoted an alternative socio-political vision in the Atrato-region. Special attention has been paid to their exact role in the establishment of a counter-hegemonic project. This objective contributes to the current lack of (scientific) understanding of the specific role of these religious actors in assisting the community on a range of issues. Whereas, some research has touched upon the activities of the Claretians in a specific domain, no research –so far- has focussed on the Claretians themselves, and how their approach based on liberation theology has specifically promoted forms of local organisation and ‘development’. While different scholars use different labels to describe the socio-political activities promoted by church actors, by using labels such as: the Roman Catholic Church, *Pastoral afrocolombiana*, Missionaries, *Pastoral Social*, Claretians etc., this thesis aims to investigate what the exact contribution of the Claretian approach is, and as such making the position of the Claretians in the Roman Catholic Church a point of reflection. During my fieldwork, it became increasingly clear that in some cases it became hard to make a clear distinction between the activities of the Claretians and other Catholic entities. However, as the following chapters will point out the influence of the Claretians has been quite important for the development of the mission of other religious entities in the region and -as such- the distinction stays valid.

Secondly, this thesis aims to research how this socio-political vision of the Claretian Missionaries has been informed by specific ‘conception of the world’. Hereby inquiring why these religious actors engage in activities that go beyond the prediction of ‘the Evangelic’. Here, this thesis aims to investigate the ‘*philosophical*’ background of their mission in order to be able to explain the form and content of the actions initiated by these missionaries.

Thirdly, it is meant to enquire how this counter-hegemonic project has evolved in the course of time, by studying the *'philosophical'* content of the Claretian mission and the actions they have generated. This thesis aims to study how this counter-hegemonic process has been evolving while studying its interaction with the context of structural violence in which it operated.

1.4 State of the art and contribution of this research

1.4.1 State of the art

This research aims to analyse the process of Afro-Colombian community organisation, visibilisation and 'empowerment' that has been initiated since the 1980s and especially focusses on the question how this process has been initiated and supported by the efforts and the *philosophy* of the Claretian Missionaries. It aims to analyse how this process has been influenced by structural and contextual factors as the Afro-Colombians historically marginalised position in the Colombian society; the constitutional recognition of 1991; the collective land rights of 1993; the escalation of violence since 1996; and specific governmental policies that promote neoliberal development. Whereas Mieke Wouters (2001), Ulrich Oslender (2007; 2008) and Arturo Escobar (2003; 2008) have discussed the role of different actors in the emancipatory process that preceded the recognition and implementation of '*ley 70*' –the law that granted the Afro-Colombian community collective land titles in the Pacific region. Furthermore, they argue that the escalation of violence undermines the ability of the local community to claim their rights. However, none of them have actually been engaged with an in depth analysis of the emancipatory process in the Chocó that has a focus on the influence of the Claretian missionaries. Nor have their researches been able to account for the diversity of 'challenges' –as explained in the preceding problem statement (and further elaborated upon in the upcoming chapters)- and its direct effect on the process of Afro-Colombian community organisation (and 'emancipation').

Mieke Wouters links the escalation of violence to the (implementation of) collective land titles, but she fails to properly incorporate the role of the Colombian State –in terms of contradicting legislation and policy orientations- in the Chocó. By only discussing the role of paramilitary and guerrilla violence on the (new) challenges of the Afro-Colombian community organisation she only acknowledges the 'paradox' between "*...one of the most progressive and democratic constitutions and legislation of the world*" and the inability of the Colombian State to uphold the rights of the Colombian citizens by its loss of the monopoly of violence (Wouters, 2001: 517). Here, she fails to take into account how the violence in Colombia is tied to particular elite interests, that make the public/private, legal/illegal divides unclear. The violence ultimately results in land concentration and uneven access and control of natural resources, benefiting certain (elite-) segments of society (Grajales, 2011; 2013; Higginbottom, 2005; Latimer, 2012). Ulrich Oslender (2007; 2008) -on the other hand- does link capitalism, state policies and displacement, and identifies challenges at a local level. However, his research is not focussed on the emancipation process of the Afro-Colombian population. Arturo Escobar is concerned with linking the experience of the Afro-Colombian population with broader questions of modernity and development. As such, he is engaged in a discussion of a hegemonic modernity/colonialism that, according to him, "*...produced a global design that encompasses the peripheries*" (Escobar, 2003: 164). Therefore, any form of 'counterwork' that recognises cultural differences and is able to produce alternatives is conceptualised as an 'alternative to modernity'. His work treats phenomena as neoliberalism, capitalism, displacement etc. as part of an encompassing 'Modernity', that -as a way of social ordering- dominates the world as power/knowledge regime. To affirm the existence of alternatives his main concern is to prove that 'modernity' isn't a social fact but other realities are possible, that other histories do count, and other designs are valid. Whereas his thesis "*Territories of Difference*" (2008) provides a detailed account of the emancipation process of the Afro-Colombians, it still is grounded in his 'modernity – alternatives to modernity' theory. Furthermore, when he analyses the strategy of the black social movements he has mainly been focused on the urban Southern Pacific emancipation process since

the 1990s –from an activist standpoint- in the name of the activist network PCN⁸. The PCN is a group of activists that disseminated the ideas of ethno-territoriality along the Pacific region, however it had its origin within the urban elites. Escobar hardly discusses the emergence of ethnic activism in the 1980s that preceded the constitutional recognition of the Afro-Colombians and preceded the ethno-territorial rights. Furthermore, he fails to challenge these ‘alternatives to development’ from within. As a consequence, he is opposing the local reality to the predominant ‘Modernity’ but fails to acknowledge how this movement itself is full of contradictions, composed out of heterogeneous perceptions of these alternatives and actually influenced by ‘modernity’ itself. Others have studied the relationship between violence, land grab, neoliberal development and the state but didn’t specifically focus on the process of community organisation (Asher & Ojeda, 2009; Ballvé, 2011; Grajales, 2011; 2013; Higginbottom, 2005; Latimer, 2012).

Other literature about the Chocó Department (or Pacific region) has focussed on mainly three themes. One strand of literature engages in a discussion about the ‘*ethnisation of blackness*’ that has been used as an activist strategy to obtain citizenship rights. This strand of literature engages mainly in a culturalist discussion about the centrality of ‘race’ or ethnicity in the Colombian society, multiculturalism and ethnic-difference; and its implications for national inclusion (Arocha, 1998; Ng’weno, 2008; Restrepo, 2002; 2008; Wade, 1991). A second strand of literature mainly focusses on this process of identity creation, engaging in a close description of the different elements that compose this emerging black identity. While some scholars emphasise the context of its creation, others study the content of this identity in more detail (Agier, 2002; Almario G, 2002; Hoffman, 2002; Oslender, 2002). A third strand of literature analyses the relationship between violence, land grab and neoliberalism. However they do not specifically focus on the implications of this context for the process of Afro-Colombian community organisation (Asher & Ojeda, 2009; Ballvé, 2011; Grajales, 2011; 2013; Higginbottom, 2005; Latimer, 2012; Ojeda, 2012).

Different authors have discussed the role of the Catholic Church in promoting the rights of the minority groups in the Chocó Department in a limited way (e.g. Escobar, 2003; 2008; Oslender, 2007; Wouters, 2001). While Mieke Wouters (2001) describes the support of the Claretian Missionaries in establishing and helping ‘*La Asociación Campesina Integral del Atrato*’ (ACIA) -an Afro-Colombian organisation that emerged in the 1980s- to defend and control the territory from the destructive effects of natural resource exploitation. Furthermore she discusses some actions of the Catholic Church in a context of violence: documenting human rights abuses and supporting the community (Wouters, 2001). Escobar (2008) describes the church as an important actor –among many other actors- in the ‘black social movement’ (Escobar, 2008). Furthermore he describes how the Catholic Church was granted educational rights in the Pacific territory and that their actions are based in a form of cultural sensitivity for local models of knowledge (Escobar, 2008). However, how and why these missionaries engage in these processes has not been studied. Furthermore, different authors use different names for the involvement of the ‘Church’ either naming specific pastorals, ‘the Diócesis’, Claretians, or more generally, missionaries. As such, previous research is not consistent in naming those ‘actors’ within the church and furthermore have not explained how and why they engage in these social, cultural and political projects.

Robert Sean Mackin (2010; 2012) points out that in order to assess the political orientation of a church one should assess the strength of liberation theology holistically by focussing on both official statements and the organisational practices within (at all levels of) the church. Secondly, one should be aware that liberation theology is present to varying degrees and in particular cases. This implies a variation among different settings and that one should not oversimplify by using simple binary categorisations, as either progressive or conservative. Third, one should acknowledge that the strength of liberation theology varies along a continuum from strong to weak while changing over time (Mackin, 2010). However, only focussing on the role of Church elites obscures the role of lay activists in grasping favourable political

⁸ El Proceso de Comunidades Negras

opportunities, organisational resources and critical consciousness in facilitating a ‘social liberationist movement’ (Mackin, 2012). Therefore, when analysing the strength of these ‘movements’ it is necessary to look at how specific pioneering individuals had an important contribution in supporting the rise of liberation theology in specific settings. Any analysis should move away from a perspective centred around the ‘national church’, acknowledging the key role of ‘individual’ elites and more importantly stressing the role of (lay-)individuals. Furthermore, one should pay careful attention to the Church internal dynamics and pre-existing organisations and movements. (Mackin, 2012). Mackin, therefore, argues that pre-existing networks and organisations were crucial in the development of liberationist movements and as such these movements cannot be explained by solely looking at the ‘national church’. A context-specific analysis of the statements and practices, and sets of (different) actors involved –elite and non-elite, catholic and lay- is necessary to determine the strength and content of a church’ political orientation at a certain time (Mackin, 2010; 2012).

1.4.2 Contribution of this research

This thesis will move beyond ‘the state of the art’ by focussing on the process of Afro-Colombian community organisation, visibilisation and empowerment, while starting with an analysis of the specific orientation of the Claretian Missionaries. This thesis aims to analyse the efforts of a specific religious community in a specific (limited) region that has not been studied before, therefore contributing to a lack of current (scientific) understanding of the exact scope and content of the Claretian mission in this region. At the same time, this thesis questions how their orientation has been affected by a range of challenges that have identified themselves at a local level (in the course of time). Here the Claretian Missionaries will form the starting point of analysis to identify how their approach has planted the seeds for a counter-hegemonic process, but (following Mackin) this thesis takes an holistic view by identifying those local actors that have been involved in the creation of a ‘social liberationist movement’. Therefore, an analysis of the historical process itself forms the methodological base line of this thesis. Drawing upon a Gramsci-inspired analysis, grounded in his method ‘historicism’. This thesis analyses the efforts of the Claretians in terms of a counter-hegemonic project initiated and facilitated by these missionaries, being based on the ‘creation’ of a specific ‘class for itself’, and being a response to a (critical) conception of the hegemonic material and ideational bases of the Colombian society. Gramsci –as the next chapters will show- allows me to consider how different conceptions of the world interact and are always, relational, situational and spatial and as such contestable. Here the processes of emancipation and visibilisation become embedded in a wider network of power relations, that manifest themselves at the material and ideational levels of society. This perspective enables me to analyse the exact scope and content of the Claretian-initiated project, while analysing the implications of the state’s hegemonic conception of neoliberal development, the Afro-Colombians’ marginalised position within society, and the escalation of violence as part of a state-initiated hegemonic project (the context of structural violence). The choice for a Gramsci-inspired perspective, thus, can be further justified by the observations made by several authors: how nature, space and territory are central in an analysis of the consolidation of state-power (Ballvé, 2011; Brenner & Elden, 2009; Ekers et al, 2012); how the political-economy is crucial in understanding contemporary land questions (Borras Jr. et al, 2012); how the ideological dimensions of neoliberal capitalism and the ‘democratic’ state are compatible concepts that have founds their ways into (inter)national policies and institutions, where they come to intersect with the state-logic of power and capital accumulation (Goldman, 2005; Harvey, 2005; Peck & Tickell, 2000), how ‘multi-culturalism’ is compatible with a neoliberal framework (Hale, 2006); and how many of the current problems in Colombia are grounded in a neoliberal export oriented enclave model, based on natural resource extraction (Flórez López & Millán Echeverría, 2007; Higginbottom, 2005; Latimer, 2012).

1.5 Theoretical outlook

This thesis will use a theoretical perspective inspired by the Political-Economist Antonio Gramsci to analyse the process of Afro-Colombian community organisation, visibilisation and empowerment. This thesis focusses specifically on the role of the Claretian Missionaries in enabling the emergence of an alternative philosophy on the ideational and material conditions in which the communities ought to live. As already pointed out in the previous sections, this thesis takes the Claretian Missionaries' Approach as a starting point to analyse their *philosophy* and corresponding actions in the light of a Gramscian 'counter-hegemonic project'. In which the Claretians were said to respond to the local challenges posed by a state-based 'hegemonic project' that had left the Afro-Colombian population (socially, economically and politically) marginalised for centuries. However, with the identification of the Pacific region as a 'new frontier for development' started to increase its interest in the Chocó's ecological and strategic potential. With the adoption of -and elaboration on- a combined neoliberal trade liberalisation - (democratic) security doctrine (since the 1980s) the state redefined its hegemonic position within the Chocó Department by altering the '*philosophical*' orientation (and the material reality) with which it looked upon the region.



IMAGE 3: ANTONIO GRAMSCI (1891 - 1937)

(SOURCE:

[HTTP://WWW.MARXISTS.ORG/ARCHIVE/G
RAMSCI/PRISON_NOTEBOOKS/READER/](http://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/prison_notebooks/reader/))

In this section I will outline the main elements of Gramsci's oeuvre that I will use for the analysis of my research material: mainly grounded in his method of historicism, his conceptualisation of a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic project, the '*philosophical*' basis for a (counter)-hegemonic project and the specific role Gramsci reserved for '*organic intellectuals*' to develop, disperse and strengthen an alternative conception of the world with wider societal relevance. Gramsci –just as Marx- takes a temporal situation of class hegemony as starting point to describe the patterning of social relations in society. As such, an analysis of the scope and content of the counter-hegemonic project of the Claretian Missionaries becomes embedded in a wider analysis of the situation of class-hegemony (the model of social ordering in Colombian society), against which the counter-hegemonic project developed and which interacts with, conditions, limits and enables (the possible success of) a counter-hegemonic project. This section outlines these Gramscian concepts by explaining his theory and illustrating the relevance of these concepts for the subsequent analysis within this thesis.

Gramsci's ideas are increasing in their popularity in contemporary research, not only in neo-Marxist or political-economic circles but gradually a group of critical geographers and political scientists started to reinterpret his work in order to make his work applicable to the 'current conjuncture' (e.g. Gillian Hart, David Harvey, Micheal Ekers, Alex Loftus, Teo Ballvé and others). Here, an understanding of (the production of) social differences –political, economic and cultural- by using a Gramscian lens is said to foreground the historically-evolving and spatially interconnected nature of political practice. In which, space, nature, politics and social difference are central elements (Ekers et al., 2012). Within this 're-interpretation of Gramsci' Gillian Hart highlights the importance of 'critical ethnographies of globalisation' that "...offer vantage points for generating new understandings by illuminating power-laden processes of constitution, connection and dis-connection, along with the slippages, openings and contradictions and possibilities for alliance within an across different spatial scales" (Hart, 2006: 982). Here critical conceptions of spatiality extend global ethnography by studying the material 'facts' on the ground and their meaning: "...understood together in terms of multiple historical/ geographical determinations, connections and articulations" (Hart, 2006: 984). As such, in order to understand the relationships between local processes and external forces one needs to study the 'experience of globalisation' in which intensive ethnographic studies should be

used to conduct broader analytical and political work. Gillian Hart understands ‘place’ as a “...*nodal point of connections in socially produced space*” that is able to move beyond case studies by making broader claims based on these determinations, connections and articulations (Hart, 2006: 996). *“In this conception, particularities or specificities arise through interrelations between objects, events, places and identities, and it is through clarifying how these relations are produced and changed in practice that close study of a particular part can generate broader claims and understandings”* (Hart, 2006: 996) Here, a Gramsci-inspired focus can illuminate how objects, events, places and identities are constituted in relation to others by power-laden practices and in various and interconnected arenas (Hart, 2006).

A Gramsci-inspired theoretical framework enables a study of the ‘material facts’ on the ground and its interaction with wider power-laden processes that constitute and condition social action. Following Gillian Hart (2002; 2006) the ‘place’ (e.g. the Atrato Region) becomes the nodal point in which this thesis aims to analyse how a Gramscian ‘class struggle’ has manifested itself at a local level. While this thesis is based on an ethnographic account of the construction of a counter-hegemonic project, it becomes embedded in a wider analysis of the relations of force that illuminate the power-laden practices that form the context that produce, condition and change the relationships between the ‘hegemonic project’ and ‘counter-hegemonic forces’.

1.5.1 Historicism as a method

Gramsci’s historicism is rooted in his understanding that historical processes can be understood and can be brought into relationship with each other. Distinct historical processes are able to ‘define’ a particular reality based on the coming together of different social, political and economic (hegemonic) understandings of the world. These processes come to define and compose the ideational and material reality of a particular society (at a particular time and in a particular space) – **‘the philosophy of praxis’**. Historicism is seen as a method that starts with the analysis of particular historical conjunctures and (organic) movements. These are “...*historical moments that articulate the punctual temporality of the event with longer-term forms of historical duration*” emphasising “...*the dialectics⁹ of continuity and discontinuity that shape social reality*” (Kipfer, 2013: 86). A conjuncture is seen as a junction of distinct but intertwined temporalities, and tries to grasp how different historical rhythms do overlap in the course of time and compose an apparently stable ‘whole’ (Crehan, 2002; Ekers et al., 2013).

Gramsci himself distinguished between organic and conjunctural phenomena based on their historical duration -relatively permanent versus occasional/ day-to-day phenomena. Both kinds of movements are interrelated and unite the economic and political sphere within a method that tries to grasp the coming together of various structural conditions and their political and economic responses. With the purpose to analyse how particular conjunctures can lead to political struggles (Crehan, 2002; Ekers et al., 2013; Morera, 1990). Within this Gramscian method the situation becomes the particular unit of historical, economic and political analysis as it is able to include the distinct temporalities, processes and relations of force at a certain ‘moment’ (Morera, 1990). *“Structure, conjuncture, event; these are the elements of the situation, each with its specific rhythm, its temporality and all linked together in a dialectical unity, a unity of contradictory forces”* (Morera, 1990: 91). Gramsci didn’t gave a clear theory for the analysis of these different movements, and the distinction between these two categories of movement can be hard to establish (Forgacs, 2000). However, building upon Ekers et al. (2013): the merit of a Gramscian conjunctural approach lies in the fact that it emphasises the dialectic relationships between different processes, and recognises the coming together of these distinct processes at different times, in different localities. As such, Gramsci’s perspective permits an holistic, contextualised, spatialised perspective that is able to analyse a particular

⁹ Following Glassman (2013): the notion of dialectic can be understood in two (distinct but mutually related) ways: at first there is the notion of dialectics as a way of thinking that “emphasises the understandings of processes, flows, fluxes and relations over the analysis of elements, things, structures and organised systems” (Harvey (2008: 2606), cited in Glassman, 2013:245), but this interpretation implies an ontological commitment to the existence of a ‘real dialectic’ defined as “the broader process of socio-natural transformation that themselves dialectically interpenetrate thought” (Glassman, 2013:246)

local reality (Hart's 'place') at specific times (Crehan, 2002; Ekers et al., 2013; Hart, 2002; 2006; Morera, 1990).

This thesis is ultimately grounded in Gramsci's method of historicism in which the local reality of the Atrato region, thus, becomes the 'place' in which different structural forces and their social and political responses interact at specific 'moments' in time. Gramscian 'situations' in which organic/ structural phenomena and conjunctural political responses interact form the basis of the structural outline of this thesis. Here the ideational and material reality in the region becomes analysed in terms of a specific 'hegemonic' definition of the world, against which the Claretian Missionaries approach became -framed in terms of an 'alternative (counter-hegemonic) conception of the world' – developed in order to challenge the dominant status-quo. Ultimately, this will clarify the production and change of the relationships between the two 'conceptions of the world' in specific situations.

1.5.2 The consolidation of class hegemony

The Philosophy of Praxis as the basis for social ordering

Gramsci's work is inherently concerned with historicising politics and the political as part of a larger relational negotiation between the material and ideational, political society and civil society, humans and nature (Ekers et al., 2013; Ekers & Loftus, 2008; Forgacs, 2000; Haug, 2000; 2001). Understanding politics and the political is the central feature within Gramsci's thinking, and he uses different concepts to come to grasps with what he sees as the inherently political negotiation of a hegemonic definition of reality based on class struggle¹⁰. In this line of thinking Gramsci understands a situation of political dominance as a manifestation of class hegemony in which a particular 'class' is able to define the material and ideational reality upon which society is based.

Gramsci's '**philosophy of praxis**' –derived from Marx- understands 'politics' and 'the political' as two distinct (analytical) concepts (Crehan, 2002; Haug, 2000; 2001). 'The political' is seen as an inherently relational concept and is essentially about the translation and the negotiation of a (bourgeois) 'class project' -as the (*philosophical*) foundation for its material realisation in 'politics'. According to Gramsci, a historicism of the manifestation of the ideational and the material dimensions of society is needed to analyse and explain a particular hegemonic manifestation of political thought and the materiality of politics –the philosophy of praxis- in a wider society at a certain moment. All thinking and doing is articulated socially, is mediated through praxis and is further situated in history. "*In a society characterized by class-domination which predominantly relies on power over minds, philosophy of praxis comes to life in the class struggle*" (Haug, 2001: 12). "*Philosophy in this [read: Gramsci's] perspective figures as a particularly intense form of organization of social relations of knowledge within which political practice occurs, and thus as itself already a form of highly mediated institutional and discursive political practice. Equally, politics, in so far as it attempts to modify the organization of the social relations of which knowledge forms an integral part, is itself already a form of highly mediated 'philosophical' practice. Politics, that is, is comprehended as philosophy 'in the practical state'*" (Thomas, 2009b:29). The philosophy of praxis as an analytical concept emphasises the manifestation of a particular situation of 'class hegemony' by the self-regulated social form that is created at the material and ideational levels of society.

The two levels of the production of hegemony

In the process of the consolidation of a hegemonic *philosophy of praxis* Gramsci distinguishes between 'civil society' and 'political society'. Two concepts can be separated on an analytical level but are 'organically'

¹⁰ Following Gramsci's original work I will continue to use the concept of class within this (political economic) theoretical framework. Even though the usefulness of the concept has been debated within a range of disciplines and a lot of different concepts can be used to describe inequality (gendered, racial etc.). I will follow Crehan's (2002) line of thinking when emphasising the usefulness of the concept when discussing the large and more systemic inequalities in the world. The notion of class expresses the contrasts within a socio-historical order. Whereas Marx emphasised the organisation of production, this could be extended to the socio-historical (spatial) patterning of relationships –in line with the "going beyond Gramsci" advocated in this thesis- and its contradictions that result in a praxis: 'how class is a lived reality'. Exactly this 'living of class' includes –following Crehan- "the ways in which different inequalities are gendered, ethicized, or present themselves in the forms of particular national realities" (Crehan, 2002:195).

united within the ‘integral state’. The analytical distinction between the two lies in Gramsci’s conception that political society is the ‘hegemonic’ situation in which a particular group is able to dominate and organise the *philosophy of praxis* based on the institutional realisation of political claims, by using both force and consent. On the other hand civil society is the place where social classes strive for social and political leadership (or hegemony) over other classes (Mann, 2013; Thomas, 2009a; 2009b). Hegemony is seen as the “...social relation of coordination and direction through which the ‘bourgeois class project’ made the transition from a merely (economic) corporative to a properly hegemonic or political phase, successfully positing its own particular interest [...] as valid for society as a whole” (Thomas, 2009b: 31). The (integral) state is Gramsci’s concept to describe this unity of state/ political society and civil society, that together compose “...an internally differentiated, dialectically unified state-form’ that contains –socially and territorially- the possibility of ‘possessing all the intellectual and moral forces...needed to organize a complete and perfect society’” (Gramsci (SPN: 271) cited in Mann, 2013: 115). Here the integral state is not only limited to the machinery of government and its legal institutions but also composing the ‘dialectical unity’ between political and civil society (Mann, 2013; Thomas, 2009a; 2009b). “The historical unity of the ruling classes is realized in the State, and their history is essentially the history of States and Groups of States. But it would be wrong to think that this unity is simply juridical and political (though such forms of unity do have their importance too, and not in a purely formal sense); the fundamental historical unity, concretely, results from the organic relations between State or political society and ‘civil society’” (Gramsci (SPN: 52) cited in Mann, 2013: 113).

The distinction between ‘civil society’ and ‘political society’ only exists on an analytical level, in practice those people that become the ‘hegemonic bourgeois class’ rely on the unification of thought and action into a coherent *philosophy of praxis*. Hegemony –as central feature in Gramsci’s understanding of politics- operates within civil society, and can be understood as a specific spatial-temporal consolidation of particular (class) interests that become the defining grounds for the constitution of ‘the political’. Gramsci’s hegemony is not a theoretical concept but should be seen as a mere analytical tool to study questions of power in a particular context, as the tool through which other Gramscian concepts should be read (Crehan, 2002; Thomas, 2009a). A situation of hegemony needs the union of civil society and political society in the integral state, here Gramsci distinguishes two levels of its production that enable this ‘unity’: **coercion and consent**. Firstly, hegemony is located in the production of subjects – as “...a broader social project that attempts to inscribe itself on the body and on the body’s complex of ‘intellectual-cerebral’ and ‘muscular-nervous’ activities” (Glassman, 2013: 243&244), an interpretation closely related to Foucault’s concept of ‘governmentality’ (Ekers & Loftus, 2008; Mann, 2013; Whitehead, 2013). Here it is not meant to emphasise individual willingness to engage in certain activities, but one should see this ‘production of subjects’ as an organisation of a ‘collective will’ (see next section). In this way individuals are motivated to make their free choices based on certain limits – set by the ‘ruling class’. It implies some sort of acceptance of the socio-political order (it’s philosophy and corresponding materiality) as the core of collective consensus –having both an individual as a more structural basis (Morera, 1990). Secondly, hegemony is maintained through a particular combination of coercion and consent (and as such is always contestable) (Glassman, 2013; Ekers & Loftus, 2008). The consensual part operates at the forefront, meant to secure a ‘collective will’ that accepts the basis of the specific ‘hegemonic class alliance’. Domination or coercion occurs in more ‘marginal’ cases, it is deployed against those that could not be included within the collective will- those that oppose the class alliance (Cox, 1993; Morera, 1990; Thomas, 2009a). Here relations of force (army, police) become “...the ultimate guarantee for consent” (Thomas, 2009a: 165). Implying that hegemony “...always involves practical activity and the social relations that produce inequality, as well as the ideas by which that inequality is justified, explained, normalized” (Crehan, 2002: 174).

The ideological base for (counter-) hegemony

Whether a worldview can become hegemonic is related to its social, political and historical coherence (Thomas, 2009a). A philosophy –‘the ideational’- within the philosophy of praxis is an organic creation based on a societal consensus that accepts a ‘bourgeois hegemonic class project’. Gramsci distinguishes between ‘ideologies’ and ‘philosophies’ that can be understood as a spectrum of ‘conceptions of the world’

according to their level of coherency, elaboration, systematism, political organisation and centralisation (Crehan, 2002; Loftus, 2013; Thomas, 2009a).

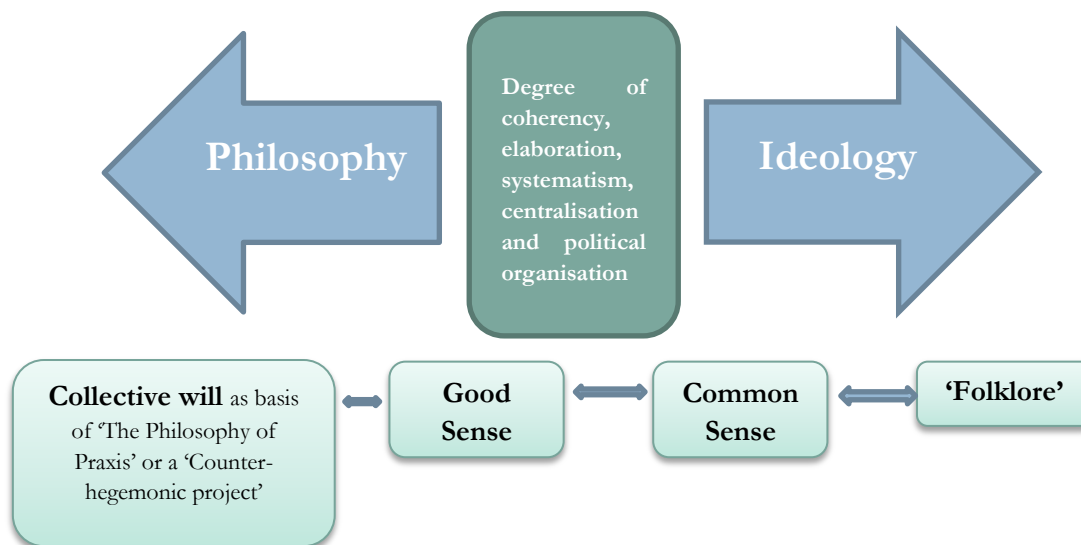


FIGURE 1: THE PHILOSOPHY - IDEOLOGY AXIS

In order to become the ideational basis of a 'hegemonic' situation, an ideology needs to transcend prevailing sorts of common sense: the ultimate aim of the philosophy of praxis (Loftus, 2013). Gramsci distinguishes various sorts of 'ideologies' / 'philosophies' using concepts as 'Folklore', 'Common Sense', 'Good Sense', 'Collective Will' and the 'Philosophy of Praxis'. 'Folklore' can be seen as 'a conception of the world and life' implicit in specific strata of society (Crehan, 2002). It's official definition according to the Oxford English Dictionary is "...the traditional beliefs, legends and customs, current among the common people; the study of these" (Crehan, 2002: 106). However, 'Folklore' as a Gramscian concept shouldn't be understood as a mere romantic notion. For Gramsci it was a particular conception of the world, present in diverse strata of society but in its least organised/ elaborated form. Thus the least 'powerful' concept on the philosophy-ideology axis, as it solely reflects the cultural conceptions of the people. *"Folklore can be understood only as a reflection of the conditions of cultural life of the people, although certain conceptions remain even after these conditions have been (or seem to be) modified or have given way to bizarre combinations"* (Gramsci (SCW: 188-190) cited in Crehan, 2002:107). However, its merit lies in identifying those elements within the 'Folklore' that could be used for wider 'philosophical' purposes. 'Common sense' can be understood as a particular 'conception of the world' of a particular social or regional group. It is a 'philosophical' folklore, seen as the most widespread conception of life and men. *"Common sense is not something rigid and immobile, but it is constantly transforming itself, enriching itself with scientific ideas and with 'philosophical' opinions which have entered ordinary life"* (Gramsci (SPN: 326) cited in Crehan, 2002: 110). 'Common sense' is relational, multiple, dynamic and fragmented and can be found throughout the whole of society. It is more organised and elaborated than 'Folklore' but still incoherent and fractured, and as such it is still not critical or possessing revolutionary potential (Crehan, 2002; Loftus, 2013). The concept of 'Good Sense' refers exactly to this more 'critical' or 'conscious' worldview inherent in the masses of society. Whereas 'Common Sense' is something to be transcended to unleash any counter-hegemonic potential, it does contain some elements of 'Good Sense'. This more critical perspective exactly provides *"...the raw material out of which counter-hegemonic narratives develop"* (Crehan, 2002:114). 'Good Sense' does reflect activities and conceptions within the wider society, however it is a more renovated and critical application of prevailing common senses that

have the potential to be transformed into a more coherent whole. For a ‘conception of the world’ to become ‘*philosophical*’ –and as such elaborated, politically organised, centralised, systematic and coherent– intellectuals are crucial. To engage in a successful hegemonic or counter-hegemonic project one needs to build upon a form of ‘collective will’ that either accepts the ‘philosophy of praxis’ or has the potential to criticise it at a politically organised/ wide-spread level –discussed in the next section (Crehan, 2002; Loftus, 2013; Morera, 1990; Thomas, 2009a).

In sum, the consolidation of a situation of class hegemony is based on the use of both coercion and consent in order to let wider society accept the hegemonic philosophy (and its materialisation) based on a collective will. Here this ‘philosophy’ thus corresponds with critical and non-critical ideologies present in wider society. Without this societal acceptance a hegemonic project would not be able to survive, as its legitimacy is dependent on it. However, if a ‘collective will’ does not accept the situation of elite dominance the fundamentals of the class hegemony are challenged. Here, an analysis of the ‘*philosophical*’ foundations of the ‘dominant social patterning’ within the Colombian State and its interaction with the development of ‘alternative world views’ that could have the potential to undermine the societal consensus –dependent on the new philosophy’s degree of coherency, elaboration, systematism, centralisation and political organisation– forms the analytical angle of this thesis.

1.5.3 The role of intellectuals

Gramsci’s acknowledgement of the existence of multiple, contradicting ‘world views’ within a hegemonic project and his emphasis on situations of uneven development opens up the ability to see hegemony as spatial, relational, temporal, and as such contestable. Following Glassman (2013) this locates politics in a “...*historically dynamic relational process that both produces and undermines hegemony*” (Glassman, 2013: 250). In this sense a conjunctural analysis would be all about analysing the struggle –political, economic, ideological, social and cultural– inherent in the constellation of a situation of ‘class hegemony’ to develop a form of (alternative) consciousness that is meant to provide the basis for a new form of political hegemony. The preceding summary of Gramsci’s ‘political hegemony’ can also be translated to the political practices of sub-altern groups. “*The conflict and opposition inherent within the state of domination [...] set in motion the process by which consciousness and reason are developed. What Gramsci attempts to do, following Marx, is to locate this process within a historical dialectic immersed within a material and natural reality*” (Fontana, 2013:137). As such, the situation of hegemony might itself sow the seeds for resistance. The social differences inherent in the consolidation of hegemony, thus, can result in the development of sub-altern political practice.

According to Gramsci, a successful revolution is achieved by the creation of a proletarian culture – a new ‘culture’ that represents the worldview of an emerging class. Within this process, intellectuals are said to be crucial actors. Intellectuals are understood to be the actors that are able to transform incoherent and fragmented ‘understandings’ of a particular class into a coherent and reasoned vision upon the world. Gramsci argues that ‘Folklore’, ‘Common Sense’ and ‘Good Sense’ contain alternative world views to the hegemonic ‘philosophy of praxis’. However, even these alternatives are developed in and interacting with society as a whole and as such are influenced by the situation of class dominance (Crehan, 2002). What society lacks, therefore, is a group of actors capable of transforming these worldviews into an elaborated, directed, critical and politically-organised alternative towards the dominant ‘status quo’ (Crehan, 2002; Loftus, 2013). As such, sub-altern groups are able to develop a form of critical consciousness –the core of ‘Good Sense’– that can lead to the transformation of a particular social group from a class-in-itself to a class-for-itself. The role of intellectuals is said to be crucial in uniting (‘*philosophical*’) knowledge with the feelings of a particular dominated class. “*The popular element ‘feels’ but does not always know or understand; the intellectual element ‘knows’ but does not always understand and in particular does not always feel... The intellectual’s error consists in believing that one can know without understanding and even more without feeling and being impassioned (not only for knowledge in itself but also for the object of knowledge): in other words that the intellectual can be an intellectual (and not a pure pendant) if distinct and separate from the people-nation, that is, without feeling the elementary passions of the people,*

understanding them and therefore explaining and justifying them in the particular historical situation and connecting them dialectically to the laws of history and to a superior conception of the world, scientifically and coherently elaborated –i.e. knowledge. One cannot make politics history without this passion, without this sentimental connection between intellectuals and people-nation” (Gramsci (SPN:418), cited in Crehan, 2002: 130).

Gramsci sees an intellectual as someone that has the responsibility –being a specific function in society- to produce and pass on knowledge to a particular society. He identifies the specific role of an intellectual being: directional, organisational, educational and intellectual (Crehan, 2002: 131). As such, being the ‘bridge builder’ between ideology and philosophy. In line with Gramsci’s historical and relational understanding of the world, the ‘intellectual’ should be seen as both an individual and as a set of social relations in a particular time and space. Therefore the intellectual “...not only grasps the contradictions, but positions himself as an element of the contradictions and elevates this element to a principle of knowledge and therefore action” (Gramsci (SPN: 405), cited in Crehan, 2002: 133). Intellectuals need to be connected to a particular economic and social class to be able to develop a homogeneous critical conception of the world concerned with specific interests and positions in society.

Gramsci’s makes the distinction between organic intellectuals and traditional intellectuals. Organic intellectuals are those intellectuals that are fundamentally and structurally related to the development of a particular (new) class, being mediated by society as a whole –and as such within the regimes of power in society- and the wider superstructures¹¹. Traditional intellectuals -on the other hand- are those intellectuals that originally have not had organic links to a particular class but have developed themselves into “...a crystallized social group...which sees itself as continuing uninterruptedly through history and thus independent of the struggle of groups” (Gramsci (SPN: 452), cited in Crehan, 2002: 141). The organic intellectuals of a new social class need to confront the traditional and organic intellectuals of the bourgeoisie in order to challenge their hegemonic position by providing an ‘alternative conception of the world’. “A human mass does not ‘distinguish’ itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organising itself; and there is no organisation without intellectuals, that is without organisers and leaders, in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory-practice nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of people ‘specialised’ in conceptual and ‘philosophical’ elaboration of ideas. But the process of creating intellectuals is long, difficult, full of contradictions, advance and retreats, dispersals and regroupings, in which the loyalty of the masses is often solely tried. (And one must not forget that as this early stage loyalty and discipline are the ways in which the masses participate and collaborate in the development of the cultural movement as a whole.) The process of development is tied to a dialectic between the intellectuals and the masses. The intellectual stratum develops both quantitatively and qualitatively, but every leap forward towards a new breadth and complexity of the intellectual stratum is tied to an analogous movement on the part of the mass of the ‘simple’, who raise themselves to higher levels of culture and at the same time extend their circle of influence towards the stratum of specialised intellectuals, producing outstanding individuals and groups of greater or less importance.” (Gramsci (SPN: 334-5), cited in Crehan, 2002: 151). Key in this counter-hegemonic project, thus, is the ability of a group of organic intellectuals -closely connected to the masses- to organise, educate, direct and intellect a new class in an ‘alternative conception of the world’. This happens by turning prevailing societal ideologies –its most critical part rooted in ‘Good Sense’- into a ‘philosophy’, in order to engage in a mass movement based on a collective sense of purpose and a relatively homogenous collective will. This is achieved by creating a ‘cultural-social unity’ that unites multiple diverse wills with diverging aims into a single (critical) conception of the world. This implies the need for a long historical process and a wide range of social relationships throughout society (Crehan, 2002).

In order to assess the validity, scope and content of the counter-hegemonic project, it becomes crucial to see the role of the Claretian Missionaries as organic intellectuals, in order to analyse how and to what extent they have been able to develop a critical world view –as a basis for their counter-hegemonic project- that is consistent with the feelings of a particular class. Furthermore, it allows us to investigate

¹¹ Following Marxism: superstructures are the social institutions that are erected upon the ‘economic base of society’.

whether these Missionaries have been able to transform this ‘class’ from a class-in-itself into a class-for-itself. As such, the critical world view of the Claretian Missionaries needs to be compared to the feelings and conceptions of the ‘class’ they targeted. The assessment of the potential of this counter-hegemonic project should incorporate a study of how the Claretians have been able to organise, educate, direct and intellect this class in an alternative conception of the world, and to identify whether they have succeeded in creating a ‘mass movement’ based on a shared purpose and collective will.

1.5.4 Beyond Gramsci

The previous sections have outlined some of the main concepts of Antonio Gramsci work concerned with historical evolvement of a hegemonic political project and its implicit counter-revolutionary potential. Every section concluded with an evaluation of the relevance of these analytical concepts for this thesis. This ‘theoretical outlook’ concludes with a short summary of some elements that ‘move beyond’ Gramsci’s original interpretation –originating from those scholars that started to revalidate his insights in the last decades- and -as such- extends Gramsci’s original perspective to make it useful to analyse the current conjuncture. This section deals especially with four themes: space and nature (as under-emphasised themes in Gramsci’s original work); the concept of ‘structural violence’ and a historicism of the current neo-liberal conjuncture (in order to contextualise the Colombian State’s neoliberal orientation within wider global processes).

Spatiality in Gramsci

When (re)emphasising – following Ekers et al. (2013)- Gramsci’s spatial sensitivity within his theory of hegemony, hegemony can be seen as: “...*doubly geographical in that it is constituted on the basis of spatial relations, and such relations become hegemonic as geographies are naturalized as common sense through political and cultural practices*” (Wainwright (2005: 1037) cited in Karriem, 2013: 144). One of Ekers et al.’s (2013) main arguments in their attempt to revalidate Gramsci is their plead for a more explicit spatialised understanding of Gramsci’s work. In their revalidation Henri Lefebvre is identified as providing an important ingredient for Gramsci’s spatial conception of hegemony by explicitly theorising hegemony as a spatial project and affirming the inherently spatial dimensions of state-power (Ballvé, 2011; Brenner & Elden, 2009; Ekers et al., 2013; Hart, 2008). This revalidation of space is meant to extend Gramsci’s ideas to the current (global) conjuncture and the situation of uneven capitalist development, to reposition him as a “*historical-geographical materialist avant la lettre*” (Ekers & Loftus, 2013: 26; further supported by writings as: Ekers et al., 2013; Harvey, 2000; 2005; 2007; Hart, 1998; 2002; 2006; 2008; 2009; Goldman, 2001; 2005). Gramsci already considered geography as an important feature in the constellation of a situation of hegemony by the way territorial distinctions are socially produced within a hegemonic project (Ekers et al., 2013; Hart, 2008). As such he emphasises the fractured process of state-formation (seen as the class project of the bourgeois), and its manifestation in a social struggle over space and territory (Morton, 2013). The conditions of spatiality are part of the bigger hegemonic project in which political society comes to define –by using force and consent- the (ideational and material) conditions upon which a given territory is deployed. Here, an historical-geographical analysis and ethnography that are grounded in a relational conception of the production of space has the capacity to point out the different processes and interconnections that constitute the Hart’s specific “...*nodal point of interconnection in socially produced space*” (Hart, 2006: 996).

It is important to note that this sense of space has both material and ideational aspects, following Gramsci’s emphasis on the interrelatedness of both dimensions. The notion of capital –‘the economic’- has a central place within Gramsci’s work, in which the state is seen as the prime facilitator of capitalist expansion by setting the conditions “...*securing processes of primitive accumulation, relations in civil society including culture, ideas and language tend to be dominated by state-power*” (Morton, 2013: 50). At the same time solidarities and relationships –the political- are also produced in a spatialised way. Gramsci stresses the practices through which political activity becomes conducted and how these relationships have specific ‘political geographies of connection’. He emphasises the generative character of these dimensions for political

activity (Featherstone, 2013). As such a conjunctural analysis needs to incorporate a spatial sensitivity within the political analysis of the production of (counter) hegemony, in which spatial divides are defined, (re)created and transformed (Ekers et al., 2013; Kipfer, 2013; Morton, 2013).

This spatiality (or spatial differentiation) does not only describe intra-state relationships, it also touches on the international dimensions of a hegemonic project. Gramsci already argued: *“It is also necessary to take into account the fact that international relations intertwine with these internal relations of nation-states, creating new, unique and historically concrete combinations. A particular ideology for instance, born in a highly developed country, is disseminated in less developed countries, impinging on the local interplay of combinations. This relation between international forces and national forces is further complicated by the existence within every state of several structurally diverse territorial sectors, with diverse relations of force at all levels”* (Gramsci (SPN:182) cited in Morton, 2013: 58). As such a spatiality can be found within Gramsci’s conjuncture, arguing that the specific ‘local moment’ is intimately linked to regional, national and international processes and social relationships. *“In real history these moments [in the relations of force] imply each other reciprocally –horizontally and vertically, so to speak- that is according to socio-economic activity (horizontally) and to country (vertically), combining and diverging in various ways. Each of these combinations may be represented by its own organised economic and political expression. It is also necessary to take into account the fact that international relations intertwine with these internal relations of nation-states, creating new, unique and historically concrete combinations. This relation between international forces and national forces is further complicated by the existence within every State of several structurally divers territorial sectors, with diverse relations of force at all levels”* (Gramsci (SPN: 182) cited in Kipfer & Hart, 2013: 329).

Nature in Gramsci

Nature is one of the central themes within the collection of Ekers et al. (2013), where they use Gramsci’s understanding of nature, link it with Lefebvre’s conception of space –and territory- and go beyond Gramsci to especially emphasise the mutual co-evolution between nature and society. A relationship that Gramsci sometimes discussed ambiguously (Ekers & Loftus, 2013). Haug (2001) argues that according to Gramsci *“...nature is exactly not a beyond for the practical-historical reality of human beings. Philosophy of Praxis signifies for him a ‘unified process of reality’: a thinking of the ‘dialectical mediation between human beings and nature’. The mediation of this unity, however, can only become real through praxis”* (Haug, 2001: 9). *“In producing nature through labor and technology, humans and nature co-evolve and it is a consciousness of this process that opens possibilities for reorganizing society-nature relations on a new basis”* (Ekers et al. (2009:288) cited in Karriem, 2013:145). As such the production of nature is based on its relation with man-kind and part of the hegemonic project within the philosophy of praxis. Here nature becomes one of the elements within the ideational and material dimensions of the philosophy of praxis based on a certain conception of the world. As such –when building on Marx’ “trinity formula”¹² - one is able to emphasise a relational production of a space: how it is a site, medium and outcome of specific socio-political struggle around its relation with man-kind and specific ‘conceptions of the world’. Furthermore, an emphasis on nature contributes to *“...a fuller recognition of nature’s role in the making of capitalism expands and modifies the temporal and geographical referents that have framed dominant narratives of modernity”* (Coronil, 2000: 355). Coronil (2000) further argues that the incorporation of the triadic understanding helps to change the conventional understanding on the development of capitalism by recognising: (1) how nature is an important dimension within the creation of wealth. *“This perspective makes it possible to view the specific mechanisms through which capitalist exploitation extracts surplus labour from works as well as natural riches from the earth under different historical conditions. It also makes it possible to see lines of continuity and change between modes of appropriating nature under colonial and neoliberal regimes of domination”* (Coronil, 2000: 356). (2) It helps to see capitalism as a global process that because of nature’s ‘socialised materiality’ brings back the social actors that have been involved in the process of commodification (Coronil, 2000). Nature -as such- can be an important ingredient within the current (and

¹² Marx’ trinity formula distinguishes between capital, land and labour as the key elements within the social process of ‘production’. According to Marx, these factors of production are the main determinants that can generate new value to output. As these form the ingredients that limit the maximum output of the ‘production function’ by its given combination of available factors of production.

past) functioning of the capitalist system and processes of state-formation. Furthermore, when going beyond an abstract conception of space (nature/ territory/ land) this opens up a possibility to see its central place in socio-political struggles (Brenner & Elden, 2009; Coronil, 2000; Ekers et al., 2013; Hart, 2008).

Structural violence

Gramsci is ultimately concerned with studying the inherently political negotiation of a hegemonic definition of reality based on class struggle in which any form of hegemony is based on a form of class dominance over the wider 'civil society' by using a particular combination of coercion and consent. Furthermore, he affirms the inequalities inherent in these situations of dominance by the naturalisation of (social, political, economic and geographical) distinctions. Gramsci doesn't offer a clear-cut analytical concept to grasp these 'naturalised' distinctions. Even though they can be framed as the 'inherent inequalities within the hegemonic state project' –in society and wider superstructures- he did not provide us with a tool to explicitly put forward the different 'mechanisms' through which these inequalities are produced and maintained. In this thesis the concept of structural violence will be used to explicitly put forward these structural implications of a situation of class dominance on the wider civil society. The concept has its origin in the 'conflict triangle' of Johan Galtung, but is extended by using the insights of Slavoj Žižek's concept of 'objective violence'. Johan Galtung has been one of the most influential scholars in the field of conflict studies and his concept of 'structural violence' is widely used to refer to the contradictions inherent in a social structure or the wider macro-economic system that influences the wider manifestation of (direct and cultural) violence¹³ (a Gramscian *class struggle*) (Galtung, 1990; Miall, 2004; Ramsbotham et al, 2004). The merit of using Galtung's concept within this Gramsci-inspired analysis is that his concept of structural violence enables me to directly study the inequalities inherent in the 'hegemonic state project' and recognises that these structural inequalities form the basis of a 'conflict structure' in which direct and cultural violence can manifest themselves. Here it extends Gramsci's perspective on the dialectic interaction between the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic project as a form of class struggle by a more explicit theorisation of the role of conflict. Thus, the processual manifestation of relationships of exploitation and struggle within the wider social structure will be more explicitly labelled (Galtung, 1990). The concept extends a focus on (direct) violence as it recognises "...that the meaning of conflict depends largely on the context out of which it arises" (Miall, 2004: 8). This means that the focus on the contradictions at a state-society level should take notice of various "*crucial background aspects*" as: "...culture, governance arrangements, institutions, social roles, norms, the roles and codes in place in a society and its path of development" (Miall, 2004:8). This perspective also corresponds with Slavoj Žižek's (2009) emphasis on the violence inherent in the 'normal state of being' that forms the background contours against which physical violence erupts. Žižek's main point is that the study of subjective violence (direct physical violence) ignores the very background against which these outbursts are generated (Žižek, 2009). He uses the concept of objective violence to make this invisible dimension visible. There are two kinds of objective violence. First there is: symbolic violence, the violence that is inherent in our language, which reproduces relations of social domination and creates an universe of meaning which is taken for granted (Gramsci's '*collective will*'). Secondly, there is 'systemic violence' the violence that is caused by the "...catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems" (Žižek, 2009:1). These can be seen as the implications of the materialisation of a 'hegemonic social order' on wider society. In this thesis, structural violence refers to the 'back ground contours' in culture, governance arrangements, institutions, social roles, norms etc. that are –ultimately- manifested in the relationships of exploitation and class struggle in the wider society. As such, the concept comprises the mechanisms that are used to objectify a situation of

¹³ Galtung's simple but comprehensive 'conflict triangle' distinguishes between three forms of violence (and their manifestations): direct violence (based on attitudes), structural violence (based on contradictions) and cultural violence (based on behaviour). In which structural violence forms the basis against which direct and cultural violence can erupt.

class hegemony but –at the same time- form the crucial background contours against which any ‘conflict’ can erupt.

A historicism of the global neo-liberal conjuncture

To understand the contemporary political (world) economy in which socio-political struggles are fought out, one cannot escape a discussion of the role of neoliberalism, capitalism and geo-politics in order to properly contextualise the social relations, materialisations and ideologies within a global playing field. Neoliberalism should be seen as a specific (hegemonic) framework –an ideological project- that provides a conception of the world promoting competitive globalisation. It operates at the various ideational and material levels of society. Neoliberalism should not solely be seen as an economic project. It is inherently political and manifests itself profoundly in all levels of society (Hart, 2002; 2009; 2011; Harvey, 2007; Peck & Tickell, 2000). Neoliberalism is ‘plural’, it combines itself with other models and modifies them to correspond with a particular vision upon a desirable ‘theological destination’ and long-term tendency within the political economy (Hall, 2011; Hart, 2002). Neoliberalism should be understood in specific historical-spatial terms. *“The process of neoliberalization, then, is neither monolithic in form nor universal in effect”* (Peck & Tickell, 2000: 384).

Neo-liberalism’s form and content have made several significant changes in the course of time. Within the expansion of the neoliberal project capitalism took a ‘double movement’. The current neo-liberal conjuncture is characterised by a continuous expansion of capital accumulation –based on ‘new strategies’- whilst its inherent contradictions create both potential for resistance as well compose the sites where capitalism’s ideational and material ‘base’ are constantly redefined to contain and eliminate these spaces for social struggle. Within the historicism of neoliberal project three phases can be distinguished, building upon Peck & Tickell’s typology: “proto-neoliberalism” (< late 1970s) via “roll-back neoliberalism” (late 1970s- early 1990s) towards “roll-out neoliberalism” (early 1990s - present), that are meant to reflect three different phases in the development of the neoliberal hegemony. In which North-South relationships are embedded within the uneven and contradicting history of capitalist development (Goldman, 2005; Hart, 2009; Peck & Tickell, 2000).

“Proto-Neoliberalism” (< late 1970s) – Post Colonialism and The Collapse of Bretton Woods

Whilst internal upheavals and popular support for colonialism vanished, a new ‘Development’ paradigm was born after the second world war. Harry S. Truman’s inauguration speech (in January 1949) is illustrative. He promised that ‘the West would bring progress to the Rest’. It is seen as having been the start of a discursive formation in which the ‘Third World’ was created. This kind of interventionism reflects a form of power in geographically distinct but interconnected areas, based on the history of colonialism and influenced –importantly- by the uneven dynamics of capitalist development within the North-South relations, and later the Cold War (Goldman, 2005; Hart, 2009). In this ‘proto-type’ phase -in which the ‘intellectual’ project of the neoliberalism was being developed- the discourse of Development started to flourish. A key turning point became the shift between the ‘Bretton Woods Regime’ –in which exchange rates were fixed but adjustable- towards the ‘Dollar/ Wall Street Regime’ that continued to dominate the phases of ‘roll-back’ and ‘roll-out neoliberalism’ (Goldman, 2005; Hart, 2009; Peck & Tickell, 2000). Whereas this phase fell short of its aim to alleviate poverty, the resource flows that started to be transferred to ‘less developed countries’ increased enormously (Goldman, 2005; Hart, 2009). The escalation of oil prices in 1973 and the flood of petro dollars into commercial banks created economic incentives for big loans towards the ‘Third World’. These shifts in the global political economy were accompanied by the reconfiguration of US military power during the Cold War, as well the increased dominance of institutions as the IMF and World Bank in providing loans to the Third World. During this phase, the University of Chicago would be a centre for education economists who would become the main promoters of neo-liberal policy. With the discrediting of Keynesian economics in the 1970s, accompanied by broader economic crisis, the Chilean coup became testing ground for *“...a frontal assault*

on both Keynesian and Development economics” (Hart, 2009: 128). The Chilean success became a justification to use stabilisation and structural adjustment packages in other parts of the world in the 1980s.

“Roll-Back Neoliberalism” (late 1970s – early 1990s)

In the late 1970s the ‘intellectual’ project of neoliberalism, advocated by the Chicago School became anchored within the policies of the governments of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, entering the phase of “roll-back neoliberalism”. Whereas neoliberalism had been mainly an intellectual project meant to restore free-market thinking, with the protagonists of the US and the UK, neoliberalism evolved in the 1980s into a political project emphasising the freeing up of markets, the moving away from the welfare state whilst promoting the supply side conditions of capital accumulation (Harvey, 2005; Peck & Tickell, 2000). The ‘intellectual project’ moved away from state-led developmentalism towards the neo-liberal doctrine, where state power was used to marketise and deregulate those institutions that were behind the Keynesian model (Peck & Tickell, 2000). In this phase, the neoliberal discourse started to enter the policy cycles of various international institutions by changing the frameworks of institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank (Goldman, 2005). Especially those countries that had started to borrow money from the IMF and World Bank became trapped by their debts in the ‘New Dollar/ Wall street regime’ when stabilisation and structural adjustment became to dominate World Bank and IMF politics –following the Chilean success as example (Hart, 2009). “*Structural adjustment programs forced the developing world to set market forces free, open their economies to free trade and foreign investment, while promoting the liberal virtues of elections, multi-party politics, the rule of law and good governance*” (Hall, 2011: 707).

“Roll-out Neoliberalism” (early 1990s – now)

In the early 1990s this neoliberalism evolved further, responding to “...*the institutional and political limits as evidence of the perverse economic consequences and pronounced social externalities of narrowly market centric forms of neoliberalism*” (Peck & Tickell, 2000: 388). In this phase of “roll-out neoliberalism”, new forms of institution-building and governmental intervention became part of the wider neoliberal project. Neoliberalism became increasingly concerned with providing new institutional hardware. In this new ‘era’ processes of economic management became increasingly technocratic and depoliticised, “...*acquiring the status of a –taken-for-granted or foundational policy orientation*” (Peck & Tickell, 2000: 389). At the same time an interventionist agenda developed surrounding social and penal issues where “...*new technologies of government are being designed and rolled out, new discourses of reform are being constructed, [...], new institutions and modes of delivery are being fashioned, and new social subjectivities are being fostered*” (Peck & Tickell, 2000: 389). Following Peck & Tickell (2000) there are three main implications of the shift to roll-out neoliberalism. Firstly, the neoliberal project became increasingly extended to incorporate some forms of governance and regulation that operated outside of the market. Secondly, the extension of the neo-liberal project since the 1990s has influenced the ‘terms’ on which the (national) ‘philosophy of praxis’ can be negotiated. Thirdly, the ‘new project’ has increasingly been focussed on the financing of economic policy and the activation of a market principle within social policies.

Hegemony and spatiality within the neoliberal project

As the neoliberal (international) paradigm has found its ways into (inter)national policies and institutions, it comes to intersect with the state-logic of power and capital accumulation. Hegemony is reflected in a range of spatio-historical relations constructed within the dominant (world-wide) neo-liberal conjuncture. The institutionalisation of the neoliberal discourse in a range of (inter)national governmental institutions - that reflects the shift from roll-back to roll-out neoliberalism- illustrates Gramsci’s idea that hegemony is reflected in the dialectic relationship between coercion and consent. The double dialectic of the territorial and capitalist logic of power reflects the internal and external relationships of the capitalist state. As the neoliberal paradigm provides a global hegemonic interpretation of desirable governance and economic development, this logic interferes with the territorial logic of power when taking into account the central role of the state –and the world system- in consolidating its power and “...*exploiting the uneven geographical*

conditions under which capital accumulation occurs” (Harvey, 2005: 31). Here a wider ‘philosophy of praxis’ influences the context in which the Colombian State develops its national policy orientations, thus, exemplifying its interaction with international institutions and frameworks that increasingly have been able to put forward a ‘hegemonic neoliberal project’ at a global level and succeed to impose this vision upon individual nation states.

1.6 Overview of chapters

The structural outline of this thesis is grounded Gramsci’s method of ‘historicism’, and in this case the historicism of a ‘counter-hegemonic project’ initiated by the Claretian Missionaries. The different chapters of this thesis are outlined according to the identification of specific time frames –corresponding with Gramscian ‘moments’ in which structural forces and political responses interacted and have resulted in a change in the political, cultural and economic conditions under which ‘hegemonic’ and ‘counter-hegemonic’ forces interacted. Chapters Four, Five and Seven are based on a conjunctural analysis – emphasising a specific ‘moment’- by studying the spatio-temporal interaction between the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic project within the context of structural violence. Chapters Three and Six are meant to emphasise the *philosophy of praxis* of the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces in order to exemplify the ideational and material background upon which the specific interactions in the other chapters were based. Whilst Chapter Three illuminates the exact content of the *philosophy* of the counter-hegemonic project –in order to determine the exact content of the Claretian Missionaries’ counter-hegemonic project. Chapter Six further contextualises the development of the hegemonic state project since the early 1990s, that has for an important degree influenced the ‘context of structural violence’ in which the counter-hegemonic project needed to operate in the third conjuncture. The outline of this thesis is as follows:

- **Chapter Two: Research Methods**

This chapter provides the reader with a methodological overview (and justification) of the tools and methods used along the whole research process (preparation, field work and analysis). Furthermore, this chapter is accompanied by a reflection on a variety of choices made in the course of the research process and their implications for this research’ reliability and validity.

- **Chapter Three: A historicism of the Claretian Missionaries’ Approach in the Chocó (1909-early 1990s)**

This chapter introduces the origin of the ‘*philosophy*’ behind the Claretian Missionaries approach, by discussing the place of the Claretian Missionaries within the National Church, its organisational development as religious community in the Chocó Department, and a dense description of the *philosophy* behind their ‘Evangelic Mission’ that was meant to engage in a transformation of the socio-political formation of the *Chocoanean* people.

- **Chapter Four: The first conjuncture ‘La lucha por el territorio’ (1980s-1991).**

This chapter discusses how the Claretians (and other missionaries) started to introduce an ‘alternative conception of the world’ in the Atrato-region, hereby adopting the role of ‘*organic intellectual*’ in order to educate the rural Afro-Colombian population in a critical conception of the world. This was meant to empower the rural communities against perceived threats that were initiated by the hegemonic social patterning within the Colombian State-formation. This chapter discusses how this process has been developing in the 1980s and studies how this ‘intellectual project’ came to intersect with a structural opportunity to obtain governmental recognition –in a Gramscian ‘moment’. It further discusses the role of the Claretian Missionaries within this ‘intellectual project’, their interaction with the rural Afro-Colombian communities and the interaction with the hegemonic state-project. The chapter covers a time-frame from the early 1980s until 1991.

- **Chapter Five: The second conjuncture ‘A short term victory or a Gramscian *passive revolution*’ (1991-1996)**

This chapter discusses the effects of the institutional recognition of the Afro-Colombians’ status as a (officially recognised) minority group and the development of a law that granted the rural Afro-Colombians in the Pacific region the right to collective territories. These institutional developments have affected the scope, content and development of the ‘counter-hegemonic project’. How some inherent qualities of the institutional recognition have affected the relationships between the ‘hegemonic and counter-hegemonic project’ will be discussed. This chapter follows a time frame that starts with the adoption of the new constitution in 1991 and ends with the recognition of the first collective territories in 1996.

- **Chapter Six: The context of structural violence: ‘An extension of the state’s hegemonic project’ (1991-now)**

This chapter discusses some developments within the state’s hegemonic project that have influenced the context of structural violence in which the ‘counter-hegemonic project’ operates. This chapter discusses how the escalation of violence in the Chocó, the further development of the state’s neoliberal orientation and the continued marginal position of the rural Afro-Colombian communities have influenced the context in which the ‘counter-hegemonic project’ needed to continue its political mission after the institutional recognition in the early 1990s. This chapter follows a time frame that starts in 1991 until the present day when outlining the changes within the hegemonic project (while building upon the insights that were provided in chapter 1.2.2).

- **Chapter Seven: The third conjuncture ‘Territorial autonomy undermined: the intellectual project in an impasse?’ (1997-now)**

This chapter discusses how the institutionalisation of the ethnic and territorial rights of the (rural) Afro-Colombian population and the changed context of structural violence have affected the scope, content and spatio-temporal development of the counter-hegemonic project under the jurisdiction of the just established ‘ethno-territorial organisations’. This chapter follows a time-frame that starts with the recognition of the first collective land titles in the *Medio Atrato* region (1997) until the present day.

- **Chapter Eight: Conclusion**

This chapter presents a theoretically informed conclusion/ discussion in which the main findings of this thesis are described, interpreted and discussed; the relevance of this research is explained; and suggestions for further research are presented.

Chapter 2: Research Methods

2.1 Introduction

The data-collection of this thesis is based on qualitative research grounded in a three and a half month period of field research in Quibdó, Chocó, Colombia. This phase had been preceded by initial desk research that would lead to my proposal, and a two month stay in Medellín in order to learn the local language (Spanish). During the latter period, I also have been able to initiate the phase of actual field research by a close collaboration with the Claretian Missionaries, through which I had been able to get my first introduction to the activities of the Claretians and the content of their Evangelic Mission in Colombia. After this phase of field work, a period of data-analysis would follow which resulted in this thesis.



In this chapter, I will reflect on the process of data-collection and analysis. First, I will introduce my research location and population. Here I will reflect on the issues of personal security and the sensitivity of the research. Secondly, I will discuss the methods used preceding, during and after field work, in order to obtain and analyse my data. In this sub-chapter a separate section is reserved for a short reflection on some assumptions inherent in this thesis that ask for careful delineation and justification in order to defend some of the choices I needed to make in course of the research process. Lastly, I will reflect upon my own position as a student/ researcher in this specific research site.

2.2 Research Location and Population

2.2.1 Research location

The research site where I have conducted my field research is mainly located in the Chocó Department's capital city of Quibdó where I have been living for three and a half months. There I have conducted the majority of my interviews, participated in various workshops and meetings, and gained access to various organisations -of which a number have been involved in the 'emancipation process' of the 1980s. As my research question is concerned with inquiring and explaining the scope and content of a 'counter-hegemonic project' initiated and facilitated by the Claretian Missionaries since the 1980s -and its interaction with the wider context of structural violence- most of my interviews have a more 'organisational' focus. Thus, reflecting on the scope and content of the organisational process itself, my interviews were with community leaders, organisational representatives, priests etc. Whereas some of my informants engaged in a more personal account in which they reflected on the reality in their communities, these accounts should, however, become interpreted by their position within the specific organisation that they represented. The opportunity to engage in research that could reveal the local reality in the community has been restricted because of the internal security situation. The internal security situation in the department further restricted my mobility and, thus, the opportunity to collect data within the rural communities. While community level accounts would have been highly interesting to complement the acquired data, unfortunately I have not been able to engage in this type of research.

The security situation in the Chocó restricted my mobility and flexibility to visit the rural communities. The Chocó Department still faces internal conflict and the different armed actors have their presence in the whole department. The Chocó is still considered to be a higher risk area in terms of internal security. My affiliation with the Catholic Church has been a strategic asset, as it increased my personal security. Nevertheless, going into the country side on my own was a bad idea. In order to visit those rural communities, I needed a boat to go upstream/ downstream the Atrato-river. These trips needed preparation and guarantees of security. As such, I became dependent on other organisations to join them on 'field trips'. Consequently, I only had limited possibilities to visit the communities that the different



IMAGE 4: 'FIELD TRIP': ZONAL MEETING COCOMACIA (PHOTO: AUTHOR)

organisations were talking about. While I had three concrete possibilities to join different organisations on their 'field trips' into the rural areas, in the end only one field trip appeared to be feasible. The first trip had been postponed because of a *para armado*¹⁴, and when rescheduled, it came to overlap with some important interviews and a mining workshop in Quibdó itself. A second possibility to join the organisation COCOMOPOCA needed to be cancelled because of personal reasons. The last opportunity had been a zonal meeting of the ethno-territorial organisation COCOMACIA in Napipi, this appeared to be the only opportunity I had to go deep into the country side. As such, my restricted mobility influenced the scope and focus of my research.

Whereas 'the process of community organisation' in itself wasn't a sensitive topic, the analysis of the way in which a context of structural violence has affected these processes in the current conjuncture implied a discussion about the role of the wider socio-economic structure, politics and the presence of a variety of armed actors in the region. These topics are considered to be sensitive in Colombia. Therefore, I needed to gain relationships of trust before people would open up. An organisational focus helped to make expressions less personal and therefore gain access to these topics. While the security situation in the Chocó Department still obliged me to be careful with the phrasing of my questions –or carefully assessing the places where I could and could not ask some questions–, and made me dependent on relations of trust to gain access to specific organisations and specific individuals.

My ties with the Claretian Missionaries have proved to be an important asset in gaining access to various sites, organisations and individuals. Openly using my affiliation with the missionaries granted me the possibility to come to the department and facilitated my stay there, opening up access to church-based organisations and meetings. As formal researcher of the Claretian University –the FUCLA– I also could preserve some independence by constantly affirming the ties, while making sure my informants understood that my research had been an independent effort in collaboration with the Claretians, but not on behalf of them. While I can state the merits of these ties, there were some implications that should be mentioned. Firstly, my overt identification –even though affirming my independence– put me on the 'side of the Claretians'. This initially has granted me access in a network of Church-based organisations in which I constantly heard the same discourse and perspective on the 'ethno-territorial perspective' described in this thesis. However, by a constant reflection and a deliberate search for alternative visions by using the more critical informants to get access to perspectives that were different from the 'Claretian discourse', I aimed to ensure my impartiality and strengthen the validity of my data-collection. Secondly, as my research question had been (partially) focussed on the activities of the Claretians themselves, these ties were valuable as I got unconditional access to their network. At the same time, it sometimes appeared that the Claretians had a specific kind of research in mind and tried to steer my focus and my respondents. Hence, I needed to be careful, as I did not want to lose the favourable ties I had with them. At the same time, I needed to preserve a form of independence and impartiality to ensure the scientific validity and representativeness of the research conducted. A careful dialogue with the Claretians and a careful balancing of their wishes and my research has resulted in a choice to use the Claretian efforts of the 1980s as a starting point to further inquire into the scope and content of this specific process within the current conjuncture. I could use my network –and their wishes– but at the same time, I had the flexibility to move beyond their focus when assessing the validity of their actions.

¹⁴ 'Armed Strike' declared by the FARC-EP that prohibited all transport by road and water in the whole department between 12 and 17 November. A second *para armado* started on the 1st of February and concentrated itself on the road between Quibdó and Pereira but didn't affect my research as it started on the day that I would leave Quibdó by air.

Although I had my presence mainly in Quibdó, the content of my thesis extends beyond the city as it discusses a rural emancipation process in the Atrato-region. It is rather hard to delimitate the geographical scope of this process as the various organisations presented in this thesis have had –historically- different geographical areas of jurisdiction that overlap in scope. One could say that all the organisations have had a Pacific focus –because of the shared characteristics of this region: being a marginalised region with a high percentage of Afro-Colombians, being the object of the *ley 70* –a central element in this thesis- and this geographic region currently shares similar challenges in the new conjuncture. While the processes of community organisation have similarities and differences in the Pacific region, this thesis focuses on the Atrato-region –being the zone of jurisdiction of the Claretians between 1953 and 1990-, further delimited to the *Medio* and *Alto Atrato* region -by the geography of jurisdiction of the Diócesis of Quibdó since 1990, and being the area of jurisdiction of the two ethno-territorial organisations COCOMACIA and COCMOPOCA presented in this thesis. As such, this thesis –whereas contextualising a reality that is said to reflect parts of the Pacific region- only aims to say something about the *Alto* and *Medio Atrato* region (corresponding with image 7 on page 44).

2.2.2 The research population

The research population is composed of the members of the Diócesis of Quibdó, Claretian Missionaries and the Afro-Colombian population in the (*Medio and Alto*) *Atrato* region, being the primary subjects of my research question. However, as this thesis analyses a process of community organisations, all individuals and organisations related to this process are considered valid respondents as well, even if they are not of an Afro-Colombian origin or Claretian background. Consequently, the informants have been of diverse backgrounds, and are all related to the ‘Counter-hegemonic project’ (in the past or present). I interviewed various missionaries, lay Claretians and individuals that had been historically involved within the process of community organisation; various leaders that had their origin within this organisational process; new leaders that were continuing this process within the present day.

I will use the label Afro-Colombian to describe those people of (original) African origin that were brought into Colombia as slaves and currently compose a considerable minority group in Colombia. At a political and scientific level, the use of the word Afro-Colombian seems to be relatively ‘neutral’ in describing a group of Colombians with African roots. It reflects the ‘ethnic’ political status the community has been granted in the constitution of 1991. Nevertheless, the use of this specific term does distinguish them from the ‘mestizo’ Colombians, and Indigenous groups based on these ‘African characteristics’. While from a scientific viewpoint the use of this label seems to be rather neutral, out of my own experience the use of the words *negro/negra* [negro] or *chocoano/ chocoana*¹⁵ are more commonly used in daily life. The choice for the word ‘negro’ or ‘black’ people might be more controversial in Europa, whereas *Chocoano* would officially also refer to the indigenous and mestizo population in the Chocó. The choice to use this ‘label’ within this thesis should be seen independently of any connotation the word might have in Colombia itself.

My selection of my informants was based on ‘snowball sampling’ in which I had started with using my ties with the Claretian Missionaries to get some insight in the process of community organisation in the 1980s and their exact role within this process. Here I asked for possible new informants that had been historically involved in this process, or those people that currently continue this process. My ties with the Claretians made access to this network easy. However, at a certain point, I deliberately chose to look for alternative visions –and as such to move away from this network- to validate the stories I had heard so far. Here the mere critical informants could help me to identify some interesting respondents outside of the ‘Claretian Network’. In which the main determination of sampling had been their historical or contemporary involvement in the process of (Afro-Colombian) community organisation. The first

¹⁵ Whereas the word ‘Chocoano’ refers to the inhabitants of the Chocó Department, quite often it is equalised with the ‘black’ chocoanos as the Indigenous groups do refer to themselves mostly based on their specific indigenous identity (being Embera, Wounaan etc.).

respondent –a former Claretian Priest- had been suggested by members within the ‘Claretian Network’, on a later stage the more ‘critical’ respondents were able to provide me with new names. As such, here again I had been able to engage in a form of snowball sampling. At the same time, my participation in various workshops and events enabled me to identify some new respondents that were engaged in the same processes but had not been suggested by one of my respondents.

2.3 Research Methods

2.3.1 Desk & field research

Within the research process different methods were used to answer the research questions formulated in chapter 1.3. Preliminary research was based on a literature review of the scientific literature available about this topic, limited to the English language. This phase resulted in a first research proposal that became the starting point for my field research in Quibdó. During this first phase, the limited information available about the scope and content of the activities of the Claretian Missionaries became the first big question to be answered in the field. As hardly any information could be obtained about their specific focus and actions in the Chocó Department, it had been one of my primary research objective. Desk research in the field -during the first two months in Medellín and later during my field work phase in the Chocó- enabled me to contextualise the first observations made, validate the first acquired facts and enabled me to redirect the questions that I had. By this stage in the research, I also could read the Spanish literature. Within a couple of weeks, I could better understand the scope and content of the actions of the Claretians in a way that I had not been able to do in the Netherlands.

Data collection was based on qualitative and ethnographic approaches. Different methods were used: semi-structured and informal interviews, participant observation and the participation in various events. And the analysis of secondary data by the analysis of (locally-available) documents.

Conducting interviews is an important method within qualitative field research. Here I have been engaged in semi-structured interviews based on an interview guide that had delimited the topics that I wanted to discuss. In total I have been engaged in 30 qualitative interviews that were all tape-recorded, transcribed and were discussed in my field notes. While the decision to record an interview has clear methodological disadvantages in terms of restricting honesty when talking about sensitive topics, constructing an artificial environment, loss of anonymity, and even refusal to participate. My deliberate choice to record my interviews had been based on an evaluation of my short-term experience with the Spanish language that would outweigh the limitations posed by recording. The recordings granted me a form of (personal) security and confidence –in terms of the accuracy of my interpretation- while engaging in my interviews. At the same time, it provided me with a lot of valuable information as every aspect of the conversation had been recorded –and later transcribed- and field notes had been used to describe the interview setting in itself –including an evaluation of the possible effects of recording the interview. Furthermore, none of my informants had expressed doubts when asking to record the interview. With some of my respondents I have been engaged in a follow-up interview to ask for further clarification or to validate new insights that I had acquired in the course of time. For these interviews the transcriptions have been proven to be very useful as they allowed me to explicitly question the expressions that had been done in previous interviews. Although I have been engaged in some paired interviews and one group interview, the majority of my interviews were on a one-on-one basis. Informal interviews with priests, community leaders, community members and organisational representatives have been discussed only in my field notes.

A second method has been document-analysis as a wide range of local documents became available when I conducted my field work. Ranging from local publications, policy documents, organisational mission statements and ‘communications’ sent out by the different organisations that were part of my research.

Participant observation has been another important element within the period of field research, as in any form of qualitative field work. Based on the daily interaction with various respondents or their organisation I have been able to observe and validate the information acquired by studying the coherency between expressions and the 'daily reality'. These observations also permitted me to formulate follow-up questions if any observation had been contradicting the information I had collected, or asked for more elaboration. Especially valuable has been the fact that I have been working in the Claretian university –the FUCCLA- where I have been able to interact directly with a lot of my informants on a daily basis.

Especially valuable has been my participation in a variety of events in which a combination of informal interviews and participant observation could contribute to a reflection upon acquired information and would further direct my research. My weekly participation in the meetings of the '*Comisión Vida, Justicia y Paz*' [Commission of Life, Justice and Peace] (part of the Diócesis of Quibdó) -where representatives of the Church, ethno-territorial organisations, other social organisations and the international cooperation were present and discussed the 'local' situation and urgencies within their field of action- has been highly valuable to contextualise the statements and actions of the different organisations, observe their interaction and to be informed about the 'current' necessities of a variety of local organisations. My participation in two mining-workshops -facilitated by the Claretians- further informed me about this specific topic of interest. A number of community leaders, representatives of the Church and ethno-territorial organisations had been present. These workshops informed me about this particular topic, and permitted me to study the interactions between, and opinions of, different organisational representatives. Lastly, my participation in a zonal meeting of the ethno-territorial organisation COCOMACIA in one of their communities has been a valuable case-study in which I could reflect on the 'local reality' of the many statements I had acquired within this organisation.

The different kinds of methods permitted me to engage in an '*interactive model of research design*' (Maxwell, 2004) where I have been constantly reflecting on the relationships between my research question, the goals of my research, conceptual framework, research methods and the validity of my data. Eventually, this led to the adoption of an alternative conceptual framework as a frame-of-analysis. At different points in time I engaged in a preliminary analysis, recorded in 'memos' in order to structure my thoughts, rephrase my interview questions, recognise the gaps in my knowledge and identify new respondents. In order to check the validity of my data I deliberately have been looking for alternative visions on the reality I had studied. Hereby engaging in a cyclical process in which data collection affected data analysis, which affected the development of a theory, which again affected further data collection (Westbrook, 1994). As a consequence, insights, theory, questions and gaps could be continuously identified and followed up during the field work period (Westbrook, 1994). The variety of methods described above also permitted me to engage in a form of '*retrospective inspection*' (Flick, 2002), where my frequent interaction with the different organisational representatives enabled me to recall specific situations or statements in interviews to avoid only general statements, and reflect on the acquired knowledge so far. In the case of a follow-up interview, the previous interview was first transcribed and analysed in order to keep an overview of what was said and to ask more specific questions. At the same time the variety of methodological triangulation (switching between methods), data triangulation (using different data-sources) and investigator triangulation (frequent discussion and reflection with colleague anthropologist in the field) has aimed to increase the validity of my results.

2.3.2 Coding, categorising and analysis

After transcribing the interviews and making a preliminary reflection on the amount of required data, the conceptual framework and research questions needed to be rephrased in order to reflect the organisational focus I had chosen to follow. A new theoretical framework was developed based on the acquired data and my preliminary conclusions. Later this framework became the basis upon which the data would become categorised and analysed, following the procedure of '**qualitative content analysis**'. A Gramsci-inspired

theoretical framework allowed me to take his method of historicism as a starting point of analysis in which crucial ‘moments’ in time were identified to form the starting point of an analysis of the interaction of different structural forces and their political responses –and their ‘conceptions of the world’ at specific times. Secondly, the acquired data became categorised in terms of a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic project and ordered according to the ‘moments’ identified before. First, the most relevant passages within the acquired material were selected. Secondly, new material was selected to explore contradictory statements, and new statements from field data (or newly acquired policy documents) were designated to clarify some of the findings presented by the respondents. Lastly the material was structured. Whereas the official procedure of qualitative content analysis is somehow schematic, it offers a quick way of analysing material. While officially the method is based on paraphrasing the data, in this case I chose to work with the original material, which might have been more time consuming but could result in a more dense description of the acquired material. The most important limitation of a qualitative content analysis is the fact that it is able to obscure views in the material as it starts from the theory. As the theory has been selected after preliminary analysis and a rephrasing of the main research questions, it is highly material driven. As such, parts of the inherent limitation of this approach should have been overcome (Flick, 2002).

This thesis uses the insights provided by ‘narrative research’ in order to illuminate the interaction between different ‘conceptions of the world’ in a specific space, and at a specific time. Whereas this thesis does not follow an narrative approach –in the most conventional form- it does analyse the interaction between individual, organisational and societal accounts in order to illuminate how the content of (Gramsci’s) ‘conceptions of the world’ interact with each other and are influenced by wider structural phenomena. Within this research I aimed to analyse the content of personal, organisational and societal stories in order to illuminate their interaction, development and societal relevance. I placed the individual story within wider ‘narratives’ of social and organisational history ,hereby acknowledging a story’s wider relevance and its interaction with various ‘conceptions of the world’ in a society (Czarniawska, 2004; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Gilsonan, 1996; Ries, 2002). This type of research corresponds with my theoretical orientation and the analysis of my field data, i.e. the way in which different conceptions of the world can emerge (and are facilitated by organic intellectuals) and can become the *‘philosophical’* base for (counter-hegemonic) projects, while interacting with the wider hegemonic social patterning in society. Here, the insights provided by ‘narrative research’ enabled me to collect personal accounts, social and organisational histories and a wider study of the ‘hegemonic’ conceptions of the world in the Colombian society. The attractiveness of using some of the insights provided by narrative research is the way in which this format tries to grasp the ways in which humans experience the world. By analysing the way in which individuals construct a ‘story’, give meaning to it and how it can be seen as: “...a frame that emerges and is tried out, is developed and elaborated, and a frame that can absorb the new event” (Czarniawska, 2004: 39). By using these insights, I aimed to position an individual’s account within wider social and organisational accounts in order to understand the repertoire of legitimate stories and how they have evolved. Questioning what kind of different subjectivities are used to legitimise a form of alternative politics, in order to study how this differs from the dominant status quo and how people experience their own place in their specific context. When keeping these insights in mind, one has to acknowledge the existence of multiple and conflicting ‘narratives’ at a given time in a given society, relations of power and dominance, and how it relates to further narrative performance (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Czarniawska, 2004; Gilsonan, 1996; Petty et al., 2012). As such, these insights proved to be utile within a Gramscian inspired analysis of the interaction between different *philosophies* within society.

2.3.3 Reliability and validity of the research.

In order to ensure the reliability of the data-collection and succeeding interpretations, an engagement in a mixed-method approach, that lends itself for ‘retrospective inspection’ and in which the data-collection had been based on a cyclical process, was used to increase the quality of the documented data. At the

same time, the decision of tape-recording enabled me to double check my interpretations by having the complete transcriptions of the interviews available. A dense description of any interview and event in my field notes increased the quality of the data obtained. The validity of the research conducted is based on the authenticity of the accounts of the informants, trustworthiness of observations, interpretations and generalisations. The authenticity of the informants' accounts could have been influenced by the sensitivity of some elements of the research topic and the choice to record the interviews. However, the ability to meet the majority of my respondents on a frequent basis by the close ties I developed with the different organisations enabled me to cross-check the statements made. My relationship with these different organisations was facilitated by the collaboration with the Claretians, especially my weekly participation in the '*Comisión Vida, Justicia y Paz*' and the different workshops. Consequently, I had various occasions in which I could observe, talk informally and verify previously made statements. Secondly, the various forms of methodological triangulation (different methods, different data-sources, reflection with other researchers and not being fixed upon one theoretical angle) further helped to increase the validity of the acquired data.

2.3.4 Reflection on theoretical/ analytical assumptions

There are two assumptions in this thesis that I would like to justify. The first assumption is that I take the Claretian Missionaries' Approach as a starting point to analyse the origins of their political orientation within their interpretation of the Bible and the lessons provided by important events in the 1970s. While the Claretians were until 1953 the main religious actors in the region, as their organisational status evolves into a Vicariate (1953-1990) and later into a Diócesis (1990-now), different religious communities became part of the 'Evangelic Mission' that had been defined by the Diócesis' bishop. While I refer to the Diócesis and other missionaries, I argue that the choice to continue to use the label 'Claretian Missionaries' Approach' stays valid for several reasons. First, as the political orientation of the Diócesis is for an important degree grounded in the efforts of its first bishop (a Claretian), I can argue that the socio-political orientation of the 'Church' is grounded in a Claretian-inspired interpretation of 'the Evangelic'. Secondly, the Claretians are said to have continued to influence the orientation of the Diócesis by continuously putting this social orientation forward. Although currently a third bishop is supervising the Diócesis of Quibdó, this social orientation still is found in the pastoral plans of the Diócesis after Castaño Rubio's retreat. Therefore, I can argue that this orientation still continues to guide the actions of the different communities under jurisdiction of the Diócesis of Quibdó. Thirdly, by ascribing this approach to the Claretian Missionaries it is not to say that this orientation cannot be found within other religious communities. The different religious communities under the jurisdiction of the Diócesis bishop need to comply with the pastoral plans formulated by the Bishop. The social orientation is a 'personal matter' for the specific person to commit him or herself to 'liberating evangelisation'. This is to say that even though the Diócesis maintains a focus grounded in the 'Claretians Missionaries' Approach', not every member of its Diócesis will fully agree with it. Some members will be more 'conventional' than others. This is to say that as this vision originated within a Claretian interpretation of the Bible, I use the label 'Claretian Missionaries' Approach' to describe the historically-evolved orientation. However, following Mackin (2010; 2012) in order to assess the political orientation of the church one should have an holistic focus that takes into account official statements such as organisational practices, pioneering individuals, internal dynamics and related organisations and movements.

A second assumption within this thesis is that the Claretian Missionaries' Approach promoted a counter-hegemonic project. Here I understand their 'conception of the world' as being an alternative political project in comparison with the state-induced political ordering of the Colombian society, that left the Atrato-region marginalised and subject to neo-liberal resource exploitation. While it is in line with a Gramscian understanding of the political to phrase this state-based project as being the 'hegemonic project' in society, one could argue that a Catholicism based political project is also reinforcing the already hegemonic position of this religion within the Colombian society. Therefore, if this thesis would have

been focused on questions of religious conversion, one could have understood the Claretian efforts as being a continuation of a quest for religious hegemony. However, in the context of this research question, in which the Claretian contribution to the socio-political emancipation of the Afro-Colombian community is the main focus, I can legitimately understand their position as counter-hegemonic by focussing on the socio-political content of their efforts in contrast to the dominant social patterning in society.

2.4 Position of the researcher

The last section of this chapter is concerned with a reflection on my position as a student/ researcher within the research site. As the conduction of ethnographic/ anthropological research intrinsically puts forward some ethical considerations that obligates the researcher to be at all times critical towards his/ her position, actions and the effects that might be generated by his/ her presence. While there is no clear-cut definition of what 'ethical' research is or ought to be, critically considering my status as a bystander in a context of marginalisation, poverty and violence obliges me to consider how *"...social and political criticism must extend to self-criticism, to illuminating how ordinary every day ways of thinking, loving and being in the world are implicated in the violence that we are trying to understand and to combat"* (Scheper-Hughes, 2008: 225). This research does not aim to produce universal truths but is essentially about producing a truth in a particular context –and making this truth useful to particular people. My research has been engaged in the study of the margins of society, where research objectivity and ethical conduct should be guaranteed by the *"...examination of the impact of ethical and political decisions upon social research"* (Hale, 2008: 8). Within this section I, thus, want to reflect on three aspects within my research that could have had an impact on the way in which my own position has impacted on my research (and its participants): 1) my position as an absolute outsider (being a white female in a black surrounding with only limited experience with the Spanish language), 2) my engagement with the Catholic Church, and 3) the questions surrounding the sensitivity of the topic and questions of confidentiality.

2.4.1 Being an absolute outsider

Being a white young female in Quibdó has not been always easy, as only my physical appearance made me the absolute outsider within the city and the department. Furthermore, being an independent young woman within a macho-culture implied the need for some cultural reflection on the desirability of the way in which I was inclined to approach people and what would be the normal form of 'conduct' seen from a local perspective. It seems to be too easy to depict this physical/ cultural characteristic -in a department in which the majority of the population is considered to be black- as an 'ethnic consideration'. My own experience shows that this simple characteristic actually has influenced the way in which people approached me. Within a couple of weeks, I was already known to be the *'gringa'* or the Dutch that lived in Quibdó; and there was no way for me to walk anonymous in the streets of the city. Furthermore, my position as an outsider seemed to have facilitated the my access to the different organisations as different respondents expressed that it was a good and useful thing to make the knowledge about the situation in the Chocó Department publically available. At the same time, being an international associate of the FUCLA had partly enabled me to present myself as being connected to a local institution –and as such illustrating my ties with the community.

The fact that people easily characterised me as being a European, and my level of Spanish has been in continuous development during the period I have been conducting my research, meant that I have to conclude that I have never been able to be seen as an 'insider'. While people were prepared to share their information with me, and –especially in the beginning- my level of Spanish and related insecurity had the consequence that many informants explained a lot of information in great detail. This can be seen as both an advantage and disadvantage, as people went into great detail about the facts they were explaining to me since they did not expect me to understand everything. This was greatly useful to get to know a new context in great detail. On the other hand, it might have been the case that some informants have been

reluctant in sharing all their information as they did not expect me to understand the overall complexity of the problems. I have used tape-recordings to overcome the language barrier in the first place, which increased my own confidence in the use and understanding of this new language. In the course of time, my level of Spanish had increased a lot which permitted me to understand everything that was said. In addition, a constant reflection of the information obtained with a colleague anthropologist, the early transcription of important interviews, the use of various follow-up interviews and my frequent interaction with the same people in different settings had to increase the reliability of the research findings and increase the trust (decrease my outsider status) with my informants. The *Chocoanean* dialect continues to be difficult, due to the speed of talking and the shortening of words. Whilst a lot of people had warned me about this dialect, stating that I would have to learn the Spanish language all over again when I started with my research. For me it did not make that much difference, in comparison with other dialects. Nevertheless, my non-Spanish background continued to be another marker of my position as an outsider. However, when I was identified as being either a Brazilian or an Argentina during my last weeks in Quibdó, I could assume that my accent and level of Spanish had improved a lot.

The frequent interaction with my informants had enabled me to increase the relationships of trust. Consequently, I was able to collect more in-depth information which I had not been able to obtain in the first weeks of my research. Actually, when reading my interviews in a chronologically, one can observe that both my questions and the answers became more in-depth. Nevertheless, for people that hardly knew me, the fact that I was seen as an outsider could be seen as positive, as well as negative. Whilst one of my respondents positioned himself as the macho-man, fortunately these interviews were exceptions. Actually both my gender and background was instrumental in convincing some male respondents to explain to me their reality in great detail. Some informants were very enthusiastic about my presence in the department and my effort to conduct research about a topic that they saw as really important. With similar enthusiasm for my research, the IIAP to ask me to publish my results in their own scientific review paper. I cannot state without hesitation that these characteristics of my own position within this context have not influenced the information that I had obtained. The building of relationships of trust by the frequent interaction with many of my respondents, my own development as a Spanish speaker, my ties with the FUCCLA and –sometimes- making use of my status as an outsider have also permitted me use these characteristics to obtain more detailed information.

2.4.2 Engagement with the Catholic Church

A second point of reflection should be my own position within the Catholic Church, whilst I already have pointed out how these ties had permitted me to gain access to different organisations and respondents and have been useful to build relationships of trust. At the same time, I have been pointing out how these ties also have forced me to balance my position as a researcher and the implied impartiality when different people attempted to guide the course of my research (see also section 2.2.1). In this section I want to reflect on the ethical implications of my ties with this religious community. In the course of my research, I had decided to make my ties with the Claretians quite specific in order to decrease my position as an outsider and increase the relations of trust. At the same time, I was emphasising that my research was an independent effort initiated by my own university. The decision to follow this strategy had been partly professional and partly personal, as I considered this half-way identification the best way to increase the reliability of my research whilst avoiding an over-identification. At the same time, as the Claretians themselves were part of my research question, I needed to think about the ethical implications of my own ‘religious identity’ as part of this research. My reflection on this identity started on the first days that I arrived in Quibdó, and continued to be part of my research process until the point that I have finished this thesis. Personally I do not consider myself religious. Whilst I have been raised in a modest-protestant family, at this point in my life I do not practice any religion. Whilst I do have respect for the actions that the Claretians have generated within the Chocó department and –in general-, I have the (personal) conviction that it does not matter what kind of ideological background any person has. I sincerely believe

that it is one's actions that count. As such, I needed to position myself within this religious community in order to make sure that I would be able to study the content of their socio-political orientation, whilst not dismissing the relevance of their Bible for their daily activities. When people asked me about my religious orientation I decided to use my protestant background as a guiding principle, as I found myself in a context in which the majority of the population placed a high emphasis on the role of religion in their life. However, as an excerpt out of my field notes illustrates, I needed to (personally) get used to this identification. *"At this moment I realised this is the first time in many years that I have identified myself as a protestant, and used this part of my 'education' to position myself towards others.. I am not saying anything which is not true, I am baptised and been to a protestant primary and secondary school. At the same time, this aspect of my life is not in any way guiding the decisions I make in daily life. I respect some of the teachings of Christianity, but I more or less regard them as guidelines for living a decent life. Elements that other religions share, and -in my opinion- people are no better than another based on their religion, but based on their actions. As such, I believe that one can be good by doing good. This is not to say that I don't understand why people believe, and this is also not to say that I don't understand how religion can support people in different circumstances. Getting back to the situation, for the sake of my research and for the sympathy of the people here I thought it would be better to express my alliances with the protestant church instead of saying that I do not believe"* (Field Notes, p. 12).

What are the ethical or political implications of this choice? It could be considered unethical to make such an over-identification with something that is personally not that relevant for me in my daily life. In this case my protestant background did permit me to emphasise my historical relationships with this form of Christianity. Whilst not insulting people for whom their religion had been an important part of their lives. As I had been closely collaborating with priests, nuns and lay persons, I could not avoid this question being asked. Here I considered the implications of my own non-religious background for the interpretation of my data as more important than an apparent over-identification with any religion. It appeared that the fact that I was not Catholic did not affect the way the Claretians had approached me, as I even got permission to join their ritual of eating bread and wine after a Catholic birthday celebration. Furthermore, the 'enculturated and ecumenical and inter-religious' worldview of the Claretians seemed to be relatively tolerant towards other perceptions and cultures. At a personal level, I knew that my background permitted me to understand –partially- their religious interpretation; but on the other hand, the organisational structure of the Catholic Church had been completely new to me. Here, my non-Catholic background was obvious. As my research is focused on the actions that the Claretians' approach had generated, I could easily separate the 'prediction of an Evangelic' from the analysis and description of the way in which a specific perspective on the world has generated wider socio-political actions. Personally, whilst deliberately not joining my hosts' weekly church visit, I increasingly identified myself with the social-political orientation of the Claretians' efforts to combat situations of injustice and implement projects that liberate the people from their oppressions. As such, I personally developed a form of respect for their actions. At the same time, my non-religious background enabled a scientific analysis of the socio-political content of their 'Evangelic Mission'.

2.4.3 Sensitivity of the topic and questions of confidentiality

Different scholars have pointed out that it can be very difficult to build up relationships of trust in a (post)conflict situation, especially when taking the 'law of silence' into account that is said to characterise public opinion about sensitive issues in Colombia (Pécaut, 1999; 2000ab; Taussig, 2003; Oslender, 2008). A Colombian anthropologist had told me that the topics of politics, religion and violence were importantly connected to my research. As such, when starting with my field work I did not really know how easily I could get access to the information I was looking for. At the same time, I was not certain what questions I would be able to ask. However, a local supervisor that had told me that the topic of my research was feasible. The initial focus on the approach and activities of the Claretians in the process of Afro-Colombian community organisation, visibilisation and empowerment. Later, the process itself helped me to build up relationships of confidence, as it appeared to be a topic that people liked to talk about. At a

later stage, I could pose questions that were considered more sensitive; but I noticed that the mere organisational focus was instrumental in getting access to these 'sensitive topics'. Whilst initially I did not feel that secure about what kind of questions I could ask and what kind of answers I could expect, in the course of time it appeared that the mere organisational focus in the beginning had opened up a lot of doors which enabled me to ask more in-depth questions about sensitive issues.

On the other hand, the insecure situation in the Chocó Department obliged me to make sure that my actions would not have unwarranted political implications for the people involved. Ethical conduct as such implied a careful examination of the possible consequences of my actions on the people that I had been engaged with. As the presence of the armed actors in the region -and Quibdó- had the implication that not everyone wanted to discuss certain issues 'in public'. Consequently, I decided to make sure to meet my informants on terrain that was neutral - their office, their house, or the university- in order to give a minimum guarantee of 'privacy', to make my respondents feel more comfortable and ensure that the discussion of certain topics would not reach other ears for whom it was not destined. I found myself in quite a closed circle of informants because I got access to them by means of snowball sampling, i.e. by asking my respondents about possible informants. A lot of my respondents have helped me to get in touch with new contacts. This was important because people did not answer the phone from a number they did not know. Because my informants introduced me to additional informants, I had entered a circle of confidentiality and familiarity.

It had been impossible to escape the fact that a lot of people would know that I had been talking with a certain person as my position as an outsider and the frequent interaction between many of my respondents did not permit me to engage in more invisible ways of interviewing. Nevertheless, this had been a circle of trust in which -between persons- a lot of confidential information had been shared. However, I chose to never explicitly refer to statements made by other persons but I have been using the different events, workshops and meetings -in which many different people had been present- if I wanted to know more about a specific case. In this manner, I hoped to minimise the risk that some statements would have been ascribed to someone without his/ her permission. In order to guarantee anonymity and some security -whilst 90% of my respondents stated I could use their name in this thesis- I decided to use fictitious names in order to ensure their confidentiality. However, for two respondents I have decided to use their real names as I am using their own publications within this thesis in which they publicly have expressed their political opinion. A fictitious name would undermine my ability to cite these documents properly, while at the same time these respondents had expressed their agreement with explicitly using their name in this thesis.

Chapter 3: A historicism of the Claretian Missionaries' Approach in the Chocó (1909 – early 1990s)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will introduce the Claretian Missionaries' presence in the Chocó Department by giving a short historical account of their 'mission' in the department, and exploring the '*philosophical*' content of the Claretian Missionaries' approach in order to assess their 'political orientation' –as a basis of the counter-hegemonic project. Here I will build upon the insights provided by R.S. Mackin (2010; 2012) that emphasises the need to engage in a context-specific analysis of the statements, practices, and sets of different actors in order to assess the strength and content of a church' political orientation at



IMAGE 5: THE CATHEDRAL OF QUIBDÓ (SOURCE: AUTHOR)

a certain time (e.g. the strength of a liberation theology). This chapter –therefore- aims to contextualise the orientation of the Claretian Missionaries within the National Catholic Church and further explores the content of their '*philosophy*' in order to assess their political orientation as a religious community. This chapter starts with a short introduction of the national religious climate, followed by an overview of the organisational development of the Claretian Mission in the Chocó Department. Then this chapter discusses the '*philosophy*' of the Claretians that formed the ideational basis of their counter-hegemonic project. This chapter aims to illuminate how exactly the socio-political vision of the Claretian Missionaries – grounded in 'the Evangelic'- has been informed by a specific '*philosophy*' on reality. Ultimately this chapter answers two questions: *what is the 'philosophical' content of the Claretian Missionaries' Approach? What kind of 'hegemony' was this project supposed to challenge?* (sub-questions 1a and 1b). This chapter ends with a theoretically informed conclusion.

3.2 The national religious climate

The Catholic Church in Colombia could easily be characterised as conservative. However, this would obscure the reality of the Claretian missionaries in the Chocó –as I will argue later. Historically the Colombian National Church had close links with the Conservative party and it possessed a privileged position in the Colombian society as the Conservative Party dominated politics for the first half of the 20th century. Vatican II (1962-1965) and the Medellín Conference (1968) had some profound influence on the orientation of the Church's bishops, especially as the latter was held in Colombia. Whereas the Medellín Conference marked a change in orientation of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America, not all national churches supported the conference. At the same time, the conference was overrepresented by the more progressive bishops and theologians. The conservative bishops in Colombia were not pleased with the conference conclusions and "...time and again the Colombian bishops offered a staunch defence of the status quo, property relations, and church policies which emphasise class harmony, supported international corporations and right-wing governments which were gaining more influence in the region" (Mackin, 2010: 235). The National Church tried to keep its more conservative orientation by discounting the more radical messages. Daniel Levine (1985) explained that the nature of the Church in Colombia (in the 1980s) was inherently concerned with

preserving its authority –as such making its hierarchy central to the Church. The hierarchical unity between the clergy and the Church’ internal structures was of profound importance, combined with a deep belief in the values and guidelines of their religious orientation (Levine, 1985). At the same time, this conservative Roman Catholic orientation fitted the mentalities and structures of Colombian politics. As such, the development of a social Catholicism only emerged at the margins (Levine, 1985; Mackin, 2010). Where popular initiatives did arise they were constrained by the higher institutional authorities, as these initiatives faced limitations by a nationally strong emphasis on the Catholic doctrine and structures of authority. The popular alternatives needed to be careful in order to avoid being repressed by the Church’ hierarchy. The popular movements that emerged in the 1980s searched “...for a new operative style which balances political goals with more explicitly religious activities and orientations” (Levine, 1985: 313). A set of groups that operated in a quiet and scattered way, seeking intra-institutional support by sympathetic bishops or religious orders (Levine, 1985; Mackin, 2010). “*Though Colombia is usually portrayed as one of the most conservative Catholic countries in Latin America, a number of scholars have demonstrated that over the course of the twentieth century, there was an important progressive sector in Colombia*” (Mackin, 2010: 237).

This chapter deals with the organisational development of ‘the Claretian Mission’ in the Chocó and how their ‘Evangelic Mission’ has been inspired by the lessons of the Vatican II and the Medellín Bishop Conference. The next chapters will have a more practice-oriented focus when analysing the process of community organisation while reflecting on the role that these missionaries have played in facilitating this process. As such, the following chapters move away from the ‘National Church’ and the official statements of the Claretians. Rather, they focus on the variety of actors, organisations and movements that were engaged in this process of community organisation in order to determine the strength and content of a church’ political orientation (Mackin, 2010; 2012).

3.3 Organisational development¹⁶ of a religious community

The Claretian Missionaries entered the Chocó Department in 1909, being contracted by the Colombian government to replace the Franciscans and to fulfil the needs of both the Indigenous and Afro-Colombian minorities living in the region. The Claretians were sent to convert the Indigenous and Afro-Colombians in order to incorporate them in the Roman Catholic National religion. “*The phrase that God says in the Convention is an ancient phrase, it says, in a sector of the country of Colombia, there are Indigenous groups and Afro-descendants, whom are very laymen, whom are full of superstitions and are also on a path of immorality. Then, that risks their salvation “[...]” So, the role of the Claretians was incorporate these Indigenous people and Afro-descendants, in the hegemonic culture, both the religious and the national*”¹⁷ (Interview with Padre Gonzalo de la Torre Guerrero: 10 December 2012). Padre Gonzalo de La Torre Guerrero –Gonza or Gonzalo for friends- is a highly charismatic white-haired man that has just entered his 70s. He is known for his ever gentle expression on his face, long presence in the Chocó, his close ties to the community and often named as one of the most important and influential persons in the region when talking about the processes of community organisation. Before meeting Padre Gonzalo for the first time I already had heard a lot of stories about him, in which a lot of local people had expressed a form of gratitude towards him as a person. At the same time, he should also be the person that possessed ‘all the knowledge’ about the region, the activities and orientation of the Claretians and the process of community organisation. People seemed to lighten up when mentioning his name. My first impression could not contradict the expressed comfort of meeting this

¹⁶ Within the Roman Catholic Church different ‘organisational units’ can be identified along the path of organisational ‘majority’ of the religious community at hand and implying a relative autonomy from Rome. Its basic unit is called a Diocese and is supervised by a bishop. Within a Diocese different religious communities (e.g. Claretians, Xaverians, Jesuits etc.) can have their presence, all with a certain autonomy but the actions of a religious community need to be coordinated with the bishop. The ‘basic organisational units’ are territorially organised. The status of the Claretians in the Chocó has evolved from being a prefecture (1909-1953), to a vicariate (1953-1990) to being part of a Diocese (1990-now). The status of the church in a specific territory depends on its development and approval from the Vatican.

¹⁷ Original quote: “*La frase que dice Dios en el Convenio es un frase muy antigua, dice, que en un sector de la patria de Colombia, hay unos grupos indígenas y afro-descendientes que están muy legos, que están llenos de supersticiones y están también en un camino de inmoralidad. Entonces, corre peligro su salvación*” [...] “*Entonces, el papel de los Claretianos era incorpora a esta gente indígena y afro-descendiente a la cultura hegemónica, tanto la religiosa como la nacional*”.

person. He looks like any grandfather you want to cuddle. While he has the physical appearance of a *paisa*¹⁸ the fact that he himself is a *Chocoano* –having a black mother and white father- seems to only further make him an interesting person to talk to.

Padre Gonzalo de La Torre Guerrero entered the Claretian Vicariate in 1979, when he returned to the Chocó after having left the region to finish his biblical studies. He entered the Vicariate of Quibdó at a time that the ‘liberation theology’ had opened up the religious horizon in parts of Latin America. That had been influenced by the Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965 held in Brazil -a meeting that discussed the new orientation of the Catholic Church in a ‘modern world’- and the bishops’ conference in Medellín in 1968. These two meetings provided the Latin American Catholic Church with a new and broader orientation based on developing a greater sensitivity around social justice issues. This new orientation took a critical standpoint towards ‘modernity’ originating in the worlds’ periphery and embraced the ideas of enculturation and conscientisation (Gómez de Souza, 2007; Klaiber, 2009).

At this time the Claretians operated within the organisational structure of the ‘Prefecture of Chocó’ in which the Claretians had jurisdiction over the complete department. In the course of time the outlook of the Claretians started to change, as they developed a form of respect for the local customs, religious view points, local organisations and cultural myths by their interaction with the locals. The missionaries that were sent to the region to incorporate the ‘savages’ into the national religious culture, began to develop a curiosity for these distinct cultures and became the first ones to study the people and their language. They started to write books about the local myths and legends and documented the indigenous language. Padre Gonzalo explained how this curiosity made the group of missionaries realise that local religions, forms of organisation and myths count, and actually led them to reevaluate specific aspects of the local culture. The Claretians started incorporating local (cultural) elements into their religious orientation and activities. Here, they committed themselves to the celebration of San Pacho (a commemoration to the ‘patron’ of the city San Francis de Assisi), introduced music bands and dancing classes, and promoted local art etc. These were the first steps towards the ‘enculturation’ still advocated by the Claretians. *"I remember that as a kid, because I was born here on this site, my mother was black, my father white [...], the same missionaries, there were five missionaries who came out to play in the band San Francisco with the people. There was a missionary who directed the band and gave recitals in the park [...] then one learns and ‘drinks’ from them their cultural school, and we have tried where we are now to continue that, that same line: that approaching of the people"*¹⁹ (Interview with Padre Gonzalo de la Torre Guerrero: 10 December 2012). While the Claretians entered the region based on a convention with the National Government, and during the first years the Claretians still reported to the Colombian government. Later, the Claretians became more independent from the government. Especially with the maturation of their religious juridical status the Claretians became more autonomous as a religious community.

Padre Gonzalo explained to me how Vatican II helped the Claretians to overcome the moralism –what he called the ‘aesthetic catechism’- inherent in the Christian culture by providing another path in which a revaluation of other cultures and a respect to the conscience of other groups opened up their religious horizon. While some form of moralism needs to be predicted, Gonzalo described how the Vatican II and Medellín Bishops’ helped them to find ways to integrate a respect for local cultures and ‘appropriate knowledge’ within their religious orientation. When the Church decided to open up its doors and windows to let new air in: *"...we found poor people, poor people and poor people. People very carried, very impoverished, so this provoked the birth of the liberation theology. These impoverished, to some extend still enslaved in the industry, in what we*

¹⁸ *Paisa* is the word used to refer to the inhabitants of the Colombian Department Antioquia. However, the word is also frequently used to refer to ‘Colombian outsiders’ that have entered the Chocó but are not of a Chocoanean origin (thus referring to all non-Chocoanean Colombians), and –with a more negative connotation- the word is also used in daily life to reflect the ‘entrepreneurial Colombian’ based on an ‘entrepreneurial spirit’ that is –in a common sense way- connected to the Antioqueños.

¹⁹ Original quote: *"Yo me acuerdo que de pequeño, yo nací ahí pues en este sitio, mi mamá era negra, mi papa blanco [...], los mismos misioneros, había cinco misioneros que salían a tocar en la banda San Francisco con la gente. Había un misionero que dirigía la banda de música y daba recitales en el parque [...] entonces uno aprende y ‘bebe’ de su escuela cultural, y hemos tratado desde donde estamos de continuar eso, esa misma línea: ese acercamiento del pueblo"*.

call, economically in the system of dependency. If our economies are dependent primarily on the North American Economy, capitalist and neoliberal, and the European, as well capitalist and neoliberal. So, our cultures are dependent, and in the concrete case of 'the Chocó' very dependent, it was practically a land to take out. The Chocó has always been a land where they didn't invest to transform in order to improve life, but they take out. They remove gold, they remove wood, all the materials of life, and, practically, a land of extraction, but never a land of transformation, of contribution, of recreation. So, in that sense, the liberation theology sticks a lot, because it is simply to free the people from their enslavements, their mental consciousness and as well their social consciousness"²⁰ (Interview with Padre Gonzalo de la Torre Guerrero: 10 December 2012).

In the 1980s the Claretians shared the Chocó Department with the Xavierians. In 1953 the 'Prefecture of Quibdó' had been evolved into two vicariates: the 'Vicariate of Istmina' and the 'Vicariate of Quibdó'. The latter under Claretian jurisdiction and still comprising the whole Atrato-river (see image 6). In 1990 the 'Vicariate of Quibdó' evolved into the 'Diócesis of Quibdó' in which a bishop would guide the various religious communities, and where the Claretians would only become one among the many religious communities in the region. Here, the area under jurisdiction of the Bishop of the Diócesis of Quibdó would be further limited to the *Alto* and *Medio Atrato* Regions (see image 7). In a Diócesis the religious communities have relative independence from the bishop; however, they need to comply with the general pastoral plans and options formulated at 'higher level'. Whereas the status of the Claretians at an organisational level became less autonomous, their historical presence in the region and involvement in the development of the Diócesis makes them an important actor. Here, even though the Diócesis and Claretians are distinct 'entities' within the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy, a Claretian perspective can be observed within the general outlook of the Diócesis. This perspective was influenced greatly by the Diócesis' first bishop Jorge Iván Castaño Rubio – a Claretian.



IMAGE 6: THE TERRITORY OF JURISDICTION OF 'THE VICARIATE OF QUIBDÓ' (SOURCE: FLÓREZ LÓPEZ (2012) PP. 377)



IMAGE 7: THE TERRITORY OF JURISDICTION OF 'THE DIÓCESIS OF QUIBDÓ' (SOURCE: FLÓREZ LÓPEZ (2013), PP. 379)

²⁰ Original quote: "...encontramos pobres y pobres y pobres. Gente muy llevada, muy empobrecida, entonces eso provoca el nacimiento de la teología de la liberación. Estos empobrecidos en cierta medida todavía esclavizados por la industria, en eso que llamamos nosotros, económicamente en el sistema de la dependencia. Si nuestras economías son dependientes principalmente de la economía Norte Americana, capitalista y neoliberal, y de la Europea, también capitalista y neoliberal. Entonces, nuestras culturas están dependientes y en ese caso concreto, el Chocó, muy dependiente, fue prácticamente una tierra de extracción. El Chocó ha sido siempre una tierra donde no se ha invertido para transformar para mejorar la calidad de vida, si de la que solamente se extrae. Se sacó oro, se sacó madera, todos los materiales de vida y prácticamente, una tierra de extracción, pero nunca una tierra de transformación, de aporte, de recreación. Entonces, en ese sentido, la teología de la liberación pega también mucho, porque es sencillamente liberar el pueblo de su esclavitud, mental de conciencia y también social".

3.4 The Evangelic Mission

The Evangelic Mission of the Claretians is based on the Roman Catholic interpretation of the Bible and the specific readings of Saint Anthony Mary Claret. However, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), The Bishops' meeting in Medellín (1968) and the "Evangelii Nuntiandi" of pope Paulo VI (1975) have further directed the Claretian mission to commit themselves to the 'liberation theology', by taking the insights of these events as guiding principles to design their new orientation as religious community. Padre Gonzalo de La Torre had been sent to the *Medio Atrato* Region as provincial supervisor by Jorge Iván Castaño Rubio -the 'vicar apostolic' of Quibdó between 1983-1990 who became the first (Claretian) bishop of the Diócesis of Quibdó in the period 1990-2000. Gonzalo told me how Jorge Iván Castaño Rubio has had an important role in the development of the 'renewed content' of pastoral work in the 1970s-1980s and in the development of the church's organisational structure, resulting in the Diócesis of Quibdó. In order to understand how the approach of the Claretians became grounded in a 'transformative practice'. Padre Gonzalo de la Torre told me to read Castaño's biography *'un Obispo en una época de cambios – la Iglesia del Vaticano II en Quibdó'* [a bishop in an epoch of changes – the Church of the Vatican II in Quibdó] –published by the Claretians in 2012 (Flórez López, 2012). In this text the Bishop's legacy is discussed extensively. From the text I was able to see: how the formulation of pastoral options started to guide the pastoral plan of the various religious communities and on what kind of socio-political vision this had been based. The Claretian mentality of the (first) bishop has influenced the development of the content of pastoral work a lot, as the exact outlook of any Diócesis is completely dependent on the mentality that the bishop brings with him. Here the Claretians themselves had put a lot of input into the creation of the Diócesis' pastoral options, that had been the *'true secret of the Pastoral Project'* under Bishop Castaño Rubio (Interview with Padre Gonzalo de la Torre Guerrero: 30 January 2013). The biography offers a synthesis of Castaño Rubio's involvement in the formulation of an 'alternative church' in the 1960s-1980s, illuminates how his ideas have further influenced the orientation of the Claretian Missionaries (and later the Diócesis) in the Chocó Department, and has been especially useful for exploring the exact *'philosophical' origins* of the Claretian Missionaries' approach.

The actions of the religious communities are for an important extent grounded in the pastoral plan [*plan de pastoral*] that started to coordinate the evangelic homework since 1983. The 'III General Pastoral Assembly of the Vicariate of Quibdó' held in 1985 was meant to clarify the central lines within its pastoral work. Although the mission of the Vicariate was to evangelise this had to contribute to a change at personal and social level: *"The Church evangelises when, by the sole divine power of the message she proclaims, tries to convert, at the same time, the personal and collective consciousness of men, the activity in which they are engaged, their life and their specific environments ...it is for the Church to transform with the power of the Evangelic, the standards of judgment, the determining values and the models of life of humanity which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation"*²¹ (Cf. Anuncio del Evangelio hoy (n. 18-19) cited in Castaño Rubio, 1985: 461). The Vatican Council II instructed the church to *"...examine the signs of the times and to interpret them according to the light of the Evangelic"*²² (Castaño Rubio, 1981: 206) in which *"...theological trials [...] depart from the oppressive conditions in which men are subjected to other economic, social and political matters, and aspire freedom. One does not take this situation of human history as a destination impossible to change, it is understood as a process "creator" [original: un proceso 'creador'] that should lead to greater freedom in all camps of existence and finally, does arise the 'new man'"*²³ (Castaño Rubio, 1981: 207). Action that favours social, economic and political justice and the participation in a

²¹ Original quote: *"La Iglesia evangeliza cuando, por la sola fuerza divina del mensaje que proclama, trata de convertir al mismo tiempo la conciencia personal y colectiva de los hombres, la actividad en la que ellos están comprometidos, su vida y ambientes concretos...se trata para la Iglesia de transformar con la fuerza del Evangelio, los criterios de juicio, los valores determinantes y los modelos de vida de la humanidad que están en contraste con la Palabra de Dios y con el designio de salvación"*

²² Original quote: *"...escrutar los signos de los tiempos y de interpretarlos a la luz del Evangelio"*

²³ Original quote: *"...los ensayos teológicos [...] parten de las condiciones de opresión en que se encuentran los hombres sometidos a otras en materia económica, social y política, y que aspiran a la libertad. No se toma esta situación de la historia humana como un destino imposible de cambiar; se la comprende como un proceso "creador" que debe conducir a mayor libertad en todos los campos de la existencia y finalmente, hacer que surja el 'hombre nuevo'"*

transformation of the ‘world’ to overcome situations of oppression is seen as a constitutive element of the prediction of ‘the Evangelic’. The content of the Claretian evangelisation is grounded in different principles, following a text written by Castaño in 1978, the evangelisation is essentially about giving testimony of (1) the central biblical messages and (2) the announcement of hope. However, the (3) ‘nexus between evangelisation and human promotion’ unites an anthropological order, theological order and evangelic order by promoting development and liberation by recognising the social and economic realities of the people. Furthermore (4) the primacy of combating injustice and promoting justice, privileges ‘clarity’, which implies that it is not possible to proclaim “...the new commandment without promoting the true and authentic advancement of man through justice and peace” (Castaño Rubio, 1978: 456). Lastly, (5) the nature of the ‘Christian Liberation’ should be grounded in a multi-dimensional, anthropocentric, a-political and non-violent (long-term) project that isn’t meant to replace the biblical message but envisages an holistic perspective on humanity, that uses the Biblical teachings to convert hearts and minds to ‘liberate’ humans from their oppressions (Castaño Rubio, 1978: 454-457).

As such, a new pastoral mission was formulated: *"The mission of the Church amidst the conflicts that threaten the human race and the Latin American continent, against the outrages against justice and freedom, against institutionalised injustice of regimes that are inspired by opposing ideologies and face terrorist violence, is immense and more than ever necessary. In order to fulfil this mission this requires the action of the whole Church –pastorals, consecrated ministers, religious, laity- everyone in their proper mission. One and the other, united to Christ in prayer and dedication, will commit without hate or violence, to the end [original: ‘hasta las últimas consecuencias’] in achieving a more just, free and peaceful society, longing of the people of Latin America and indispensable fruit of a liberating evangelisation”*²⁴ (Puebla (n. 562) cited in Castaño Rubio, 1981: 209)²⁵

This critical perspective on society is based on some societal judgements that ask for pastoral action grounded in this ‘liberating mission’. The most profound societal challenges (in Latin America) of the 1980s were identified as: the lack of respect for the cultural patrimony of the different peoples in Latin America; the discrepancy between inhuman conditions and the Christian culture; and the ever-growing conflicting tendencies in social and political life (Flórez López, 2012). While specifically in Colombia, several ‘moral evils’ –identified in the Colombian pastoral message of 1985²⁶– prohibited social and material progress, caused by:

- *“the moral decomposition that has infiltrated in almost all levels and spheres of life, both private and public, and what is worse, in the people that have the economic, political and social power”*

²⁴ Original quote: “La misión de la Iglesia en medio de los conflictos que amenazan al género humano y al continente latino Americano, frente a los atropellos contra la justicia y la libertad, frente a la injusticia institucionalizada de regímenes que se inspiran en ideologías opuestas y frente a la violencia terrorista, es inmensa y más que nunca necesaria. Para cumplir esta misión se requiere la acción de la Iglesia toda –pastores, ministros consagrados, religiosos, laicos-, cada cual en su misión propia. Unos y otras, unidos a Cristo en la oración y en la abnegación, se comprometerán sin odios ni violencias, hasta las últimas consecuencias en el logro de una sociedad más justa, libre y pacífica, anhelado de los pueblos de América Latina y fruto indispensable de una evangelización liberadora”

²⁵ The Puebla documents are the outcome of the “Tercera conferencia General de Episcopado Latinoamericano” in Puebla, Mexico (1979) that discussed the present and the future of ‘evangelisation’ in Latin America.

²⁶ Being part of the ‘Mensaje Pastoral de la 44 Asamblea Plenaria Extraordinaria del Episcopado Colombiano’ held on 23-26 September 1985

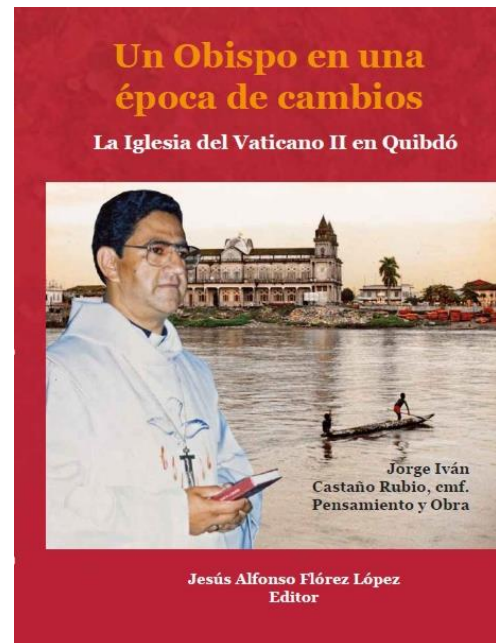


IMAGE 8: BOOK COVER 'UN OBISPO EN UNA ÉPOCA DE CAMBIOS' (SOURCE: [HTTP://RX.FUCLA.EDU.CO:81/Evento/UN-OBISPO-EN-UNA-%C3%A9POCA-DE-CAMBIOS](http://rx.fucla.edu.co:81/Evento/UN-OBISPO-EN-UNA-%C3%A9POCA-DE-CAMBIOS))

- *“the structure of Colombia’s economy that is almost completely based in capitalism, that has made possible the inequality in distribution of resources, and has produced the social inequality. Here one needs to add the difficult international economic conjuncture and the world economic crisis”*
- *“the violation of the most elementary human rights as the right on life, on liberty, on property, by murder, kidnapping, extortion and acts of violence”*
- *“the progressive deterioration of the political parties, that are called by nature to act as servants of the people, to be advocates for bold and necessary changes to strengthen the participative, just and progressive democracy”* (Castaño Rubio, 1985: 462).

Castaño Rubio stresses that missionary presence in a department such as the Chocó -which is marginalised and poor- obligates the church to opt for the poor. As the *Chocoanos* find themselves within this reality which is ‘contradicting the plan of the Creator’, here the Church has the capacity to transform the situation and, as such, is obliged to do so. The pastoral plan –ratified in 1985- became grounded in a ‘**fundamental option for life**’ that takes life as the reference point in order to reflect on the sacraments, rituals and doctrines of the church. This is further supported by six other options:

- **Option for the poor and the oppressed:** in order to keep the poor as the point of reference in all discussions, actions and discussions.
- **Option for an liberating evangelisation:** implying a commitment to the teachings of the liberation theology in the prediction of ‘the Evangelic’.
- **Option for the ‘Comunidades Eclesiales de Base’ [‘Christian Base Communities’]:** aiming to support the community by creating small organisational units that recognise the initiatives of the community: their being, thinking and acting.
- **Option of the organisations of the bases:** to overcome the risk of a lack of community organisation by creating and supporting popular organisations, while giving them sufficient autonomy.
- **Option for the defence and preservation of the territory and environment and a rational use of natural resources:** protect the territory of the Chocó in which the different minority groups have constructed their history and culture.
- **Option for an enculturated church:** a church that reflects its people by affirming their history, culture, etc.

(Diócesis de Quibdó, 2012b; De La Torre Guerrero, no date: 625-635).

These options and ‘the Evangelic compromise’ obligated the Vicariate of Quibdó ‘...to confront those objective obstacles that exist in the heart of men as in the diverse social structures and social structures that prevail in our midst’ (Castaño Rubio, 1985: 463). This happens by condemning poverty, investigating and denouncing the root causes of poverty, assisting the aspirations of the people to be ‘treated as free and responsible men’ that can participate in the decisions that concern their life, and by defending their fundamental rights to create free organisations in order to save and promote their interests to contribute to the communal benefit (Castaño Rubio, 1985: 463).

According to Castaño Rubio ‘*comunidades eclesiales de base*’ (CEBs) should be understood as small human cores of faith, hope and care of which its first function is ecclesial, with an focus on the evangelisation and ‘primary factor of human promotion and development’ (Castaño Rubio, 1972: 532). CEB’s are meant to give a three-fold impulse: sociological, political and Christian. Sociological in the sense that it creates new communitarian forms in critical moments of social change. Political in the sense that it urges to live in a ‘political Christian compromise’. And finally, Christian in the sense of being able to have a church that is more in line with the spirit of ‘the Evangelic’ (Castaño Rubio, 1972: 534). The fundamental option for life,

the poor and the oppressed committed the Claretians to engage in a protagonist role in the altering of the social conditions in which the *Chocoanos* lived, as a respect for life and their (politically) marginalisation became central in the 'liberating mission'. The principle of enculturation reflected a respect for cultural diversity, in which the history, customs and life-styles of the diverse minority groups are protected by 'strengthening the values of the people' (Castaño Rubio, 2012: 516) *"Cultures aren't vacant lands, devoid of true values. The evangelisation of the Church isn't a destructive process, but of consolidation and strengthening of these values; a contribution to the growth of the 'seeds of the Word' [original: "gérmenes del Verbo"] present in the cultures"* (Puebla (n. 401) cited in Castaño Rubio 1991: 592). Christian values can be found within distinct cultures. A respect for this distinctiveness is not contradicting the prediction of 'the Evangelic'.

The importance of the defence of natural resources originates in a 'theology of the land and the defence of the territory'. Land is seen as the living ground of the communities of the region. However the land is being threatened by 'unjust' laws of government which induce natural resource exploitation. Territory is seen as a space for life and culture, being from the community as a whole. An perspective explicitly grounded in the following option: *"...we opt for the defence and the preservation of the territory and environment, for the rational use of the natural resources, fundamentals for live and other assets sought after by national and international economic interests, against which we must always have clear criteria and standpoints in favour of the people. We opt for an enculturated Church that rescues, reflects and celebrates the life of the Chocoanean people"*²⁷ (Castaño Rubio, no date: 561).

Whereas the pastoral plan with its options have political implications they are not to be understood as a political project as such. The plan has a long-term vision on a desirable 'liberation' that relates the theological dimension to a critical standpoint towards the contemporary world, by relating theory to praxis, and the comprehension of faith to social practice (Flórez López, 2012: 11). However, Biblical principles -such as justice, liberty, and truth- are the grounding principles for wider social action. They are grounded in 'the Evangelic' and should not be directed by (direct) sociological or political criteria. This is not to say that these choices do not have external and social consequences. As actually -in the course of my fieldwork- the most clearly defined political statements would be articulated within church-circles. Padre Gonzalo explained that obviously the adoption of options have political repercussions, as they reflect a confrontation with 'the model of society' that is based on a neoliberal, capitalist vision that that does not opt for life. This implies a confrontation with those that destroy life, to opt for the communities, and, therefore, goes against the 'hegemonic culture'. However, while this critical perspective on society has social and political repercussions, it is grounded in the principles of 'the Evangelic' and as such it is not to be understood as a political project in a conventional sense, but as 'Liberating Evangelisation' (Interview with Padre Gonzalo de la Torre Guerrero: 30 January 2013).

In sum, the pastoral options reflected a (broader) socio-political perspective originating in a Claretian 'conception of the world' that judged the socio-historical patterning of relationships in the Chocó Department. A socio-political stand point had been developed -based on a critical, coherent and elaborated vision on 'the hegemonic class project' - that proposed an alternative ideational and material reality. This narrative emphasised the intrinsic connection between the 'black population' and their lands. As the Afro-Colombian population *'...that came from Africa to our lands as slaves, obligated to work in the mines of our territory'* (Castaño Rubio, no date: 557) had settled themselves -in the course of time- in the jungle along the Atrato River. Their descendants had lived in peace and harmony for many years. However, in the end of the 20th century, this 'black population' became confronted with an invasion by *colonos* [colonisers] - initiated by state policies promoting an extractivist enclave model of neoliberal development - in order to exploit the region's natural potential. This threatened the land tenure systems that their

²⁷ Original text: *"optamos por la defensa y preservación del territorio y medio ambiente, por el aprovechamiento racional de los recursos naturales, fundamentales para la vida y demás bienes codiciados por intereses económicos nacionales e internacionales, frente a lo cual debemos tener criterios y posición siempre clara a favor del pueblo. Optamos por una Iglesia inculturada que rescate, refleje y celebre la vida del pueblo chococano"*

ancestors had given them as single heritage. *“For our black people the use and possession of the land becomes more dramatic when you consider that for them it is something central that encompasses their whole life, both in their personal as well as their communal dimension. [...] The territory is part of their socio-cultural experience. It isn’t a cadastral concept or a property for trade. Grounded in this strong sense of community, the black ethnicities have created and recreated -departing from their origins, exchange and impositions occurred during the contacts with the settlers- cultural expressions that are features around their territory. As the focus of subsistence, space of the occurrence of life and symbolic trade-mark for the identity and search for liberty and autonomy as a people”* (Castaño Rubio, no date: 559-561). A ‘philosophical’ foundation for a (Gramscian) counter-hegemonic project was created by the development of the pastoral options and the socio-political criteria for judgement behind them. The Claretian perspective was critical towards the contemporary social ordering and situation of class dominance. At the same time the ‘intellectual project’ was based on an interpretation of the Afro-Colombian history and cultural specifics (enculturation) that were meant to respect (and reflect) the wider conceptions (ideologies) of the Afro-Colombians citizens. The Claretians made themselves responsible for altering the situation of oppression based on their conception of the world that had asked for judgment and action. Following Gramsci, the Claretians started to see themselves as ‘*organic intellectuals*’ – a social group that identifies itself with a particular social class (here: ‘the oppressed’ Afro-Colombians) and saw themselves as responsible for the production of and passing over of knowledge in society, by grasping the contradictions in society and positioning themselves within these contradictions. Their connection to the lessons provided by the ‘liberation theology’ further stimulated the Claretians to engage themselves actively in the prediction of this (broader) ‘Evangelic’ and the contribution to socio-political change. As the next chapter will show, the early 1980s marked the beginning of a process of community organisation and formation based on this ‘conception of the world’, where the Claretians (and other missionaries) increased their presence in the rural Atrato-communities and started to disseminate this ‘alternative world view’ in the rural communities. They did this in order to transform the mere fragmented and incoherent (political) visions of the rural Afro-Colombian communities into a more coherent, politically-elaborated, centralised and critical perspective that would be able to empower the community to ‘defend’ themselves against the threats posed by the ‘hegemonic’ state project.

Based on these convictions the Vicariate of Quibdó and later the Diócesis grounded their actions in a socio-political orientation that emphasised the merit of an evangelisation based in the ‘progressive principles’ of the Vatican II and the Medellín Conference. Castaño Rubio’s influence in the establishment of the Diócesis and his 10-year position as a bishop of the Diócesis of Quibdó has importantly affected the way in which this Diócesis would formulate its mission and pastoral plans. However, this vision was not without internal friction as a report written by Castaño Rubio in 1993 reveals. There he expressed his preoccupations about the doctrinal and relational divisions within his Diócesis, mainly grounded in an apparent tension between evangelisation and liberation identified by some members of his Diócesis (Castaño Rubio, 1993). Within this Diócesis one could observe a distinction between progressive and less progressive priests. As distinctions could be made between those in favour of an ‘Evangelic Mission’ based on a socio-political commitment and liberating vision, and those who saw the role of the Church as mainly grounded in a more conventional ‘prediction of the Evangelic’. This tension has been confirmed by various priests that I have interviewed during my stay in the Chocó: *“The position of the Diócesis of Quibdó has always been an exceptional position – thanks to God- we have achieved a little schooling in this Pacific region, it is the first time that six bishops have united themselves in a position that the Diócesis has been defending since 25 years²⁸. You can see that bit by bit we have achieved to open up spaces at the level of the Church but the general position of the Colombian Church does not go in this direction, let alone the world church [...] As well you have to see, not everyone in the Diócesis thinks the same, as well as there are sectors within the Diócesis, there are some priests that are not committed to the*

²⁸ Refers to ‘la Carta Pastoral de los Obispos de las Diócesis del Pacífico Colombiano del Año 2010’, in which six different bishops of the pacific region have developed a shared perspective about the defence and protection of the territory.

organisational processes, and they dedicate themselves solely to their religious work”²⁹ (Interview with Padre Jan Petersen: 19 December 2012).

The socio-political vision that has been outlined in this chapter would inspire the scope and content of the mission of Claretians, Vicariate of Quibdó and later the Diócesis of Quibdó (and its various religious communities) for the next 30 years. It would form the “*philosophical*” foundation of the counter-hegemonic project that became initiated in the early 1980s. The mid-1990s and 2000s would pose some new challenges on the communities in the Chocó Department (and the Pacific region as a whole) and would result in the adoption of new options and new priorities of the Diócesis, that will shortly be discussed in chapter 7. The next chapter, however, will discuss the emergence of a counter-hegemonic movement in the 1980s in which the diverse missionaries started to engage themselves in an ‘intellectual project’ in the Atrato-region.

3.5 Theoretically-informed conclusion

The Colombian National Church –historically- has continued its conservative orientation and preserved its authority, while keeping close ties with the political status-quo. Social Catholicism emerged at the margins of society, inspired by the lessons provided by the Second Vatican Council, the Medellín Bishops’ Meeting and some influential Catholic publications that emerged since the 1960s. While the Claretian Missionaries entered the Chocó Department based on an agreement with the Colombian government that aimed to incorporate the department’s various minority groups into the hegemonic (national and religious) culture. In the course of time their orientation changed into a more socially-concerned vision. At the same time, the organisational development of this religious community granted them more ‘autonomy’ from both the Colombian State and the National Catholic Church. The two meetings provided the Claretians with a way to reinterpret ‘the Evangelic’ in light of the ‘Liberation Theology’. ‘The Evangelic Mission’ became reinterpreted in terms of a holistic perspective on humanity in which action that favours social, economic and political justice and an active participation in the transformation of situations of oppressions in ‘the world’ were seen as constitutive elements of the prediction of ‘the Evangelic’. A critical perspective on ‘reality’ became the basis for the judgement of society and the promotion of societal action. ‘The current reality’ –in Colombia in general and the Chocó in particular- became condemned based on an observation of: the lack of respect for cultural-diversity; instances of (social, political, economic and cultural) inequality; the ‘moral decomposition’ in social, political -public and private- life; the capitalist nature of Colombia’s economy –that resulted in growing inequalities-; a continuous violation of human rights; and the progressive deterioration of the political parties. At the margins of the (spatially-unevenly developed) hegemonic class project, the Claretians were confronted with the inherent contradictions in both the (conventional) Roman Catholic interpretation of the Bible –advocated by the National Church- and a situation of uneven state-power. As the prediction of the ‘Evangelic’ according to the conventional Roman Catholic interpretation did not address the injustices in society, and their presence in the Chocó Department confronted the missionaries with the social, cultural, political and economic inequalities within the Colombian State. Here, they started to develop a vision that recognised the contradictions inherent in (both) hegemonic projects. The Claretians developed pastoral options that were meant to guide pastoral action: a commitment to the socio-political project inherent in their ‘Evangelic mission’. These, by then, seven options would reflect the socio-political commitment of the Claretians Missionaries by opting for: life; the poor and oppressed; an enculturated evangelisation; the *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*; the social organisations; a liberating evangelisation; and the defence of natural

²⁹ Original quote: “La posición de la Diócesis de Quibdó siempre ha sido una posición excepcional –gracias a Dios- hemos logrado hacer un poquito de escuela en esta región del Pacífico, es la primera vez que seis obispos se unieron en una posición que la Diócesis había hace 25 años defiende. Se puede ver que poco a poco hemos logrado abrir espacios a nivel de la iglesia pero la posición general de la iglesia colombiana no va en esta dirección, ni mucho menos la iglesia mundial [...] también hay que ver que no todos en la Diócesis pensamos igual, hay sectores también dentro misma la Diócesis, hay algunos sacerdotes que no tienen compromisos con los procesos organizacionales, y se dedican solamente a su trabajo religioso”.

resources. All together these 'commitments' made the Claretians Missionaries responsible for a transformation of 'the world' in which the people lived. The options directed the Claretians to engage in a liberation of the oppressed 'classes' (in this case: the rural Afro-Colombian population in the Atrato-region). These commitments aimed to grasp the 'contradictions in the dominant social order' that they saw as being in contrast with the 'Plan of the Creator', where they positioned themselves within these contradictions as active 'transformers'. As 'actors' responsible for producing and passing over knowledge in society. They evolved into a Gramscian 'Organic Intellectual'. The development of a socio-political 'world view' that critiqued the 'hegemonic conception of the world' based on a culturally-sensitive, historical and relational account of the Afro-Colombian class was used to justify their political orientation and resemble the ideologies present within the masses. Here a new 'critical conception of the world' emerged that was supposed to resemble the 'feelings' of the classes they were supposed to represent. By respecting the Afro-Colombian (cultural) legacy, advocating their independence from 'hegemonic culture', the creation of a critical historical account on their marginalised position, an emphasis on 'communal benefit', and an exemplification of the community's ties to their land, a 'coherent' socio-cultural history was presented. It aimed to 'grasp the contradictions in society' and positioned the 'experience' of the Afro-Colombian population within a wider (critical) socio-historical narrative. In this manner it challenged the ideational and material reality of the 'bourgeois class project' in which this 'alternative organisation of social relations and knowledge' aimed to 'liberate' the communities. This alternative conception of the world identified 'a long term liberating project' that should be passed on to the masses by the 'liberating evangelisation' (see next chapter).

Chapter 4: The first conjuncture ‘La lucha por el territorio’ (1980s-1991)

“Sin territorio no hay vida. [...]”

El territorio es la madre, la base fundamental de una casa son los cimientos, y el cimiento del ser humano es el territorio. Si no hay territorio donde va a vivir el ser humano, donde va a nacer ese ser humano, donde se va a reproducir ese ser humano, como va a alimentarse ese ser humano si no tiene donde producir, ¿si no tiene una tierra que le produzca?. Entonces el agua y el territorio son la parte, esa es la parte fundamental, la esencia y la razón de ser de todo ser viviente, sea ser humano, sea animal, sea hierba, todo lo que nace crece y muere, la base fundamental y la esencia es el territorio.”

“Without territory there is no life [...] the territory is the mother, the fundamental base of a house are the foundations, and the foundation of the human being is the territory. When there is no territory where is the human being going to live, where is this human being going to be born, where is this human being going to reproduce, how is this human being going to feed itself if you have nowhere to produce, if you do not have a land that it produces? Thus, the water and the territory are the part, this is the fundamental part, the essence and the reason of being of all the living beings, be human being, be animal, be the grass, all that is born, grows and dies, the fundamental base and the essence is the territory”.

(Interview with Paula Cordoba– Legal Representative COCOMACIA: 17 November 2012)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses how the ‘socio-political perspective’ that had formed the ‘*philosophical*’ foundation of the Claretian-inspired ‘alternative conception of the world’ –chapter 3- became the basis for an ‘intellectual project’ initiated in the rural communities of the Atrato region. This chapter discusses the emergence of a counter-hegemonic project in which different missionaries committed themselves to socio-political and religious ‘formation’ and a process of community organisation as the basis for the defence of the community’s territory and rights. It was a response to the absence of state influence in the region and an emerging (national and international) interests in the region’s natural resources. This chapter provides an anthropological account of the experiences of different missionaries and community leaders within this process, by presenting primary research material, interview fragments and observations. Furthermore, it discusses the role of various Catholic missionaries who have been the protagonists within this process. By adopting the role of an ‘*organic intellectual*’, they were preparing the local population to continue this ‘intellectual project’. It follows a time frame that starts in the early 1980s -when the missionaries increased their presence in the country side and started their ‘intellectual project’- and this chapter ends in 1991 when a specific (Gramscian) ‘situation’ led the Colombian government to recognise the Afro-Colombian population as a minority group within the new constitution and furthermore adopted a ‘Transitory Article’ (AT-55) that would grant the (rural) Afro-Colombian communities collective property rights in the near future. This chapter, thus, builds on the previous chapter by looking at the concrete efforts of the missionaries in promoting and consolidating this counter-hegemonic project, while looking at the role of specific individuals, networks and movements that were crucial components for the emergence of this ‘liberationist movement’ (Mackin, 2010; 2012). This chapter aims to answer the sub-question (1c): “*How did the Claretian missionaries attempt to create this counter-hegemonic project?*” At the same time, there will be reflection on the influence of the context of structural violence on the scope, content and development of the counter-hegemonic project within this time-frame (sub-question 2).

4.2 Missionary presence in the rural regions

The organisational process of the Afro-Colombian communities started in the beginning of the 1980s when the different actors and agencies with help from the church started to engage in a process aiming at a wider visibilisation and recognition of Afro-Colombian citizenship. Arturo Escobar (2008) describes how this process involved an interaction between experts, ethno-territorial organisations, communities, activists, *consejeros*³⁰ and local groups in which the church played an important role. However, the particularities of this organisational process in the Atrato-region are worthwhile to mention. Initially, the process of community organisation did not have an explicit ethno-territorial focus –which it would get in the advent of the constitutional reform of 1991. Once the ‘rural movement’ started to collaborate with an (urban) ethnic movement that had emerged in the cities of the Southern Pacific this ethnic component became adopted. Another particularity was that the (Claretian Missionaries’) process of organisation and formation was highly connected to specific actors in the country side (the interaction between various Catholic missionaries and the locals), whereas the ethno-territorial discourse mentioned by Arturo Escobar had largely been a product developed by the intellectuals of the cities in the Southern Pacific. As such the decade preceding the legal reforms in the 1990s set the stage for a (more) organised rural community that became (mentally) prepared to engage in a confrontation with their marginalised position within the Colombian State. Cristian Restrepo –a former Claretian Priest – explained: *"This initial step was important because you did not fight for the territory because we had it. So, you did not need to fight for the territory. One of the biggest problems that we had was that we did not know what to fight for. But we knew we had to fight. We did not know why. [...] You fought for health care, for energy services, for communication services, roads these things, and also for attention of the state for the poverty, the lack of support, the marginalisation"*³¹ (Interview with Cristian Restrepo – research director IIAP & former Claretian Priest: 18 December 2012).

In the late 1970s/ early 1980s the Claretians (and other missionaries) went –for the first time- into the communities to live there permanently. Earlier the missionaries only made several trips a year while having their house in Quibdó -the department capital due to the high instances of Malaria in the Atrato-region. Padre Gonzalo de la Torre started to live in the *Medio-Atrato* region in the beginning of the 1980s and lived there for 17 years. He had been sent by Jorge Iván Castaño Rubio to become the provincial supervisor in this region. Many of the contemporary priests working at the Diócesis of Quibdó had been present in the country side at that time. Padre Jan Petersen –one of the non-Claretian missionaries with a German nationality- had been living and working near the rivers Norí, Buchadó and Bojayá and united forces with the Claretians in order to ‘prepare the communities for the problems that were coming’. While living in the communities, the Claretians –and other Catholic missionaries that supported ‘the social compromise’- were able to see the communities needs more clearly. Here their ‘Evangelic Mission’ started, based on the socio-political vision that originated in their reflections on the local reality and were directed by the insights provided by the liberation theology. When discussing this period in time with the various priests, nuns, or lay Claretians that had been present in the country side during this period, a mere romanticism seemed to overwhelm the discussion about the content of their mission. By now they were still seeing the fruits of their attempts in the 1980s and many of the community leaders that I would meet in Quibdó had their origins within this process of formation. The amount of people I got referred to in order to talk with who had their origin within this ‘process of formation and organisation’ and currently occupied important positions within the organisations that were supposed to continue the ‘intellectual project’ in the 2000s was overwhelming. Initially, I ran into an overwhelming ‘coherence’ within the organisational narratives and political worldviews within a dense network of organisations that all had their origin within this process. Already after my second interview I recorded in my field notes how *"I got fascinated by the use of this ‘ethnic discourse’ [read: the connection between an ethnic group and their land], how it*

³⁰ Members of consejos comunitarios (local community councils)

³¹ Original quote: *"Esa etapa inicial fue importante porque no se peleaba por el territorio porque lo teníamos. Entonces, no había para qué pelear por el territorio. Uno de los grandes problemas que tuvimos era que no sabíamos por qué pelear. Pero sabíamos que había pelea. No sabíamos por qué. [...] Se peleó por servicios de salud, por servicios de energía, por servicios de comunicación, vías, estas cosas, y también por atención del estado sobre pobreza, la de falta de apoyo, el marginamiento"*

seemingly is promoted by the Claretians and related organisations” but it left me wondering whether *“the discourse or awareness was first”* (Field Notes: p. 63). Actually, it took me quite a while before I had been able to find alternative voices about this topic.

Padre Gonzalo explained that the ‘Liberating Evangelisation’ in the communities had started with the development of ‘*Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*’ - following the Brazilian experience- that he described as ‘brotherly/ social’ groups within the communities, in which the ‘words of God’ were used to feed people’s conscience so as to find a social compromise. Here, they aimed to promote a Transformative Practice [*Practica Transformadora*] that, grounded in a situation of indignation, forms the starting point where the principles of seeing, judging and acting –originated in the ‘liberation theology’- are applied. *“I drink [read: witness/ experience] this situation and I am not in accordance with her, I judge this situation. In order to judge her, the word of God helps a lot, as judgement of this situation and then act”*³² (Interview with Padre Gonzalo de la Torre Guerrero: 10 December 2012). Within the CEB’s ‘the Evangelic’ was used to promote a critical vision on the reality in which the Afro-Colombian communities were living, by reflecting on the (historical) socio-political position of the Afro-Colombians within the Colombian nation. Here the different missionaries disseminated a ‘*philosophical*’ (alternative) conception of the world –based on their ‘Liberating Evangelisation’- within these weekly meetings in which they interacted with the rural communities. While the Claretians –together with some other missionaries- had their presence in the country side they used different methods such as courses, workshops, lectures, their daily communication and specific trainings to increase the consciousness of the farmers. *“These were like our homework, the social and religious formation [...] to give them the formation of liberation theology of the Vatican Council and the contextualised biblical hermeneutics”*³³ (Interview with Padre Gonzalo de la Torre Guerrero: 10 December 2012).

4.3 The formation of community leaders

Mariana Rodriguez is a lay Claretian with the Spanish nationality. She joined the Claretian Missionaries in the Chocó in December 1981, after Padre Gonzalo had send a letter to her priest back in Spain with the question to help him out by sending three persons to Latin America to strengthen ‘their work with the farmers’. Mariana came to Colombia with two other women as lay Claretians in order to help the Claretians’ efforts in the Atrato communities. She was motivated by her Christian compromise in which it was clear for her that any religious formation had to be linked to the lives of the people. Mariana is currently 62 years old and has been living in the *Medio Atrato* region for many years. She has always been closely involved in the processes of community organisation and –later- within the pastorals of the Diócesis and the activities of (COCOM)ACIA. She explained that the Claretian Mission in the Atrato-region was based on an integral evangelisation that comprised various areas: they established children’s homes to diminish infant mortality; they paid attention to cultural activities to strengthen the community’s cultural identity; they promoted communal enterprises to support the local economy; they strengthened the health care services; and paid attention to the educational services. By means of ‘being close to the communities’ (mentally and physically) the missionaries started to assist the local farmers in a transformation of their reality by providing some basic services as education and health care.

The idea of ‘*acercamiento*’ [getting closer to the communities] and ‘*conscientización*’ [awareness raising] needed to increase the community’s awareness about their marginalisation, poverty and discrimination. Here – Mariana explains- the ‘Liberating Evangelisation’ was able to articulate faith and life, by promoting a ‘humanisation’ of the people in order to achieve social justice, equality, community solidarity and a conception of the world that would be less individual and more communitarian. Here the Claretians

³² Original quote: “Yo bebo esta situación y no estoy de acuerdo con ella, juzgo esta situación. Y para juzgarla, la palabra de Dios ayuda mucho, como juicio de ese situación y después actuar”

³³ Original quote: “Estos eran como nuestra la tarea, la formación social y la formación religiosa. [...] darles la formación de la teología de la liberación del Concilio Vaticano y de la hermenéutica bíblica contextualizada”

sought ways to promote the collective well-being of the people, by facilitating information and the promotion of (concrete) alternatives against the capitalist model “...*models more communitarian, more solidary, that at the same time respect the environment and are constructed in correspondence with the traditional knowledge in which the community can make its decisions*”³⁴ (Interview with Mariana Rodríguez: 29 January 2013). In order to assure a continuation of these processes, the Claretians came to the conclusion that in the end the population itself should be able to assume responsibility for the continuation of these processes. Community organisation was seen as the key for a continuance of what the different missionaries had started. The establishment of a local community organisation, equipped with ‘critical’ leaders, would be able to continue the process that had been initiated. In different workshops the missionaries attempted to increase the community’s awareness about human rights, the various rights that the communities have, the social dynamics within society and the functioning of the Colombian State. “*In these reflections that we did on the Bible, we realised that it was necessary to organise ourselves in order to be able to defend our rights as forgotten people and nestled in the biographic Chocó, a land so priced by the big national and international capital*”³⁵ (Perea, 2012: 47). The Claretians and some other missionaries united their efforts to plant the ideas behind the need for the community to organise itself based on their critical reading of the society and facilitated by the trust they had gained while being one of the few ‘outsiders’ living in the rural areas of the Chocó Department. Padre Gonzalo de La Torre explained that the Claretians invested a lot of time and money in the formation of the people and their leaders. In fact, a lot of community leaders of the various popular organisations that would emerge in the end of the 1980s would have their origin in the *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* or in the Children’s homes, from the latter originated mainly female leaders.

Nevaldo Perea Perea, currently 62 years old, is an Afro-Colombian community leader that –for me- would become me the embodiment of the Claretian ‘intellectual project’. As his life-history, political convictions and 30 year engagement in the process of community organisation had made him a ‘reflection of the ethno-territorial discourse’ that was promoted in the 1980s and I continued to hear within many organisations –closely related to the Catholic Church- during my period of field work. Nevaldo had been born in Domingodó, part of the municipality ‘Carmen de Darién’ in the *Bajo Atrato* region. His mother had to raise her three children on her own – Nevaldo did not know his father until he became 21- and as such Nevaldo needed to work from a young age in order to provide for his family. The only schooling he was able to take had been based in the Children’s homes, but always conditioned under the work load to provide the necessary income for his mother and brothers. At the age of 18 Nevaldo was able to finish the 4th grade of primary school. Although he was eager to continue his study he did not have the financial opportunity to do so. He explained to me “*I did the university of life, I did not have the opportunity – caused by an absence of economic resources of my mum – very poor-, she could not give me studies in order to arrive, well, at an university. But, in this processes, since 30 years I am into this popular process, a process of the re-vindication of rights, as is the ACLA and where our advisors have been the Diócesis, the missionaries, the priests [...] and they have always been these teachers wherein one has been forming*”³⁶ (Interview with Nevaldo Perea Perea – community leader COCOMACIA: 13 December 2012). Nevaldo remembers how in the end of the 1970s the first priests entered his village – under whom Padre Jan Petersen- and started the process that would organise the community.

The missionaries used different (yellow) booklets to educate the community on a range of topics. These booklets were called ‘*con ustedes*’ [‘with you’] and ‘*caminar con ustedes*’ [‘walk with you’] and explained in a simple language and with the help of drawings some educational lessons regarding a variety of topics such as: health care, hygiene, the native forests and the importance of the environment etc. Whereas I was only

³⁴ Original quote: “...*modelos más comunitarios, más solidarios, también que sean respetuosos con el medio ambiente y que todo eso se construya de acuerdo con los saberes tradicionales en las que la comunidad haga sus propias decisiones*”

³⁵ Original quote: “*En esas reflexiones que hacíamos sobre la Biblia nos dimos cuenta de que era necesario organizarse para poder defender nuestros derechos como pueblos olvidados y enclavados en el Chocó biogeográfico, una tierra tan codiciada por el gran capital nacional e internacional*”.

³⁶ Original quote: “*He hecho la Universidad de la vida, no tuve la oportunidad - por falta de recursos económicos de mi mamá - muy pobre - , no pudo darme estudios para llegar, pues, a una universidad. Pero en todo este proceso, hace 30 años que estoy metido en todo el proceso popular, un proceso de reivindicación de derechos, tal y como lo es la ACLA y donde nuestros asesores han sido la Diócesis, los misioneros, los curas [...] y siempre han sido ellos maestros con los cuales uno se ha ido formando*”

able to access a couple versions of this booklets –on my last day in Quibdó- I observed how many of the topics discussed reflected to a high degree the ‘conception of the world’ I had been hearing so many times within the ‘Claretian Network’ (Field Notes, p. 177). Paula Cordoba -current legal representative of COCOMACIA- remembers the different booklets that were used to alphabetise the communities “...*there they spoke about the situation and the reality in which the people were living, I mean one learned...the people learned to sign their name, to read, to send notes, here, to Quibdó, one learned it with a view from our, from ourselves [...] they have some verses, eh, for example, here you have a booklet that has: ‘watch and do nothing will turn us passive and to be passive will bring us to always live restricted’, because there are two blind spots, blinded as one doesn’t see and blinded as one doesn’t know things, so until one knows*”³⁷ (Interview with Paula Cordoba – legal representative COCOMACIA: 17 November 2012).

She explained that this was where ‘it all started’ “...*it started with the Claretians, in the head of Padre Gonzalo de la Torre*”. Every Sunday she went to one of the houses in her community in order to read the Bible -within the CEB’s-, and every time a couple of coins were asked in order to collect the required cash for one of the community members to visit the assemblies –organised by the Claretians- where different community representatives would meet in order talk over the ideals of the –not yet established- popular organisation. These were the first steps within the organisational process Paula explains. By now she is the legal representative of the first popular farmers organisation that would become established in the ‘*Medio Atrato* region’, critically aware of the need to protect the lives of the communities and their territory in order to defend ‘...*the life one wants the people to have in their community*’ as part of the “*Aciatic family*”, “*the family of COCOMACIA*” [original: la familia Aciatica, la familia de COCOMACIA] (Interview with Paula Cordoba – legal representative COCOMACIA: 17 November 2012). Nevaldo Perea explained that in these community meetings (the ‘assemblies’) the idea developed to create a farmers organisation in the ‘*Medio-Atrato* region’ that would enable the communities to reclaim their rights, as -until then- the communities had always been functioning at the mercy of the different politicians that only showed their face during election times to collect votes. Other forms of governmental presence in the region was nearly absent. And hardly any Afro-Colombian possessed any form of property rights over its lands.

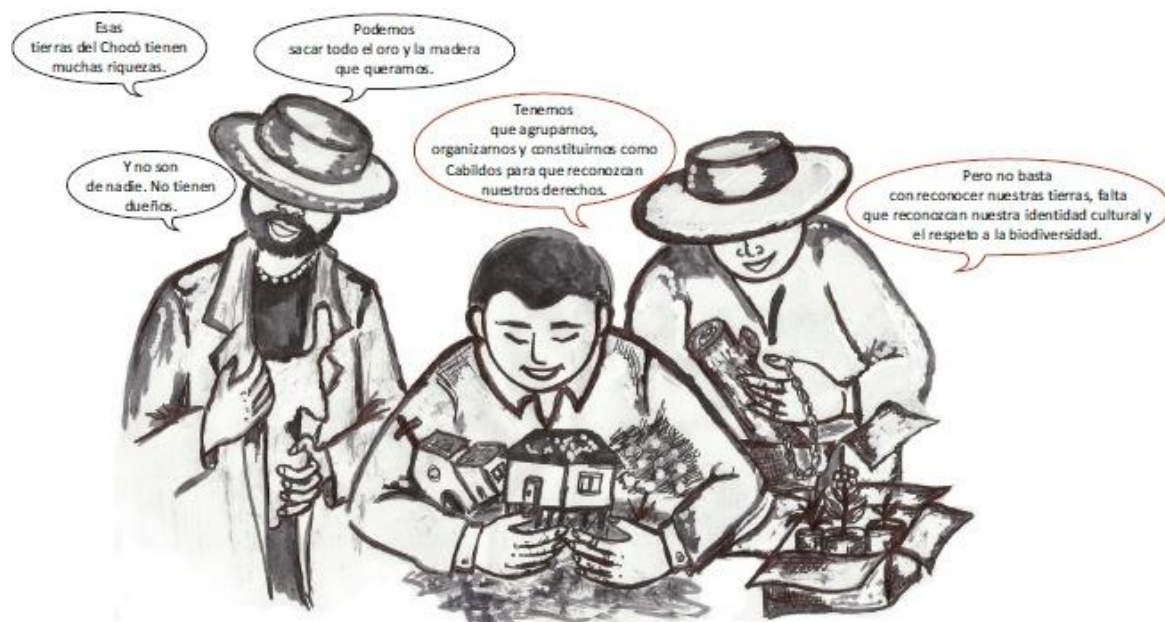


IMAGE 9: A NEED TO ORGANISE (SOURCE: DIOCESIS DE QUIBDÓ, 2012: 5)

³⁷ Original quote: “...*abí se habla de la situación y la realidad que la gente estaba viviendo, ósea uno aprendía... la gente que aprendió a firmar su nombre, a leer, a mandar notas de acá a Quibdó lo aprendió con un, una mirada desde nosotros, desde nosotros mismos[...] tienen unos versos, eh, por ejemplo abí hay una cartilla que tiene: ‘observar y no hacer nada nos va volviendo pasivos y el ser pasivos nos lleva a vivir siempre atenidos’, porque hay dos cegueras, ciego como el que no ve y ciego el que no sabe las cosas, entonces basta que uno conoce*”

Until the 1980s there had been only limited interaction between the communities that were living up-stream and down-stream the Atrato river (or living on one of the river's influents). The communities had been living relatively isolated, and hardly had left their communities. Daily life was concerned with a provision of subsistence needs by engaging in different activities based on a 'seasonal rotation'. Padre Jan Petersen –one of the non-Claretian missionaries- explained how the Afro-Colombian farmers lived from different activities that they distributed over the year. Depending on the weather or the height of the river the farmers shifted between agriculture, fishing, cutting wood and mining. *"So the people were engaged in different activities and with these they knew how to live with the nature, using the resources, without destroying the environment"*³⁸ (Interview with Padre Jan Petersen: 19 December 2012). As during this epoch periodical meetings were organised in the different communities in the region –with support of the missionaries- and nearby communities were invited to join, communities that previously hardly interacted got educated in a 'common conception of the world' and started to interact and collaborate. Delegates of the different communities would attend these meetings and spread their main messages within their communities. The socio-political worldview that had originated within the Claretian '*philosophy*' started to create a form of 'class awareness' based on the creation of a common will and purpose. Here the seeds of the 'Transformative Practise' and the process of community organisation were planted and dispersed along the Atrato-river. These seeds created a popular organisation that would be equipped to represent the different communities in the region based on the socio-political vision advocated by the missionaries.

4.4 An increased urgency

The missionaries observed how wood companies had entered the '*Bajo Atrato* region' and started to cut down the trees. These companies started mapping, marking trees and initiating projects further up the river in the *Medio Atrato* region. Here the organisational process strengthened a lot when the companies 'Maderas de Darién' and 'Triplex Pizano' had requested –and were granted- concessions to exploit wood in the '*Bajo Atrato* region' and one could observe their interest in the *Medio Atrato* region as well. As such, the motives behind the organisational process were two-fold, explains Padre Jan Petersen.

First, up-to-then the Afro-Colombian communities did not have any institutional form to claim property rights. The Atrato-region had been declared forest reserve by the government. This had been in contrast with the abilities of the Indigenous minority groups that had received a form of recognition in the Colombian constitution of 1886. Since then the Indigenous communities had been the subject of various legal transformations, and had been granted collective land titles in the form of natural reserves. The government had treated the Afro-Colombians as settlers, as only a few Afro-Colombians possessed any form of property rights over their land. Furthermore, their official citizenship status had not been granted.

Secondly, the observed interest in the region's natural resources by the arrival of the wood companies placed the communities' lands at risk (Interview with Padre Jan Petersen: 19 December 2012). In 1986 Nevaldo Perea Perea became elected as president of one of the –by then- established local committees in his village Punta de Acaidó. This local committee was the first organisational figure at a community level and was based on a partnership between various community members. As such, the amount of participants depended on the active participation of the community. Nevaldo began with his first job concerned with gaining respect for the community's rights over their territory. In 2013 he would still be involved in the organisational process. Various meetings were organised in order to further consolidate these local committees; and with help of the missionaries, various trainings were held to give these committees more strength as authority. Nevaldo explained *"...the idea was that every local committee worked hand in hand with communal actions and that when these strangers arrived, they made them know that the community was*

³⁸ Original quote: *"Así que la gente se dedicaba a diferentes actividades y con eso ellos sabían convivir con la naturaleza aprovechando los recursos sin destruir el medio ambiente"*

the owner of the land and that, therefore, before making their trails they needed to talk with us and explain to us what they wanted”³⁹ (Perea, 2012: 49). The arrival of the (wood) logging companies contributed to an increased awareness about the need to ‘defend’ the territories’ natural resources at a community level. The different local committees became consolidated in a bigger organisation that was established to ‘defend life and territory’. In the *Medio Atrato* region the (popular) farmers organisation ‘ACIA’ – *Asociación Campesina Integral del Atrato*– became established in 1987. Those community leaders who were mentally best prepared in their ‘consciousness’ –originating in the ‘*Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*’– would become the leaders within the process. Every region would have its own popular organisation. Some of them were established in the late 1980s, others in the beginning of the 1990’s. The ACIA is seen as one of the pioneers in the organisational process, being one of the first Afro-Colombian organisations that became legally established and having gained recognition for their activities at a national and international level. Other (Afro-Colombian) ethno-territorial organisations that received (organisational) support from the Claretian missionaries were OCABA – *Organización Campesina del Bajo Atrato*– and (COCOM)OPOCA – (*Consejo Comunitario Mayor de la) Organización Popular Campesina del Alto Atrato*. The three areas under jurisdiction of the Vicariate of Quibdó at that time.

As there had been no law favouring the interests of the Afro-Colombian communities this became the main pillar of the organisation’s efforts. Nevaldo Perea recalls, that at this stage, the theme that worried the ACIA the most had been their natural resources, as the presence of the wood companies could be observed and the booklets that were used by the Claretian Missionaries for their ‘*conscientización*’ had made the community members aware of the effects of the wood exploitation in the *Bajo Atrato* region. In 1988 the ACIA got its juridical (official) status and its first board became elected. At this time the board originated from one community within the area of influence of the ACIA (Buchadó) to avoid travel costs. As the juridical status of the ACIA granted them the ‘authority’ to demand governmental authorities to engage in a dialogue, negotiations with Codechocó⁴⁰ started– the state institution governing the management of natural resources in the region. Nevaldo remembers how in one of the first official reunions of the ACIA (in 1988) they met with some representatives of state institutions in the community of Buchadó. Here a state functionary confessed that he needed to apologise to the ‘black communities’, as he had no idea that there were so many communities living in the jungle (Perea, 2012). At this reunion the ACIA and Codechocó signed an agreement that identified an area of co-management of natural resources in the *Medio Atrato*. “We realised that it was worthwhile to organise ourselves in order to defend the rights because, till then, we had not ‘legally’ insured anything that our ancestors gave us as their legacy”⁴¹ (Perea, 2012: 52). The ACIA realised that as the ancestry of the Afro-Colombian communities was not recognised in the Colombian constitution, the government possessed the right over the whole Pacific region and was in the position to grant concessions to various companies to exploit the region’s natural resources. At this point –in the late 1980s and early 1990s– the ACIA, accompanied by the various missionaries– started to reflect on the possibility to obtain land titles. Different kinds of land titles were discussed but they came to the conclusion that requesting either individual titles or titles at a community level would imply a long process of agrarian reform that would not benefit the whole community. Furthermore, the time that would pass before the INCORA⁴² – the state institution responsible for agrarian reforms– would have titled each single community would be highly dependent on governmental willingness, a factor that would be shifting with the arrival of every



IMAGE 10: LOGO ACIA
(SOURCE:
[HTTP://COCOMACIA.GALEON.COM/](http://COCOMACIA.GALEON.COM/))

³⁹ Original quote: “La idea era que cada comité local trabajara de la mano con las acciones comunales y que cuando llegaran esos forasteros, se les hiciera saber que la comunidad era la dueña de las tierras y que, por tanto, antes de hacer sus trochas tenían que hablar con nosotros y explicarnos qué pretendían”

⁴⁰ Corporación Autónoma Regional para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Chocó.

⁴¹ Original quote: “Nos dimos cuenta de que valía la pena organizarse para defender los derechos porque, hasta ese momento, no teníamos asegurado ‘legalmente’ nada de lo que nuestros ancestros nos dejaron como herencia”

⁴² Instituto Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria (state institution incorporated in INCODER in 2002)

new president. Nevaldo developed the idea of collective land titles – inspired by the way the Indigenous communities had claimed their natural reserves- to let every community (member) benefit from the process, and as such claim it on the basis of a collective group.

With the development of the '*Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*' as the primary organisational unit at a community level, the missionaries started their 'Evangelic Mission' in the different communities along the Atrato river. In weekly meetings they discussed the Bible and compared it to the local reality in which the communities were living, based on the '*practica transformadora*' that had originated within the liberation theology. Here the missionaries started to position themselves as '*organic intellectual*' in the communities, in which they promoted a larger class awareness within the Afro-Colombian communities by 'educating' them in a shared (critical) vision on their reality, based on their position as a minority group within wider society. By directing and educating the Afro-Colombians in a critical conception of the world in which a reflection on reality placed their position as a minority group within a wider perspective of state-marginalisation and capitalist interest, the community started to get politically aware (and organised). The missionaries attempted to base this vision on a form of cultural sensitivity (the principle of enculturation) that recognised the cultural distinctiveness of the Afro-Colombian population: their history, customs and being. Furthermore, by using the local situation of the communities as a starting point for reflection the communities got educated by departing from their selves: their experiences, culture, distinctiveness and position within the hegemonic socio-political order. The missionaries attempted to understand the local reality of the Afro-Colombian population by selecting and validating those elements in their (Gramscian) ideologies (Folklore, Common Sense and Good Sense) that corresponded with the philosophy of the missionaries. As Gramsci explained, the intellectual cannot be a true intellectual without "*feeling the elementary passions of the people, understanding them and therefore explaining and justifying them in the particular historical situation and connecting them dialectically to the laws of history and to a superior conception of the world*" (Gramsci (SPN: 418), cited in Crehan, 2002: 130). As such, by building upon those conditions of cultural life and local world views the missionaries attempted to create a 'proletarian culture' that represented the world view of an upcoming class. This was done by integrating feelings and conceptions and alimentering these 'ideologies' with an elaborated, directed, critical and politically organised alternative towards the dominant 'status quo'. Following Gramsci one could say that the missionaries, as organic intellectuals, attempted to develop – dialectically- a more politically organised (rural) Afro-Colombian class by identifying the realities of the people, and alimentering them with a particular 'philosophy on reality'. The aim was to create a group of people who were sufficiently organised and intellected to identify themselves with this 'alternative conception of the world'. With the increased visibility of capitalist interest of the state in the lands upon which the communities were living, the socio-political perspective of the missionaries increased in its salience for the community members. For some years, the missionaries had been promoting their ideas about the ontological connection between the Afro-Colombian communities and their territory, as being the living ground for the communities on which they had historically built their lives and culture. With the increased visibility of 'this threat', a feeling of urgency awoke in order to defend 'their territories'. Following the idea that the territory should belong to the community, a popular organisation was created in which the first 'new Afro-Colombian intellectuals' were supposed to represent their communities and continue the process that was started. The ACIA's political mission –to defend territory and life- was grounded in the 'philosophy' promoted by the missionaries. With this increased urgency, the process of community organisation had activated a critical common sense within (parts) of the community that had helped to develop a collective (political) purpose which contradicted the 'hegemonic project' of the state: the defence of their (communal) territorial rights.

4.5 A crucial opportunity

The ACIA started as a popular farmers organisation, based on the collective purpose and political mission to defend the lives of ‘their peoples’ and their territory against the capitalist interest the Colombian State had articulated in the Atrato Region (and the Pacific region as a whole). In the course of time, their mission became embedded in an ethno-territorial discourse when the different popular organisations realised they needed to grasp the opportunity of the planned constitutional reformation in 1991 to be recognised as a minority group and –as such– be able to claim (collective) land titles. In the present day the ethnic-territorial discourse is very strong, and especially within the ethno-territorial organisations (that have their origin in the popular (farmers) organisations of the 1980s). The connection between an ethnic and its territory is so clear cut that it sometimes feels impossible to escape it.

When reflecting on this sense of ‘blackness’ and the apparent stable connection between ethnic group and territory with a Swiss Anthropologist that lives in Quibdó, she affirmed the high emphasis in the region on being black and being culturally different from others. In daily life, being ‘negro’ is something that is highly emphasised in the region. She mentioned the example how she knows different people that are simply named the ‘negro’ [‘the negro’ (male)], the ‘negra’ [‘the negro’ (female)] or the ‘negra hermosa’ [‘the beautiful negro’ (female)]. Nobody knows them differently than by their nickname. The majority of the inhabitants of Quibdó is black. Sometimes it seems that the darker you are the better. At the same time, the ‘Afro-Colombians’ live quite separated from the Indigenous people, both in the city as in the countryside. In some cases they collaborate, but in general they are quite oriented towards their own ethnic group. The use of an ethnic discourse has two sides, she adds: it emphasises differences but also permits positive discrimination and international support.

On the other hand, some of my informants did affirm the importance of blackness in the region but added the statement that in general black is seen as something ‘bad’, related to their marginalised and discriminated position with the Colombian society as a whole. Different informants added that the discourse turned ethnic when the new constitution of 1991 came in sight, and the popular organisations had been able to make some crucial alliances to extend the reach of their political project. When considering the ‘intellectual project’ of the Claretian Missionaries I kept wondering *“Whom has promoted the ‘politics’ of ethnicity and its relation to territory and why in this way?”* (Field Notes, p. 116). There are some ingredients present in the socio-political vision of the Claretians, when considering their options reflecting the principles of enculturation and the defence of natural resources and territory. However, how did the political discourse turn ethnic?

This happened when the Colombian government had been negotiating with the guerrilla group M-19 for its demobilisation, and allowed the M-19s political participation in the negotiations about the new constitution (to replace the 1886 version). At the same time a wider anti-discrimination movement had originated in the cities – *el Movimiento Nacional Cimarrón*– in which intellectuals and activists were fighting against racial discrimination. Here two visions coincided. The first was the territorial discourse had started in the country side by an identification of the need to defend the territory against state-initiated natural resource exploitation –based on a form of territoriality that had originated within the ‘connection’ between the rural Afro Colombians and their territory as place of life and culture, while belonging to the community as a whole. The second was a wide-spread movement that fought racial discrimination and marginalisation –that had been initiated in the cities of the Southern Pacific– could assist their needs by providing the framework upon which rights could be claimed. The rural Afro-Colombian organisations were able to link up with an wider ‘Afro-Colombian awareness’ that had emerged since the mid-1970, in order to promote a wider process of Afro-Colombian emancipation and citizenship. Different meetings organised since the 1970s –as *‘Congreso Nacional de Negros en Bogotá’* [the National Congress of Blacks in Bogotá] (1975), *‘Aportes del Negro a la Cultura Americana’* [Contributions from the Blacks to the American Culture] (1976), *‘Primer Congreso de la Cultura Negra de las Américas’* [First Congress of the Black Culture of

the Americas] (1977) – have led to the establishment of different social organisations with an Afro-Colombian focus (under which Cimarrón). In 1990 the ‘Congreso Preconstituyente de Comunidades Negras’ [Pre-constituent Congress of the Black Communities] was organised in Cali, and united the different activists with an Afro-Colombian cause, representatives of NGOs, and ‘black social organisations’ in order to put pressure on the Colombian government to recognise the Afro-Colombians as citizens (Mondragón, 2006). It was here that the network of organisations that composed the ‘black social movement’ (as discussed in Escobar, 2008) emerged.

"We were not recognised as part of the citizens, as within our genetic characteristics, we were some Colombians, eh, but without any kind, say, differentiation in our social, cultural and ethnic essence. [...] Why [has it been] important to achieve this in this conjunctural moment in the history? For a simple reason, it is because we did not feel represented, we were invisibilised, the state said with all its institutions that there was not discrimination, that there wasn't racism but the established politics was in contrast with what they said. It had to be important [to get] a law that would generate positive discrimination in order to be able to level the population in this territory. For all this, the 'ley 70', in this conjunctural moment, rose, say with this spirit and this development"⁴³ (Interview with Andres Lopez— previous member of el Movimiento Nacional Cimarrón: 16 Januari 2013)

In order to be able to express their needs as Colombian citizens, the Afro-Colombians needed to have someone to represent them in the constitutional negotiations in Bogotá. The selection of the constituent that would represent their interests was a difficult process in which all Afro-Colombian organisations – ACIA, ACADESAN, ACABA, OBAPO, OCABA and ACAMURI⁴⁴- of the department united to find a representative (Perea, 2012). The ACIA was not so advanced as to be able to put someone forward that would be able to ‘defend’ the rights of the ethnic group, explained Mariana. While they named and asked Francisco Maturana – an Afro-Colombian born in Quibdó that at that time was the trainer of the Colombian national football team- it appeared that his pre-occupations did not accord with the ethno-territorial questions the organisations wanted to put forward. Francisco Rojas Birry –an Indian born and raised in the Chocó and founder of the Indigenous organisation OREWA- was asked to promote the Afro-Colombian cause. Whereas he was not of Afro-Colombian descent he agreed to collaborate but “...he made us clear that he was of a different culture and he knew very well that what the indigenous wanted. So, we would provide him support and advice and he would defend the proposals of the black communities as well”⁴⁵ (Perea, 2012: 55).

Nevaldo Perea accompanied the constituent for three months –with some others- in Bogotá in the process of negotiations. The ones in Bogotá worked closely together with the people in Quibdó in order to produce proposals that they wanted to see implemented in the new constitution. The ‘threats’ that became visible in the Chocó - the concessions for natural resource exploitation and infrastructural mega-projects as the proposed canalisation of the ravine ‘La Yesca’- would affect the population living in that area directly. These threats promoted a further inter-organisational and inter-ethnic collaboration in various regional meetings organised ‘por la defensa del Territorio del Pacífico, Negros e Indios Juntos’ [‘for the defence of the Pacific Territory, Blacks and Indians together’] (Perea, 2012: 55). The different popular organisations, the church, and some intellectuals worked together in ‘mesas de trabajo’ [working groups] to formulate proposals for the national assembly.

During the negotiations in Bogotá it appeared to be difficult to convince Francisco Rojas Birry’s advisors of the need to adopt legislation for the Afro-Colombian community. The emphasis in the constitutional

⁴³ Original quote: “No éramos reconocidos como parte de los ciudadanos, como dentro nuestras características genéticas, éramos unos Colombianos, eh, pero sin ningún tipo, digamos, de diferenciación en el sentido cultural y ético. [...] ¿Por qué ha sido importante en ese momento con junta de la historia realizarla? Por una razón sencilla, y es porque no nos sentíamos representadas, éramos invisibilizados, el estado decía con todas sus instituciones que no había discriminación, que no había racismo, pero la política establecida estaba en contradicción con lo que decían. Tenía que ser importante una ley que generara la discriminación positiva para poder nivelar la población en ese territorio. Por todo eso la ley 70, en ese momento coyuntural, surge, digamos con ese espíritu y ese desarrollo”

⁴⁴ Of these organizations the last two do not exist anymore, ACABA has been replaced by ESCOBA; and in the 1990s COCOMOPOCA has become to represent the interests of the communities in the ‘Alto Atrato’.

⁴⁵ Original quote: “nos dejó claro que él era de otra cultura y conocía muy bien lo que los indígenas querían. Así que, se le brindábamos acompañamiento y asesoría, él defendería también las propuestas de las comunidades negras”

process was still grounded in other topics than the ecological, environmental and ethnic themes the Afro-Colombian delegates had in mind. When there was support, this would be grounded in the left-wing delegates, mainly embodied in the person of Antonio Navarro Wolff and his (demobilising) guerrilla movement, the M-19. The Afro-Colombians needed further strategies of visibilisation to be able to convince the constituents of the need to incorporate something that would benefit the Afro-Colombian communities.

Two events of significance were frequently mentioned by my respondents. Firstly, what is known as '*los telegramas negros*' [the black telegrams] was initiated -by these '*mesas de trabajo*' in which different actors participated- where 10.000 telegrams were collected and sent to the different constituents to visibilise the Afro-Colombians living in the jungle and express a shared desire to be recognised as a distinct ethnic group. When Mariana starts to talk about the '*telegramas negros*', she lightens up and starts to laugh, telling me the anecdote how the amount of mail had blocked the postal service. '*The CEO of Telecom called Padre Gonzalo and said to him –well no, do not send [literally: put] more telegrams as they are blocking our service – and the father said to him- but they are paying you, no?, – yes-, ah ok, so if they are paying, you have no choice but to deal with them and go on with the transmission*'⁴⁶ (Interview with Mariana Rodriguez – lay Claretian: 9 November 2012).

As this strategy alone wasn't sufficient to convince 'Bogotá' of the demands of the Afro-Colombians and there were only a few days left before the National Assembly of Constituents was finished, - it was decided to occupy some of the most important buildings in Quibdó – it's town hall, the building of INCORA and the Cathedral- to increase the pressure on the representatives in the nation's capital. This was the second event. Nevaldo Perea recalls -in his biography- that to convince the communities to occupy the institutions they were invited for a '*chirimía-dance*'⁴⁷ in Quibdó. Four boats were filled with farmers. Half-way on their trip to Quibdó they embarked in Baudosito and informed the people about the reason they were going to Quibdó: to put pressure on the government to be recognised as distinct ethnic group and '*...to be free as promised by the slaveholders*', with only limited time before the negotiations would end (Perea, 2012: 56). They explained that if the 'blacks' were not recognised as an ethnic group, they would lose every struggle meant to defend the natural resources in their territory. Only a few refused to participate. In Quibdó, the event was supported by the indigenous community and the OBAPO. Both joined the occupation of the three buildings. At the same time, the 70 delegates that were in Bogotá occupied (peacefully) the Haitian embassy as '*the Haitian brothers were like representatives of the first free black people in America, they sympathised and opened the doors of their embassy for us*'⁴⁸ (Perea, 2012: 58). The occupation started on the 24rd of May 1991 and lasted five days. In the national media the occupation was presented as being a guerrilla occupation of the whole city of Quibdó.

With the help of the governor of the Chocó a petition was handed over to the government that explained that the occupation was a demand for equal rights. The government responded that they would not negotiate with the guerrillas. After five days of occupation the Transitional Article 55 (*AT-55*) was adopted that promised to pass a law in the upcoming years that would recognise '*...the Black communities that have been occupying the uncultivated land in the rural areas on the riversides of the rivers in the Pacific Basin, according to traditional production practices, the right to collective property over the areas that will be demarked by the same law*'⁴⁹ (Constitución Política de Colombia, 1991: s. 8., r.55). This law would establish mechanisms that would protect the cultural identity and rights of the 'Black communities', while further promoting their economic and social development. A special commission was established by the government that would further investigate and develop the scope and content of the promised law. While the constitution recognised

⁴⁶ Original quote: "El director de Telecom llamó a Padre Gonzalo y le dijo- bueno no, que no pongan más telegramas porque es que nos están bloqueando el servicio- y el padre lo dijo- pero a usted le están pagando ¿no?-, -si-, ah bueno entonces si le están pagando entonces no les queda más remedio que atenderlos y seguir con la transmisión"

⁴⁷ Chirimía is a music style in which the flute (either made from wood or reed) is the main instrument. This style is especially popular in the Cauca region and certain parts of the Chocó (two areas where the Afro-Colombian population is considered the biggest 'ethnic' group).

⁴⁸ Original quote: "los hermanos haitianos como representantes del primero pueblo negro libre de America, se solidarizaron y nos abrieron las puertas de la embajada"

⁴⁹ Original text: "a las comunidades negras que han venido ocupando tierras baldías en las zonas rurales ribereñas de los ríos de la Cuenca del Pacífico, de acuerdo con sus prácticas tradicionales de producción, el derecho a la propiedad colectiva sobre las áreas que habrá de demarcar la misma ley"

Colombia being a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country, the *AT-55* paved the way for the development of a territorial law in the near future.

Although the process of community organisation had activated a more coherent, elaborated, systematic, centralised and politically organised ‘ideological base’ within the Atrato-Communities, what Gramsci would have called a critical ‘*good sense*’ that could evolve into a ‘*collective will*’ that accepted the ‘*philosophical*’ basis of the Claretian-Initiated counter-hegemonic project’. Furthermore, the ‘intellectual project’ of the missionaries had been able to create some critical leaders that started to continue the ‘counter-hegemonic project’ and represented the ‘alternative conception of the world’ within the newly established ‘popular organisations’. The constitutional reformation of 1991 would appear to be a crucial opportunity in time in which an opening of the ‘organic structure of society’ provided these conjunctural (socio-political) forces with an important opportunity to demand social change. This can be seen as a Gramscian ‘situation’ in which the dialectics of structural conditions and their political and economic responses –at a particular junction- can lead to a political struggle around the ‘hegemonic’ conception of the world. The counter-hegemonic project engaged in a ‘relational negotiation’ of the material and ideational basis of society: between the relationships between political and civil society and humans and nature. In this ‘situation’ the alliances with the black movement of the intellectuals from the Southern Pacific would appear to be crucial, as it provided the rural Afro-Colombians with a broader network of support. All actors were engaged in the promotion of a wider visibilisation of the Afro-Colombian communities. However, whereas the urban ethnic movement focussed on a recognition of minority rights and citizenship, the rural movement saw this form of citizenship as a tool to obtain (collective) land titles. By uniting these alternative ‘conceptions of the world’, the ‘intellectual project’ had been able to challenge the ‘dominant status-quo’ by integrating two distinct but interrelated ‘world views’ into one. This was done by the overlap in their sense of purpose and collective will to alter the marginalised position of the Afro-Colombian within the current state-formation. Here these counter-hegemonic forces were able to stand up as ‘class-for-itself’. It had been able to create a mass movement of sufficient size in order to challenge the dominant status-quo. In the Atrato-region, proposals were developed that emphasised the need for a territorial law that recognised the property of the Afro-Colombians, in which experts, community leaders and the church collaborated. The different political events in the early 1990s appeared to have had sufficient strength to convince the National Government to adopt something that would favour these communities. A territorial law became promised.

4.6 The contribution of the Catholic Missionaries

Based on the principles of the ‘Evangelic Mission’ of the Vicariate of Quibdó and its (1985) pastoral plan with corresponding options, the Vicariate of Quibdó (and with them the Claretians) decided to engage in the process of a re-vindication of the territorial rights of the Afro-Colombian Community. Where the different evangelic teams “...were always present, accompanying, orientating and encouraging the different farmers communities that lived and suffered the grave problem of their lands”[...] “the various organising and training, always led by the church, were contributing to clarify and systemise the conceptual category of Territory, as a socio-cultural and political category. The black people of our Diócesis saw clearly what was their ancestral use of the territory and, departing from here, initiated a process of legal reclamation of this right. The Church, one time more, was not alien to this legitimate demand”⁵⁰ (Castaño Rubio, no date: 562). The grounding principles of their pastoral plan and options were reflected in the different topics discussed in the workshops, meetings and methodologies used to train the community and increase a form of critical awareness about their position in society. By using their ‘*Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*’ and their permanent presence in the country side, the missionaries were able

⁵⁰ Original text: “...estuvieron siempre presentes, acompañando, orientando y animando las diferentes comunidades campesinas que vivían y sufrían el grave problema de sus tierras” [...] “Los diversos organizativos y de capacitación, liderados siempre por la Iglesia, fueron contribuyendo a clarificar y sistematizar la categoría conceptual de Territorio, como una categoría socio-cultural y política. El pueblo negro de nuestra Diócesis vio claramente cuál era su dinámica de apropiación ancestral del territorio y, a partir de allí inició un proceso de reclamo legal de este derecho. Y la Iglesia, una vez más, no fue ajena a este legítima demanda”

to increase their reach and build trust within the communities. Here they laid the foundation for a more organised, critical and equipped Afro-Colombian community in which new community leaders would emerge. The ‘intellectual project’ had been grounded in the ‘*philosophical*’ foundation –outlined in chapter 3- and a ‘liberating Evangelic mission’ that -at a community level- could result in a group of new intellectuals that were able to continue this project.

4.7 Theoretically-informed conclusion

With their presence in the rural communities, the missionaries committed themselves to the prediction of ‘the Evangelic’, based on a long-term (socio-political) vision of a desirable liberation of the people. They started to incorporate the content of their liberating mission (and critical perspective on the current reality) into a social and religious formation of the community within the ‘*Comundades Eclesiales de Base*’. For Gramsci, any counter-hegemonic project needs ‘*organic intellectual*’ as key actors in the creation of an alternative philosophy that is (socially, politically and historically) coherent, elaborated, centralised and politically organised. If such a ‘conception of the world’ exists and is disseminated within the ‘masses’, and is able to transcend the prevailing common sense of the people by integrating a critical and conscious perspective on reality within prevailing ideologies, it has counter-hegemonic potential. These organic intellectuals were able to transform prevailing ideologies into a more elaborated and critical ‘collective will’ that accepted the new (alternative) ideational base of the Claretian ‘philosophy of praxis’ and questioned the legitimacy of the ‘state’s hegemonic conception of the world’. Thus, they created the social conditions for a (mass) movement, required to challenge the existing political hegemony. As Gramsci had argued, a successful counter-hegemonic project needs the creation of a ‘cultural-social’ unity that unites multiple and divers wills with diverging aims into a single (critical) conception of the world.

The missionaries succeeded in creating greater class awareness between the Afro-Colombian communities along the Atrato river, by educating them in a critical vision about their position as minority group in the wider Colombian society. This was strengthened further by the promotion of a socio-political narrative that the recognised cultural diversity and the communities’ connection to their lands. The Claretians succeeded in the creation of a base of critical Afro-Colombians that started to commit themselves to the defence of their natural resources. They achieved this by staying close to the reality of the peoples and thus staying close to the ‘ideologies’ present in the masses. Hereby the missionaries attempted to integrate their ‘*philosophy of praxis*’ in the lived realities of the communities, by selecting and revalidating the elements in their ‘feelings’, every day conceptions and world views that corresponded with their ‘Liberating Evangelisation’. With the increased visibility of state-interest in the communities’ lands, the organisational process accelerated and resulted in the emergence of the first rural ‘popular organisations’ aiming to defend ‘life and territory’. While the organisational process was not completely matured, a group of new leaders had been created that were to represent a new upcoming class. The constitutional negotiations of 1991 became a specific situation in which structural forces, conjunctural phenomena and specific events came together and provided this ‘counter-hegemonic project’ with a potential to put their claims forward within the national hegemonic structure. However, for any counter-hegemonic project to succeed, it needs to be incorporated into a ‘mass movement’ with a collective sense of purpose and a relatively homogeneous collective will. While the intellectual project of the Claretians had a relatively limited focus, an urban ‘black social movement’ that had been claiming a wider visibility and recognition of the ‘black population’ in Colombia provided the crucial alliance to extend the project and have a base sufficiently large to put pressure on the Colombian government. By uniting these two conceptions of the world – based on a visibilisation of the Afro-Colombian population and citizenship and the need for territorial rights- the counter-hegemonic forces had been able to create ‘counter-hegemonic movement’ of sufficient size to be able to challenge the dominant status-quo. Ultimately, this resulted in the recognition of their status as minority group in the constitution. With regard to the territorial demands of the rural population,

this had resulted in the promise that a territorial law would be developed that would benefit the '*comunidades negras*'. While the constitutional recognition and the promise of a territorial law seemed to be a 'victory' on behalf of the counter-hegemonic forces -as the next chapter will show- the institutional recognition of (collective) property rights would not be enough to challenge the state's hegemonic conception of the world. At the same time, new (internal and external) challenges would threaten the further development, scope and content of the 'counter-hegemonic project'.

Chapter 5: The second conjuncture ‘A short-term victory *or* a Gramscian passive revolution’ (1991-1996)

“Esta Ley podemos considerarla como la meta de llegada de una marcha de siglos y la formulación increíble de los sueños que muchos pueblos negros tuvieron y soñaron como imposible”

“We can consider this law as the goal of an upcoming march of centuries and an amazing formulation of the dreams that many black people had and dreamed as impossible”

(Bisshop J.I. Castaño Rubio, no date: 562).

5.1 Introduction

The counter-hegemonic project that had been initiated by the various missionaries resulted in a Gramscian ‘situation’ in which a broader Afro-Colombian (class) movement had been able to unite their forces in order to obtain the institutional recognition of their status as a minority group and further resulted in the promised development of a law that would grant the Afro-Colombians territorial rights in the Pacific Region. This chapter discusses the period of institutional consolidation of these minority and property rights, and consequently follows a time frame that starts with the adoption of the *AT-55* in the constitution of 1991 and ends with the recognition of the first collective land titles in the *Bajo* and *Medio Atrato* regions in 1996/1997. This chapter argues that while the institutional recognition could be seen as an important victory on behalf of the ‘counter-hegemonic project’, the exact scope, content and process of development of the new territorial law suggests something different, namely a consolidation of the counter-hegemonic forces within the ‘hegemonic state project’: a Gramscian ‘*Passive Revolution*’. Firstly, this chapter will outline the process of institutionalisation of Afro-Colombians’ rights by discussing the three legal documents that would become the institutionalised format that recognised the Afro-Colombian demands. Here, the content of the different institutional mechanisms and the construction of a particular ‘ethno-territoriality’ are examined. Secondly, this chapter discusses the implications of these particular laws on the ‘ethno-territorial organisations’ that were supposed to govern the land titles. Here after, the inherent qualities of the law will be critically examined while contrasting it to the hegemonic state project. The Chapter concludes with a theoretically-informed discussion about the scope and content of the counter-hegemonic ‘victory’ where I will use Gramsci to analyse the interaction between the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic project within this time-frame.

5.2 The institutional recognition of the ‘Black community’s’ rights

Three legal documents would pave the way for the institutional recognition of the rights of the Afro-Colombian citizens in the early 1990s. After Colombia characterised itself as a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country (in the constitution of 1991) and the adoption of *AT-55* promised the development of a law that would grant collective property rights to the Afro-Colombians living in the Pacific region in the upcoming years. In 1993 *ley 70* would be adopted, while *Decreto 1745* (1995) would further regulate the conditions under which these territories could be claimed. This section will outline the content of the three legal documents, while reflecting on the interaction between these institutional mechanisms and the ‘intellectual project’ of the missionaries and the ‘new leaders’ of the popular farmers organisations.

5.2.1 Artículo Transitorio-55: a first promise

With the recognition of the Afro-Colombians as a distinct ethnic group and the incorporation of the *AT-55* in the constitution of 1991, the Afro-Colombians were promised their own law that would grant them collective property rights in parts of the Pacific region. The government established a special commission (in august 1992) –*la comisión especial para las Comunidades Negras* [the special commission for the Black Communities]– to conduct research in order to be able to develop this new law. This ‘special commission’ would consult various representatives of local community organisations in order to increase the degree of participation and representation. The *AT-55* promised the community the right to collective property. At the same time, the (upcoming) law would establish mechanisms to protect cultural identity and the rights of the communities; and it would further promote social and economic development (Constitución Política de Colombia, 1991: s. 8, r. 55). However, the exact scope and content of this new law would still be formulated in the upcoming years. The Afro-Colombians were asked to diffuse the message of the *AT-55* in their communities, strengthen their organisational process, conduct surveys among the population to identify what the community thought should be the content of the promised law, discuss the form and content of the law, elaborate the proposals of the communities, census and map their communities, and make sure the different Afro-Colombian organisations conformed in their vision. The newly established commission was composed of different representatives of governmental and research institutions that would develop the exact content of the law. The commission had representatives from the following organisations: the INCORA, the department of national planning (DNP), the national institute of renewable natural resources and the environment (INDERENA), the Geographic institute Agustín Codazzi, the Institute of Cultural and Anthropological investigations (ICAN), and three members of the ‘consulting committees’ –each representing the popular organisations of one of the Pacific Departments: Chocó, Valle de Cauca, Cauca and Nariño. (CEPAC, 2003). The function of this special committee was to: develop suitable regulations; fulfil the different functions identified in the *AT-55*; identify and propose mechanisms that could protect the cultural identity and the rights of the black communities; and propose competent programs that would be able to promote economic and social development of the black communities (CEPAC, 2003).

In the period that preceded the adoption of the *AT-55*, the ‘*mesas de trabajo*’ –being the collaborative effort between different popular organisations, the church and some intellectuals– had already put forward their proposals for the national assembly. With the adoption of the *AT-55*, a specific role would be reserved for the popular organisations (e.g. the ACIA and (COCOM)OPOCA) as they were part of the ‘consulting committees’. Furthermore, the *AT-55* and subsequent regulations would ask these organisations to further strengthen their organisational process in order to become the legitimate ‘authority’ to administer the upcoming collective land titles.

Jesús Alfonso Flórez López –a former Claretian Priest– explained that the Afros to be recognised as an ethnic group needed to develop themselves organisationally to be able to have the capacity to become the legal owners of the territory. The popular organisations were only recently established and still lacked the organisational capacity to become the governing institution that the government had in mind. While some form of territoriality had preceded the constitutional recognition by the rural organisations’ emphasis on the need to obtain territorial rights in order to defend themselves against the upcoming threats of the ‘neoliberal’ interests in the lands upon which they had been living. Additionally, an apparent ethno-territorial connection could be observed within the ‘socio-political vision’ of the counter-hegemonic project. Within the ‘Claretian-inspired’ socio-political narrative, the Afro-Colombians were seen as a distinct population with their own history, culture and customs that were the rightful owners of the territories upon which they had been living since the abolition of slavery. With the ‘ethnisation’ of their minority group status, this focus would have a more prominent character in the development of the upcoming territorial law. The ‘ethnisation of blackness’ catalysed the emergence of a new regime of

representation in which a 'black otherness' with a territory, traditional practices, an ethnic identity and specific rights became the central pillars within the 'black social movement' as a whole (Restrepo, 2002; Escobar, 2008).

When discussing this ethno-territorial connection with Padre Gonzalo de la Torre, he explained how this 'territoriality' has been the key for the construction of the ley 70. Whereas the concept in itself originates in anthropology, he argued that the connection between the Afro-Colombians and their territory had been a process that had been discovered by these 'anthropologists'. It had been promoted by the missionaries to affirm the validity of each ethnic group its 'proper history', 'proper culture' and way of living against the State's 'hegemonic cultural school'. *"In other words, the communities had it clear that their territory was theirs. And they had it very clear the relations they had being located in their territory. They had been like the managers of their territory, respecting the environmental vocation a lot, the ecological vocation that offers their territory. They had respected it, know their plants, know their fishes, know their animals of the forests and had respected the times of reproduction, the closed times, the times of mixing fishing with agriculture and with mining. And so, all come out as change their times. So, they, owners of the territory, have lived the territoriality. They haven't needed the theory, only when we discovered the theory of territoriality, we gave them many courses, many workshops. The ley 70 has followed the path. Eh. COCOMACLA made booklets that were very easy for the farmers to understand the ley 70. Because, obviously the farmer helped but didn't construct it, because the ley 70 had to be built with specialists in front of the government"*⁵¹ (Interview with Padre Gonzalo de La Torre Guerrero: 10 December 2012). As part of the process of the formulation of the ley 70 the different customs and traditions of the Afro-Colombians had been researched, and an ethno-territorial connection was constructed. Here the AT-55 specialists (anthropologists, biologists, lawyers, researchers etc.) redacted the basis of the new law, however building upon a foundation that already had been laid down by the 'intellectual project' of the missionaries in the 1980s. The principles of enculturation and the defence of the territory and natural resources as the living ground of the Afro-Colombian communities had been an instrumental discursive formation for the 'ethno-territorial' law to develop.

5.2.2 La ley 70 de 1993: 'la ley de las comunidades negras'

In August 1993 'la ley 70' [law 70] was adopted which recognised collective property rights in parts of the Pacific region. It proposed to establish mechanisms to protect the cultural identity and the rights of the 'black communities' as an ethnic group, and a wider promotion of economic and social development, with the purpose to "...guarantee that these communities obtain real conditions of equality in opportunities compared to the rest of the Colombian society"⁵² (Ley 70 1993: s 1, r. 10). However the geography of the jurisdiction of the law was limited to specific parts of the Pacific region. The law had been based on some assumptions that would be important at a later stage. The definitions of 'comunidad negra'⁵³ [black community], 'ocupación colectiva'⁵⁴ [collective occupation] and 'prácticas tradicionales de producción'⁵⁵ [traditional production practices] identified the Afro-Colombian communities as a distinct ethnic group with their own collective production practices that were in harmony with nature. The Afro-Colombian communities were seen as a conjuncture of family ties of Afro-Colombian origin, having their own distinct culture, history and traditions. Land use was seen

⁵¹ Original quote: "En otras palabras, las comunidades tenían claro que su territorio era de ellos. Y tenían muy claras las relaciones que tenían localizadas en su territorio. Ellos han sido como administradores de su territorio, respetando mucho la vocación medio-ambiental, la vocación ecológica que le ofrece su territorio. Lo han respetado, conocen sus plantas, conocen sus peces, conocen sus animales de monte, se respetaban los tiempos de reproducción, los tiempos de veda, los tiempos de mezclar la pesca con agricultura con la minería. Y así, todo sale como cambian sus tiempos. Entonces, ellos, dueños del territorio han vivido la territorialidad. Ellos no han necesitado la teoría, solamente cuando ya nosotros descubrimos la teoría de la territorialidad le dimos mucho cursos, mucho cursillos, la ley 70 ha seguido el camino eh la COCOMACLA hizo cartillas muy fáciles para que el campesino entendieran la ley 70. Porque obviamente el campesino aportó pero no la construyó, porque la ley 70 hubo que construirla con especialistas frente al gobierno."

⁵² Original text: "garantizar que estas comunidades obtengan condiciones reales de igualdad de oportunidades frente al resto de la sociedad colombiana"

⁵³ Comunidad negra is defined as: "es el conjunto de familias de ascendencia afrocolombiana que poseen una cultura propia, comparten una historia y tienen sus propias tradiciones y costumbre dentro de la relación compopoblado, que revelan y conservan conciencia de identidad que las distinguen de otros grupos étnicos" (Ley 70 1993, s. 1, r. 20)

⁵⁴ Ocupación colectiva is defined as: "es el asentamiento histórico y ancestral de comunidades negras en tierras para su uso colectivo, que constituyen su hábitat, y sobre los cuales desarrollan en la actualidad sus prácticas tradicionales de producción" (Ley 70 1993, s.1, r. 20)

⁵⁵ Prácticas tradicionales de producción is defined as: "son las actividades y técnicas agrícolas, mineras, de extracción forestal, pecuarias, de caza, pesca y recolección de productos naturales en general, que han utilizado consuetudinariamente las comunidades negras para garantizar la conservación de la vida y el desarrollo autosostenible" (Ley 70 1993, s. 1, r. 20)

as historically collective and based on traditional production practices in which different agricultural activities were rotated to sustain livelihoods. As such the law recognised an ethnic distinctiveness of the Afro-Colombians, and promoted a wider dignity, and a wider participation in political processes. At the same time, the community was seen as an actor with a key role in the conservation of the environment because of their specific historical ‘relationships with nature’. In order to obtain the collective land titles, the Afro-Colombians needed to organise themselves into *consejos comunitarios* [community councils] at a local level, being a local governance mechanism that was seen as the administrative unit that would need to administer and govern the collective titles. These *consejos comunitarios* would have the administrative, regulative, and controlling function over: the boundaries of the assigned territories, the protection of the land rights, the preservation of cultural identity, the use and conservation of the natural resources in the territory and the resolution of internal conflicts (Ley 70 1993: s.3. r. 50). The law would grant the Afro-Colombian communities relative autonomy with regards to their territorial (agricultural) practices. However they had the obligation to “...watch the rules over the conservation, protection and rational use of the renewable natural resources and the environment”⁵⁶ (Ley 70 1993: s.3, r.14), as such “...the collective property over the areas under this law, have to be exercised in accordance with its inherent social and ecological function. Consequently, the holders shall comply with the requirements of the protection of the environment and renewable natural resources and assist the authorities with the defence of this heritage”⁵⁷ (Ley 70 1993: s.4, r. 20). To engage in wider social and economic development, the community is allowed to engage in partnerships with public or private entities to promote the commercialisation of certain natural products. The state will guarantee and facilitate the capacitation of the local communities in the development of techniques and practices in order to “...ensure the economic success and sustainable development of the members and the region”⁵⁸ (Ley 70 1993: s. 4, r. 24). Whereas the collective land titles do not give access to the territory’s subsoil, mining practices are still allowed under special conditions: the techniques that define protection and participation in order to preserve the special economic and cultural characteristics of traditional mining practices of the community without damaging the rights obtained by third parties. Here the government grants the community a special licence in order to engage in mining activities in the mining zones of the ‘black communities’, respecting the natural resources traditionally exploited by the community. However, these activities need to comply with existing mining codes (Ley 70 1993: s. 5, r. 26-31). In order to protect and develop the cultural rights and identity of the Afro-Colombian population, a specific educational process became guaranteed in which ethno-cultural needs, aspirations and specifics were incorporated in school curricula and different organisations and institutions. The government promised forms of social and economic development, in which ethnic diversity should be recognised in the national development plans of the nation (Ley 70 1993).

5.2.3 El Decreto 1745 de 1995: the creation a new local governance body

The decree 1745 (adopted in 1995) [*El decreto 1745 de 1995*] would further regulate the procedure under which collective property rights could become recognised by the compulsory creation of *consejos comunitarios* and the regulation of the titling procedure. As such, the decree further regulated the 3rd article within the *ley 70* (until now this is the only article that has been further regulated). A local *consejo comunitario* would be integrated into an umbrella organisation supervised by a general assembly and a board. The document formulated the responsibility of the umbrella organisation as prime administrative and governing authority. Its responsibilities include: administering the use and transfer of the assigned territories to individuals or families; adopting and implementing the economic, social and cultural development plans that are formulated by the board; delimitating the solicited collective territories; resolving conflicts; regulating and ensuring the application of procedural rules of the communities;

⁵⁶ Original text: “...observar las normas sobre conservación, protección y utilización racional de los recursos naturales renovables y el ambiente”

⁵⁷ Original text: “...la propiedad colectiva sobre las áreas a que refiere esta ley, debe ser ejercida de conformidad con la función social y ecológica que le es inherente. En consecuencia, los titulares deberán cumplir las obligaciones de protección del ambiente y de los recursos naturales renovables y contribuir con las autoridades en la defensa de ese patrimonio”

⁵⁸ Original text: “...asegurar el éxito económico y el desarrollo sustentable de los integrantes y de la región”

strengthening the ethno-cultural identity and promoting a communitarian organisation; ensuring the use and conservation of the natural resource conforming environmental legislation and traditional production practices, guaranteeing sustainable use of natural resources (Decreto 1745 1995: s. 2., r. 6 & 11). It further regulated the election procedure for the assembly and board, the procedure of soliciting specific territories, the rules for the management and administration of titled territories; and it set the rules for the exploitation of natural resources (Decreto 1745 1995).

5.3 The transformation into an ethno-territorial organisation as a local governance body

Missionary presence in the country side would still be strong during this time period, and their actions would still be grounded in the same principles as formulated in the pastoral plan of 1985 (and its options). The Vicariate of Quibdó –at this time- had been organisationally evolved into the Diócesis of Quibdó⁵⁹ in which different religious communities fell under the jurisdiction of Bishop Castaño Rubio. Many of the protagonists of the organisational process in the 1980s continued their ‘Evangelic Mission’ in the Atrato region until the late 1990s. They continued their ‘homework’ grounded in a ‘liberating evangelisation’, hereby further strengthening the organisational process and assisting the development of the bases for the (implementation of) the *ley 70*. While the actual law had been based on the collaborative effort of government institutions and some community representatives, the main pillars of what would become the *ley 70* had already been reflected in the ‘socio-political narrative’ of the ‘intellectual project’ in the 1980s. With the ethnicisation of the discourse, this became only further strengthened. For the Diócesis, the *ley 70* had been an achievement which was part of a quest for wider recognition, as it offered the communities a mechanism to reclaim their territories and to provide a stand against the governmental/ capitalist threats the missionaries had identified in the communities’ territories. Here the missionaries still continued their ‘intellectual project’ and further assisted the popular organisations (and its leaders) in their organisational development.

In response to the legal requirements formulated in the *ley 70* and *Decreto 1745*, the popular organisations needed to transform their internal organisation by establishing these *consejos comunitarios* at a community level. For the ACIA this meant a transformation from being an organisation based on affiliates to an organisation in which the local community council became the representative of a specific community. As such, the *consejo comunitario local* is to represent the community as a whole within the organisational process. Paula Cordoba –current legal representative of COCOMACIA- explained to me that in this process of transformation everybody became part of a community census to identify how many families were living in each community. The *consejo comunitario local* is composed of every member of this community, but a local board is elected to coordinate social and territorial actions. At that time the ACIA was composed of 119 communities, these communities elected a board that would represent all the communities ‘*la junta mayor*’ [the higher board]. In 1997 the ACIA changed its name to COCOMACIA –*Consejo Comunitario Mayor de la Asociación Campesina Integral del Atrato*- being the ‘*junta mayor*’ representing all the 119 communities in the *Medio Atrato* Region. It became a governmentally recognised ethno-territorial organisation. The same procedure counted for the popular organisations in the other parts of the Chocó. For instance, COCOMOPOCA – *Consejo Comunitario Mayor de la Organización Popular Campesina del Alto Atrato*- became legally established in 1994 to represent 54 communities in 4 municipalities in the *Alto Atrato* region. Here the ‘new intellectuals’ that were formed by the ‘intellectual project’ of the Claretians in the 1980s would become the members of the *junta mayor* and *juntas locales*, being the ones that were politically prepared to continue the ‘intellectual project’ within this new form of organisation. It would appear that many of the

⁵⁹ Note that with the organisational evolution into a Diócesis the area under jurisdiction was limited to the Medio and Alto Atrato Region.

leaders would choose for a long career (and a long-term commitment) within these ethno-territorial organisations, as many of ‘today’s’ leaders had already been involved in the 1980s and early 1990s.

In order to be able to get the territorial concessions, the ethno-territorial organisations needed to follow the procedure exemplified in both legal documents. Nevaldo Perea explained how COCOMACIA needed to collect the histories of every village in their area of influence in order to prove the territory’s ancestry, and hereby corresponding with the ethno-territorial requirements posed by the *ley 70*. As the communities had been living relatively isolated from each other, only then did it became apparent that many of the communities established in the *Bajo Atrato* region were actually established by people that came from the *Alto Atrato* region. At the same time, it appeared that the local systems of production that were quite different between the various communities, and COCOMACIA needed to document these in a clear way in order to be able to claim the collective land titles based on the ‘constructed’ ethno-territoriality within the law. *“We divided the homework and we left [with] commissions towards all the zones to collect the information about the traditional forms of administration of the territory, the type of authority that had been exercised [...] the three fundamental elements in order to put the titling proposal together were: the territorial unity, the organisational unity and the cultural [unity]”*⁶⁰ (Perea, 2012: 59-60).

The *ley 70* had demanded the ethno-territorial organisations to prove this territorial, organisational and cultural unity in order to correspond with the ‘constructed’ ethno-territorial relation. Within this process COCOMACIA discovered a high variety in the ways in which the different communities had engaged themselves in agricultural activities, had defined land possession, or had structured themselves organisationally. The local reality, thus, would not be as ‘ethnically unified’ as the newly adopted law assumed. Nevaldo explained that they had not known that family trees had determined possession of land in which land became divided/ handed over along family ties, and in which the different communities appeared to have organised themselves in different ways. The collection of specific rituals, parties and organisational structures were used to convince the state of the existence of an authentic cultural background. As the *ley 70* provided some space for internal mechanisms of social control, different internal regulations were developed under jurisdiction of an inter-ethnic commission concerned with mediating in inter-ethnic territorial problems with the indigenous people and coordinating the draft of internal regulations for all communities. *“Within this process we realised that we were left with a void: the communities regulated that which had to do with duties and obligations, but we hadn’t clear until where the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts went and until where the jurisdiction of the internal regulations”*⁶¹ (Perea, 2012:61).

This observation would become visible at more points where the relative autonomy of the Afro-Colombian *consejos comunitarios* would intersect with formal governmental bodies and legislation. Whereas the *ley 70* and the *decreto 1745* had set the formal procedures for the request for land titles, it also had formulated the scope of authority of the ‘*consejo comunitario mayor*’ under specific conditions (e.g. their role as distinct ‘ethnic group’ in nature conservation, and formulating their own appropriate ethnic development). In the future these conditions would appear to be further conditioned by other forms of legislation and –as such- influenced the scope of authority of the *consejos comunitarios*.

The first communities that received their collective land titles were part of the popular organisations ACAMURI and OCABA in the *Bajo Atrato* region in 1996. In December 1997 COCOMACIA received its collective land title covering originally 695.245 hectares of land spread over –by then- 119 *consejos comunitarios locales*, 7.000 families comprising in total 45.000 people. In 2012 COCOMACIA would possess 800.000 hectares of titled land, spread over 124 *consejos comunitarios locales* and in total representing 39.000 inhabitants living in the *Medio Atrato* region. To be able to administer this territory COCOMACIA divided

⁶⁰ Original quote: “Nos compartimos las tareas y salimos comisiones hacia todas las zonas a recoger la información sobre las formas tradicionales de administrar el territorio, el tipo de autoridad que se había ejercido [...] los tres elementos fundamentales para armar la propuesta de titulación eran: la unidad territorial, la unidad organizativa y lo cultural”

⁶¹ Original quote: “En este proceso nos dimos cuenta de que nos quedaba un vacío: las comunidades reglamentaron lo que tenía que ver con deberes y obligaciones, pero no teníamos claro hasta dónde llegaba la competencia de la justicia ordinaria y hasta dónde la de los reglamentos internos”

its region into nine zones of which a zonal representative became responsible for the communication between *Junta Mayor* and *Juntas Locales*. The titled territory is part of eight different municipalities and covered two departments, mainly the Chocó, but also a small party of the department of Antioquia. Other ethno-territorial organisations would follow a similar organisational structure. In 2010, 5.033.486 hectares in the Pacific region would have become collective property of the 'Black Communities' –see also image 11 on page 73 (Observatorio Pacífico y Territorio, 2010).

The start of the titling process that granted the Afro-Colombian (ethno-territorial) organisations collective land titles coincided with the escalation of violence in the Chocó Department. Although Colombia's political conflicts of the 20th century were for an important degree linked to economic interest and control over land – see also section 1.2.2.2- for a general introduction into the history and development of Colombia's internal conflict (Brittain, 2010; Mendieta, 2011; Oslender, 2007; Wouters, 2001). The Pacific region had been relatively excluded from this violence for many years until the paramilitaries entered the Chocó in December 1996 and accelerated the pace of violent confrontations between different armed actors in the region (guerrilla groups, paramilitary groups, national army). Since then, violence has been intensifying, putting the local population in the crossfire between paramilitary, guerrilla and army combats and making them the victims of widespread violence, terror, and forced displacement (Oslender, 2008). The paramilitary forces entered the municipality of Riosucio in North Chocó on the 20th of December 1996 in order to combat the FARC-EP guerrillas (Wouters, 2001; Oslender, 2007). The attack was coordinated by the Colombian army and the paramilitaries and succeeded in forcing the Guerrillas away from this region but led 15.000-17.000 people fleeing their homes (mainly Afro-Colombians and Indigenous people) (Oslender, 2007; Wouters, 2001; Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007). This event marked the beginning of a period of intense violence, displacement and terror in the Chocó Department, in which many people fled their homes, lost their lives or forced to live in circumstances of profound insecurity (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007; Oslender, 2007; Oslender, 2008; Pécaut, 1999; 2000a; Taussig, 2003; Wouters, 2001). Here the exercise of the territorial rights and the authority of the ethno-territorial organisations—and the implicated development of the region- became severely affected by the escalation of violence and the different dynamics that this violence facilitated and the continued expansion of the State's neoliberal development model. These issues will be the subject of the next two chapters

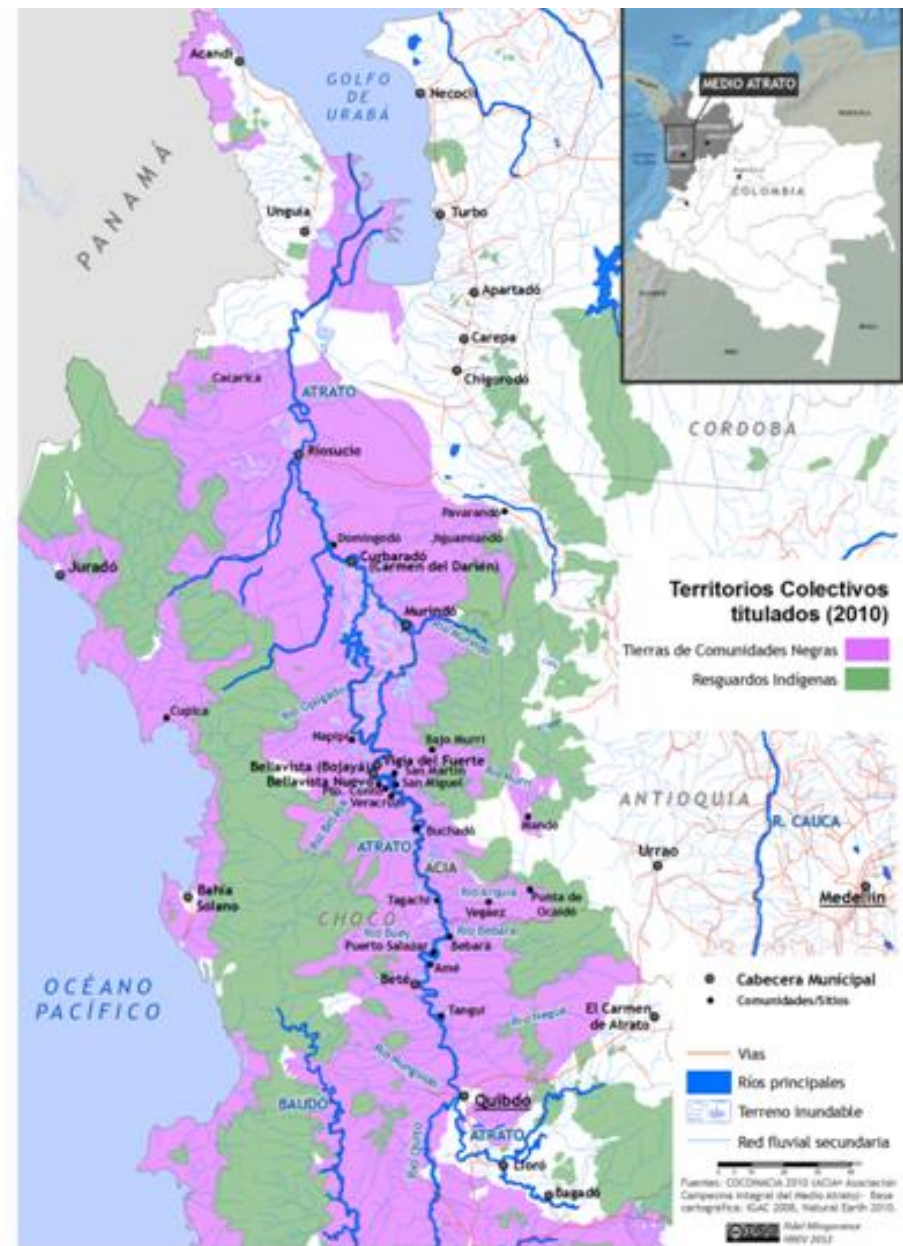


IMAGE 11: COLLECTIVE LAND TITLES IN THE
[HTTP://GODUES.WORDPRESS.COM/2012/12/30/PACIFICO-COLOMBIANO/](http://GODUES.WORDPRESS.COM/2012/12/30/PACIFICO-COLOMBIANO/)

MEDIO ATRATO (LEFT) AND CHOCÓ (RIGHT) (SOURCE: I)

5.4 Reflection on the process of ethno-territorial recognition

The organisational process and the institutional recognition of property rights of the Afro-Colombian communities could and should be seen as an important achievement in the process of visibilisation and (institutional) recognition of one of Colombia's minority groups. However, it would appear that –in contrast with what many people seemed to hope for- *ley 70* itself was not the solution to all the problems that existed in the rural communities of the Pacific region. Different aspects inherent in both the process of establishment and the content of the law would pose challenges on the future implementation of the law. While exploring the current validity of the *ley 70* in a changed context (chapters 6 and 7) I encountered some interesting critical perspectives on the weaknesses inherent in the law itself (and related regulations). It took me quite a long time to find people who did not take the 'ethno-territorial discursive connection' for granted; and who did not take this law as 'the solution' for all the Afro-Colombians' problems. In the course of my research, the dense network of 'like-minded' people –that were educated into the same 'conception of the world' as the one that had formed the basis of the *ley 70*- confronted me with an overwhelming coherency in organisational and personal accounts. At the same time, when reflecting upon the validity of the *ley 70* in a changed context –after the escalation of violence and the further development of the neoliberal export-oriented model based on grand-scale resource extraction in the Chocó (subject of the next chapters)- many representatives of the ethno-territorial organisations continued to emphasise the validity of this 'piece of paper' for Afro-Colombian visibilisation and empowerment. This was because it was seen as the main tool to counteract the new challenges in their territories (Field Notes). However, some more critical perspectives could illuminate some interesting insights into the scope, content and development of this law that corresponded with some of the principal challenges the ethno-territorial organisations started to face when implementing their acquired land titles (since the mid-1990s).

These informants stated that they were not an enemy of the *ley 70* and pointed out that things could have been worse if this law wouldn't have been granted. They, principally, tried to make it clear to me that different weaknesses are inherent in the law itself and should be taken into consideration when analysing the validity of the emancipation process of the Afro-Colombians in a changed context. The law had been formulated at a crucial moment in time in which there had been an interesting opportunity that needed to be grasped to have a first legal mechanism that would positively discriminate the Afro-Colombians. As there was a constitutional opening, it had been the time to grasp this opportunity, however *"...in a way very accelerated they structured, proposed and defined aspects of the proposal for the law. That, in another way, could have been more thought over, more participatively worked this law"*⁶² (Interview with Luís Hernández: 19 December 2012). *"They see it as something more, something that would be able to produce some immediate results or changes and hasn't been as how they look at other laws [...] it was simply a law [...] the ley 70 isn't a more embedded achievement, changing the life of the Afro-Colombians, it has an opening and closing of eyes. For example, an element has been a product of the quest and a conception of facts, a vision to collect some elements that is life, of a sector of the Afro-Colombian population in the country, and from here project some legislative elements with some administrative elements"*⁶³ (Interview with Luís Hernández: 19 December 2012). *"Ley 70 isn't a panacea, it is a first step [...] that needs to continue to rise [...] that we rose in the way that now there is a better level of awareness and commitment, not only the government, where we are to procure the betterment of the quality of life"*⁶⁴ (Interview with Andres Lopez– previous member of el Movimiento Nacional Cimarrón, now director Universidad Nacional Abierta y a la Distancia (UNAD): 16 January 2013).

⁶² Original quote: *"...en una manera muy acelerada ellos estructuraban, se proponían y definían aspectos de la propuesta de la ley. Que de otra manera pudieron haber sido mucho más pensado, mucho más trabajados participativamente esta ley"*

⁶³ Original quote: *"La miran como algo más, algo que tendría que producir unos resultados o unos cambios inmediatos y no ha sido como se miran otras leyes [...] Eso fue simplemente una ley [...] la ley 70 no es una herramienta más incorporada, cambiar la vida de los afro-colombianos, tiene un abrir y cerrar de ojos. Por ejemplo un elemento ha sido un producto de la lucha y de una concepción de hechos, una visión de recoger unos elementos de lo que es la vida, de un sector de la población Afro-Colombiana en el país y de allí proyectar unos elementos legislativos con unos componentes administrativos"*

⁶⁴ Original quote: *"No es la panacea la ley 70, es un primer inicio [...] que toca seguir subiendo. [...] lo escalamos en la medida en que ya hay un nivel mayor de consciencia y de compromiso, no solo el gobierno, sino que está en nosotros procurar el mejoramiento de la calidad de vida"*

The ethnicisation of blackness –see also Restrepo (2002; 2008)- had been used as a tool to be constitutionally recognised as an Afro-Colombian minority group. The status of the Afro-Colombians as an ethnic group became defined by their possession of a particular (distinct) culture which was the basis for their status as political subject and subject of rights (Restrepo, 2008). However, the further development of this ethnic distinctiveness is said to be partially artificial because of the pace and momentum in which these processes took place. *“There isn’t an anthropological and sociological base to say, for example, that the blacks have an organisation in family trees. This we invented with the challenge to be able to say they were ethnicities, but if one would recreate, they did research in this field, more profound, more of the ethnographic type, that could describe more accurately the organisational model of the black communities. It must, almost to say this, with the objective to justify that they made collective territories but, ultimately this [research] can be in the same places, because they haven’t accepted it massively. Because the ley 70, planned in this way, leaves half of the population without benefits”*⁶⁵ (Interview with Cristian Restrepo – research director IIAP & former Claretian Priest: 18 December 2012). Cristian further explained that the connection between territory and ethnicity -as the basis of the ley 70- is for a large part –but not totally- artificial. In the process of ethnicisation a part of the population started to feel themselves as an ethnic group. He explained that they started to feel the elements of a common history, and their territorial presence as a basis to justify this ethnic belonging. Some elements do have relevance according to Cristian. While an 110 year history in the Chocó (after the abolition slave trade) is short, it should have been enough time to create a territorial attachment, as after the abolition of slavery the black communities were –for the first time- able to be a family, to live in their territory and to use their territory. However, they have their origins in distinct parts of Africa, as such these people do not compose one sole ethnic group. Therefore they were not able to create this ‘ethnic-belonging’ before the history of enslavement. But even when taking the post-slavery era as a starting point, Cristian argues that the *Atratoños*, *San Juanenos* and *Baudosenos*⁶⁶ and even people living up-stream and down-stream of the Atrato are distinct. He concludes with saying that indeed there is something ethno-territorial, but at the same time elements are constructed, partially artificial. Furthermore, this type of rural ethnicisation leaves the urban population without benefits. Here lies an important distinction with the process of ethnicisation in the Southern Pacific area as there the emancipation process was largely a product of the ‘urban black population’. As such this specific ethno-territoriality misses the support of the urban intellectuals, politicians etc. *“I think that the Chocó, the department of Chocó, between the Afros in this country, more than 70% of us aren’t friends of the ley 70. They see it as something outdated [...] the Afro, object of the ley 70, seen from outside, is a rural focus. And including here, for me there is a conflict between Afros [...] the rural Afro and the urban Afro [...] I consider myself an urban Afro. This transgresses me, it makes me inconsistent with the rural process. But I am from the urban. I am not rural. So, sometimes, including with the influence, the nuance of the Church, this rises but far. One wanted to generate this confrontation between the rural Afro and the urban Afro. If you considered all urban Afros were like a politician, an enemy of the rural process. I do not necessarily think so, but as well for the ignorance of many urban Afros they see [...] the rural Afro as the ignorant”*⁶⁷ (interview with Luís Hernández: 19 December 2012).

Additionally, it is argued that the organisational model of the ley 70/ *Decreto 1745* -based in the development of a new politico-administrative unit the *consejos comunitarios*- never has been sufficiently adopted by the politico-administrative system that existed before the implementation of *Decreto 1745*. This implies a two-fold challenge explained Luís Hernández. First, in the departmental governing, they incorporated the *consejos comunitarios* into its structure; however, this does not fit the way in which the

⁶⁵ Original quote: “No hay una base antropológica y sociológica para decir, por ejemplo, que los negros tienen una organización en troncos familiares. Eso lo inventamos con el reto de poder decir que eran etnias, pero si uno recreara, se hicieron investigaciones en ese campo, más profundas, más del tipo etnográfico que puedan describir con mejor exactitud el modelo organizativo de las comunidades negras. Hay que, casi que se digo, este con el objeto de justificar de que se hicieron territorios colectivos, pero que finalmente esta pueda ser en los mismos lugares. Porque no han aceptado masivamente, porque la ley 70 así planteada, deja la mitad de la población sin beneficios”

⁶⁶ Names to indicate the people that live respectively on the riversides of the Atrato-river, San-Juan river, or the river Baudó

⁶⁷ Original quote: “Pienso que el Chocó, el departamento del Chocó, entre los afros de este país, más del 70% de nosotros no son amigos de la ley 70. Se ve como algo arcaico [...] el afro objeto de la ley 70 visto desde afuera es un enfoque rural. E incluso ahí, para mí, hay un conflicto entre afros, [...] el afro rural y el afro urbano [...] Yo me considero un afro-urbano. Si que eso me delinque, y que me hace inconsecuente con el proceso rural. Pero yo soy de lo urbano. No soy rural. Entonces, a veces incluso con la influencia, la nuance de la iglesia, y ese surge pero mucho más. Se quiso generar ese enfrentamiento entre el afro rural y el afro urbano. Si consideraba que todo afro urbano era como un político, un enemigo del proceso rural. Yo no lo creo necesariamente así, aunque también por la ignorancia de muchos afros urbanos lo ven [...] el afro rural como el ignorante”

municipalities and mayors have previously governed the territory. As such tensions might exist between the old and new structure. Secondly, the *consejos comunitarios* are not sufficiently prepared to be able to participate in the political process. This lack of preparation (education/ formation) has the consequence that these people who now compose the governing unit at a local level might act in ways that does not correspond with the vision for which the territorial law and its administrative units had been constructed.

With the lack of urban affiliation with the *ley 70*, the artificial (ethnic) elements and an insufficiently developed organisational model, there are some inherent qualities in the law that can lead to a questioning of the ‘intellectual project’s’ counter-hegemonic success. Here one is able to ask: Does this ‘counter-hegemonic victory’ actually resemble the *common sense* of the rural people? Does this institutional recognition actually resemble the demands of the (Afro-Colombian) mass movement that confronted the Colombian State? And does the new organisational model grant the (rural) Afro-Colombians more autonomy or are they just integrated into the wider socio-economic (hegemonic) structure? When new contextual challenges would present themselves in the mid-1990s (the escalation of violent conflict; (forced and voluntary) migration; influence of communication, education and globalisation; the lack of fulfilment of basic needs and the further implementation of the neoliberal model), this undermined the ethno-territorial discourse and brought the counter-hegemonic project into an impasse (subject of the last two chapters). *“As far as the internal things have not responded to reality, say, the legal has not responded to the traditional, they grow apart”*⁶⁸ (Interview with Cristian Restrepo – research director IIAP & former Claretian Priest: 18 December 2012).

5.5 Theoretically-informed conclusion

While the institutional recognition of the (rural) Afro Colombians could be seen as an important victory on behalf of the counter-hegemonic forces, this thesis claims that the scope and content of this institutional recognition did not result in challenging the hegemonic order within the Colombian society. The constitutional recognition of the Afro-Colombians based on an ‘ethnic otherness’, the adoption of the *AT-55* and, later, *ley 70* and *Decreto 1745* should be understood as a ‘passive revolution’: as an attempt of ‘restoration’ by the hegemonic elite. Where *“...restoration becomes the first policy [of the state] whereby social struggles find sufficiently elastic frameworks to allow the bourgeoisie to gain power without dramatic upheavals”* (Gramsci (SPN:115) cited in Morton, 2013: 52).

Within the period of constitutional negotiation, the economic form (neo-liberal natural resource exploitation) and the political content (the marginalisation of ethnic groups) within the social formation of the hegemonic class project were challenged by a mass movement of Afro-Colombian citizens. They were asking for wider visibilisation, empowerment and citizenship rights in order to transcend their marginalised position in society. While the counter-hegemonic project had been able to ‘unite’ two distinct ‘intellectual projects’ into one Afro-Colombian class movement that ‘attacked’ the state for its historical social, cultural, political and economic marginalisation. Here the ruling class, thus, appeared to have been unable to fully integrate these ‘producer classes’ within its hegemony. Hegemony is: *“...doubly geographical in that it is constituted on the basis of spatial relations and such relations become hegemonic as geographies are naturalized as common sense through political and cultural practices”* (Wainwright (2005: 1037) cited in Karriem, 2013: 144). Consequently, the absence of state-influence in the Pacific region and the (geographic) inequalities that had been spatially produced within the hegemonic state-project -that had identified the Pacific region as site for resource exploitation whilst not contributing to the development of the region- facilitated the emergence of alternative ‘conceptions of the world’ in this region. The absence of state-influence had left a void in which alternative conceptions could develop and the ‘naturalised’ geographical, political and cultural distinctions became questioned within the counter-hegemonic project.

⁶⁸ Original quote: *“En la medida en que ya las cosas internas no han respondido a la realidad, digamos lo legal no ha respondido a lo tradicional, se van separando”*

The lack of state-influence in the Pacific region had prohibited the integration of the Afro-Colombian class into the material and ideational reality of the state-project because historically the state had neglected the Pacific region and its inhabitants. At the time that the state increased its interest in the region's ecological potential, this history of marginalisation (and structural violence) started to erode the societal consent upon which the historical social ordering had been based. According to Gramsci, any situation of class hegemony is based on a combination of coercion and consent, in which the creation of a 'collective will' facilitates the acceptance of the hegemonic state-project by civil society. This 'collective will' accepts the limits set by the state-project and has both an individual as an structural bases, as the hegemonic project is reflected within the wider 'superstructures' of society. In the more marginal cases, coercion is deployed. In this particular case, the acceptance of the ideational and material pillars of the 'hegemonic state project' came into crisis.

While Gramsci argues that the 'organic crisis of the hegemonic class project' tends to favour the deployment coercion over consent, the notion of passive revolution provides the state with alternative mechanisms to restore its legitimacy. It refers to a form of containment of social struggle in two distinct ways. Firstly, it refers to the process that attempts at "*...revolution through state intervention or the inclusion of new social groups within the hegemony of a political order, without an expansion of mass producer control over politics*" (Sassoon (1987) in Morton, 2013: 53). The second interpretation refers to "*...the acceptance of certain demands from below [whilst] at the same time encouraging the restriction of class demands so that changes in the world of production are accommodated within the current social formation*" (Sassoon (1987) in Morton, 2013: 53). As such the concept refers to the containment of the formation of an alternative 'collective will' by accepting certain demands or forms of 'empowerment' to contain the possibility of a class struggle, whilst at the same time "*...insuring the creation of state power and an institutional framework consonant with capitalist property relations*" (Sassoon (1982) in Morton, 2013: 54). This thesis argues that the institutional recognition of an ethnic-other and the consequent development of the *ley 70* should be interpreted as such a 'passive revolution'. While the Colombian State included new social groups in its political order, it did not grant them more control over politics. Furthermore, the ethnicisation of the minority group constructed them as the 'ethnic other' within society (Restrepo, 2002; 2008). Secondly, while the Colombian State accepted certain class demands, the adoption of the *AT-55* and *ley 70* did not change the current social formation within the Colombian State. The exact formulation of the law (combined with its organisational requirements) would institutionalise the demands of the (rural) Afro-Colombians in a way that was compatible with the 'hegemonic state project' and hereby contained its revolutionary potential.

The *consejos comunitarios* became a new governance body that operated within the wider hegemonic political structure. Here the *ley 70* granted the *consejos* a form of authority to implement their own appropriate (socio-economic) development in their collective territories. However, conditioned under the specific functions these *consejos* were assigned to fulfil. At the same time, the authority of these new governance bodies were conditioned under other forms of regulation and national development plans that were developed in Bogotá. Here, the authority and scope of the actions of the *consejos comunitarios* were compatible with the current social formation within the Hegemonic State Project. As the first law of the Afro-Colombians only had a limited geographical scope and had been based on a 'ethnicisation of class demands' that only benefitted a segment of the rural Afro-Colombians, especially in those departments where the 'revolutionary potential' had originated. The definitions of '*comunidad negra*', '*ocupación colectiva*', and '*prácticas tradicionales de producción*' characterised these (rural) Afro-Colombians as a distinct group in society that had their own traditional production practices that were in harmony with nature. Here, the urban Afro-Colombians would not (directly) benefit from the law, while at the same time, the Afro-Colombians were assigned to fulfil a specific environmental function in the Pacific region. *Ley 70* easily fitted into the international discourses of minority rights, sustainable development and nature conservation.

The content of the *ley 70* can be placed within a wider (international) institutional framework that has for an important degree influenced the *'philosophy of praxis'* of the hegemonic state project. 'The global neoliberal politico-economic framework' had placed the state's class project within the political project of international institutions as the IMF and World bank, and the wider 'capitalist world system' that intersects with the state-logic of power and capital accumulation. The 'global neoliberal project' has itself been built upon relations of unequal development, in which structural adjustment and stabilisation packages of the 1970s, the principles of marketisation and deregulation of the 1980s, and the 'interventionist agenda' of the 1990s had already conditioned the 'ideational and material reality' of the Colombian State within the system of international relations. Since the 1980s this became increasingly reflected in the 'orientation of the Colombian State' (see chapter 1.2.2.1) in which the ILO convention on minority rights, the discourses of sustainable development, modernisation, environmental protection and the relationship between economic growth and poverty reduction reflect the 'dialectics' between the national class project and a wider (global) neoliberal framework.

Following, Hale (2002), Goldman (2005) and Cardenas (2012) this provoked a (green) 'neoliberal multiculturalism' in which "...the proponents of the neoliberal doctrine pro-actively endorse a substantive, if limited, version of indigenous cultural rights, as a means to resolve their own problems and advance their own political agendas" (Hale, 2002: 487). Here neoliberalism, social justice and environmentally sustainable development are integrated within the discursive formation of a 'green neoliberalism' (Goldman, 2005; Cardenas, 2012). Afro-Colombian minority rights and the recognition of collective territories in the Pacific region can be understood as the example of a specific 'nodal point of connection' in which the global neoliberal framework via the state's hegemonic project produced the materiality of the Afro-Colombian communities. These are forms of 'emancipation and visibilisation' that are in line with the wider discursive developments in the 'global neoliberal framework' in the 1980s/ 1990s and which entered the 'conception of the world' of the Colombian State (especially since the 1980s). Even though, the achievements of the early 1990s increased the visibility of the Afro-Colombians, this thesis argues that the economic form and political content of the 'counter-hegemonic project' that was supposed to be challenged has hardly been affected. The institutionalisation of class demands permitted the Colombian government to maintain its political control and the social formation according to their own 'hegemonic conception of the world'. The institutionalisation of these ethno-territorial demands permitted a containment of (possible) counter-hegemonic 'revolution' while not altering the status quo.

Chapter 6: 'The context of structural violence: 'An extension of the state's hegemonic project' (1991- now)

"Majestuoso Atrato. Tú que has soportado tanto. Bríndale a tus hijos valor para seguir luchando. [...]. Sus aguas eran cristalinas. Lo decía mi abuelo en sus relatos. Eran riqueza y hoy son ruinas. Que lástima Río Atrato."

"Majestic Atrato. You who have endured so much. Give your children values in order to continue struggling [...] Its waters were crystal clear. That said my grandfather in his stories. They were rich and are now ruins. What a pity Río Atrato"

(Excerpt of Chirimía Song. Author: Tanguí. Title: Majestuoso Atrato. Paraphrased by Paula Córdoba– Legal Representative COCOMACIA: 17 November 2012)

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter concluded with characterising the implementation of the *ley 70* as a Gramscian 'passive revolution' that had contained the 'counter-hegemonic project's' revolutionary potential. This chapter will further sketch the development of the hegemonic state-project –since the 1990s- hereby outlining the 'context of structural violence' in which the counter-hegemonic project needed to continue its political mission after having obtained the right on collective land titles in the mid-1990s. This chapter aims to build upon the insights provided in chapter 1.2.2 that already introduced the history of Colombia's neoliberal orientation and internal conflict. It should further be interpreted in light of the 'global neoliberal conjuncture' (part of chapter 1.5.4) that conditions the state's '*philosophy of praxis*' within a global politico-economic project.

This chapter starts by introducing the escalation of violent conflict in the Chocó Department and its direct and indirect effects on the communities in the Atrato Region. This will be followed by a discussion of the (further) development of the neoliberal orientation of the Colombian State since the early 1990s, especially focussing on the mining-boom that only increased the (inter) national interest in the Chocó's subsoil. Then, the chapter shortly discusses the continued marginalised position of the Afro-Colombian communities within the nation. Lastly, this chapter concludes by interpreting these two dynamics with a Gramscian lens in order to assess the implications of these developments for the consolidation of class hegemony by the state's the ideational and material conditioning of society. Ultimately this chapter aims to contribute to answer sub question 2 "*How has the context of structural violence influenced this project?*". This will be done by discussing the changes in the context of structural violence following a time-frame that reflects the *post-institutionalisation period* (1991-now). This reflects the new 'conjuncture' in which the 'counter-hegemonic forces' needed to continue their 'intellectual project' while interacting with the changed ideational and material reality.

6.2 The escalation of violence in the Chocó

6.2.1 The escalation of violence in the Chocó

On the 20th of December 1996, Colombia's internal conflict entered the Chocó Department with the military offensive 'Operation Genesis' in the *Bajo Atrato* region. The army and the paramilitaries entered in order to expel the FARC-EP from the region and used different methods: economic blockades, aerial bombing the looting and burning of houses and crops, and the massacre, abduction, torture and arbitrary detention of civilians (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007: 7). This resulted in a massive displacement of

the local population. After occupying the northern part of the department, the paramilitary forces moved southwards and entered the *Medio Atrato* region on the 22nd of May 1997, followed by the *Alto Atrato* and the rest of southern Chocó. Just as in the case of the *Bajo Atrato*, the paramilitaries argued that they came to liberate the communities from guerrilla occupation. Whereas there had been some guerrilla presence in the region during the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, Padre Jan Petersen explained that they only had occupied some remote place as a place to rest. *“The majority of the communities had never seen a guerrilla. The guerrilla entered after the paramilitaries had and made and more presence and started to attack the paramilitaries”*⁶⁹ (Interview with Padre Jan Petersen: 19 December 2012).

Colombia has a long history of violent conflict first between the liberals and the conservatives, and since the 1970s, between the left-wing guerrilla forces –of which the ELN, M-19 and FARC-EP were the biggest groups- and the right-wing paramilitary groups. In the course of time, the distinction between political and non-political manifestations of the violence became less clear as the proliferation of the drug cartels in the 1970s/1980s, illicit activities, widespread corruption and the involvement of politicians with these different armed actors make the public/ private, legal/ illegal divides unclear. Furthermore, the motives of the different parties seem no longer to be easy to determine (Grajales, 2011). All parties (including the national military) are reported to have committed human rights abuses and involvement in drug trafficking and other illicit activities –either to sustain the armies or for personal enrichment- is also widely reported. While paramilitary groups are officially demobilised –and as such do not exist according to the Colombian government- their interaction with the state to pursue a range of objectives is both officially reported and ‘common knowledge’ at a local level. The strategic location of the Chocó Department in geographic, ecological, economic and military terms provoked the interest of a range of violent actors to consolidate a form of territorial control in the region either to control traffic routes (for drugs, goods and arms), to engage in illicit activities (coca-cultivation, marihuana-cultivation, illegal mining), or to protect property rights of allied companies or individuals.

With the paramilitary invasion of 1996, the violence intensified and a range of actors came to pursue their diverse objectives around a logic of military control and land contention. Image 12 reveals the positions of the different armed actors in the region in 2003, however governmental forces are not taken into account in this image. It is argued that the positioning of the different armed actors have a lot to do with strategic locations around various sorts of natural resources (the cultivation of illicit crops and African Palm oil; and the various minerals in the department’s subsoil (especially Gold) etc.), transport corridors and territorial rivalry (FUCLA, 2009; Secretariado Nacional, 2010; Field Notes). Furthermore, the relationship between violence and land grab is proven, as the expelled population in the *Bajo Atrato* region found their titled land fully planted with African Palms owned by different companies (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007; Grajales, 2011; Wouters, 2001). The violence intensified with the arrival of multi-national/ private companies exploiting the region’s natural resources. It is argued that these plantations and (gold) mines are used to white wash illegal money. While some armed actors engage in ‘illegal’ natural resource exploitation (e.g. gold mining, drug cultivation), others ally with multi-national companies to provide a form of armed protection. With the paramilitary invasion moving southwards, the Chocó Department saw an acceleration of the confrontations between different military actors. The situation worsened between 1997 and 2002, when different communities found themselves within a cross-fire between the different armed actors, resulting in deaths, destructed communities, threats and massive displacement. Whereas the violence diminished in the late 2000s, the different armed actors are still present in the country side and occasionally clashes erupt in which the community finds itself caught.

The Colombian State has a dubious role within Colombia’s violent conflict. The (para-) military invasion in the *Bajo Atrato* region and subsequent occupation of the Chocó Department can be seen in the light of

⁶⁹ Original quote: *“La mayoría de las comunidades nunca habían visto un guerrillero. La guerrilla entró después de que estaban los paramilitares y hizo cada vez más presencia y empezó a atacar a los paramilitares”*

the militarist logic of the Colombian government that suppresses counter-insurgency forces, and became only further reinforced by the history of military aid relations between Colombia and the United States. This started in the Cold War, but was reinforced with the adoption of ‘Plan Colombia’ (1998) and later ‘the War on Terror’. Here a counter-insurgency campaign was initiated with (military) support of the U.S. in order to disarticulate the illegal (drug) networks engaged in the smuggling of drugs, arms and illicit commerce. Colombia’s history of violent conflict – Pecaut’s ‘generalized violence’- (see also chapter 1.2.2.2) shows the historical articulation between counter-insurgency forces and elite-interest which had mainly been based on a logic of land control and power. Until today, elite-interests guide military campaigns where “*a number of actors in the government and the military see the ‘pacification’ of the territory as a prelude to modernization. In this case, violence, even private and illegitimate, has contributed to the establishment of an economic and political order that is compatible with a liberal democratic state*” (Grajales, 2013: 2013). As such, the ‘violent pacification’ of the Chocó Department, the displacement of its population, the violent dispossession of lands, and the institutional mechanisms that support these situations of land grab point towards a (seemingly) contradictory process of state-formation in which counter-insurgency repression is used as a discursive strategy to mask the interests behind a (para-) military collaboration in the ‘development’ of the Pacific region (Grajales, 2013).

IMAGE 12: POSITIONING OF ARMED ACTORS IN THE CHOCÓ DEPARTMENT ANNO 2003
(SOURCE: OBSERVATORIO DEL PROGRAMA PRESIDENCIAL DE DERECHOS HUMANOS Y DERECHO INTERNACIONAL HUMANITARIO, 2003: 4)

6.2.2 The effects of the presence of armed actors

Direct effects of the escalation of violence

At a local level, the escalation of violence placed the population in a cross-fire between the different actors. As combats were fought out between and in communities, civil casualties, disappearances, displacement, terror, and rape were the conflict's direct consequences. Human Rights' abuses are committed by all parties (guerrilla, paramilitaries and national army) and documented by the Dócesis as a way of visibilisation of the conflict at national and international level. Life in the country side is vulnerable and uncertain. While massive displacement had been the case in the early violent years, and still occasionally occurs in military strategic sites, a combined policy of community resistance advocated by the Dócesis of Quibdó, ethno-territorial organisations (as COCOMACIA and COCOMOPOCA) and international organisations as SweFOR and ACNUR (UNHCR) promote the return of the communities to their villages to provide 'resistance in the territory'. COCOMACIA argued that even though they had faced massive displacement of their communities, returns are estimated to be between 66 –

80%. However, the communities do not have any guarantee. Communities stay vulnerable as violence and intimidation still occur in different parts of the region –mainly in resource rich/ strategic areas. For various years, mobility has been severely diminished–and still faces restrictions- which resulted in situations of food shortage. Normal agricultural rhythms were disturbed by the presence of the armed actors that restricted the possibilities to follow the normal cycles of agricultural activities. Furthermore, time-clocks have restricted movement at night and food supplies have been blocked several times. '*Paro Armados*' ['armed strikes'] still paralyse the country side approximately 3-4 times a year -lasting between a week and a month. During a *paro armado* transport is restricted by one of the armed actors (mainly the FARC-EP) –either by land, water or boat- for a predetermined period of time. Everybody that does not comply with these rules 'has to face the consequences'. Whereas the situation is more tense during a *paro armado*, it is part of normal life. In Quibdó one can observe more military presence, the television reports about the economic consequences of the lack of commercial transport and in the country side, and food supplies and inter-community transport are restricted. As a consequence, there is a temporary isolation of the different rural communities. An armed strike is based on a struggle over the control of the territory. However, after a couple of days/ weeks the people are going back to normal life as if nothing has happened. The community strictly follows the rules set by the guerrilla as it is dangerous to go against the rules set by the FARC-EP (Field Notes). In sum, the direct effects of the escalation of violence had contributed to a situation of humanitarian crisis. In addition to murders, intimidation, and fear due to the

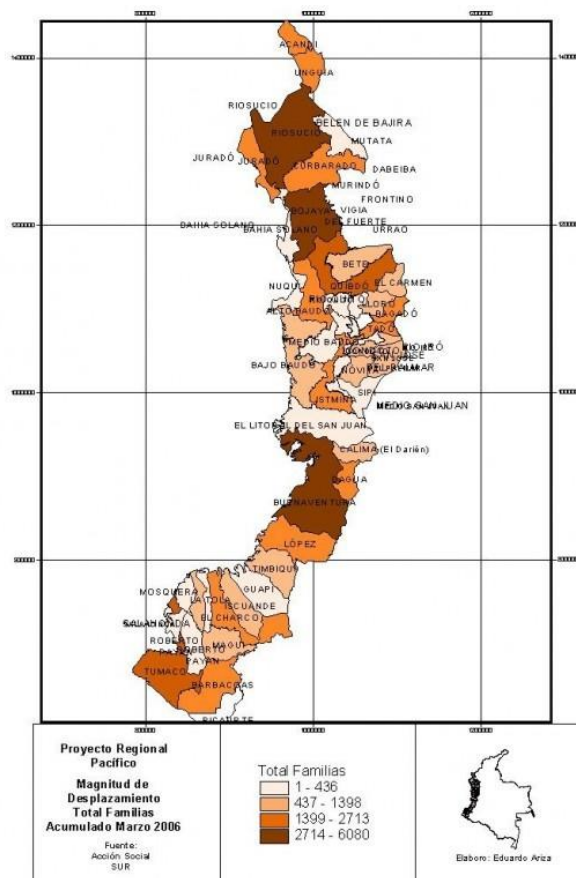


IMAGE 13: AMOUNT OF DISPLACED FAMILIES IN THE PACIFIC REGION (ACCUMULATED NUMBER MARCH 2006) (SOURCE: OBSERVATORIO PACÍFICO Y TERRITORIO; 2006)

presence of the armed actors and their diverse strategies. This resulted in a situation of food shortages, a lack of health services, a blocking of the provision of basic services, and the violation of civil, human, and humanitarian rights.

Direct social effects of the escalation of violence

When the paramilitaries and the guerrillas are present in the country side, they disrupt the ‘social fabric’ within the communities, many community leaders explained to me. A civilian that complies with one of the two ‘fronts’ is easily seen as a traitor and -as such- faces the risk of being liquidated by the other party. On the other hand, non-compliance is also dangerous. Suspicions about compliance with another actor easily results in intimidation or death, as in the case of Nevaldo Perea’s son. While discussing the situation of internal displacement with him, he told me that next to the situation of violent displacement, in a marginalised region as the Chocó, there were two forms of ‘non-violent displacement’ that –in the case of violent conflict- increased the vulnerability of the communities. Nevaldo and his family needed to move to Quibdó to be able to give his children a chance to study (as this opportunity wasn’t available in the country side). One of his sons –after finishing his high school- decided to return to their village to be able to work on a wood farm in order to earn the money needed –for him and his sister- to continue their studies. As he came back to his region –and he had not been there for 3 or 4 years- the FARC-EP distrusted him and killed him as they suspected this ‘stranger from the city’ to be an informant of the paramilitaries (Interview with Nevaldo Perea Perea: 13 December 2012). Here, a two-sided stigmatisation is imposed by the rival armed actors –if you are a farmer you are collaborating with the guerrilla, if you are from the cities, you have ties with the paramilitaries- and makes displacement, return and living in the country side difficult. However, Nevaldo is convinced that living in the country side has more advantages than living in a situation of displacement in one of the cities. He explained that while a lot of COCOMACIA’s communities have been displaced a lot of them prefer living in a situation of insecurity in the country side than having to cope with an undignified reality of being displaced. According to him, people in the country side have more facilities to live in poverty than they have when they live in a situation of poverty and displacement. He explained that in order to be able to survive in the city the people need money whilst in the country side one is able to produce food for self-substance. *“The people in the countryside have had more facilities to live in poverty than live poor and displaced. Because you in the country side, in your communities, I realised, that I needed money when I displaced myself to Quibdó. Before I didn’t need money for what I had over there [in the country side]. I will tell you a secret, I have ten children, and I never needed money to raise my kids. Because we had the pork meet, that we created [...] the plantain, the milpeso that is a fruit that gives oil that we carried, took down and we had oil. The only thing we bought in Quibdó was the salt and soap. Salt and soap, we didn’t need more. The clothes, I went, we roped up 4/5 marranitos [small pigs], we took them to sell them, I went to Medellín to the retailer, I bought two bags of second hand clothes and we had clothes for three or four years”*⁷⁰ (Interview with Nevaldo Perea Perea- community leader COCOMACIA: 13 December 2012). Returning is not easy as the communities are often confronted with their villages being partly demolished or burned down. Having lost many of their possessions, their new life has to be composed all over again. According to Nevaldo, even though living in the country side is unstable, people prefer to live there than to live in a situation of displacement in the cities where one needs money and find a stable job to be able to survive.

Indirect effects of the escalation of violence

Indirectly the presence of the armed actors in the country side and the escalation of violence provoked a couple of other dynamics that would influence daily life for the local population and the various organisations present in the region. Although displacement is a direct result of the violence it is said that the violent dynamics accelerated the pace of rural-urban migration, caused by the lack of facilities in the

⁷⁰ Original quote: “La gente en el campo ha tenido más facilidades de vivir dentro la pobreza que vivir pobre y desplazado. Porque tú en el campo, en tus comunidades, yo me di cuenta [...] que necesitaba plata cuando me desplacé a Quibdó. Antes yo no necesitaba la plata por lo que tenía allá. Te cuento un secreto, mis hijos son diez, y yo nunca necesité plata para criar mis hijos. Porque teníamos la carne de cerdo, la creábamos, [...] el plátano, la milpeso que es una fruta que da aceite que la portamos, la sacamos y teníamos aceite. Lo único que comprábamos de Quibdó eran la sal y el jabón. Sal y jabón, no necesitábamos más. La ropa, yo me iba, encordamos por ahí 4/5 marranitos lo llevamos a vender, me iba a Medellín a la minorista compraba dos bultos de ropas de segunda y teníamos ropa de 3 o 4 años”

country side and an eagerness to move-upwards [‘montarse’]: “...they didn’t want to [move up] because of the war, no, in order to look for the opportunities in health, education, working opportunities, opportunities of well-being, to better the living conditions [...] this has conveyed a process that even the armed conflict has been used in favour of this dynamic [...] many people have invented themselves to be threatened, because they simply wanted to come to Quibdó, in order to move up to Quibdó”⁷¹ (Interview with Cristian Restrepo – research director IIAP & former Claretian Priest: 18 December 2012). Here the lack of services in the country side, combined with the opportunities triggered by the availability of telecommunications and images of ‘the other world’ seems to provoke a more urban focus, in which human presence in the territory is further put under treat by a desire to ‘move upwards’ to the urban centres.

At the same time, restricted mobility in the rural parts of the Chocó, the absence of state influence –and – as we see later– the lack of ability of the ethno-territorial organisations to continue their ‘intellectual project’ in their bases, provokes a question of legitimate authority. A frequently heard comment –on behalf of the ethno-territorial organisations– has been the ‘lack of morality’ present in the country side. The armed actors’ daily presence in the communities enables them to (continue) to gain political space at a local level, even more because they are managing the ‘alternative discourses’. For instance, by promoting the financial benefits of illegal mining, the community can be brought benefits in the short-term. Hereby the armed actors are said to be influencing the perceptions of the community (Interview with Nevaldo Perea Perea: 13 December 2012). The involvement of the armed actors in forms of resource exploitation (illegal and legal mining, drug-cultivation, arms and drug smuggle etc.) provides the community with alternative world views based on an accelerated form of resource exploitation or the engagement in illegal activities in order to obtain money. The availability of ‘fast money’ and the forced/ consensual participation of the local population in these activities are frequently pointed out to be undermining the autonomy and legitimacy of the ethno-territorial organisations (and their ‘ethno-territorial discourse’ in which they are grounded). With their daily presence in the country side, the armed actors have a direct influence on the daily lives of the people, either by increasing their insecurity or by the danger of non-compliance, a possible identification with one of the armed actors, violence and instances of looting and robbery. On the other hand by the provision of small services to the population some armed actors do gain some recognition for their assistance to the community: “*The consejos comunitarios have a recognition even with the same groups outside the law...eh, I will not call it respect, better a recognition for their fight. In addition, the outlaw groups are not that stupid, they are clear that they have to respect someone in the region to be able to sustain...they do not respect the government, they do not respect the authorities recognised by the constitution, they sabotage, rape, do whatever...but they know they have to protect a group that exists and has an institutional recognition. So, where you have an area where a woman is in labour and her son is about to breach and there is no way to get him out, and the guerrilla starts the engine [of their boat] in order to bring him over there or the guerrilla gets medicine for them to apply, it calms the pains...this is a recognition that they gain in the community as you don’t have presence of the state and you know that the struggle of a human being is to survive. So that is one of the many things that happens in the Pacific. There is no state presence in more than 60% of the territory of the Pacific, but for 100% there is presence of the guerrilla and drug traffickers. So there are state responsibilities that are assumed by the groups outside the law. So this has permitted that they permeated to the people in the region, that simple. Ah, if you live over there in a corner where there never is energy, but it turns out it was a drug trafficker that brought an energy plant to the village, there never has been an aqueduct, they buy hoses and communally put a waterfall over there that brings water to the village, they are gaining recognition. There is no drug, but they bring the medicine for the day you have a head ache, the day that the farmer cuts himself while working, the snake bit him, they are the ones that resolve this, they are gaining a recognition because there is no state presence, this is what is happening in the*

⁷¹ Original quote: “...no querían [montarse] por la guerra, no, por buscar las oportunidades de salud, de educación, oportunidades de trabajo laborales, oportunidades de bienestar, de mejorar las condiciones de vida [...] ha llevado un proceso que inclusive el conflicto armado se ha utilizado a favor de ese dinámica. [...] mucha gente se inventó amenazas, porque simplemente quieren venirse a Quibdó, para mudarse a Quibdó”

Pacific'⁷² (Interview with Camilo Mosquera – Instituto de Investigaciones Ambientales del Pacífico – office of the 'black communities': 07 December 2012).

This form of recognition and compliance with loyalties other than with the ethno-territorial mission of the *consejos comunitarios* seemed to worry many of the contemporary priests and community leaders, and has often be phrased as being a form of 'demoralisation' of the communities. Chapter 7 will show how a lack of continuation of the 'intellectual project' within the current conjuncture has contributed to an erosion of a base of educated community leaders (and communities). As such, this further undermines the continuation of the ethno-territorial project within the ethno-territorial organisations' bases.

6.3 Colombia's national development plans and the 'locomotoras de desarrollo'

6.3.1 A further neo-liberalisation

While the Colombian government had just granted the Afro-Colombians the ability to obtain collective land titles, their neoliberal export-oriented extractive economic model would have important implications for the projection of land use in the Chocó. The first signs of national interest in the natural resources of the Chocó Department were already observed in the 1980s; but with President Gaviria's opening of the national economy for foreign competition in 1990, different international agreements paved the way for international capital to enter the Colombian market. National Development Plans, International (trade) agreements, and the combined Development-Security Doctrine had identified the exploitation of the Chocó's natural resources and the region's infrastructural development as strategic elements for (national) economic development. In the 1990s this doctrine would become more visible with the installation of the first African-Palm Oil plantations in the *Bajo Atrato* Region, the infrastructural development of various strategic transport corridors, the 'pacification of the region' and especially the mining-boom that would be initiated in the early 1990s by the revision of the existing mining-code and related public policies. This would further facilitate of international investment in Colombia as a whole, and especially the bio-diverse Pacific region. Ultimately, this would result in a favourable international position in terms of investment opportunities, where Colombia became one of the most open economies in Latin America to foreign ownership, by enabling a 100% foreign ownership in almost all sectors except media (e.g. mining, oil and gas; agriculture and forestry; transportation; telecommunications; construction, tourism and retail etc.) (The World Bank Group, 2010: 101).

To open up the Pacific territory for different kinds of mega-projects, diverse policies and development plans unlocked the region in order to integrate it into the internal economy. The implementation of mega-projects entitled giving concessions of land to private (multi-national) companies to exploit the region's natural resources or to further develop the region's infrastructure. Consequently, these concessions started to threaten the collective land rights obtained by the Afro-Colombians. Of particular interest for the Atrato-Communities were the development of: 1) an electrical connection between Colombia and Panama, where the government aimed to implement a transmission line for 300 MW of electricity; 2) the construction of a 'pan-American road' through the north of the Chocó that would connect Colombia to

⁷² Original quote: "Los consejos comunitarios tienen un reconocimiento, inclusive en el marco de los mismos grupos al margen de la ley... eh, no lo voy a llamar respeto, mejor un reconocimiento por su lucha. Además los grupos al margen de ley tampoco es que sean tan tontos, ellos tienen claro que en la región a alguien tienen que respetar para poderse sostener... ellos no respetan al gobierno, no respetan a las autoridades reconocidas por la constitución, sabotean, violan, hacen lo que sea... pero saben que se tienen que amparar en un grupo que exista y que tenga un reconocimiento institucional. Entonces donde hay una zona donde una señora está en parto y se le está atravesando el hijo y no hay como sacarla y la guerrilla puso el motor pa' que le lleven hasta allá, o la guerrilla puso la medicina pa' que le apliquen, le calme los dolores... eso es un reconocimiento que se ganan en una comunidad, porque no hay presencia de un estado y tu sabes que la lucha de un ser humano es por sobrevivir... Entonces eso es una de las cantidades de cosas que ocurren en el Pacífico. No hay presencia del estado en más del 60% del territorio del Pacífico, pero en el 100% hay presencia de la guerrilla y de narcotraficantes. Entonces, hay responsabilidades que son del estado que las están asumiendo los grupos al margen de la ley. Entonces eso permite que haya permeado la gente de la región, así de sencillo... Ah, si tu vives allá en un cucho donde nunca hay energía, pero resulta que fue un narcotraficante que llevó la planta pal pueblito, nunca ha habido acueducto, compran las mangueras y comunalmente logran poner que de allá de una cascada se traiga el agua al pueblo, ellos se están ganando reconocimiento. No hay nada de droga, pero ellos van y traen la medicina para el día que haya un dolor de cabeza, el día que el campesino se cortó trabajando, que lo mordió la culebra, ellos son los que resuelven eso, se están ganando un reconocimiento porque no hay presencia del estado, eso es lo que pasa en el Pacífico"

Panama (el Tapón del Darién)⁷³; 3) the construction of a road to the sea that would connect the villages Las Animas and Nuquí⁷⁴; 4) the identification of a new port area near Tribugá⁷⁵; 5) the increased interests in promoting bio-fuel production (e.g. African Palm oil); and 6) the accelerated speed of Governmental (grand-scale) mining concessions in the region (Centro de Estudios, 2012).

The exploitation of wood, the infrastructural development and the planting of African palm oil plantations are still prominent topics in the Chocó Department. However, the mining boom became increasingly salient in the post-*ley 70* era, as it became identified as the main pillar for foreign investment in the country that would provide the nation with a continent-wide comparative advantage regarding Colombia's gold-stock. This was reflected in various national development plans: the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Minero 2007-2010*, the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Minero Visión 2019*. Related policies paved the way for the mining boom since the early 1990s. These new policy developments became one of the primary concerns of the ethno-territorial organisations, directly threatening their territorial autonomy. In the last decade, 45 mining concessions have been granted to transnational companies in the Chocó and 175 solicitations are still pending approval (Centro de Estudios, 2012) –see also image 14 on page 87. These are directly affecting all ethno-territorial organisations, and with the prospect of Colombia being a 'mining country' [*país minera*]⁷⁶ only reinforcing this threat for the upcoming years. The topic has been frequently discussed as (now) one of the most salient threats for the ethno-territorial organisations in order to implement the collective territories granted under the *ley 70*.

6.3.2 The mining-boom

The institutional arrangements

While artisanal mining has a long history in the Pacific region, since the government-induced mining boom, different challenges have presented themselves at a local level. It has been explained that there are various categories of mining, for an important degree influenced by governmental policies that since 1991 have changed the 'mining-landscape'. In the 1991 constitution the Colombian State explicitly stated that the state is the owner of the sub-soil and all non-renewable natural resource "...without prejudice to the rights acquired and perfected under existing laws"⁷⁷ (Duarte, 2012: 7). Whereas the state had already differentiated mining according to their scale and technical level in the 1980s, the 1990s-2000s witnessed a further neo-liberalisation of the mining model by: 1) further facilitating private property of mining-sites; 2) the reform of (previously) state-owned mining institutions to institutions of a mixed public-private nature; 3) the facilitating private mining exploitation; 4) a flexible environmental control over exploitations; and 5) the authorisation of transnational mining companies to exploit new national territories (Duarte, 2012). A new mining code –adopted in 2001- '*la ley 685 del 2001*'- fundamentally restructured the institutions that governed natural resource exploitation. These factors facilitated a way of governance that was based on an enclave model of national resource exploitation (Duarte, 2012: 8). It is argued that these changes are facilitated under influence of diverse private companies and international institutions (as the CIDA, and World Bank) resulting in revised legislation, a reduction of environmental protection and taxes to facilitate international investment in the sector. The new mining code of 2001 (and subsequent reforms in *Ley 1382* and *Decreto 2820*) would have important consequences at a local level. First it stigmatised small-scale mining by differentiating between small, medium and grand-scale mining, obliging the first two to comply with the same conditions as the big-scale mining would need. Second, any form of mining that is not officially legalised becomes illegal. Here one can observe how the small scale miners and artisanal mining became illegalised. '*The incorporation of this normativity, being subjected to the economic conditions of our country, and*

⁷³ Originally part of President Uribe's "Plan Nacional de Desarrollo" of, but officially concessioned to 'el Consorcio Vías de las Américas SAS' in 2010.

⁷⁴ Part of the 'Agenda Pacifico XXI'

⁷⁵ Whereas approved in 1993, became an official priority in 'el Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (2002-2006)'

⁷⁶ Articulated in the 'Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Minero Visión 2019'

⁷⁷ Original tekst: "...sin perjuicio de los derechos adquiridos y perfeccionados con arreglo a las Leyes preexistentes"

*the deepening of social and armed conflict, has been producing the excessive growth of the illegality in mining exploitation*⁷⁸ (Duarte, 2012:14). At the same time, the new mining code makes all mining-resources within the collective property of minority groups state-owned, as these natural resources are excluded from the collective land titles. While there exists an option for ‘*consulta previa*’ [previous consultation of the ethnic communities], frequently companies do not comply with these requirements or engage in a negotiation based on unequal relationships of power. Furthermore, as the international orientation of the Colombian government favours international exploitation, obtaining mining titles as small-scale/ artisanal miner is difficult. “*The ethnic rights have been one of the most important points of contradiction and discussion in the domain of contemporary mining governability*”⁷⁹ (Duarte, 2012: 15). SINTRAMINERCOL –the union of workers within the state mining company MINERCOL- reports that the mining-boom is part of a larger network of ‘para-politicians’ that have personally influenced the institutional changes of the 1990s, and further secured its implementation by using paramilitaries to repress dissents and clear the specific ‘sites’ for exploitation –frequently by using a security-centred explanation of the ‘war against narco-trafficking’. The para-politicians operate together with prominent multinationals to further develop and institutionalise their operations (Field Notes, p. 105; Sintraminercol, 2005).

While the ‘mining-boom’ has resulted in an ever-growing amount of titles and solicitudes in the Chocó, and as such threaten the territorial autonomy of the Afro-Colombian community -being the legal owners of the soil but not the sub-soil. The illegalisation of small-scale mining and the presence of the armed actors in the region further complicate the picture. A previously ‘traditional’ economic activity of the Afro-Colombian population evolved from an informal economic activity into an illegal activity, increasingly associated with the armed actors (by the government). The different armed actors try to use the gold as source of income, or as a way to white wash money. Furthermore, paramilitary involvement with the multi-nationals complicates the picture.

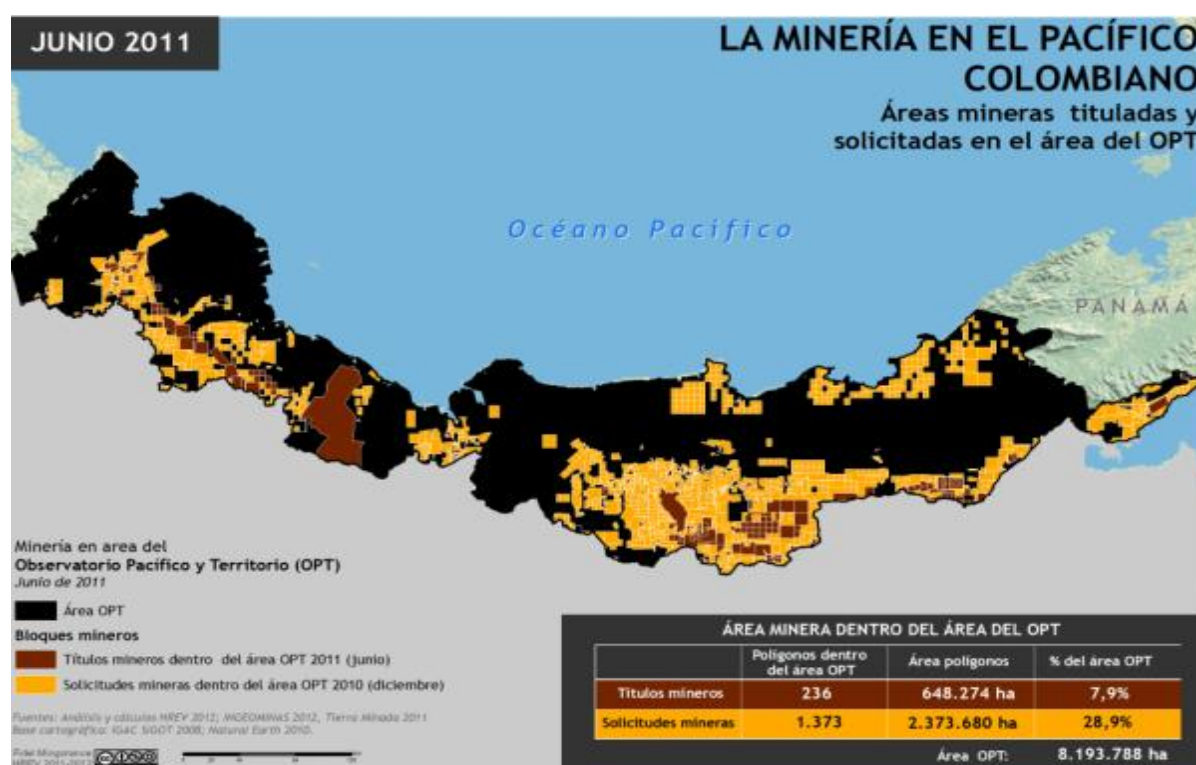


IMAGE 14: MINING TITLES (JUNE 2011) AND SOLICITUDES (DECEMBER 2010) IN THE COLOMBIAN PACIFIC (SOURCE: OBSERVATORIO PACÍFICO Y TERRITORIO, 2011)

⁷⁸ Original text: “La incorporación de esta normatividad, sumando a las condiciones económicas de nuestro país y la profundización de conflictos sociales y armados, ha venido produciendo el crecimiento desmesurado de la ilegalidad en la explotación minera”

⁷⁹ Original text: “Los derechos étnicos han sido uno de los puntos mas importantes de contradicción y discusión en el ámbito de la gobernabilidad minera contemporánea”

The local reality of the mining-boom

When discussing the validity of the *ley 70* in a context of violence, a military quest for territorial control, and territorial dispossession, it became clear that ‘the mining-boom’ was a topic of interest for all. Everybody had an opinion about the pro’s and con’s of large scale mining, even though there were conflicting opinions within the same organisation. Many local organisations seemed to be working on alternative strategies to cope with the territorial threat that affected the life worlds of the local communities, the small-scale miners, the autonomy of the ethno-territorial organisations. It also contradicted the ‘anti-capitalist’ vision of the Diócesis. While the mining-boom could be seen as just another example of the implementation of a neoliberal doctrine in the Pacific territory, its’ pace of development, the institutional support by the government, and various side effects placed it high on many different agendas. There was a perceived urgency to find ways to cope with this situation. At the same time, the proliferation of the mining boom was connected to displacement, violence and the presence of armed actors.

Traditional (small-scale) mining has been an essential element of the livelihoods of many Afro-Colombians. Historically, it had been part of the reason to transport the enslaved Africans to Colombia. However, in the course of time mining evolved into one of the multiple activities rotated with agricultural activities that the Afro-Colombians used in order to sustain their livelihoods. With the proliferation of grand-scale mining, the increase in illegal mining by ‘external actors’ and the illegalisation of its traditional form of mining, the local reality in the communities was affected. The small-miners associated themselves in the small-miners association FEDEMICHOCO. The IIAP started to engage itself in the promotion of ‘Green Gold’ [Oro Verde]. The different ethno-territorial organisations started to look for ways to cope with the mining concessions in their territory and the social side-effects generated by the mining boom (Field Notes).

In addition to the violation of human rights by the different armed actors engaged in illegal mining or the protection of multi-national interests, different social impacts were articulated by various community leaders and priests. As they explained that the presence of these companies and the circulation of money within the communities led to a ‘cultural change’ at a local level. Increasingly the ‘morality’ of the community is affected by the availability of ‘fast money’ by the engagement in either illegal mining or by working for the multi-nationals. Furthermore, the circulation of money and the presence of arms in the region is said to have led to the development of a market for prostitution (Field Notes). Camilo Mosquera explained to me: “...the people there have worked the artisanal mining with material elements not mechanisms [...] we can say that [it had been] almost two and a half decade to begin to put mechanisation in the mining. First, very light pumps, still the peasant could pay a million, a million, five hundred thousand pesos in order to buy a pump to easily break the mud. But then they got other types of mechanisms, as [draguetas] that were already more expensive, not everyone had the facility. So, they did more business with entrepreneurs, traders to acquire it [...] and the bulldozers make far bigger damage as they destroy the whole forest and kill the jungle entirely in order to penetrate the land and arrive where the minerals are”⁸⁰ (Interview with Camilo Mosquera – IIAP – office of the ‘black communities’: 07 December 2012). Consequently, the rivers are contaminated and there is no (environmental) authority that controls this. Camilo expressed that the situation is worsening as Bogotá continues to give licences without consulting or studying. In addition, different dangers have entered the Pacific territory by the arrival of (illegal) miners. “The worst is at night, one cannot navigate as the people have extended some cables that are a danger for the boater. To this we must add a double danger to the mining activity. Today in the Pacific [...], these are the drug-traffickers, in the sense that it has been pursued by both the government with its US politics and everything against the drug-traffickers. So, they are legalising the money of the drugs-trafficking with the mining and wood. As such, the big miners, those with licences,

⁸⁰ Original quote: “...la gente ahí ha trabajado la minería artesanal con elementos materiales no maquinaria ... podemos hablar de que hace casi ya dos décadas y media para que comenzaran a meterle maquinaria a la minería. Primero motobombas muy livianas que todavía el campesino podía pagar un millón, un millón, quinientos mil pesos para comprar motobomba para facilitar el batido del barro, pero posteriormente ya le metieron otro tipo de mecanismos, como unas draguetas que ya eran más caras, no todo el mundo tenía la facilidad, entonces hacían más los negocios con los empresarios, los comerciantes para adquirir eso [...] y las retro hacen un daño mucho mayor porque destruyen todo el bosque y acaban con la selva en su totalidad al penetrar la tierra y profundizar y llegar a donde están los minerales”

*they empower themselves and associate with those that extract the permissions at the national level, they associate with them. They put [read: pay] the 'bot' billet of the drugs, they legalise it with the mining and that what they are doing is run over the native farmer. Then, the farmer cannot work in the mine because it is taken over by them. Where the gold appears the people cannot say that they aren't allowed to work because that will result in an assassination of him, his kids, his wife"*⁸¹ (Interview with Camilo Mosquera – IIAP– office of the 'black communities': 07 December 2012).

The naturally rich areas in the Pacific saw, with the escalation of violence and the implementation of national development plans a range of different actors interested in their (collective) territories. While various actors with diverging goals are involved, the state has played a crucial role in the proliferation of violence by its engagement in a form of para-politics hereby linking its 'neoliberal development' with a wider (democratic) security doctrine that is meant to secure access to the strategic sites for investment. At a community level, this started to erode the ability of the ethno-territorial organisations to continue their organisational development and processes of formation. The absence of state-influence (and basic development) and the daily presence of the armed actors is said to change the mentality of the local people. Increasingly, they are said to move away from the main pillars of the ethno-territorial discourse in favour of the provision of services by the armed actors and the new possibilities to earn money that started to present themselves in the country side. The next chapter will further discuss the effects of the changed situation on the ability of the ethno-territorial organisations to continue their mission.

6.4 Basic needs in the new era

With the escalation of violence and the 'humanitarian crisis' provoked by the direct and indirect consequences of the presence of the armed actors in the region, the already marginal position of the *Chocoanean* communities became only further affected. Whereas the international community –in collaboration with the ethno-territorial organisations have been engaged in the provision of basic services – such as education, health and food security there has been no significant improvement in the quality life of the rural communities in the department. This is the consequence of the continued state-absence, the unstable situation and the inability of the ethno-territorial organisations to engage in the ethno-development of their communities (see next chapter). Although the early 1990s had promised a further (ethno) development of the region, this process stagnated by the department's internal problems. Whilst national development plans have identified the natural resource exploitation in the Pacific region as a way for the local communities to get out of poverty, the direct (financial) benefits of its exploitation are not reaching the communities. Basic services are still lacking and the Afro-Colombian communities are still in an economically, culturally and politically marginalised position.

On the other hand, the increased access to methods of communication opens up an alternative world where the discrepancy between local living conditions and the rest of the world become visible. Mobile telephones are widely available, and the youth –especially- are frequent users of social media. Even in the middle of the jungle, one can use the telephone network –however the chance is big one needs to climb in a tree to pick up a signal. Quibdó has been 'modernising' enormously in the last two decades. There is now a sharp contrast with the villages in the country side (Field Notes). Whilst for me Quibdó still can be seen as one big slum, with hardly any sanitary sewers, running water and no garbage collecting system, compared to the rural communities, Quibdó is 'modern' and provides its inhabitants services that are not available in the rural communities. The visibility of these differences is said to have importantly influenced

⁸¹ Original quote: "Lo más grave de noche es que no se puede navegar porque la gente tiene un poco de cables extendidos que son un peligro para el navegante. A eso hay que abonarle doble peligro que la actividad de la minería genera hoy en el Pacífico [...], son los narcotraficantes, en el sentido de que lo ha perseguido tanto el gobierno con su política de Estados Unidos y todo contra el narcotráfico, entonces el dinero del narcotráfico lo están legalizando con la minería y la madera, entonces los grandes mineros, así sean con licencias de otro, ellos se empoderan y se asocian con los que sacan los permisos a nivel nacional y se asocian con ellos. Meten el billete caliente del narcotráfico, lo legalizan con minería y lo que hace es atropellar al campesino nativo. Entonces, ya el campesino no puede trabajar en la mina porque está copado por ellos. Donde aparece el oro la gente no puede decir que no les está permitido trabajar, porque entonces eso terminaría con su asesinato, o el de sus hijos, o el de su mujer"

the imagery of the people as an alternative is possible and there seem to be more ways than the ethno-territorial rights that can lead to a situation with better living conditions.



IMAGE 15: WOMEN WASHING THEIR DISHES AND ROPES IN THE ATRATO-RIVER (PHOTO: AUTHOR)



IMAGE 16: RIVERSIDE NAPI, MEDIO ATRATO (PHOTO: AUTHOR)

6.5 Theoretically-informed conclusion

In the course of the 1990s and 2000s the Colombian State further developed its 'hegemonic conception of the world' at ideational and material levels. By the further consolidation of the state's neoliberal orientation in national development plans and various institutional and legal reforms, the state paved the way for further implementation of (neoliberal) interests in the country. While the Chocó had already been an interesting region since the 1980s, with identification of 'mining' as an 'engine for growth', the interest in the department's subsoil would only be growing further. Furthermore, different institutional arrangements paved the way for the implementation of these 'projects'. The state's counter-insurgency rhetoric would further help the state to semi-legitimately resort to the use of force as "*...the ultimate guarantee for consent*" (Thomas, 2009a: 165) in order to facilitate the implementation of mega-projects in titled territories. In addition, an international discourse of 'democratic security' was used to legitimise the state's actions. In the specific case of Colombia, where the relationship between violence, elite interests, control of natural resources and 'para-politics' already has a long history, the deployment of force in order to pursue political goals is not uncommon. While the *ley 70* granted the rural Afro-Colombian communities the right on collective territories, the presence of armed actors in the region and the new forms of legislation provided a way to undermine the collectively owned territories by the way it affected daily life in the territories. The communities were confronted with the direct and indirect effects of the presence of armed actors and neoliberal interests that resulted in: 1) waves of displacement, intimidation and murder; 2) an altering of the landscape that did not correspond with the way in which the ethno-territorial organisations had envisaged their territories to be developed; and 3) further undermined the ethno-territorial organisations' political discourse and authority as a new governance body. The criminalisation of small-scale mining and the distinction between a right on soil versus a right on the subsoil provided the state with a 'legitimate' legal position to continue to promote the 'mining-boom'. The exact formulation of the *ley 70* had made the relative autonomy of the ethno-territorial organisations conditional upon their specifically formulated social and ecological function, while restricting their scope of jurisdiction as their authority always proved to be conditional upon the obligations and duties in which these organisations needed to comply with existing codes, regulations and higher authorities (see chapter 7).

As a consequence, the inclusion of the (rural) Afro Colombian communities became undermined as the *ley 70* did not provide the communities with the (institutional) power to implement their own form of ethno-development by its subsidiary position in comparison to national development plans and other forms of legislation that were still consolidating the neoliberal interests of the Colombian State. At the same time, the escalation of violence and lack of institutional power at a local level started to undermine the effectiveness of the ethno-territorial discourse that had been the basis of their ‘intellectual project’ (see next chapter). This chapter aimed to illustrate how the context of structural violence within the ‘new conjuncture’ only further consolidated the state’s hegemonic conception of the world and left the counter-hegemonic project –according to the principle of passive resolution and the use of military force to suppress dissent- operating within the (a further consolidated) social formation that did not alter the marginalised position of the communities. The *ley 70*’s promise to bring the (rural) Afro-Colombians more visibility, political power and development appeared to be conditional under the premises set by the hegemonic state-project. The *ley 70* as a legal mechanism proved to be no guarantee for change. Within this new context, the legitimate owners of the territories needed to find new ways to continue their counter-hegemonic project within this new conjuncture, in order to continue the ‘Intellectual Mission’ that had been initiated in the 1980s. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 7: The third conjuncture ‘Territorial autonomy undermined: the intellectual project in an impasse?’ (1997 – now)

“Cuando entramos la solicitud, estábamos pensando que la obtención del título era la solución de todos los problemas, que teníamos nosotros en la área de influencia de COCOMOPOCA. Pero nos teníamos que tocar con la realidad. Allí fue donde nacieron todos los problemas [...]”

“When we entered the solicitude, we were thinking that the obtainment of the title was the solution to all the problems that we had in the area of influence of COCOMOPOCA. But we had to touch us with the reality. That was where all problems were born [...]”

(Interview with Santiago Díaz– Legal Representative COCOMOPOCA: 12 December 2012)

7.1 Introduction

With the institutionalisation of the Claretian-inspired ‘intellectual project’, the ethno-territorial organisations COCOMACIA and COCOMOPOCA became the prime administrative, regulative and governance units protecting the cultural identity and the rights of the ‘Black Communities’. In order to promote a wider economic and social development of the ‘Black Communities’, and to obtain conditions of equality within the Colombian society. These organisations had relative autonomy, with regard to territorial (agricultural) practices in accordance with their legally specified social and ecological function. Their relative autonomy would appear to be conditional on the established patterning of social relations in society. In Chapter Five, the implementation of the *ley 70* had been characterised as a form of *passive revolution*, compatible with a wider ‘global neoliberal framework’. Furthermore, Chapter Six had sketched the evolution of the neoliberal state project and the ambiguous role of the state within Colombia’s internal conflict. This chapter will build upon the previous two chapters in order to answer the question: *How has the context of structural violence influenced the scope, content and spatial-temporal development of the counter-hegemonic project?* (sub-questions 2a and 2b). It covers a time frame that starts with the recognition of the first collective land titles in the *Medio Atrato* region in 1997 until the present day.

This chapter first will discuss how the scope and content of the ‘counter-hegemonic project’ have been incorporated within the hegemonic state project by its institutionalisation. Consequently, the revolutionary potential of the counter-hegemonic project reached an impasse because of a two-sided legitimisation and exclusion of claims (‘incorporative hegemony’). This section also discusses the changed role of the Catholic Missionaries in a context of institutionalisation. Secondly, this chapter discusses how the context of structural violence has influenced the spatial-temporal development of the ethno-territorial organisations’ mission to ‘defend life and territory’, in order to illustrate how the ethno-territorial project has been continued in this ‘new conjuncture’. This chapter will end with a theoretically informed conclusion.

7.2 The intellectual project in an impasse

The *AT-55*, *Ley 70* and *Decreto 1745* had integrated some of the main pillars of the ‘counter-hegemonic conception of the world’ within the institutional structure of the Colombian society. Following Chapter

Five, some of the main pillars of the ‘ethno-territoriality’ that had been promoted by the Claretian Missionaries had been adopted within these legal documents. The Afro-Colombians had been granted citizenship rights based on their ethnicity, whilst their connection to their lands as a space for ‘life and culture’ had been incorporated in the specific social and ecological function of the *ley 70*. The *consejos comunitarios* had become the prime administrative, regulative and governance unit to administer the collective land titles, and therefore needed to follow the institutional and organisational requirements that the legal documents had prescribed. Following Gramsci, a counter-hegemonic project can succeed by creating a critical proletarian culture that transforms a class-in-itself into a class-for-itself. To an important degree, this transformation is based on the activities of the ‘*organic intellectuals*’ that are able to unite the fragmented worldviews of the masses into a coherent, elaborated, directed, systematic and politically-organised narrative that finds resonance within the classes these ‘*organic intellectuals*’ are supposed to represent. And ultimately, the counter-hegemonic movement is able to challenge the dominant status-quo. The Claretian missionaries had adopted the role of ‘*organic intellectual*’ and had promoted an ‘alternative conception of the world’. With the institutionalisation of these pillars, the class-for-itself had been incorporated into the dominant governance structure and had been granted the right to engage in a form of identity politics and ethno-development based on their status as Colombian citizens. Therefore, the counter-revolutionary potential of the ‘intellectual project’ had been accommodated within the dominant social structure.

However, their Afro-Colombians’ citizenship status had been based on an ‘*ethnicisation of blackness*’ in which their status as a political subject and subject of rights was based on an ethnic distinctiveness (Restrepo, 2008). The obtainment of (identity-based) citizenship rights (with the implied obligations, duties and rights) can be understood as an ‘incorporative hegemony’: a mode of governance in which “...*autonomy and choice were embodied in technologies that enable people to be governed and to govern themselves in terms of their own identity*” (Rose (1994: 385) paraphrased in Purvis & Hunt, 1999: 469). Here an identity becomes overly politicised and the stability of the identity of a ‘citizen’ has been diminished as “...*citizenship rights provide a framework – a framework that is stable, but never fixed- that establishes grounds for both the legitimization of some claims and, conversely, the exclusion of others*” (Purvis & Hunt, 1999: 474). This sub-chapter argues that the incorporation of an ethnic citizenship status and the corresponding territorial rights were based on a “*particular form of social power that transverse the (analytical) divide between political and civil society*” (Ballvé, 2012: 606). The production of ethnic and territorial distinctions allowed the Colombian State to incorporate the dissident voices within its *philosophy of praxis* and granted the (rural) Afro-Colombians a form of ‘territorial power’. However, this power would appear to be conditional upon the further development of the State’s hegemonic project and hereby contained their autonomy as a governance unit. Additionally, this power had been limited to a particular construction of the ethnic and territorial pillars of the law. On the one hand, their incorporation within the ‘hegemonic state structure’ had granted the ethno-territorial organisations the ability to put forward some legitimate claims –based on the rights they obtained. On the other hand, their obligations and duties as an ethno-territorial organisation conditioned their autonomy. Other claims’ could be disregarded, as ultimately the final authority would continue to be in the hands of the Colombian State.

This sub-chapter illustrates how the continuation of the ‘ethno-territorial discourse’ as the main pillar of the Claretian-initiated ‘intellectual project’ –the scope and content of the (institutionalised) counter-hegemonic project- became part of the *philosophy of praxis* of the state (and thereby the ethno-territorial organisations). Firstly, this section discusses the duties and obligations the ethno-territorial organisations faced as a new governance unit in order to become the governance unit that was able to exercise its governance over the obtained territories. Secondly, this section reflects on the implications of this ‘incorporative hegemony’ on the scope and content of the rights that were granted. Thirdly, this section will outline the changed role of the Diócesis after the institutionalisation of these rights, which were further influenced by a change in priorities by the escalation of violence and further extension of the hegemonic state project. Here the Diócesis started to adopt new pastoral options that reflected the new

urgencies in the region. The ethno-territorial organisations were made responsible for the continuation of their ‘political mission’: to defend life and territory.

7.2.1 An Incorporative Hegemony

With the adoption of the *ley 70* in 1993, the popular organisations ACIA and MOPOCA had been evolved into ‘ethno-territorial organisations’ (COCOMACIA and COCOMOPOCA) that were the designated organisational units to administer and govern the (obtained) collective land titles. While COCOMACIA received its first collective land titles in December 1997, COCOMOPOCA needed to start a long process of political negotiation before it would receive its collective territories in 2011.

While COCOMOPOCA started its’ process of application for collective land titles in 1999 –due to the fact that they were only formally established in 1994 and still needed to develop themselves organisationally before it was able to request the collective territories. COCOMACIA started the process of application from 1996 and onwards. Within a year, in December 1997, COCOMACIA legally obtained 695.245 hectares in the *Medio Atrato* Region as part of a collective territory of the different communities under jurisdiction of the *Junta Mayor*. According to the *ley 70* and *Decreto 1745*, the ethno-territorial organisation became the responsible administrative and governance unit to request, administer and develop the collective land titles. Whilst in the mid-1990s the organisation was still developing itself organisationally to become the governance unit they were designed to be, this period had been received as an important victory as the *ley 70* had enabled the rural Afro-Colombians to obtain the legal ownership over the territories that had been threatened by the state’s neoliberal interests. COCOMACIA needed to meet the various requirements posed by the two legal documents to become the formal owner of the territories. At the same time, this ethno-territorial organisation slowly started to think about how they were going to use these territories, how were they envisaging the ‘appropriate’ (ethno-) development of their communities, and how would they manage their relationships with the development plans with the indigenous communities living in the same region. One of COCOMACIA’s consultants in the area, ‘Territory and Autonomy’, explained how in these years COCOMACIA’s primary objective had been to strengthen the capacity of the organisation to defend the territory that they had obtained. Here, the development of internal regulations, the strengthening of their ethnic-territorial authority (within its newly established governance structure of a higher board, local community councils and the community) were priorities, in order to increase the consciousness of the different ‘layers’ of the organisation about the processes, procedures and rights that the organisation and the communities had been granted. Furthermore, procedures for the containment of inter-ethnic conflict needed to be developed and the territories that had been granted needed to be mapped in great detail to define the boundaries of the land titles. In this initial period, the main efforts had focused on the empowerment of the communities in the ‘*exercise of the enforcement of governance*’ over their territories. As such, the first challenge that had presented itself after obtaining the collective land titles had been to put into practice what had been granted by the further organisational development of COCOMACIA and a further instruction of the communities in the rights they had obtained (Interview with Natalia Asprilla - COCOMACIA ‘territoria y autonomía’: 5 December 2012). These processes took their time, as the amounts of (economic) resources were limited, and leaders needed to be educated in different techniques, such as technical and social cartography. Furthermore, the mapping procedure needed to be based on an interaction with the community to be able to correspond with reality. It took COCOMACIA 10 years to finish this process. Likewise, the development of ethno-development plans were formulated with the interaction of the community in order to identify ‘their’ appropriate development. The lack of transport facilities, lack of resources and the distances between all the communities prolonged the time it would take COCOMACIA to install the ‘basic tools’ as a governance body. With the escalation of violence in the Atrato-region, this process of organisational development stagnated as other priorities started to consume a lot of the organisation’s capacity (see section 7.3).

COCOMOPOCA -on the other hand- entered a long process of negotiation as the organisation only had been legally established in 1994. It first needed to develop itself organisationally before it could request the collective land titles. Furthermore, the conditions had changed when COCOMOPOCA entered its request in 1999. COCOMOPOCA needed to operate in the changed context of structural violence in which the armed conflict had already entered their area of jurisdiction and the state already had been further developing its interest in the region's ecological and geographical potential. The process of titling lasted a long time, only in 2011 would 73.000 hectares be granted -whilst 172.000 hectares had been requested- after a long process of creating political and environmental advocacy for their cause. At the same time, COCOMOPOCA had used the further development of the ethno-territorial development plans as a strategy to provide an alternative to the national development plans formulated by the state. It had been explained to me that the main difference in the length of the process was caused by the timing of the request *"...that they had [read: COCOMACLA] it a lot easier and more willingness to advance in the process of titling [...] for us we played in a phase in which the theme of globalisation and the theme of the markets, the theme of the investments were more bare. So, we fought against two, firstly against two obstacles, the first was the state for the political theme and the theme, the whole theme of the exploitation of mineral and forestal resources [...] and secondly, the interests that had been centred around the portion in the case of us [read: identified interest in the Alto Atrato Region] [...] they were [read: COCOMACLA] in a moment in history where they had many more favourable conditions for the titling, for us we played in a political and economic context where the conditions had already changed"*⁸² (Interview with Carlos Murillo–COCOMOPOCA: 23 January 2013). For COCOMOPOCA, the challenge became centred around the search for governmental willingness to grant them the collective land titles that were requested but became increasingly difficult to get granted. The international community would become the key to advance COCOMOPOCA request as it could put pressure on the national government.

In general, the main pillars of the ethno-territorial organisations continued to reflect the ethno-territorial discourse that had been initiated in the 1980s and had found its voice in its institutionalised form (the *ley 70*). This discourse was based on the same ethnic connection to a territory, an emphasis on collective use and environmental preservation. The *ley 70* had restricted the institutional scope by which the ethno-territorial organisations were able to claim their collective lands, as they needed to comply with the organisational requirements, the assigned ecological and social function and –as would become apparent- a relatively restricted scope of authority of the new governance unit. Based on their recently acquired status as new citizens with a right on collective territory, the Colombian State had incorporated a new governance mechanism within the government apparatus. Namely, the previously 'invisible' Afro-Colombians had evolved into a group of 'ethnic citizens'. The ethno-territorial organisations became part of the wider structure of governance within political society, however being subversive under the conditions posed at a national level. Hereby crossing the analytical divide between civil and political society. The Afro-Colombians only had a limited jurisdiction to implement activities according to their ethno-territorial function. However, in order to exercise their political power they needed to comply and accept the main premises upon which the law had been built. Their obligations and duties were formulated, but the scope of jurisdiction of the ethno-territorial organisation was not always clear-cut. The escalation of violence and the continued development of the state's neoliberal orientation influenced the continuation of this ethno-territorial worldview and its institutional realisation. The differences between the 'timing' of the application process of the two different ethno-territorial organisations would influence their relations with the state-apparatus and the way in which these organisations would position themselves within 'the hegemonic state project' in a changed context (see chapter 7.3).

⁸² Original quote: *"...digamos que había muchísima más facilidad y muchísima más voluntad de avanzar en procesos de titulación. [...] A nosotros nos tocó en un etapa donde del tema de la globalización y el tema de los mercados, el tema de las inversiones, pues eran mucho más latentes. Entonces, nosotros luchamos contra dos ... en primer lugar contra dos obstáculos, el primero era el estado por el tema de política en el tema, sobre todo el tema de explotación de recursos, minerales o forestales. [...] Y segundo, los intereses que ya estaban centrados en parte en el caso de nosotros. [...] Ellos estaban, estuvieron en un momento en la historia donde había muchísimas más condiciones favorables para la titulación, a nosotros nos tocó en un contexto político y económico donde esas condiciones ya habían cambiando."*

7.2.2 The Scope and Content of an Institutionalised Ethno-Territoriality

With the incorporation of the ethnic and territorial premises of the emancipation process into the institutional structure of society, the Colombian government took back its control over the revolutionary forces in the Pacific region. By incorporating these elements with the national structure, and following wider international discourses surrounding minority rights, sustainable development, social capital, modernisation based on a respect for social, ethnic, cultural and natural diversity, and the political participation of local actors. The Colombian State was able to present itself towards the wider world as being a protagonist in the socio-political pillars of the neoliberal project. Whilst at the same time, by incorporating the (decentralised) *consejos comunitarios* within the (national) governance structure, it was able to maintain control over how the Pacific territory would be organised in the near future. As the *ley 70* and *Decreto 1745* had formulated the exact scope and content by which the *consejos comunitarios* could claim, obtain and develop their territory. But ultimately, the state would possess the final decisions about which territories would be granted to the ethno-territorial organisations and under what conditions. Following Purvis & Hunt (1999), this kind of incorporation, within the hegemonic structure by the legitimisation of certain claims but the consequent exclusion of others, can be characterised as an ‘incorporative hegemony’: “...as it helps to focus attention on the constructive project that is at the core of hegemony” (Purvis & Hunt, 1999: 473). As such, the incorporation of this ‘ethno-territoriality’ within the state’s *philosophy of praxis* would be instrumental for the constitution, organisation and exercise of state power in these specific territories. The argument that the specific construction of the ethnic and territorial pillars formed the core of the status of the Afro-Colombian as citizens and subject of rights enabled to Colombian State to contain the revolutionary potential of the counter-hegemonic forces that had been challenging their conception of the world. At the same time, the incorporation of these forces within the political structure of society did not grant the organisations more control over *politics*. As the scope and content of the obtained rights were compatible with the *ideational* and *material* pillars of the Colombian State Project, whilst the spatio-temporal development of its institutionalised version would become dependent on other forms of legislation that (further) conditioned the authority of these organisations within the *philosophy of praxis* of the state.

Following David Harvey (2005), the incorporation of these ethnic and territorial rights reflects the double dialectic of the territorial and capitalist logic of power. The internal and external relationships of the capitalist state produce the localised materiality (Hart’s ‘nodal point of interconnections’) in which the neoliberal paradigm provides a framework of desirable governance and economic development. However, at a territorial level, the state has the ultimate power to define how power is consolidated at a local level. As such, “...state development and spatialization strategies can therefore be seen as an attempt to secure the expansion of capital through the conditions of passive revolution. The contradictions of capitalism are therefore accommodated through changing space relations and geographical structures linked to the redefinition of territory and the state. Passive revolution is one expression of the shaping and reshaping of class struggle through the structured coherence (or ‘spatial fix’) of state power within conditions of uneven and combined geographical development” (Harvey (2001: 324-325) in Morton, 2013: 59). Here, the incorporation of the ethno-territorial organisations within the state’s structure had redefined the relationships between political and civil society in the Pacific region. By the incorporation of a previous ‘invisible’ ethnic group within the state-structure and granting them a form of (territorial) autonomy, the Colombian State conformed itself towards the hegemonic ‘global neoliberal framework’. However, the territorial logic of power implies that the state remains the actor that possesses the authority to redefine the spatial relations within its own frontiers. This contrasts with the more fluctuating ‘capitalist logic of power’, which is based on processes of global capital accumulation and uneven development. It can be argued that the *ley 70* had been instrumental for the constitution, organisation and exercise of state power in these specific territories. It incorporated the marginalised region and its (rural) population into the national political structure. However, the state had been able to continuously develop the *ideational* and *material* basis upon which this territory would become deployed. Hereby, it guaranteed that the future

development of the region could still be based on the pillars of the state's hegemonic project as the authority of the ethno-territorial organisations was conditional under the *philosophy of praxis* of the state.

The content of the ethno-territorial law did reflect the main pillars of the 'intellectual project', thus corresponding with the '(critical) common sense' understanding of the various missionaries and community leaders that had been part of the 'intellectual project'. It can be questioned how this institutionalised ethno-territorial understanding reflects the 'common sense' understanding of the Atrato-communities by the already described 'accelerated pace' of its development and its inherent artificialities (see chapter 5.4). Furthermore, 'the new conjuncture' would confront the Atrato communities with a range of challenges that directly influenced their daily lives in the country side. The escalation of violence, the daily presence of the armed actors, the humanitarian crisis, the implementation of mega-projects and an absence of basic services resulted in an accelerated pace of rural-urban migration all heightened level of insecurity in the country side. As section 7.3 will show, various community leaders would identify these factors as important reasons for the undermining of their authority at a local level. Nevertheless, when considering the fact that this 'artificial discourse' had been the basis of the scope and content of rights obtained by the Afro Colombian citizens. It can be argued that the '*philosophical*' content of the ethnic rights in Colombia might not reflect the feelings and ideologies of the masses and, as such, do not reflect the needs perceived by the (rural) Afro-Colombian population. Various informants have expressed this 'lack of correspondence' between the ethno-territorial discourse and the local reality. Unfortunately, this question could not be answered due to the security restrictions this research faced.

Overall the main pillars of the Claretian-initiated 'counter-hegemonic project' became incorporated into the 'hegemonic state project' by the containment of its revolutionary potential and the production of 'the black territories' according to the *ideational* and *material* basis of the State's hegemony. The '*passive revolution*' had produced a new set of relationships between 'the new members' of civil society and wider political society. The contradicting ways in which these legal arrangements had incorporated the 'Afro-Colombian counter-hegemonic project' within the state's philosophy of praxis (see chapter 7.3) led to reproducing and extending the 'relationships of exploitation'. However, what has been the role of the Missionaries after the ethno-territorial had been institutionalised and how has their approach changed with the escalation of violence and further extension of the neoliberal *philosophy* of the state will first be discussed.

7.2.3 The Intellectual Function of the Diócesis of Quibdó

Whilst the Diócesis of Quibdó maintained its socio-political orientation and 'Evangelic Mission' in the Atrato-Region. The ethno-territorial organisations were responsible for the implementation of the collective land titles (and the corresponding ethno-development). The Church started to grant these organisations more autonomy, as the whole idea behind the process of community organisation had been grounded in a conception that ultimately the communities themselves needed to continue what the Missionaries had been initiating. The role of the Diócesis of Quibdó continues to be important in the Atrato-Region as their Evangelic Compromise still obliges them to fight the injustices in society and promote an 'alternative conception of the world'. However, with the escalation of violence and the continued implementation of the neoliberal project in the region, the Diócesis identified new urgencies and changed its role.

When armed conflict entered the region, the Diócesis was confronted with a changed context of marginalisation and 'oppression'. New 'injustices' entered the Diócesis' territory (comprised by the *Medio* and *Alto Atrato* region). When the Diócesis became confronted with the direct effects of the escalation of violence – e.g. assassinations, murders, displacement etc.- and new forms of 'capitalist oppression' continued to expand –e.g. the invasion of the agro-industry, monocultures of African palm oil and different mega-projects- the Diócesis of Quibdó decided to assume "...a *prophetic attitude of permanent denouncements of the violations of Human Rights and the violations of the International Humanitarian Rights, at the same*

*time made alliances with international organisms in order to help the victims of the conflicts*⁸³ (Castaño Rubio, 2012: 449). The Diócesis situated itself at the side of the victims in order to ‘...judge the history of its times and advocate for social justice and responsibility’. Here the Diócesis developed an actualised political vision based upon the changed reality within their territory. The geographical, political and military interests in the Chocó Department were seen as the main cause of the current challenges. The Diócesis decided to explicitly condemn any form of violence and the related violations of Human Rights, Humanitarian Rights and the rights of their people (e.g. ethnic rights). Central within their efforts became the denouncement of these violations and the support of resistance within the communities. They followed a strategy that tried to support non-displacement and a policy of return in order to avoid the ‘territory running empty’. Different missionary teams (together with the international community, social and ethno-territorial organisations) provided mental and physical support in the country side; they continued to strengthen the organisation of the community and the different organisational processes (Castaño Rubio, 2012).



IMAGE 17: NEW PRIORITIES WITHIN THE NEW CONJUNCTURE (SOURCE: DIOCESES OF QUIBDÓ, 2012A: 7)

In response to the changed context, the Diócesis adopted four new ‘pastoral options’ since the mid-1990s that reflected the new urgencies that had been identified by the different evangelic teams, and became part of their commitment within their ‘Evangelic compromise’. Padre Gonzalo de La Torre explained that these different options as been the true secret of the Pastoral Project under Bishop Castaño Rubio as “...this means that you must first believe something and opt for something, before the realisation of concrete action. In the case

⁸³ Original Text: “...una actitud profética de denuncia permanente de las violaciones a los Derechos Humanos y las Infracciones al Derecho Internacional Humanitario, al tiempo que hizo alianzas con organismos internacionales para apoyar a las víctimas del conflictos”

of the *Dócesis*, each option is the result of a process of study and commitment”⁸⁴ (Padre Gonzalo de La Torre in Castaño Rubio: 2012: 626). As such, a study of the current reality of the *Chocoanean* people led the *Dócesis* to commit itself to:

- **Option for the liberation of the women:** a positive compromise that advocates for equal rights between men and women.
- **Option for an open church for the ecumenical action and interreligious dialogue:** meant to symbolise a respect for life and diversity
- **Option for the defence and promotion of human rights and the rights of the people:** a signal against situations of injustice.
- **Option for the infancy, youth, the major and vulnerable sectors of society :** reflecting a revitalisation of the process of evangelisation by including other sectors of society (just adopted in 2012)

(*Dócesis* de Quibdó, 2012b; Padre Gonzalo de la Torre Guerrero in Castaño Rubio, 2012: 625-635).

While each religious community under the jurisdiction of the (Claretian) Bishop has relative autonomy to design their own pastoral actions, these needed to be in line with the guiding principles outlined in the pastoral plans. The newly adopted pastoral options reflected the new scope of the ‘Evangelic Compromise’ in response to the changed situation (see annex 1 for a full overview of the 11 ‘opciones pastorales’).

In the mid-1990s most of the missionaries that had been living in the countryside returned to the department’s capital city. Padre Jan Petersen and Hermana Michaela Kappelhoff were asked to strengthen the ‘*Comisión Vida, Justicia y Paz*’ (COMVIJUPA) [Commission of Life, Justice and Peace] and have, since the escalation of violence and the emergence of a ‘humanitarian crisis’, been involved in the provision of mental and physical support to the various rural communities. The COMVIJUPA gave the *Dócesis* a tool to administer human (and humanitarian) rights abuses in the region and organises every Tuesday Afternoon a public meeting in which different grass roots organisations are invited to discuss the current situation, political stand-points, (upcoming) activities and urgencies of the different organisations represented within the COMVIJUPA. Michaela explained that the COMVIJUPA has the ultimate aim to contribute to: “...the formation of the people that support the moments in crisis, the communication and the work of public opinion, in order to tie together in accordance with the pastoral options. We work very close with the base organisations, signifying ethno-territorial, organisations of the displaced, women, thus, base organisations”⁸⁵ (interview with Michaela Kappelhoff – COMVIJUPA: 13 December 2012). The commission follows four main areas of priority: formation, communication, accompaniment and public opinion. The commission aims to: accompany the community; listen to what is happening in the communities; give trainings on how the community is able to manage themselves in the midst of a violent conflict; and publicly denounce all human rights abuses. As Michaela explains, this happens in close collaboration with the ethno-territorial organisations, supporting collective processes of ‘resistance’.

⁸⁴ Original Text: “...esto significa que hay que primero convencido de algo y optar por algo, antes de realizar acciones concretas. En el caso de la *Dócesis*, cada opción pastoral ha sido fruto de un proceso de estudio y de compromiso”

⁸⁵ Original quote: “...la formación de la gente que daba acompañamiento en momentos de crisis, la comunicación y el trabajo de la opinión pública, para ir vinculando según las opciones pastorales, trabajamos muy estrechamente con las organizaciones de base, significando etno-territoriales o organizaciones desplazadas, mujeres, pues organizaciones de base”



IMAGE 18: DOCUMENTATION OF ASSASSINATED (VERIFIED) VICTIMS OF THE ARMED CONFLICT, CHAPEL OF DÍOCESIS OF QUIBDÓ, QUIBDÓ (PHOTOS: AUTHOR)

Padre Gonzalo de La Torre returned to Quibdó in the mid-1990s in order to continue the Claretian Evangelic Mission from the city. The Claretians had decided that as part of the Diócesis of Quibdó they would continue their mission but would operate in a more specialised manner, namely focussing on the formation of leaders. Although they needed to comply with the pastoral plan of the Diócesis. They had some autonomy as a religious community. The Claretians started to increase their emphasis on the formation of new leaders by continuing their educational facilities in the country side and by starting an university in Quibdó. At the same time they promoted the cultural distinctiveness of the different minority groups by the different activities in their cultural centre MAMA-Ú.

In 1998 the Claretians founded el *centro camino*, a biblical centre aiming at teaching the Bible and the

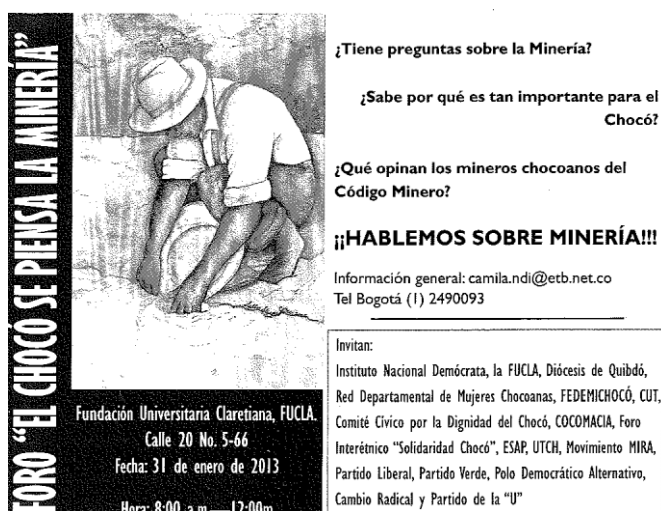


IMAGE 19: LEAFLET 'FORO EL CHOCÓ SE PIENSA LA MINERÍA' IN THE FUCLA (SOURCE: AUTHOR)

contextualised formation advocated by their Evangelic Mission. Later this biblical centre evolved into the FUCLA, a Claretian University that next to various biblical studies would engage in courses related to theology, social work and anthropology. It was explained to me as a way to respond to the necessities of the population, and is ultimately meant to prepare leaders and professionals. Although the FUCLA is an educational institution, the main premises of the Claretian Conception of the World are prominent in its mission statement: *"The Claretian University Foundation – FUCLA, inspired in the Evangelic humanising project, based in the Christian tradition and animated by the Claretian Charisma, works for the integral formation of men and women promoters of*

*the ecological equilibrium, competent in the scientific and humanising practice, ethical in their conduct, respecting the human dignity and gender equality, sensible and responsible towards the social situation and recognisers of difference, to be managers of change in social justice, human development and peace"*⁸⁶ (FUCLA, 2013a). Their different programs⁸⁷ resemble

⁸⁶ Original text: *"La Fundación Universitaria Claretiana -FUCLA, inspirada en el proyecto humanizador del Evangelio, fundamentada en la tradición cristiana y animada por el carisma claretiano, trabaja por la formación integral de hombres y mujeres promotores del equilibrio ecológico, competentes en la práctica científica y humanística, éticos en su conducta, respetuosos de la dignidad humana y la equidad de género, sensibles y responsables ante la situación social y reconocedores de la diferencia, para que sean gestores de cambio con justicia social, desarrollo humano, y paz"*

⁸⁷ The FUCLA offers different programs according to their level (undergraduate, post graduate and diploma level) Pregrados: Antropología con énfasis en la religión y en los derechos étnicos; Licenciatura en Educación Religiosa; Teología; Trabajo Social. Posgrados: Especialización en Estudios Bíblicos; Especialización en Métodos y Técnicas de Investigación en las Ciencias Sociales. Diplomados : Diplomado en Política Pública y Derechos Humanos; Diplomado en Gestión y Administración de Proyectos Sociales; Diplomado en Consulta Previa para Grupos Étnicos; Diplomado en Atención a Población Desplazada; Diplomado en Pedagogía de la Educación Religiosa.

the Socio-Political vision that had informed their Evangelic Mission since the 1980s, only at a 'higher level' –the level of leaders and intellectuals- Padre Gonzalo de La Torre told me. Especially informative is to see how the objectives of their pre-graduate program in Anthropology has the objective to study the ethnic composition of society in order to “...seek peaceful coexistence and understanding in a dialogue of knowledge, worldviews and specific ways of transforming nature” where one addresses the “...anthropology of the Sacred for the study of ethno-cultural identity of the peoples of the Pacific as constitutive element of their meaning of existence in society” and one “...obtains the theoretical and methodological tools, from the study of the ethnic rights, needed for the development of autonomous government with ethno-development policies and programs” (FUCCLA, 2013b).

In the course of the 1990s, different new organisations had been established with the help of the Diócesis in order to respond to the changed context. Here their 'Evangelic Compromise' and 'Intellectual Influence' could be observed. For instance the 'Foro Interétnico Solidaridad Chocó' (FISCH) was created to politically represent a variety of grass roots organisations in the whole department in order to increase the coherency and collaboration between the different local organisations. Its' legal representative had been educated within the 'intellectual project' of the 1980s (Field Notes). The Diócesis continued to predict a contextualised socio-political vision and supported the various ethno-territorial organisations in their missions. However, with the decreased missionary presence in the country side, the new urgencies in the region, and the increasing autonomy of these organisations, the missionaries' role as 'organic intellectual' had changed. Whilst they continued to predict a politically-organised, coherent vision that was meant to reflect the conditions in which the communities were living, their direct influence on the communities and its' leaders decreased. The ethno-territorial project that had been initiated in the 1980s now fell under the 'formal jurisdiction' of the ethno-territorial organisations, and the new priorities of the Diócesis favoured socio-political over politico-organisational action. A variety of national and international alliances and their explicit political vision aim to increase the political advocacy of their message. For example, by the (newly) adopted option for the defence of Human Rights –and their continuous administration and denouncement of human rights abuses- has linked the Diócesis to a range of international human rights advocates and has helped them participate in a variety of international human rights forums. At the same time, the escalation of violence and the consequent humanitarian crisis in the region led the Diócesis to adopt a social supporting role in order to assist their communities in their daily needs. In the present context, the process of (rural) formation reached an impasse.

At the same time, the ethno-territorial discourse still is strongly represented in the various organisations in Quibdó and even the new pastoral options are reflected in the (new) working areas of organisations such as COCOMACIA (e.g. Human Rights and Gender). When studying the interaction between the Diócesis and ethno-territorial organisations, and after interviewing various community leaders and priests, I started to notice that the new conjuncture had posed severe challenges on the intellectual capacity of the community leaders to cope with the changed situation. Whilst many of the (current) community leaders had been 'educated' by the Missionaries in the 1980s, within this new conjuncture, various representatives of the ethno-territorial organisations expressed difficulties in maintaining the organisational unity and strength for which they had been recognised. Especially COCOMACIA was said to have weakened internally by 'a lack of political orientation', organisational and financial problems. While the Diócesis had been (and still is) very explicit in their political orientation, various priests and *Hermanas* [sisters] had been quite critical about the (lack of) continuation of the ethno-territorial project within this new conjuncture. During my weekly participation in the meetings of the COMVIJUPA, I observed how different church representatives expressed a form of discontent about the lack of political vision and action of the community leaders of COCOMACIA. While these community leaders stuck to a discussion about the role of the *consejos comunitarios* according to the law, and their environmental and social function. When discussing the contemporary problems in their territories, these leaders seemed to be 'intellectually' paralysed. At the same time, various members of the Diócesis tried to support a more explicit political standpoint, and different workshops had been organised by the Diócesis -or related organisations- in

order to develop a shared vision and strategy around the current problematic. A recurring theme on behalf of the organisations –and especially COCOMACIA- had been their organisational structure and the need to discuss these problems internally before being able to formulate a political standpoint. Here the community leaders meant to consult all their *consejos comunitarios locales* on these problems in order to develop a shared vision; whilst already within its board, COCOMACIA had not been able to develop a shared vision upon most of the contemporary issues (for instance the desirability of mining) (Field Notes). COCOMOPOCA on the other hand had been referred to as more successful in their process of obtaining land titles in the new conjuncture.

Various priests were still engaged the support of the organisational process, although more in the background. When observing the interaction between the different representatives of the church and various community leaders of the ethno-territorial organisations, their interaction had been characterised by an effort of the church representatives to direct the community leaders in order to develop a political vision and corresponding strategies with regards to new urgencies. At the same time, I frequently heard comments about an apparent weakening of COCOMACIA. In many instances, leaders of COCOMACIA would engage in endless discussions within workshops, forums and meetings of the COMVIJUPA. There, members of the same organisation that were not able to conform in their (political) vision constantly re-emphasised the importance of the *ley 70* as the basis of their organisation. At the same time, it became articulated that profound challenges were undermining their authority as an organisation. I started to question what had been the main difference between the organisational process in the 1980s and the current situation, as I could not see how these community leaders had been able to obtain the institutional recognition that they had. COCOMACIA seemed to be in search of a new strategy that could give them more control over the areas over which they had been granted (territorial) autonomy. Whilst the ‘defence of life’ and ‘their territory’ reflected their main political mission, the new conjuncture had increased a need to adapt their mission to the changed context of structural violence. On the other hand, what had been the main difference between COCOMACIA and COCOMOPOCA? Different people told me that COCOMOPOCA had been more advanced in the process of obtaining collective land titles within the new conjuncture. Therefore, the next section will outline how the context of structural violence has influenced the spatio-temporal development of both organisations, hereby reflecting on their interaction with the hegemonic state-project and concluding with a reflection on the continuation of the ethno-territorial project in both organisations.

7.3 The spatio-temporal development of an ‘ethno-territorial project’

This section will discuss how the changes in the context of structural violence have influenced the continuation of the ‘ethno-territorial project’ in its institutionalised format within the two ethno-territorial organisations COCOMACIA and COCOMOPOCA. As the escalation of violence and the continued development of the state’s neoliberal orientation importantly conditioned the ways in which these two ethno-territorial organisations were able to obtain their collective territories and to engage in a form of territorial governance (and development). It has been said that the ‘timing’ of the application process of the two different ethno-territorial organisations has influenced their relations with the state-apparatus and the way in which these organisations would position themselves within ‘the hegemonic state project’. This chapter will outline the spatio-temporal development of the ‘ethno-territorial project’ of the two organisations, while studying their interaction with the changes in the ‘back ground contours’ –generated by the hegemonic state project- that further conditioned their scope of authority as a new governance unit. The chapter ends with a reflection on the differences between the two organisations and its implications for their authority and continuation of the ‘ethno-territorial project’.

Chapter Five and the preceding discussion within this chapter have already outlined how the implementation of ethnic land rights have been based on a constructed ethno-territoriality that had been

incorporated within the hegemonic *philosophy of praxis* of the Colombian State. The specific functions of the law and the authority of the ethno-territorial organisations were conditional under the further development of the hegemonic state project. As such, new governance arrangements, rules and codes within (state) institutions and the Colombian ‘path of development’ were still able to condition the scope of authority of the ethno-territorial organisations when further consolidating a neoliberal orientation within the Pacific region. At the same time, the escalation of violence posed a physical threat on the ability to govern the (acquired) territories. The presence of the armed actors –directly and indirectly- undermined authority of ethno-territorial organisations. In addition, an accelerated pace of rural-urban migration, ‘a moral decay’, and the implementation of projects of grand-scale resource exploitation influenced the ways in which the ethno-territorial organisations could protect the rights of their communities and promote a wider economic and social development.

7.3.1 COCOMACIA – the top-down implementation of collective land titles

With the escalation of violence in the *Medio Atrato* region in May 1997, COCOMACIA was confronted with the direct and indirect effects of the presence of armed actors in their territories. The presence of paramilitaries, guerrilla and the national military led to assassinations, terror, waves of displacement, which accumulated in a humanitarian crisis caused by situations of food shortages and blockage of basic services, the lack of health services in the countryside, and the violation of human and humanitarian rights. The communities in the *Medio Atrato* region found themselves caught within the internal conflict in which battles were fought out in their communities. In order to provide their communities with some minimum guarantee in a situation of insecurity, COCOMACIA started to provide forms of humanitarian assistance in close collaboration with the Diócesis of Quibdó in order to promote a form of ‘*resistance in the territory*’. It had been explained that because of the ACIA’s national and international recognition for their efforts within the emancipation process of the 1980s, the organisation had been able to attract a wide range of (international) funds when the escalation of violence had accumulated in an ‘NGO-invasion’ in the region. Consequently, COCOMACIA had been able to obtain international (financial) resources from development organisations such as MISEREOR, ECOFONDO, DIAKONA and CORDAID and started to collaborate with a range of international institutions to contain the effects that the escalation of violence had generated. In close association with the Diócesis of Quibdó and the other humanitarian organisations, COCOMACIA started to support their communities by providing humanitarian assistance in order to provide some minimum guarantees in a situation of security. In the most violent years, these different organisations were concerned with collecting the dead to enable funerals. They supported the different communities that had been displaced or were about to displace themselves in order to make sure they did not leave the territories empty. When the eruption of violence and a restricted mobility resulted in food shortages, alternative production projects were developed and a boat – *la Arca de Noé* [the arc of Noah]- was used to bring food to strategic locations in the countryside to be able to keep food in the local ‘*tiendas*’ [shops].

COCOMACIA had started to use this humanitarian discourse to sustain the organisation, by providing their communities with assistance and being able to get (international) funds to finance their activities.



IMAGE 20: BANNER OF CONSEJO COMUNITARIO DE BOCA DE BEBARA (PHOTO: AUTHOR)

COCOMACIA's main political slogan in this changed situation would evolve into '*resistencia en el territorio*' which implied keeping the organisational process strongly embedded in the obtained collective territories in order to avoid the out-migration of the communities, provide some minimum guarantees and make sure that the territories would not run empty –and as such- would not be easily obtained by one of the interested parties. The implementation of the ethno-territorial project of COCOMACIA became severely affected as the provision of social and humanitarian assistance became the organisation's main activity and the further organisational development of the ethno-territorial organisation stagnated. Natalia Asprilla – COCOMACIA's consultant in the area of territory and autonomy- explained how the 'empowerment in the exercise of (territorial) governance' became overshadowed by two new challenges in the territory of COCOMACIA. First, there were contradictions between the governmental development schemes and the way in which the communities wanted to develop themselves. Here the territorial autonomy of the *consejos comunitarios* that had been granted the opportunity to develop their own 'ethno-development schemes' conflicted with the way the Colombian government had identified the future of the region. The second challenge had been posed by the lack of satisfaction of basic needs that made the communities more vulnerable for rural-urban migration or 'seeking short term benefits' by engaging with the multinationals or illicit activities (Interview with Natalia Asprilla - COCOMACIA 'territoria y autonomía': 5 December 2012). As such, COCOMACIA started to focus its attention on the containment of these new challenges which resulted in the further development of the procedures of the *ley 70* being overshadowed. Paula Cordoba explained "*I want to say that until the sun of today, that what happens here is an organisational process that they [read: the communities] do not leave the territories alone. [The territories are] of the people that are the legitimate owners in order to prevent that others do not take over [these territories] from them. So, it is a politics that the people return, despite the difficulties, a return without guarantees. Without guarantees!*"⁸⁸ (Interview with Paula Cordoba – legal representative COCOMACIA: 17 November 2012).

COCOMACIA's leaders in their '*junta mayor*' are almost all a product of the early emancipation process – originating in CEB's or Children's homes-, and have been involved in the activities of COCOMACIA for a long time. They had left the countryside to move to Quibdó, and from here steer the organisational process COCOMACIA's head quarter in Quibdó is permanently equipped by its different commissions and its board. It was explained to me by many of COCOMACIA's community leaders in Quibdó that in the countryside various community leaders started to show a 'moral decay', by adopting visions that did not resonate with how the board had seen the ethno-territorial development of the region. From Quibdó, COCOMACIA pursued its organisational discourse around their ethno-territorial rights and envisaged a need to further strengthen their bases to become better instructed in their rights to be able to defend their territory. The frequent expression of the 'gap' between the organisation and its' communities does raise the question of how effective the organisation has been in pursuing this objective.

COCOMACIA has a more top-down organisational structure in which the *consejo mayor* formulates action plans for the next periods, identifies funding possibilities and maintains the organisation's political vision. With the international solidarity in the violent epoch, COCOMACIA's headquarters became concerned with meeting NGO-related funding requirements (such as proposals, audits etc.). Officially COCOMACIA is the politically legitimate body that holds the collective land titles and is able to engage in various sorts of ethno-development. while the communities are the beneficiaries of the titles. However, to be able to engage in any kind of activity, COCOMACIA needs to have (economic) resources. During the humanitarian crisis, COCOMACIA was able to engage in various activities funded by the international community; and as such it started to develop alternative production projects, building schools and health stations in collaboration with other NGOs. These projects were planned and developed at the level of the '*consejo comunitario mayor*' and had benefited some communities originating in their ethno-territorial vision.

⁸⁸ Original quote: "*Quiere decir que hasta el sol de hoy lo que pasa aquí, si es una política organizativa que no permite que los territorios se quenen solos. De su gente que son legítimamente los dueños, para que otros no se apoderen de ellos. Entonces es una política de que la gente retorne, a pesar de las dificultades, unos retornos sin garantías, ¡Sin Garantías!*"

However, the restricted amount of resources available limited the scope of these projects and further restricted the capacity of the centralised organisation to visit their communities on a frequent basis. This importantly affected the development of the organisational process by the lack of formation of their communities and new leaders and lowered the intensity of communication between *consejos comunitarios locales* and *consejo comunitario mayor*. In a zonal meeting in Napipí it would become apparent that the *consejos comunitarios locales* seemed to hold COCOMACIA responsible for the implementation of different kinds of projects. The different responsibilities of the *consejo mayor* and the *consejos comunitarios locales* seemed to be unclear and had become a source of (intra-organisational) tension. In this zonal meeting, different community leaders expressed the need for COCOMACIA to provide more (financial) assistance to build a school, a health post or other forms of basic ‘infrastructure’ which (normally) would have been the responsibility of the state. Here these community leaders were questioning the representatives of the *junta mayor*. They wanted to know when their communities would benefit from the resources that COCOMACIA had obtained and why certain projects had been implemented in other parts of the area of jurisdiction of the organisation and not in their specific community (Field Notes). The discussion within this zonal meeting had been quite heated as only a limited number of community representatives had shown up and COCOMACIA’s headquarters had been visibly frustrated by the lack of local participation. When questioning David Palacios about how I could interpret what had been happening in this meeting, he explained that many people do think that these ‘public works’ (such as schools, education, and health centres) are part of the responsibility of COCOMACIA. With the support of the international community, COCOMACIA had been able to engage in the construction of various schools and health centres in their territory; but ultimately these activities were not the responsibility of COCOMACIA but of the Colombian State. *“Our function is the struggle for our territory and demand that the state meets the necessities of the communities”*⁸⁹ (Interview with David Palacios – COCOMACIA: 23 January 2013). However, due to the engagement in a range of these activities with help of the international community, it appeared that the exact role of COCOMACIA was not always clear for the various community leaders. Here David explained that COCOMACIA’s mission is political and is ultimately concerned with letting the state comply with the rights of the Afro-Colombian communities. However, due to their engagement in these social activities, COCOMACIA became seen as the responsible actor to ‘do things’. As the resources of the international community had only been limited, and their function had not been clear in their basis – due to a lack of ‘community formation’ and interaction- COCOMACIA was said to have lost some of the trust of its’ bases. Different (local) community leaders had started to question the legitimacy of the *junta mayor* as a representative governance unit, whilst members of the *junta mayor* were talking about a ‘moral decay’ in their communities.

When I asked Nevaldo Perea Perea how COCOMACIA could be able to provide a form of resistance in the changed context, he appeared to be a bit disillusioned. He argued that he felt frustrated as *“...today the same farmers, in this moment are giving in on the fight for the natural resources, they are exploited by the same farmers. They are entrepreneurs [...] many from the same communities have the logic of the ‘bulldozers’”*⁹⁰. As the mining provides them opportunities to ‘better’ their living conditions, by buying music installations or even a second house in Quibdó. *“The communities never have had the opportunity to manage the resources that they are managing today”*⁹¹ (Interview with Nevaldo Perea Perea – community leader COCOMACIA: 13 December 2012). The ethno-territorial discourse and the political convictions of COCOMACIA as an organisation seem to be challenged from within as the presence of armed actors in the countryside seem to gain political support within the communities. The situation of displacement and migration patterns further increase the risk of the territory running empty. And the availability of other sources of income from the different sorts of resource exploitation, illicit cultivations and compliance with the armed actors seem to be lucrative

⁸⁹ Original quote: *“La función de nosotros es la lucha por nuestro territorio y exigir al estado que cumpla las necesidades de las comunidades”*

⁹⁰ Original quote: *“...hoy estos campesinos. En ese momento, mucho de ellos, que en ese momento estamos, tanto en la pelea para que los recursos naturales fueran explotados por los mismos campesinos. Son ellos. empresarios son ellos.[...] Muchos de las mismas comunidades tienen la lógica de las retro-excavadoras”*

⁹¹ Original quote: *“Las comunidades nunca han tenido la oportunidad de manejar los recursos que están manejando hoy”*

options at a local level. In a situation of continued marginalisation, these ‘alternative discourses’, the rural-urban migration patterns, and the territory running empty seem to be one of the primary risks in the maintenance of the ethno-territorial pillars of the organisation. This is further complicated by the decreased legitimacy of COCOMACIA as a governance unit due to the lack of clarity about the organisation’s responsibilities at a community level.

COCOMACIA is maintaining its ethno-territorial vision and is implementing different (productive) projects, courses and workshops and aims to continue to support their bases. However, as long as their communities seem to have lost the trust in their *junta mayor*, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the standing organisational structure. Whilst COCOMACIA remains responsible for the administration, regulation and governance of the obtained collective territories, their bases in the countryside have started to question the legitimacy of the actions of the organisation. This is because the ethno-territorial vision, obligations and duties of the different layers of the organisations seemed to be unclear, and as such the ethno-territorial vision and internal regulations did not seem enough to guide ‘desired actions in their community’.

However, the mission of COCOMACIA is political and should be concerned with defending the rights of their communities and further ‘organisationally developing’ their bases. To achieve this, COCOMACIA is developing different strategies to cope with the situation of conflict and land contention. And their policy of resistance, supporting communities and collaborating with the *Dócesis*, aims to guarantee strength of the community in the countryside – in terms of providing mental support and assuring presence of the community in their territory. Furthermore, at a legal level, the ‘victims law’ and the option of a ‘*consulta previa*’ [previous consultation] are explored to make a legal stand point against the invasion of armed actors and companies. The lack of development of the bases of their governance structure seems to erode the legitimacy of the organisations at a local level, as the ethno-territorial discourse and its function is questioned from below. At the same time, the numerous challenges posed by the ‘new conjuncture’ asks COCOMACIA to further develop their political orientation to be able to let the state comply with its duties.

The organisation says it needs more alliances to orient them in the changed situation, and receive the support from entities that can help to push the process forward. Recently the organisation started to collaborate with the local municipalities in the provision of services. However, as COCOMACIA faces multiple challenges: fulfilling the basic needs within the communities (by forcing the state to comply with its duties); regaining trust within their communities; overcoming the internal frictions within the organisation; finding financial resources in order to be able to engage in the provision of services; and developing political strategies to cope with the grand-scale natural resource exploitation. Their strong connection to the ethno-territorial discourse, without a strong embedding within their communities and the absence of a clear strategy to let the state comply with its duties in a changed context, seems to undermine the internal and external authority of the organisation. At the same time, the dependence on international resources for the implementation of their activities seems to have made COCOMACIA volatile to follow international discourses instead of elaborating their own political vision within the new conjuncture. Thus, it has evolved into a social organisation instead of a politically legitimate governance body that is to represent the communities of the *Medio Atrato* region.

7.3.2 COCOMOPOCA – the bottom-up struggle for land titles

COCOMOPOCA started its process of applying for the collective land titles in 1999, where it took them until 2011 to obtain 73.000 hectares (in comparison to the requested of 172.000 hectares). When applying for the collective land title “...we thought that obtaining the title would be the solution to all our problems in the area of

influence of COCOMOPOCA”⁹² (interview with Santiago Díaz – legal representative COCOMOPOCA: 12 December 2012). However, the organisation was confronted with a changed reality in which political willingness had been diminished under the influence of the state development plans that had identified the potential of the *Alto Atrato* region. 55.000 hectares within the obtained collective land titles (82%) had already been granted to national and international companies to exploit the minerals of the sub-soil within the area. In 2012 the formulation of a new strategic mining area by the government would pose the rest of COCOMOPOCA’s territory under threat.

When COCOMOPOCA started its application procedure, violence had already escalated in the *Alto Atrato* region, and confronted the different communities with displacement, murders, assassinations etc. With the illegalisation of (small-scale) mining, different (armed) actors –including the national army- entered their communities, in order to benefit from the illegal mining. Here they used mining-quotas to benefit from on-going mining exploitation. Their organisational development as an ethno-territorial organisation has been rooted in their communities. Whereas COCMACIA is advanced in other themes that COCOMOPOCA is just starting with, Carlos Murillo explained that in contrast to COCMACIA “...*the leadership, thus, has been very active, actually, the participation of the people in the communities, the community leaders have been very active. Let’s say, we were able to maintain that level of stability quite high, towards the internal and the external*”⁹³ (Interview with Carlos Murillo– COCOMOPOCA: 23 January 2013). The organisation aims to work from their *consejos comunitarios locales* towards the *consejo comunitario mayor* where “...*the leadership of COCOMOPOCA is actually in their bases, and we -here in the mayor board- simply do what the bases tell*”⁹⁴ (Interview with Carlos Murillo– COCOMOPOCA: 23 January 2013). As such the higher board operates in a decentralised manner, further supported by the fact that the members of the *junta mayor* still live in their community, and only come to Quibdó a couple of days a week. As such the organisation aims to be intimate with the community and –for example- is reluctant to implement internal regulations just because they do not want to lose their level of intimacy. Another difference, as articulated by Francisco is the fact that the staff of COCMACIA gets a salary–because they had a lot of support from international NGO’s in their process of titling- in contrast with COCOMOPOCA’s board that works unpaid. Whereas they do collaborate with different international organisations that also financially assist different projects (for instance: food security, productive projects and different workshops), the organisation has not been part of the ‘invasions of NGO’s’ during the region’s humanitarian crisis; and its’ staff appears to be closely committed to the ideological cause behind the organisation.

It is explained that the timing of the (application) process has influenced COCOMOPOCA’s activities a great deal. Whereas COCMACIA could rise in a specific conjuncture in time, COCOMOPOCA had two main obstacles when requesting their land titles: 1) the lack of political willingness and 2) the economic interest in their region. Whereas in theory the process of titling only lasts 6 months, for them it lasted 12 years. While the organisation now possesses collective land titles, the same obstacles stay a problem. To obtain their collective titles COCMACIA had two important strategies that are still valid today. First, they developed an ethno-development plan that is used as an alternative plan to the envisaged state policies. As national, regional and municipal development plans increasingly incorporate resource exploitation as the mining, COCOMOPOCA started environmental studies to enquire into the effects of the implementation of large-scale resource exploitation. They use these environmental arguments to gain support in their quest against governmental development plans. Furthermore, they engaged in political and environmental advocacy, at national and international levels, to gain support for their cause. As Carlos emphasises, the problems do not lie on a juridical level but relate to the (state’s) willingness to advance the process of titling. Here COCOMOPOCA made national and international alliances to advance the process

⁹² Original quote: “...cuando entramos la solicitud, estamos pensando que la obtención del título era la solución de todos los problemas que teníamos nosotros en la área de influencia de COCOMOPOCA”

⁹³ Original quote: “...el liderazgo así ha sido muy active realmente la participación de la gente de las comunidades, de las líderes de las comunidades han sido muy activas. Digamos que han logrado mantener ese nivel de estabilidad bastante alto, hasta el interno y hasta el externo”

⁹⁴ Original quote: “el liderazgo realmente de COCOMOPOCA es en sus bases y nosotros simplemente hacemos acá en el consejo mayor lo que las bases decían”

and put pressure on Bogotá. They organised an ‘inter-institutional ‘mesa’ in Bogotá with all institutions present in the Chocó to increase political advocacy, and travelled to Washington, Medellín and Europe. *“The international community was key in order to advance in the process of titling of COCOMOPOCA and the unlocking of political and economic obstacle had to in order to advance the titling process”*⁹⁵ (Interview with Carlos Murillo–COCOMOPOCA: 23 January 2013).

COCOMOPOCA is confronted with the ‘same’ destabilising effects of the presence of various armed actors in the region, grand-scale resource exploitation and illegal mining as COCOMACIA. As their organisational process mainly took place in an era in which these tendencies already played a role, their political orientation is closer related to the current reality in the countryside. However, *“...the context in which we as an organisation work is at times complex, complex because it is an unequal struggle. [It is] A struggle of some communities that have been totally marginalised by the state and that affected them to live in the whole them of social and armed conflict. These are communities that have tried to live in a very traditional and very peaceful from that in one moment to the other changed and was affected by the issue of the global space of capital, that isn’t easy within this [...] all this turned by the issue of the same public politics for us. It is a very difficult turn in this sense that many things are presenting themselves and the people have not assimilated and neither will be prepared for such a significant change. Thus, the context that the people work is difficult, the issue of threats starts as the work continues of one or another group, all threat finally. It is difficult to work in an ethno-territorial organisation [...]”*⁹⁶ (Interview with Carlos Murillo – COCOMOPOCA: 23 January 2013). The mining boom with governmental support brings all kinds of side effects, from violence, deaths, disappearances and extortion, to environmental pollution, prostitution and communal friction. Next to problems with mining, infrastructural projects, the construction of a military base and a police school in the middle of COCOMOPOCA’s community also affect the autonomy of its *consejos* and community. At the same time, the lack of fulfilment of basic needs in the area of influence adds to the community’s marginal position. *“And this worries one, because at this time, one doesn’t have, a community that has no light, has no water [...] has no promoter of all pharmaceuticals, already in a time in which the people more or less know of the good, the bad, to where we are going, by the television, but that doesn’t enter the television, that doesn’t enter the telephone signal that they have to start to climb a hill or climb in a tree in order to let the signal enter”*⁹⁷ (interview with Santiago Díaz– legal representative COCOMOPOCA: 12 December 2012). However, this is a responsibility of the state, whereas COCOMOPOCA has made some alliances to better the situation in the countryside – in terms of productive projects, food security or educational facilities- (with the help of international NGO’s or educational institutions), their main objective lies in letting the state comply with its duties towards the communities in the *Alto Atrato* region. As such their mission has a political focus. Different workshops in country side are part of their zonal meetings -reflecting topics such as administration, mining, human rights, socialisation about collective titles, *consulta previa* etc.- to inform their communities of the different aspects of their work.

To obtain the title, principle strategies have been grounded in the ethno-development plan in order to increase the political advocacy for their cause: *“We are saying, it is not really only a problem of COCOMOPOCA, and from this perspective we are planning to continue doing views of international advocacy in order to demonstrate that it is a thing that finally goes to affect the whole world”*⁹⁸ (Interview with Carlos Murillo – COCOMOPOCA: 23 January 2013). Here they aim to put forward how this governmental strategy leads to environmental pollution and

⁹⁵ Original quote: *“La comunidad internacional fue clave para avanzar en el proceso de titulación de COCOMOPOCA y desenredar esa traba política y económica que había para avanzar en el proceso de titulación”*

⁹⁶ Original quote: *“...realmente el contexto en el que nosotros como organización trabajamos a veces es complejo, complejo porque una lucha desigual. Una lucha de unas comunidades que han venido totalmente marginadas por parte del estado y que les afectado vivir en todo el tema del conflicto social, armado. Son comunidades que han tratado de vivir de una forma muy tradicional, muy tranquila, y que en un momento a otro se cambia le afectada por el tema del espacio global de capital, que no es fácil dentro de eso. [...] Entonces, todo eso torna desde el tema de la misma política pública para nosotros. Es un entorno muy difícil en este sentido que se están acercando tantas cosas y que la gente no asimilaba y tampoco estará preparada para un cambio tan significativo. Entonces, el contexto la gente trabaja es difícil, el tema de la amenaza arranca por el trabajo sigue de uno o otro grupo, de todo amenaza finalmente. Difícil es trabajar en una organización etno-territorial [...]”*

⁹⁷ Original quote: *“Y eso lo preocupa uno, porque en este tiempo, uno no tenga, una comunidad que no tenga luz, no tenga agua, [...] no hay una promotora de todo forma, ya está en un tiempo más o menos que ya la gente sabe que lo bueno, lo malo, hacia donde vamos, por la televisión que no entra televisión que no entra la señal del teléfono, y que tienen que subir a una loma o montarse en un árbol para que entre la señal”*

⁹⁸ Original quote: *“Nosotros estamos diciendo es un problema que no es solo de COCOMOPOCA realmente, y de ese punto de vista estamos planteando seguir haciendo miras de incidencia internacional para mostrar que es una cosa que va afectar a todo el mundo finalmente”*

degradation and in the long run can have effects that affect the world population when talking about themes such as global warming. *‘We work for one part to say that the model that they are trying to implement isn’t appropriate. We are, this is exactly what we try to demonstrate, no. That the model that they try to implement isn’t going to bring, the contrary, it will bring more poverty to the communities that are already poor. For one part. For the other part, with the theme of the development plan we are saying one can do another type of alternative development and we are trying to construct this in correspondence with the worldview that we have in the communities. That is here planned in this document that is the new development, we believe that this form should proceed to the construction of development for the communities’*⁹⁹ (Interview with Carlos Murillo – COCOMOPOCA: 23 January 2013).

On the one hand, research forms part of the alternative strategy in which political and environmental evidence at the national and international level could be able to put pressure on Bogotá. On the other hand, within the legal the procedure, the option of *‘consulta previa’* opens up the possibility for the community to demand consultation prior to resource exploitation. Whereas it is an important instrument, it *“...isn’t the key to the solution of the problems”* as non-compliance of the state is again a risk (Interview with Diego Echeverri – General Secretary FUCCLA/ Advisor *Consejos Comunitarios* COCOMOPOCA: 22 January 2013). The further development of ethno-development plans should provide alternatives to ‘state development models’ as it could provide the organisation with more control over exploitation in its territory. In general it is important to gain a lot of national and international support for their cause, by creating good alliances, including the Diócesis that has had a supporting role.

However, ‘without the community you have nothing’ explains Diego. *“In the people that have, we say, some of the tools for the possibility that all these bad things that I am saying do not appear. If we had some weak communities, some communities that were sold easily, some communities that said, no, there is no problem when they destroy the forests, they poison the rivers. If we had a community that was the friend of the narco-trafficking, a community that was a friend of the smuggling, there was nothing to do. I would have nothing to do. On the contrary, when you have a community with a very high resistance level. With a will to remain in its territory. With a will to maintain their traditions to conserve the environment, to live peacefully. Therefore, when you have a community that is convinced that it wants to stay here, that wants to continue to maintain their forests as they were received by their parents, you have every insurance that their work will be supported by the communities [...] it is our greatest asset”*¹⁰⁰ (Interview with Diego Echeverri – General Secretary FUCCLA/ Advisor *Consejos Comunitarios* COCOMOPOCA: 22 January 2013). In general COCOMOPOCA is confident about its relationships with their communities, as they have a strong presence in the country side and have been closely collaborating with the community in the process of obtaining the collective land titles. They do admit that at a local level tensions do arise because there are people that do not agree with their vision. As in a community 75 % can be against big-scale mining, and 25 % for, it does place tensions on a community as members are afraid of reprisals. However, the key to success lies in the community *“...assume that the consejos comunitarios are converted in the major tools of resistance in the communities. The form of organisation has permitted that there is a lot more awareness, longer established, firstly in the problematic and they know that many times the problematic is precisely directed at developing the people of the territory. So, watching the problematic made from the people has many more awareness than was...en the territory. And the organisational form, the same organisational for, let’s say that, [brings] much more hope to the communities that things can change, so one*

⁹⁹ Original quote: *“Nosotros trabajamos por una parte para decir es que el modelo que se está tratando imponer no es el adecuado. Estamos, y eso es precisamente lo que nosotros estamos tratando de demostrar, no. Que el modelo que se quieren imponer no va traer, lo contrario va traer más pobreza a las comunidades que ya somos pobres. Por un lado. Por el otro lado, con el tema de plan de desarrollo estamos diciendo se puede hacer otro tipo desarrollo alternativo y nosotros lo estamos tratando a construir de acuerdo a la cosmovisión que tenemos en las comunidades. Esta así planeado en este documento que es el nuevo desarrollo, nosotros creemos que esta forma es que se debe avanzar hasta la construcción del desarrollo para las comunidades”*

¹⁰⁰ Original quote: *“En la gente la que tiene, digamos, parte de las herramientas sobre la posibilidad de que todas estas cosas malas que estoy diciendo no se ven. Si nosotros tuviéramos unas comunidades débiles, unas comunidades que se vendieran fácilmente, unas comunidades que dijeran no, no hay un problema que se destruyan los bosques, que se envenenen los ríos. Si tuviéramos una comunidad que fue la, pues, amiga del narco-trafico, una comunidad que fuera una amiga del contrabando, no había nada que hacer. Yo no tendría nada que hacer. Por el contrario, lo que hay una comunidad con un nivel de resistencia muy grande. Por unas ganas de permanencia en su territorio. Por unas ganas de mantener sus tradiciones de conservar su medio ambiente, de vivir tranquilamente. Pues, cuando usted tiene una comunidad que está convencida de que quiere seguir allí, de que quiere seguir manteniendo sus bosques como se los recibió de sus padres, usted tiene toda la garantía de que su trabajo va a estar respaldado por las comunidades [...] es nuestro mejor capital”*

causes that one has a better sense of belonging to the territory for us. Territory from the widest point, right?”¹⁰¹ (Interview with Carlos Murillo – COCOMOPOCA: 23 January 2013). By keeping the relationships intimate, still living in the country side and working in a bottom-up fashion COCOMOPOCA has a lot of confidence in their bases. “We are convinced that that we are doing at a certain moment can arrive at changing the lives of many people for the better. So, we continue”¹⁰² (Interview with Carlos Murillo – COCOMOPOCA: 23 January 2013). “With all the assassinations that they have had, in the middle of the assassinations there is resistance, and threats and displacement and the people have continued to function as ordinary”¹⁰³ (Interview with Santiago Díaz – legal representative COCOMOPOCA: 12 December 2012).

7.3.3 Reflection on the continuation of the ‘ethno-territorial project’

The *ley 70* had granted the ethno-territorial organisations relative political autonomy in the administration and governing of their collective land titles. COCOMACIA has received a lot of international recognition that permitted the organisation to attract international resources in order to engage in the social development of their territories. The amount of resources is always limited upon the conditions set by the international institution. The activities of COCOMACIA became grounded within the international humanitarian discourses which had found a new outlet when violence erupted in the Chocó. Whilst COCOMACIA Quibdó had been growing enormously and in the course of time these financial resources have permitted the organisation to engage in wide range of activities in their communities. This has moved their attention away from the concrete political mission as a governance unit. However, the reason for the organisation’s existence (the defence of the territory and its development) does not resonate with the short-term NGO cycles of funding activity. As such, COCOMACIA as an organisation moved away from the ‘intellectual project’ and now faces the consequences as its’ authority as a governance unit became questioned. At a local level, the communities are said to have lost their trust in the organisation, since the implementation of humanitarian and social activities had promoted a vision of COCOMACIA as implementer of services. The stagnation of the organisation’s development – the strengthening of their ethno-territorial authority and the implicated awareness processes, procedures and rights that the organisation and the communities had been granted- undermined the ‘enforcement of governance’. The ethno-territorial vision and organisational structure seemed to not have been sufficiently passed to the communities (and their representatives) that the organisation was designated to govern. Different members of the Diócesis had been quite critical about this ‘lack of formation of community leaders, the ‘lack of political vision’ and the consequent weakening of the ethno-territorial discourse. When asking this question to Padre Jan Petersen what he considered to be the main cause of the weakening of the ethno-territorial organisation he explained: “Here enters the theme of autonomy. Ehm, the Diócesis initiated the organisational processes and this is a merit for the history. This has as well created these relationships of confidence....[...] ehm I think that the Diócesis has done what it could do, those that are compromised in this work, thus, we continue close to the organisations, willing to help. But, now, we do not have a leading role and if the organisations after so many years aren’t capable to walk for their own proper power, then neither will help that we would want to stick ourselves once more. Thus, the challenge is that the organisations take their autonomy seriously and exercise it. Because, they have it clear in theory, the discourse as well, they manifest it, they express it, but you have to apply it in reality, and not only an autonomy within the discourse, no as well an autonomy in the gesture that needs to bring an autonomy in the independence of economic resources. An organisation that only depends on the projects that come from the outside and of which they stop the money from outside.

¹⁰¹ Original quote: “...por supuesto que los consejos comunitarios están convertidos en las principales herramientas de la resistencia en las comunidades. La forma de organización ha permitido a que se que hay muchísimo más consciencia, más arraigo de, primero en la problemática y se saben que muchas veces la problemática está dirigida precisamente a desarrollar las personas del territorio. Entonces visionar la problemática hecho de la gente tenga muchísima más consciencia que era... en el territorio. Y la forma organizativa, la misma forma organizativa, digamos que, esperanza mucho más a las comunidades que la cosa puede cambiar entonces una base que haya mayor sentido de pertenencia hacia el territorio para nosotros. Territorio desde el punto más amplio, ¿no?”

¹⁰² Original quote: “Nosotros estamos convencidos que lo que estamos haciendo en algún momento puede llegar a cambiar la vida de muchas personas para bien. Y entonces nosotros le seguimos”

¹⁰³ Original quote: “Con todo los asesinatos que han habido, en medio de los asesinatos hay resistencia y amenaza y desplazamiento y la gente ha seguido funcionando común y corriente”

Consequently, they do not know what to do when it is not an autonomous organisation. This is what I have been saying since years, they need to arrive at an autonomy, as well economically in order that you yourself function with appropriate support, that that they work in their community. This is my position, and I believe that as well of the majority of those that work in the Diocese at the side of the organisations they think so, in the same direction”¹⁰⁴ (Interview with Padre Jan Petersen: 19 December 2012).

Hermana Michaela describes the main difference between the early ‘Intellectual Project’ and the current situation as a ‘difference in generations’. *“For me it was a generation, because this generation that fought for the ley 70 were those that were raised in the country side and that lived [there] all their life and were well well rooted in the country side”¹⁰⁵ (Interview with Hermana Michaela Kappelhoff: 13 December 2012).* She explains that today many community leaders have left the countryside in order to live in Quibdó. At the same time, the violent conflict and the internal displacement have weakened the ties of the people with the countryside. Earlier, the community leaders and the missionaries had close ties with the rural communities and they had been collaborating closely with them in order to disseminate the ideas of the organisation. *“But today, the organisation doesn’t continue to work this way, so so strong, they do it, but really in the middle. [...] According to the law the people have the territory secured, but this is not secure when one does not continue maintaining it”¹⁰⁶ (Interview with Hermana Michaela Kappelhoff: 13 December 2012).* While she admits that the amount of challenges has been growing since the recognition of the collective land titles, for Michaela the main difference remains grounded in the lack of close ties with the communities, both on behalf of the Church as well as the different organisations. This has had the result that the organisational project of the 1980s is not being continued in the bases. When asking Padre Gonzalo de La Torre about the strength of the ethno-territorial organisations within this changed context, he becomes a bit worried. His facial expression starts to change and he expressed his concerns about the loss of strength of the organisational process. He explained that the ethno-territorial discourse in this moment had been severely affected by the ‘dance of millions of pesos’ that arrived in the communities with the overdevelopment of the mining. The availability of money affects the loyalties in the communities. Whilst at the same time the *“...territoriality always is threatened by the displacement [...] the territory has lost its strength”¹⁰⁷ (Interview with Padre de la Torre Guerrero: 10 December 2012).*

‘But what is the role of the ethno-territorial organisation and its leaders?’, I asked him. Here he starts to explain how the key for the organisational process lies in the community itself, as when a community is not organised it does not function properly. The real strength can be found within the communities, as the leaders are only representing them. But, when leaders start to put their own personal interests first instead of the communal interests, there is no form in which the community can advance itself. He explains that this is partly a problem of formation as the leaders need to be ‘formed’ to be conscious of their proper function, however in this moment there is not much attention for the formation of both leaders and the communities. In contrast to the 1980s when there had been *“...a base of religiously prepared leaders, but that happened because they had a very open preparation. It was not only preparation devotional or religious but a social*

¹⁰⁴ Original quote: “Abí, entra el tema de la autonomía. Ehm, la Diócesis inició los procesos organizativos y eso es un merito para la historia. Y esto ha creado también estas relaciones de confianza [...] Ehm, yo pienso que la Diócesis ha hecho que pudo hacer, los que estamos comprometidos en ese trabajo, pues seguimos cerca de las organizaciones, dispuestos ayudar. Pero ya no tenemos un papel protagónico y si las organizaciones después de tantos años no son capaces de caminar por su propia fuerza, entonces tampoco va ayudar que nosotros nos quisiéremos meter otra vez más. Eso sería dar un paso atrás, no ayudaría y no lo veo conveniente y creo que tampoco existe este peligro. Entonces, el desafío está en que las organizaciones realmente toman en serio su autonomía y la ejercieran. La apliquen. Porque en teoría la tienen claro, el discurso también la manifiestan la expresan, pero hay que aplicarla en realidad y no solamente una autonomía en el discurso sino también una autonomía en la gestión que debe llevar a una autonomía de independencia en los recursos económicos. Una organización que solamente depende de proyectos que vienen de afuera, y cuales se acaban la plata de afuera entonces ya no saben que pueden hacer no es una organización autónoma. Eso es lo que yo hace años estoy diciendo, ellos tienen que llegar a una autonomía, también económica para que ustedes mismos funcionen con propios aportes de lo que se trabajan así en su comunidad. Esa es mi posición, yo creo que también la mayoría de los que trabajamos en la Diócesis a lado de la organizaciones piensan así en esa misma dirección.”

¹⁰⁵ Original quote: “Para mí fue una generación, porque esta generación que luchó para la ley 70 fueron los que crecieron en el campo y que hicieron todo la vida y estaban con sus raíces bien bien duro en el campo”

¹⁰⁶ Original quote: “Pero ahora la organización no siguió trabajando así tan tan fuerte, hacen, pero muy en si mitad. [...] Según la ley la gente tiene el territorio seguro, pero eso no es segura mientras que uno lo sigue abí manteniéndose”

¹⁰⁷ Original quote: “la territorialidad siempre está amenazada por el desplazamiento. [...] el territorio ha perdiendo fuerza”

*preparation. Later these were the same organisations that converted in a social compromise, right? In this sense*¹⁰⁸ (Interview with Padre de la Torre Guerrero: 30 January 2013).

Whilst the Claretians had invested a lot of money in this process of formation in the 1980s, today it is hardly continued. There lies a crucial weakness in the continuation of the organisation of the community against the challenges that presented themselves in the rural regions. Within this 'new conjuncture' COCOMACIA appeared to have prioritised social and humanitarian action over the further political development of their organisation (both internally and externally). Whilst the organisation already possessed the collective land titles, it became concerned with providing their communities a minimum level of security by their collaboration with the international humanitarian organisations and their activities. During this epoch, the promotion of '*resistencia en el territorio*' had been seen as crucial to avoid that other actors would take possession of their lands. However, their engagements with these humanitarian organisations increased the portfolio of COCOMACIA's activities as they needed to comply with the various requirements the NGOs had posed. The further development of their organisational process stagnated and the political organisation of their governance structure reached an impasse. The organisation started to use the support of the international NGO's in order to contain the negative effects of the changed context of structural violence. "*The unity of the state system as a whole is now maintained by relating civil society to political society through the logic of reversal of the effects of primitive accumulation*", where (intra)governmental programmes are designed to provide for the livelihoods of the poor and marginalised whilst capital accumulation can continue (Chatterjee, 2008: 61-62). As the obtained ethno-territorial citizenship rights did not result in an protagonist role of the Colombian State to protect the rights of the 'marginalised', a profound "...*contradiction in the neoliberal mode of governance*" would present itself in which "...*left in the care of a range of new para-governmental agencies –charities, advice bureaux, drop-in centres and other voluntary organizations*" (Rose (1994: 389) paraphrased in Purvis and Hunt, 1999: 470). Here COCOMACIA positioned itself outside the state system by focussing on the elements in (international) civil society that could assist the organisation in order to fulfil its social and cultural responsibility of the ethno-territorial organisation.

On the other hand, COCOMOPOCA has continued its overt political mission by the continuous search for political advocacy for their cause and keeping the Colombian State responsible to comply with the rights they had granted. Whilst, this overt political mission is for an important degree caused by the actual timing of their application for land titles. As, COCOMOPOCA was directly confronted with a lack of political willingness to grant it collective territories in a situation in which violence had already escalated and the 'mining-boom' became visible in their territory. Furthermore, COCOMOPOCA had not been absorbed by the NGO-invasion in the region and has chosen to keep its ties closer to their communities. Their belief that the organisation needs the support of the local community members in order to be able to provide real resistance against the diverse threats in their territory meant that the organisation continued its political mission also at a local level. This was facilitated by the fact that most of the members of the *junta mayor* still live in the countryside and maintain close ties with the local reality. Here it can be said that COCOMOPOCA continued to emphasise the rights they had been granted by using their politically recognised status as representative of the communities in the *Alto Atrato* region, and their legally obtained status as prime governance unit over these territories as a way to prove the legitimacy of their claims. The strategies that COCOMOPOCA adopted also can be seen in this line of reasoning as the right to formulate their 'proper' ethno-development plans has formed the basis of their strategy to demonstrate the alternatives to the hegemonic *philosophy of praxis*. Here COCOMOPOCA continued to position itself within political society, to create the international advocacy needed to put pressure on the Colombian

¹⁰⁸ Original quote: "*un base de líderes preparados religiosamente, pero que pasaron porque tenían una preparación muy abierta. No era una preparación solamente vocacional o religiosa, sino una preparación social. [...] Pues, se está, la misma organización se convierte en compromiso social, ¿no? En este sentido*"

government to comply with their (legitimate) demands. In terms of the quantity of territory obtained COCOMOPOCA only had been granted a fraction of the territories they had requested. Yet this strategy had been adopted to the new conjuncture and as such used the ‘institutionalised’ authority that had been granted based on their ‘ethno-territorial’ mission.

7.4 Theoretically-informed conclusion

With the institutionalisation of Claretian Initiated Counter-hegemonic Project, the ethnic and territorial pillars of their ‘alternative conception of the world’ had been incorporated within the dominant governance structure. The ethno-territorial organisations –as the representative governance units- got the right to engage in a form of identity politics and ethno-development based on their status as Colombian citizens. The counter-revolutionary potential of the ‘intellectual project’ had been accommodated within the dominant social structure. An ‘incorporative hegemony’ had integrated the ethno-territorial organisations within the political structure of the Colombian society. This can be seen as a form of social power that crosses the divide between political and civil society. The production of ethnic and territorial distinctions allowed the Colombian State to incorporate the dissident voices within its *philosophy of praxis* and granted the (rural) Afro-Colombians a form of ‘territorial power’. However, this power would be conditional upon the further development of the State’s hegemonic project and hereby contained their autonomy as a governance unit. Additionally, this power had been limited to a particular construction of the ethnic and territorial pillars of the law. Whilst their incorporation within the ‘hegemonic state structure’ had granted the ethno-territorial organisations the ability to put forward some legitimate claims –based on the rights they obtained- on the other hand their obligations and duties as an ethno-territorial organisation conditioned their autonomy. Furthermore, ‘other claims’ could be disregarded as ultimately the final authority would continue to be in the hands of the Colombian State. The position of the Colombian State reflects the distinct ways in which territorial and capitalist power operate. The state had been able to include some of the socio-political pillars of the (global) neoliberal project into its own political structure. By incorporating the (decentralised) *consejos comunitarios* within the (national) governance structure, the state was able to maintain control over how the Pacific territory would be organised in the near future.

With the institutionalisation of the ethno-territorial rights, the Diócesis of Quibdó changed its ‘intellectual role’ by adopting a supporting role while focussing on the new urgencies that had become salient in their area of jurisdiction. At the same time, the ethno-territorial organisations needed to conform to the duties and obligations that had been part of the *ley 70* and *Decreto 1745* in order to become the decentralised governance unit they were assigned to be. The difference in the spatio-temporal development of the two ethno-territorial organisations COCOMACIA and COCOMOPOCA illustrates the distinct ways in which these organisations had been able to position themselves within the civil society – political society dialectic.

COCOMACIA had been able to obtain its collective land titles in 1997, and started to further develop their organisational structure in order to enforce their (multi-layered) governance structure and implement the rights that had been granted. With the escalation of violence –and facilitated by their internationally recognised status within the emancipation process- the organisation became increasingly concerned with providing social and humanitarian assistance, as the international community provided the organisation with the resources to be able to engage in these activities. COCOMACIA’s concentration on these social and humanitarian activities placed their efforts within a wider (global) civil society concerned with containing the negative effects that had emerged within the context of structural violence. Internally their organisational development as a governance unit stagnated. This started to erode the ‘legitimacy’ of their status as community representatives at a community level. The provision of social and humanitarian

assistance and the lack of development of its 'internal governance structure' let the organisation move away from the main pillars of the ethno-territorial project. The consequence was that the law's main pillars did not find resonance at a local level. Furthermore, being seen as an 'implementer of projects', undermined their 'legitimacy' as a representative of the communities. At the same time, the concentration on this range of social activities moved their attention away from the development of a (re)newed political vision that would be able to grasp the effects of the changed context of structural violence

COCOMOPOCA on the other hand continued to focus on political action. As COCOMOPOCA's process of obtaining collective land titles had already placed their political mission within the new conjuncture. Here the organisation needed to adapt its strategy in order to find ways to encourage the Colombian State to comply with the requested collective land titles. COCOMOPOCA realised that within this new conjuncture, the main challenge had been to find the political willingness to obtain these territories. As they were the legitimate organisation to represent the communities in the *Alto Atrato* Region, they were granted the right to make this territorial claim. Within this new conjuncture, the organisation started to use its' political status as a strategy to increase the political advocacy for their cause. By using the authority that had been granted over the ethno-development of their territories, the organisation started to present alternative ways to develop their territories that did correspond with the social and ecological functions that the law had specified. On the other hand, the organisation started to look for ways to increase the political advocacy of their message in order to affirm their legitimacy of their authority and claims. Thus far, the organisation's main activities have been concentrated on the development of political strategies meant to find ways in which the Colombian State would comply with its duties. Another crucial difference had been that COCOMOPOCA maintained close ties with its communities, and constantly has been reinforcing its organisational structure from below in order to be the legitimate authority for their communities. As such COCOMOPOCA has been mainly concentrated on the actions within political society in order to achieve its goal.

In sum, this chapter can conclude that both organisations were granted the same ethnic and territorial rights that had placed these organisations in the dialects of political and civil society. Further, the situation of 'an incorporative hegemony' placed their scope and content of their political authority under the conditions of the hegemonic *philosophy of praxis*. Both organisations have constantly been engaged in their original mission: to defend the lives and territories of their communities. The main difference in their 'success' lies in the ways both organisations have continued the *political* content of their mission. It appeared that while being incorporated within the hegemonic social patterning of society, international political advocacy had been instrumental in putting pressure on the Colombian government to comply with the rights that had been granted. The further development of the political strategy of COCOMOPOCA -in a changed context- could visibilise the contradictions within the 'incorporative hegemony'. Whilst the use of their (politically) legitimised authority was able to extend the spatiality of COCOMOPOCA's claim. Here the organisation used Gramsci's political geographies of connection in order to find the *ideational* and *material* pillars within the global political and civil society that could put pressure on the State's *philosophy of praxis*.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This thesis answers the research questions: “*How has the Claretian Missionaries’ approach promoted a counter-hegemonic project in the Colombian Atrato-Region; and how has this project been influenced by the context of structural violence?*”. This research is based on qualitative (anthropological) research in which primary data were collected with semi-structured interviews and informal interviews conducted with the people (historically) involved in this counter-hegemonic project, participation in various workshops and events, and participant observation. Because of the regions’ security situation, it was not possible to obtain much information at a community level. Therefore, the accounts presented are based on an organisational level –interviewing religious leaders, community leaders and organisational representatives. These primary data were supported with secondary data of state-documents and legislations, and locally available literature. The objectives of this research are threefold: investigating the role (1) and content (2) of the Claretian Missionaries Approach’ in the promotion of an alternative socio-political vision in the *Atrato* region, while studying (3) how this project has been evolving in the course of time by its interaction with the context of structural violence. This thesis responds to the lack of knowledge about the (political) orientation of the Claretian Missionaries (and the actions they have generated), whilst studying how their ‘political project’ has been affected by a wider range of challenges –the context of structural violence- that had presented themselves at the local level. Hereby this thesis has a specific focus on the role of the Claretian Missionaries’ Approach in the promotion of a process of (rural) Afro-Colombian community organisation, visibilisation and empowerment.

8.2 A Gramsci-inspired analysis

This research uses a Gramsci-inspired analysis that is ultimately grounded in his method of ‘historicism’: a method that analyses how different historical processes are able to define a particular reality at a point in time by bringing together different social, political and economic ‘understandings of the world’. It offers a spatial and relational account of the articulation of organic (structural) and conjunctural phenomena at specific points in time (‘the situation’). Accordingly, a spatial-temporal consolidation of class hegemony is based on the ability to dominate the material and ideational definition of reality (Gramsci’s *philosophy of praxis*). This thesis is innovative because of its explicit focus on the role of a religious community in the promotion of an alternative definition of reality for the (rural) Afro-Colombian population. In other words the construction of a counter-hegemonic project. Furthermore, it has extended previous research done in the region. The merit of a Gramsci-inspired approach is that his theory is ultimately concerned in analysing the relational negotiation of a hegemonic definition of reality based on class struggle. He argues that this ‘negotiation’ is a spatio-temporal process influenced by the articulation of structural conditions and their socio-political responses at specific points in time. The *place* becomes the ‘*nodal point of interconnections*’ where different forms of socially produced space interact and influence the ‘material facts on the ground’. Gramsci offers a multi-scalar perspective on the articulation of different ‘conceptions of the world’ that aim to define the material and ideational reality of a society. As Gramsci’s consolidation of class hegemony is based on a combination of coercion and consent, the project’s legitimacy is dependent on a collective acceptance of its main ‘*philosophical*’ pillars (and its material realisation). His theory leaves room for the analysis of the emergence of ‘alternative conceptions of the world’ that aim to represent the critical world views of an upcoming class that are challenging the main pillars on which class hegemony has been built. Gramsci has reserved a specific place for ‘*organic intellectual*’ –a specific function in society- that have the ability to transform mere fragmented worldviews of an upcoming class into a coherent, elaborated, systematised, politically organised and centralised alternative towards the hegemonic definition of the material and ideational organisation of society. Thus, Gramsci allows me to study the role of the

Claretian Missionaries as '*organic intellectual*' in the promotion of a Counter-Hegemonic project. His theory allows me to study on what kind of world view this 'alternative' has been based; what kind of hegemony it was supposed to challenge; how these missionaries have been developing this 'intellectual project'; how this project has been interacting with the class it was supposed to represent; and the interaction of this 'counter-hegemonic project' with the wider context of structural violence it is supposed to challenge.

8.3 Discussion of main findings

This section answers the thesis' main research questions by describing the patterns, principles and relationships presented in this thesis whilst placing them in a wider (theoretical perspective). Section 8.3.1 answers sub question one: 'How has the Claretian Missionaries' approach promoted a *counter-hegemonic project*?'. Section 8.3.2 answers sub question two: '*How has the context of structural violence influenced this project*?'. Lastly, section 8.3.3 presents the overall conclusion of this thesis. Chapter 8.4 will go further by stating the 'relevance of this research' whilst reflecting on this thesis' limitations and weaknesses.

8.3.1 The 'intellectual project' of the Claretian Missionaries

This section answers sub question one: *How has the Claretian Missionaries' approach promoted a counter-hegemonic project?*

A form of 'Social Catholicism' emerged at the margins of the Colombian Society when the Claretian Missionaries started to reinterpret their 'Evangelic orientation' in the light of the lessons provided by the Vatican Council II (1962-1965), the Medellín Bishops' Conference (1968) and some other influential publications in the 1960s/1970s that advocated the need for the development of a renewed 'content of pastoral work'. The promotion of social, economic and political justice and an active participation in the 'transformation of the world' in order to liberate 'the people' from all their oppressions became seen as a constitutive element in the prediction of 'the Evangelic'. A critical perspective on the injustices within the current reality of the people became a guiding principle for (socio-political) judgement and action. The lack of respect for cultural-diversity; instances of (social, political, economic and cultural) inequalities; the 'moral decomposition' in social and political (public and private) life; the capitalist nature of the Colombian economy; the continuous violation of human rights; and the progressive deterioration of the political parties were seen as the profound injustices within the Colombian State. The Missionaries' observation of the continued (social, political, cultural and economic) marginalised position of the Afro-Colombian population; their invisibility in the (national) political sphere; and the implementation of 'neoliberal' development projects in the region -that further threatened the living environment of these communities whilst not overcoming their marginalised position- led them to conclude that these 'contradictions within the socio-political order'- obliged them to commit themselves to a transformation of the living conditions in which 'their communities' lived.

The Claretians developed a socio-political vision that recognised the contradictions within the Colombian State's project and started to develop pastoral options that were the principle (socio-political) commitments within the 'Pastoral Project'. A critical examination of the local reality of the people and the interpretation and judgment according to these new 'Evangelic Principles' –that were ultimately manifested in their pastoral options- started to guide pastoral actions. The central pillars within this liberating mission became grounded in a fundamental option for 'life'; a focus on the poor and the oppressed; a commitment to a 'liberating evangelisation'; a respect for cultural diversity, traditions and customs (the principle of 'enculturation'); the '*Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*' (small organisational units that recognise the initiatives of the population); social organisations (in order to overcome the risk of a lack of community organisation); and the defence and preservation of the territory and the environment (grounded in an idea that the territory is ultimately the living ground of the different communities and is threatened by political economic interests). By these pastoral commitments the Claretians aimed to grasp

the 'contradictions inherent in the dominant social order' that they saw as being in contrast with the 'plan of the Creator'. Consequently with the adoptions of these socio-political commitments, the Claretians started to position themselves within these contradictions as active transformers that were responsible to produce and pass over knowledge in society. They evolved into '*organic intellectual*'. The development of an alternative worldview and a coherent socio-cultural history was used to critique the *ideational* and *material* reality of the hegemonic class project, based on a long-term (socio-political) vision of a desirable liberation.

In the early 1980s, different missionaries started to live permanently in the rural communities of *Atrato-Region*. Here they started to incorporate the content of their liberating mission in a social and religious formation of the communities within the '*Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*'. Due to their increased interaction with the rural communities and the incorporation of their socio-political vision in the 'prediction of the Evangelic', they started to disseminate their (socio-political) ideas within the Atrato-communities. Here, they were promoting a critical attitude by the principle of 'transformative practice' (see, judge and act). For Gramsci, any counter-hegemonic project needs '*organic intellectual*' as key actors in the creation of an alternative philosophy that is (socially, politically and historically) coherent, elaborated, centralised and politically organised. If such a conception of the world exists, is disseminated within the 'masses', and is able to transcend the prevailing common sense of the people -by integrating a critical and conscious perspective of reality within prevailing ideologies- it has counter-hegemonic potential. The missionaries succeeded in creating a greater class awareness between the Afro-Colombian communities along the Atrato river, by educating them in a critical vision upon their position as a minority group in the wider Colombian society. This was strengthened further by the promotion of a socio-political narrative that the recognised their cultural diversity and the communities' connection to their lands. The missionaries integrated their '*philosophy of praxis*' in the lived realities of the communities, by selecting and revalidating the elements in their 'feelings', every day conceptions and world views that corresponded with their 'liberating evangelisation'.

The Claretians –and other missionaries that supported this 'social compromise'- succeeded in the creation of a base of critical Afro-Colombians that started to commit themselves to the process of community organisation and the defence of their natural resources. With the first wood-concessions in the *Bajo Atrato* region, the 'threat' of their marginalised (political) status and lack of property rights had become visible for the communities. With this increased visibility of state-interest in the communities' lands, the organisational process accelerated and resulted in the emergence of the first rural 'popular farmers organisation' (ACIA) aiming to defend 'life and territory'. While the organisational process was not completely matured, a group of new leaders had been created that were to represent a new upcoming class.

The constitutional negotiation of 1991 became a specific (Gramscian) 'situation' in which structural forces, conjunctural phenomena and specific events came together and provided this 'counter-hegemonic project' with a potential to put their claims forward within the national hegemonic structure. However, for any counter-hegemonic project to succeed, it needs to be incorporated in a 'mass movement' with a collective sense of purpose and a relatively homogeneous collective will. The 'intellectual project' of the missionaries had a relatively limited focus. The emergence of an urban ethnic social movement in the Southern Pacific that had been claiming a wider visibility and recognition of the 'black population' in Colombia provided the crucial alliance to extend the project and have a base sufficiently large to put pressure on the Colombian government. By uniting these two conceptions of the world –based on 1) a visibilisation of the Afro-Colombian population and citizenship and b) the need for territorial rights- the counter-hegemonic forces had been able to create a 'counter-hegemonic movement' of sufficient size to be able to challenge the dominant status-quo. Ultimately, this resulted in a recognition of their status as minority group in the

constitution of 1991, while the territorial demands of the rural population resulted in the promise of a territorial law that would benefit the '*comunidades negras*'.

With the institutional recognition of the 'ethnic status' of the Afro-Colombians, the development of the *ley 70* and *Decreto 1745* had been a collaborative effort of government institutions and some community representatives. The main pillars of what would become the *ley 70* had already been reflected in the 'socio-political narrative' of the 'intellectual project' of the Claretian Missionaries. Some form of 'ethno-territoriality' had preceded the constitutional recognition within the 'intellectual project'. Within their socio-political vision (and the socio-cultural history), the Afro-Colombians were seen as a distinct population with their own 'proper' history, culture and customs that were the rightful owners of the territories –as a space for life and culture- upon which they had been living since the abolition of slavery. This vision found a voice within the rural popular organisations' political mission: 'defend life and territory'. Which had resulted in the mission of obtaining collective territorial rights in order to defend themselves against the state's interest in their territories. The principles of enculturation and the defence of the territory and natural resources as the living ground of the Afro-Colombian communities had been an instrumental discursive formation for the 'ethno-territorial' law to develop. However, with the 'ethnicisation' of their minority group status, this focus would have a more prominent character in the development of the upcoming territorial law. The 'ethnicisation of blackness' catalysed the emergence of a new regime of representation in which a 'black otherness' with a territory, traditional practices, an ethnic identity and specific rights became the central pillars within the 'black social movement' as a whole (Restrepo, 2002; Escobar, 2008).

8.3.2 The interaction between the counter-hegemonic project and the context of Structural Violence

This section answers the sub-question two: *How has the context of structural violence influenced this project?*

The Claretian Missionaries' approach had been based on a critical perspective on reality that moved away from the more conservative doctrinal orientation of the National Catholic Church and criticised the situations of 'oppression' and injustice within the Colombian society as a whole. This perspective had been a reaction on the *background contours* that had manifested themselves in the 'relationships of exploitation' in wider society. The background contours were those aspects of the wider culture, governance arrangements, institutions, social roles and norms that (historically) had permitted the 'materialisation of the hegemonic social order'.

Within the 'intellectual project' of the 1980s, two main forms of criticism had been used. One was directed at the social form -the continued political marginalisation of the Afro-Colombians. And the other was directed at the economic content – the emergence of a neoliberal export-oriented economic model- of the Colombian State. With the institutional opening of the constitutional negotiations of 1991, the counter-hegemonic project had been able to put its claim forward by uniting forces with a wider 'black social movement' that was able to put sufficient pressure on the Colombian government to recognise Colombia as a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country, whilst promising a territorial law in the near future.

While this achievement could be seen as an important victory on behalf of the counter-hegemonic forces, this thesis claims that the scope and content of this institutional recognition did not result in challenging the hegemonic order within the Colombian society. Rather, it should be understood as a '*passive revolution*': an attempt of 'restoration' by the hegemonic elite. Whilst the state had failed to incorporate the Afro-Colombians in their hegemonic state project, and therefore, had left a political void in which alternative conceptions could develop that started to question the 'naturalised' geographical, political and cultural distinctions of the hegemonic project. Thus, the acceptance of the ideational and material pillars of the 'hegemonic state project' came into crisis. Nevertheless, by (1) including a new social group within the hegemony of the political order without granting them more control over politics; and (2) accepting

certain demands that were accommodated within the hegemonic social formation. This institutional recognition did not result in challenging the dominant status quo. Whereas the *consejos comunitarios* became a new governance body (and they gained some form of authority) they still needed to operate within the wider hegemonic political structure. Furthermore, their authority had been conditioned by the specific social and ecological functions they were assigned to fulfil and, while needing to comply with other forms of regulation, were developed at a national level. The law's limited geographical scope and (artificial) ethnic focus only benefitted a segment of the rural Afro-Colombians, whilst posing questions on how the assumed 'territorial, organisational and cultural unity' reflects the reality of the rural Afro-Colombians for which the law was destined.

On the other hand, the *ley 70* easily fitted into the '*philosophy of praxis*' of the 'global neoliberal project' that increasingly influenced the actions of the Colombian government since the early 1980s. With the identification of the Pacific region as a 'new frontier of development' the Colombian government decided to open up its territory for international investments. Here, - in order to guarantee the optimal conditions for investment- various international institutions (such as the World Bank, UNDP, Inter-American Development Bank, etc.) and powerful trade partners (e.g. the US and Europe) started to influence the conditions for international trade. Their influence could be perceived by the way in which the political project of neoliberalism had entered these policy circles and had changed the frameworks upon which these institutions started to condition the social, economic and political terms under which the 'neoliberal project' ought to be implemented. This reflects the 'uneven geographies of capital accumulation' within the 'global hegemonic social order'. The structural adjustment and stabilisation packages of the 1970s, the principles of marketisation and deregulation of the 1980s, and the 'interventionist agenda' of the 1990s conditioned the ways in which Colombia was able to participate in this global 'neoliberal project'. The unequal (international) trade relations favoured an international collaboration with the Colombian State in order to get access to the primary resources. This was reflected in various trade agreements, such as the WTO free trade agreement, the Andean Trade Preferences Act and the EU Free Trade Agreement and bilateral agreements as 'Plan Colombia'. At the same time, international treaties as the ILO Convention on Minority Rights (ILO 169) -ratified by the Colombian government in 1989- further conditioned the state's scope of action.

In order to meet the requirements posed by these trade partners the Colombian government needed to support the popular "discourses of reform" at that time, such as the discourses of minority rights; sustainable development; social capital; modernisation based on a respect for social, ethnic, cultural and natural diversity; and the political participation of local actors. Thus in order to implement a local version of the (global) neoliberal project, the Colombian State needed to meet these conditions of trade. It is argued that the implementation of the *ley 70* could be seen as the 'nodal point of interconnection' where the global neoliberal project via the 'hegemonic project' of the Colombian State had conditioned the ways in which the material facts on the ground (e.g. in the Pacific region) would unfold. As such within the global neoliberal project, the discourses on ethnic diversity, local participation and sustainable development became integrated within the discursive formation of a 'green neoliberalism'. The recognition of Afro-Colombian minority rights and the recognition of collective territories in the Pacific region can be understood as an extension of the state's neoliberal orientation within its *philosophy of praxis* by its compatibility with the new orientations within the 'global neoliberal project'. Thus, the institutionalisation of class demands permitted the Colombian government to maintain its' political control and social formation according to their own 'hegemonic conception of the world'.

In the course of the 1990s and 2000s, the Colombian State further developed its 'neoliberal-oriented' 'hegemonic conception of the world' at *ideational* and *material* levels. The further consolidation of the state's neoliberal orientation in national development plans and various institutional and legal reforms paved the way for further implementation of (neoliberal) interests in the country. While the Chocó had

already been an interesting region since the 1980s, with identification of ‘mining’ as an ‘engine for growth’, the interest in the department’s subsoil would only grow. Furthermore, different institutional arrangements paved the way for the implementation of these ‘projects’. The state’s counter-insurgency rhetoric would further help the state to semi-legitimately resort to the use of force, in order to facilitate the implementation of mega-projects in titled territories. In addition, an international discourse of ‘democratic security’ was used to legitimise the state’s actions. In the specific case of Colombia, where the relationship between violence, elite interests, control of natural resources and ‘para-politics’ already has a long history, the deployment of force in order to pursue political goals is not uncommon. While the *ley 70* granted the rural Afro-Colombian communities the right to collective territories, the presence of armed actors in the region and the new forms of legislation provided a way to undermine the collectively owned territories by the way it affected daily life in the territories. The communities were confronted with the direct and indirect effects of the presence of armed actors and neoliberal interests that resulted in: 1) waves of displacement, intimidation and murder; 2) an altering of the landscape that did not correspond with the way in which the ethno-territorial organisations had envisaged their territories to be developed; and 3) further undermined the ethno-territorial organisations’ political discourse and authority as a new governance body. The criminalisation of small-scale mining and the distinction between a right on soil versus a right on the subsoil provided the state with a ‘legitimate’ legal position to continue to promote the ‘mining-boom’.

With the institutionalisation of Claretian-Initiated Counter-hegemonic Project, the ethnic and territorial pillars of their ‘alternative conception of the world’ had been incorporated within the dominant governance structure. The ethno-territorial organisations –as the representative governance units- got the right to engage in a form of identity politics and ethno-development based on their status as Colombian citizens. They were granted the possibility to claim collective territories and consequently gained a form of ‘territorial power’. However their authority as a new governance unit was limited to a specific social and ecological function, in order to protect the cultural identity and rights of their ‘ethnic group’ whilst being able to engage in the promotion of economic and social development. The counter-revolutionary potential of the ‘*intellectual project*’ had been accommodated within the dominant social structure. An ‘incorporative hegemony’ had integrated the ethno-territorial organisations within the political structure of the Colombian society. This can be seen as a form of social power that crosses the divide between political and civil society. The production of ethnic and territorial distinctions allowed the Colombian State to incorporate the dissident voices within its philosophy of praxis; but the State made their power conditional upon the further development of the State’s hegemonic project and hereby contained their autonomy as a governance unit. On the one hand, the law had granted the ethno-territorial organisations the ability to put forward some legitimate claims –based on the rights they obtained; on the other hand, their obligations and duties as an ethno-territorial organisation conditioned their autonomy. Furthermore, ‘other claims’ could be disregarded, since the final authority would continue to be in the hands of the Colombian State.

The position of the Colombian State reflects the distinct ways in which territorial and capitalist logic of power operates. The state had been able to include some of the socio-political pillars of the (global) neoliberal project into its own political structure. By incorporating the (decentralised) *consejos comunitarios* within the (national) governance structure, the state was able to maintain control over how the Pacific territory would be organised in the near future.

With the institutionalisation of the ethno-territorial rights, the Diócesis of Quibdó changed its ‘intellectual role’ by adopting a supporting role, while focussing on the new urgencies that had become salient in their area of jurisdiction. At the same time, the ethno-territorial organisations needed to conform to the duties and obligations that had been part of the *ley 70* and *Decreto 1745* in order to become the decentralised governance unit they were assigned to be. The difference in the spatio-temporal development of the two

ethno-territorial organisations, COCOMACIA and COCOMOPOCA, illustrates the distinct ways in which these organisations had been able to position themselves within the civil society/political society dialectic. The two-sided incorporation and exclusion of claims had left the ethno-territorial organisations somewhere in between the two axes. The main pillars of their acquired ethno-territorial status were incorporated in the structure of political society, while the limited focus of their status as ‘political subject’ and ‘subject of rights’ easily disregarded the claims that were not corresponding with the predetermined limits of their ‘claims’.

COCOMACIA had been able to obtain its collective land titles in 1997, and started to further develop their organisational structure in order to enforce their (multi-layered) governance structure and implement the rights that they had been granted. With the escalation of violence –and facilitated by their internationally recognised status within the emancipation process- the organisation became increasingly concerned with providing social and humanitarian assistance, as the international community provided the organisation with the resources to be able to engage in these activities. COCOMACIA’s concentration on these social and humanitarian activities placed their efforts within a wider (global) civil society concerned with containing the negative effects that had emerged within the context of structural violence. Internally their organisational development as a governance unit stagnated. This started to erode the ‘legitimacy’ of their status as community representatives at a community level. The provision of social and humanitarian assistance and the lack of development of its ‘internal governance structure’ let the organisation move away from the main pillars of the ethno-territorial project. The consequence was that the law’s main pillars did not find resonance at a local level. Furthermore, being seen as an ‘implementer of projects’ undermined their ‘legitimacy’ as a representative of the communities. At the same time, the concentration on this range of social activities moved their attention away from the development of a (re)newed political vision that would be able to grasp the effects of the changed context of structural violence

COCOMOPOCA on the other hand continued to focus on political action. COCOMOPOCA’s process of obtaining collective land titles had already placed their political mission within the new conjuncture. Their organisation needed to adapt its strategy in order to find ways to encourage the Colombian state to comply with the requested collective land titles. COCOMOPOCA realised that within this new conjuncture, the main challenge had been to find the political willingness to obtain these territories. As they were the legitimate organisation to represent the communities in the *Alto Atrato* Region, they were granted the right to make this territorial claim. Within this new conjuncture, the organisation started to use its’ political status as a strategy to increase the political advocacy for their cause. By using the authority that had been granted over the ethno-development of their territories, the organisation started to present alternative ways to develop their territories that corresponded with the social and ecological functions that the law had specified. As a consequence, the organisation started to look for ways to increase the political advocacy of their message in order to affirm their legitimacy of their authority and claims. Thus far, the organisation’s main activities have been concentrated on the development of political strategies meant to find ways in which the Colombian State would comply with its duties. Another crucial difference had been that COCOMOPOCA maintained close ties with its communities, and constantly has been reinforcing its organisational structure from below in order to be the legitimate authority for their communities. As such, COCOMOPOCA has concentrated mainly on actions within political society in order to achieve its’ goal.

8.3.3 Conclusion

The institutionalisation of the main pillars of the ‘intellectual-project’ of the Claretian Missionaries had integrated the ethno-territorial organisations COCOMACIA and COCOMOPOCA within the hegemonic social ordering of the Colombian society. Some of the claims that these organisations had put forward had been incorporated within the ethnic and territorial rights the Afro-Colombian community had been granted. The institutionalisation of these rights made their ‘scope and content’ of action conditional upon the limits that were posed by the Colombian State. Although the laws had provided a framework to put

forward some claims, at the same time, they had the ability to exclude other claims. Implementing the law was conditional on the specific social and ecological functions that had been ascribed to an 'ethnic group'. Furthermore, the Colombian State would possess the ultimate (territorial) power to further consolidate the limits of authority in the assigned territories, as the ethno-territorial law was conditional upon the other forms of regulation that were formulated at a national level and, thus, could further consolidate the state's *philosophy of praxis*. The state still possessed the power to determine the ways in which state power would be constituted, organised and exercised in these specific territories. However, as this 'incorporative hegemony' had been built on a form of social power that crossed the boundaries between political and civil society, this thesis demonstrates that the scope (and content) of authority of the ethno-territorial organisations had been limited. It has offered these organisations a way to use their status as (institutionally) recognised governance unit to put pressure on the Colombian Government by using their institutional basis as the legitimate (political) governance unit to search for international solidarity that recognises their political claims. Thereby, they built upon the political power (and corresponding rights) that they had been granted. The escalation of violence and continued development of the Colombian State's neoliberal orientation confront these ethno-territorial organisations with a range of new challenges in their communities. Their institutional recognition provides these organisations with a mechanism to use their political status to develop political counter-strategies against the inequalities inherent in the Colombian State's hegemonic patterning of society.

I want to conclude with the saying '*Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will*' that is mistakenly attributed to Gramsci, but does reflect his main philosophy and allows me to conclude with a last message. The institutionalisation of these ethno-territorial demands pose limitations on the scope and content to protect the cultural identity and rights of the Afro-Colombians, whilst promoting their social and economic development. These efforts continue to be threatened by the further development of the state's hegemonic project. However, they have allowed these counter-hegemonic forces to increase their visibility and political legitimacy to defend their 'culture' and 'territory'. As such, when building upon this legitimised status and the resonance these ethno-territorial pillars have within international discourses, a form of counter-hegemony is still possible by extending the political message of these organisations.

8.4 Relevance of this research

This research responds to the 'lack of knowledge' about the efforts of the Claretian Missionaries in the promotion of a process of community organisation in the Atrato-region by questioning how and why a specific socio-political vision on reality has guided their actions. At the same time, this research extends the research done in this region by incorporating a range of different challenges that have manifested themselves at a local level. Whilst in the prevailing scientific literature these different challenges –more often than not– are discussed in their singularity, this thesis has incorporated them as part of the 'philosophy of praxis' of the Colombian State. As such, this thesis has linked these different challenges to the analysis of the emergence and development of this process of community organisation. This thesis integrated the various discussions about the role of the global neoliberal project in contemporary land questions (Borras Jr. et al, 2012); the role of nature, space and territory in the consolidation of state-power (Ballvé, 2011; Brenner & Elden, 2009; Ekers et al, 2012); the compatibility of the ideological dimensions of neoliberal capitalism and the 'democratic' state and their intersection with the state-logic of power and capital accumulation (Goldman, 2005; Harvey, 2005; Peck & Tickell, 2000); the compatibility of the discourse of 'multi-culturalism' with a neoliberal framework (Hale, 2006); and the observation of the linkages between violence and marginalisation in Colombia and the promotion of a neoliberal export oriented enclave model, based on natural resource extraction (Flórez López & Millán Echeverría, 2007; Higginbottom, 2005; Latimer, 2012).

This thesis argues that a Gramsci-inspired perspective allows us to integrate these different observations by following Gillian Hart's observation that critical ethnographies of globalisation are the starting point for an analysis of the different (multi-scalar) political processes that determine, connect and articulate the materiality on the ground. Therefore, this thesis departs from the local particularities of the Claretian-Initiated process of community organisations and has questioned how this particular materiality is connected to wider political processes that intersect along different spatial scales. It permits a multi-scalar perspective that discusses the manifestation of a particular political process in its interaction with national and global process. In the present day, these discussions are of profound importance as they acknowledge the interconnectedness of politico-economic process, whilst not obscuring the local or the global in its singularity. At the same time, as the neoliberal project increasingly is conditioning the political practices of a range of national, regional and local political actors, it becomes increasingly relevant to study this exact interaction at different points of time and its implications for the most marginalised in society. An anthropology of the margins of society is ultimately meant to challenge the 'Western concepts' from within. As such, a reflection on the contemporary world has to be related to: 1) the particular situation, 2) the shape and form in which a reality takes place, and 3) a redefinition of what the role of the social sciences is supposed to be in a situation of global interconnectedness (Arce & Long, 2010). This Gramsci-inspired analysis has allowed me to engage in a critical analysis of the 'hegemonic' relations of (politico-economic) exploitation in Colombian society, whilst connecting it to the wider 'global' interconnected nature of the politico-economic system.

This research has faced some limitations that influenced the ways in which it could make claims about the interaction between the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces. Firstly, as the security situation did not permit a focus at a community level, the observations of impacts at this level are based on secondary accounts and observations that were articulated in other scientific literature. Therefore, this research has not been able to cross-check these findings. Hence, it limits the strength of my argument. Secondly, as this research has been focussed on interviewing the protagonists within this organisational process and has not been engaged in interviews in which representatives of other governance layers (e.g. municipalities), this research has not been able to investigate the interaction between these layers of the Colombian (overall) governance structure. What this thesis lacks, therefore, is the incorporation of these 'layers' in the analysis of the interaction between global, national, regional and local processes. At the same time, this thesis is highly dependent on the particularities of the emancipation process in this particular region in Colombia. It has not been focussed on the range of ethno-territorial organisations that have been established with the emergence of the *ley 70*. This thesis claims that the ethno-territoriality has originated within the Claretian 'conception of the world' –which is confirmed by different scholars as Restrepo (2008), Escobar (2003; 2008)- and argues that this 'ethno-territorial discourse' has influenced the scope and content of the authority of the ethno-territorial organisations and their specific socio-spatial development. As the efforts of the Claretians have been (historically) concentrated in the Atrato-region, this thesis is not able to make claims about the strength of this ethno-territoriality in other parts of the Pacific region. There, alternative interpretations could be possible when considering the comments about the 'artificiality' of this ethnic discourse and the important role of the Claretians in its promotion. This leaves the question open about how this ethno-territoriality has manifested itself in different parts of the Pacific region and has –consequently- influenced the ability of other ethno-territorial organisations to develop their territorial governance.

8.5 Suggestions for further research

In line with the presented limitations of this research and some analytical comments made in the course of this thesis, I want to propose some suggestions for future research, by phrasing some questions that continue to be unanswered:

- Do the ethno-territorial pillars of the *ley 70* reflect the perceptions and needs of the rural communities?
- How does the context of structural violence influence the lived experience of the rural communities?
- How does this ethno-territorial discourse resonate in parts of the Pacific region in which the Claretian Missionaries did not promote an ‘intellectual project’?
- What is the role (and attitude) of other decentralised layers of the Colombian governance structure in the implementation of the *ley 70*?

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Annexes

Annex 1: Overview of Pastoral Options 2013 (Spanish)

OPCIONES PASTORALES DE LA DIÓCESIS DE QUIBDÓ ANNO 2013

El Plan de Pastoral, se desarrolla en el marco de las Opciones Pastorales que orientan nuestro camino. Un camino confirmado por la Conferencia de Obispos Latinoamericanos en Puebla y Santo Domingo:

1. Frente a la angustiosa situación de la vida de nuestro pueblo, tan sutil y tan silenciosamente diezmada, y frente a la amenaza de etnocidio a las comunidades negras e indígenas, hacemos explícita nuestra OPCION FUNDAMENTAL POR LA VIDA, como el don supremo que Dios ha dado al Hombre.
2. Optamos por los POBRES Y OPRIMIDOS, predilectos de Jesús, portadores de una vida empobrecida, marginada y siempre amenazada, buscando que ellos sean protagonistas de su propia historia, y que sea respetada su dignidad y su vida.
3. Optamos por una EVANGELIZACIÓN LIBERADORA, que nos lleve a adoptar los medios y el modo como Jesús evangelizó, anunciando al Dios de la vida, su Padre.
4. Optamos por las COMUNIDADES ECLESIALES DE BASE, fermento evangélico de vida y modelo de una Iglesia renovada.
5. Optamos por las ORGANIZACIONES DE BASE, entre indígenas, campesinos y marginados, a fin de que esta vida que peligra se agrupe para defenderse y para ser continuadores de la acción evangelizadora.
6. Optamos por la DEFENSA Y PRESERVACIÓN DE LOS RECURSOS NATURALES Y DEL MEDIOAMBIENTE, fundamentales para la vida, y demás bienes codiciados por intereses económicos nacionales e internacionales, frente a lo cual debemos tener criterios y posiciones siempre claras en favor del pueblo.
7. Optamos por una IGLESIA INCULTURADA, que refleje siempre los valores de nuestro pueblo, ya que éstos son expresión de la vida del mismo.
8. Optamos por una evangelización que LIBERE A LA MUJER, quien por ser objeto de discriminación sexual, social y étnica, es 'triplemente' explotada por la estructura social vigente, a fin de que ella, símbolo de vida y portadora de cultura, se convierta en mujer liberada -como María- y así genere una nueva sociedad desde su ser femenino”.
9. Optamos por UNA IGLESIA ABIERTA A LA ACCIÓN ECUMÉNICA y al diálogo interreligioso, símbolo de la vida que respeta y ama la diversidad.
10. Optamos por LA DEFENSA Y PROMOCIÓN DE LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS y de los derechos de los pueblos, como compromiso profético de nuestra acción pastoral y práctica que transforma también a la Iglesia.
11. Optamos por la INFANCIA Y LA JUVENTUD, SECTORES MAYORITARIOS Y VULNERABLES DE LA SOCIEDAD con el fin de revitalizar, articular y dinamizar procesos de evangelización, inclusión y promoción integral, dignificando sus vidas como esperanza de la iglesia y la sociedad

(source: <http://diocesisquibdo.org/Opciones/OpcionesPastoral.aspx>)

