Zonas de Reserva Campesina

An alternative model for rural development in Colombia

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Summary

Worldwide resistance against neoliberal capitalist forms of development is growing. Latin America has been named a breeding ground for such resistance, with several governments adopting policies that move away from the hegemony of neoliberalism, often spurred by the mobilization of social movements. In Colombia neoliberalism is still very much alive, but an alternative model for development has been presented in the form of the Zonas de Reserva Campesina model. This model has been designed and advocated by campesino communities from throughout Colombia, who demanded their right to territory and a dignified life to be fulfilled after years of failed agrarian reform left them in a marginalized position. The model poses restrictions to rural landownership to counter the monopolizing of land that has been characteristic of the country for many years, as well as striving to stimulate the campesino economy and environmental sustainability in these zones.

This study assesses the extent to which this model contributes to locally driven sustainable livelihoods for rural communities in Colombia, by providing an in-depth look of the history of the model, the ways in which campesino communities have been and still are involved in the creation and expansion of the model, and the environmental sustainability aspects. It incorporates concepts such as political ecology, food sovereignty, post-development and social identity to analyze these issues.

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1. Introduction

Neoliberal capitalism has brought a large share of the global population, as well as our natural environment, more bad than good. This conviction is upheld by a growing number of people worldwide. Neoliberal capitalism emphasizes the need for governments to draw back from economic matters and puts continuous economic growth at the forefront of what countries and their inhabitants should strive for (Kotz, 2008). But voices criticizing these policies have grown louder and louder in recent years. Within the sustainable development realm, the notion that there are environmental limits to growth is widely accepted. In addition, it has been argued that there might be social, political and institutional limits to traditional Western forms of development, most importantly neoliberal form of capitalism (Robinson, 2004). Opponents of neoliberal policies aimed at incorporation into global market structures argue that the proliferation of these models stimulates unsustainable behavior. Neoliberalism is also asserted to create a division between winners and losers: those who manage to enter global market structures can thrive, while those who do not become marginalized and left with few opportunities for development (Barkin, 1997). Furthermore, the business models of modernization and industrialization that are promoted by these models have been linked to environmental degradation, which has a negative impact on people who are dependent on their natural environment to provide for their daily needs. Often, this means that groups that already have a marginal position within society, such as rural communities, indigenous people, and women, are hit hardest (Baud et al., 2011).

For many governments of countries in the Global South, the emphasis in development policies lies on finding ways to incorporate regions and communities into global structures and out of the margins. This vision is largely based upon the premise that in order for development to occur, economic growth is necessary. However, with economic inequality and environmental problems increasing worldwide, criticism towards this model is growing. As environmental degradation, poverty and inequality are not only continuing, but in many cases growing, it becomes more and more important to move away from established measures that have failed to work for many, and look for alternative solutions. Such solutions are often found in moving away from neoliberalism, towards a more pluralistic notion of development (Villalba, 2013). Those adhering to this perspective argue that the mainstream development project has failed to deliver for many people. Instead, they contend, development should come from the people themselves, and take local needs, contexts, relations, and history into account (Bennett, 2012). Furthermore, rather than focusing on becoming integrated into capitalist market structures, alternatives to this model should be brought forward (Barkin, 1997). With all the damage that these models have done to both nature and

humans, the necessary step would be to move away from them, rather than increase their power (Bennett, 2012). Grassroots organizations like La Vía Campesina have also spoken out against neoliberalism and globalization, proposing to pursue food sovereignty: a human rights based approach to land, in which farmers, their livelihoods and protection of the environment is central (Altieri, 2009).

The Latin American region has been called the only region in the world where processes countering the current neoliberal hegemony are taking place at state level (Escobar, 2010), with several countries adopting measures that move away from orthodox neoliberalism towards a model in which states take on an enhanced role with regard to development issues, for example through increased social spending (Grugel & Riggirozzi, 2012). As such, Latin America can be seen as the global center of resistance against hegemonic power structures, and the place where alternatives to this construction are produced (Escobar, 2010). In addition to measures taken at state level, grassroots organization have taken the lead in countering the dominance of neoliberalism. Food sovereignty has been adopted by many community organizations as an alternative to the current production model (Altieri, 2009).

Within Colombia land is an important issue, around which problems have been present for over a century. The inequality in access to land has driven many of the weaker segments of the population into marginalization, thereby increasing social and economic inequality further and further. The importance of land ownership and policies is illustrated by the fact that land plays an important part in the current peace talks between the Colombian government and rebel group FARC[1], and was the first topic that was on the agenda for these peace talks (BBC, 2015). With a government that is very receptive to corporate involvement in the country, both social and environmental issues deriving from land use are increasing. As campesinos[2] are losing their land and livelihoods, many have put their faith in the declaration of '*Zonas de Reserva Campesina*' (ZRC), or Peasant Reserve Zones. These regions are to ensure campesinos that their livelihoods and land rights are safe (Rodriguez, 2013).

[1] FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) is a rebel organization that has been involved in the Colombian armed conflict since 1964. It is the oldest and largest of Colombia's left-wing rebel groups (www.unric.org).

[2] Within this report the term campesinos will be consistently used. Campesino is the Spanish term that is used throughout Latin America to refer to peasants and inhabitants of rural areas. As the term brings a number of specific connotations and meanings with it the choice has been made to use this Spanish term rather than translating it in English.

With Colombian farmers increasingly turning their back to neoliberal policies and demanding the expansion of ZRC, the question is: could this model be a solution that protects livelihoods of peasant communities and the natural environment they depend on? By considering to what extent this model contributes to locally driven sustainable livelihoods, in which the human rights of small-scale producers are protected and environmental conservation can be pursued through the use of sustainable agricultural models, this research will evaluate these questions.

Research aim and -questions

The aim of this research is to provide an in-depth look into the ZRC model, and its effectiveness as an alternative model for rural development in Colombia. With the backlash against neoliberalism growing worldwide, it is important to gain more insight into the validity of alternative development models and to see how they work in a society that is still following the hegemony of neoliberalism. The study also aims to provide insights into the strategies used by social movements to influence public policies that have impact on their everyday lives. And lastly, it considers how environmental conservation is part of the strategies for development used by local communities.

Following from this, the main research question of this study is:

To what extent does the Zonas de Reserva Campesina model contribute to enabling locally driven sustainable livelihoods for rural communities in Colombia?

To answer this main question, the following sub-questions have been used:

- *What does the ZRC model entail?* In order to deepen understanding of the nature of the ZRC model, it is essential to further describe what the model entails. A more in-depth history of the agrarian situation in Colombia and the ZRC model itself, as well as the model's current status will be reviewed. By describing these characteristics of the model readers can obtain more knowledge on what the base for the model has been, and the important role that social movements have played in getting it established.

- *What is the organization model of the ZRC?* Food sovereignty places the emphasis on models that are led by grassroots movements, and where those who provide food are in control over their territory. It is presented as a political program in which the modes of production are controlled by non-state actors (farmers and their communities). However, this does not mean that it rejects the state altogether. Rather, it is inclusive of the state and depends on the use of its power to react against the neoliberal globalized food system (Clark, 2013). Following from this, this research will assess who are in control of the zones, if there is an overarching organization concerned with

the model, and to what extent inhabitants are able to control their territory and have a say in development plans and decision making.

- *To what extent is environmental conservation part of the ZRC model?* With loss of biodiversity and environmental degradation being major problems in Colombia, the ecological impacts of production systems will be an important aspect of this study. Food sovereignty, one of the theoretical concepts used for this study, emphasizes that food production and distribution systems should be able to protect natural resources and avoid industrial agricultural methods with high external inputs. A good example of this is the use of agroecological methods. Agroecology refers to the application of ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agro ecosystems, with a minimal dependence on agrochemical and energy inputs (Altieri & Nicholls, 2008). Indicators of environmental conservation that will be included are use of agrochemicals, the diversity of crops on plots and inclusion of agroecology in agricultural approaches.

- *To what extent are traditional and/or local food production models used and shared within and among the ZRC? F*ood sovereignty and alternative development approaches to development stress building on skills and local knowledge, rather than using external systems that could be ill-adapted to local circumstances. By researching whether and how different farming communities work together and spread traditional and local knowledge this aspect of food sovereignty will be taken into account.

- *To what extent can the ZRC model be considered a national strategy to solve campesino grievances within Colombia?* With peasant problems arising from discontent with outcomes of neoliberal agrarian reform being widespread in Colombia, and leading to a number of strikes it is important to see if the ZRC model can provide a solution to these grievances. As such, the extent to which the model is a national strategy will be researched, as well as if and how this strategy manages to counter the hegemony of neoliberalism. In addition to looking at strategies from peasant organizations themselves, the stance that different governmental bodies are taking towards the ZRC and their possible extension will be researched.

Societal and scientific relevance

A number of factors make this study a relevant contribution to the field of sustainable development. Discontent with neoliberalism is growing worldwide, along with poverty and environmental problems. However, declarations of discontent alone are not sufficient. There is need for viable alternatives that can help protect livelihoods of marginalized populations while also protecting the

natural environment. With regard to alternative approaches to development, such as the post-development and food sovereignty paradigms, it has been argued that while these offer an outcome to strive for, they fail to provide viable ways to accomplish this goal (Akram-Lodhi, 2013). Studying the potential of a model that could possibly be used by proponents of alternative approaches to development, such as the food sovereignty movement, is thus necessary. The fact that very little international academic research has been done on the ZRC model adds further to the relevance of this study within scientific debates.

In addition, few scholars have analyzed internal organizational processes and alliances with respect to particular policy issues within grassroots movements. Questions of whether, why, and how movements seek to integrate local policy-making into a broader national strategy that may provide broader impacts also need further exploration. The ability of social movements to challenge dominant political and economic forces is still regarded with skepticism (Rodriguez, 2013). With global calls for exactly these issues growing, it is necessary to move away from such skepticism and to bring forward constructive research that is grounded in local realities. Assessing the extent to which the ZRC movement has been able to influence national decision making is therefore highly relevant.

ZRC are receiving a great deal of attention within Colombia. The struggle over land has been named one of the main factors in its violent civil war (Thomson, 2011), and plays an important role in the peace talks between rebel organization FARC and the Colombian government, currently being undertaken in Havana, Cuba (BBC, 2015). Whereas earlier agrarian policies in Colombia have continuously restrained and stigmatized peasant populations (Thomson, 2011), this is a model that is supported by these groups and could contribute to inclusive development, thereby contributing to the peace process.

Furthermore, Colombia is one of the world's 'megadiverse' countries, hosting around 10% of the world's biodiversity. With increasing social inequality and the implementation of extensive agricultural models named as being among the main drivers of and pressures on changes in biodiversity and ecosystems (source: www.cbd.int), it is important to evaluate the potential of alternative models like ZRC for environmental conservation.

The structure for the remaining part of this report is as follows:

Part I: Research framework

In this first part of the report the framework for this research is set out.

Chapter 2: Literature review

In this chapter the literature that has been reviewed for this study will be discussed. Topics that are included are the growing backlash to neoliberalism, alternative forms of development that have been brought forward within the post-development paradigm and food sovereignty, which can be seen as an example of one of those alternative development models.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

The chapter concludes with an overview of the theoretical approaches that have been used in this research: the political ecology paradigm, livelihoods approach, post-development, food sovereignty, social identity and a community-based conservation paradigm. The appropriateness of these theories for this study as well as the linkages between them will be set out.

Chapter 4: Regional context

In this chapter the regional context of the study will be discussed. It places the growing criticism against neoliberal capitalism in a regional perspective, by highlighting the development of models that go beyond the neoliberal hegemony within the Latin American region. Attention is then placed on Colombia, where neoliberal policies have brought rural communities many grievances, of which a large share are related to access to land. As a response to this the Zonas de Reserva Campesina model has been created, which is introduced in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Methodology

The research methods used in this study, as well as the risk and limitations that have arisen during the execution of the study, have been set out.

Part II: Results

In this second part of the report, the findings that have been made are discussed.

Chapter 6: The history of agrarian reform in Colombia

This chapter provides the historical background against which the ZRC model has come about. It goes into the multiple failed agrarian reforms and the reactions that campesinos have had to these.

Chapter 7: Zonas de Reserva Campesina: model, legislation and current status

This chapter sets out the creation of the ZRC model as well as its contents and current status.

Chapter 8: Campesino strategies

Within this chapter the strategies used by campesinos to get their rights fulfilled and to establish the constitution of more ZRC are discussed, as well as the role that campesino organizations play in this process.

Chapter 9: Environmental sustainability in the ZRC

In this chapter the environmental sustainability aspects of the ZRC model are discussed.

Chapter 10: Case studies

These chapters go into the findings that have been made during visits to three ZRC, two of which have been constituted, Cabrera and Valle del Río Cimitarra, and one that awaits constitution, Montes de María. The history, sustainable development plans, local organizations are amongst the topics that are discussed for each of these case studies.

Chapter 11: Conclusion

In this chapter the findings will be linked to the theoretical framework that has been used for this study. The study will be summarized and the main research question and sub-questions will be answered. Furthermore, possible future research and policy recommendations will be given.

Part I: Research framework

2. Literature review

2.1 Neoliberalism in crisis

At the center of neoliberal thinking lies the segregation of economic affairs from society; economic rationality, which entails cost-benefit calculation and maximization of profits; competition as a necessity for growth and prosperity; the replacement of a subsistence economy, where products are manufactured, sold and consumed locally, with one that is focused on foreign trade and profit making; and a state that moves away from interfering with the economy and market forces (Harvey 2005). The neoliberal model can function globally and in all parts of the economy, society and even life itself. Throughout the years, neoliberalism has become more and more globalized (Von Werlhof, 2010). To spur this process, tariff barriers have been broken down, emphasis has increasingly been placed on international trade and economies have been opened up to the global market and foreign capital (Kay, 2008). Neoliberalism also prescribes that goods, services, capital, and money should be able to move freely across national borders. Thus, corporations, banks and investors should be able to move their goods across borders, but also to acquire property in other countries (Kotz, 2002). Globalization is commonly defined as a growth in the number of cross-border economic interactions and resource flows, which leads to a shift in the relations between national economies and between nation-states (Kotz, 2002: 8). Globalization of neoliberalism has paved the way for the creation of market oligopolies and monopolies, where certain big corporations dominate. This means that small enterprises have become largely excluded from the market. Around fifty percent of the worldwide population has no role within the global market, and this number continues to increase (Von Werlhof, 2010).

In large parts of the Global South, neoliberal policies have been successfully advocated, both by the US and institutions like the IMF and World Bank. Neoliberalism replaced the 'interventionist' approach that dominated roughly from the mid-1930s to the mid-1970s. In this interventionist approach the state was involved in many parts of society. Neoliberal theory states that a mostly unregulated capitalist system, or free market economy, is the way to achieve an optimal economic performance in terms of efficiency, economic growth, technical process, and distributional justice. The State is supposed to 'roll back' from economic matters and only be involved in defining property rights, enforcement of contracts, and regulation of the money supply (Kotz, 2002: pp. 1).

For the last twenty years the overall message worldwide has been that there is no alternative to neoliberalism, nor that one is needed (Von Werlhof, 2010). However, criticism towards neoliberal capitalism is growing, with many scholars pointing towards the 'crisis' in which neoliberalism

currently finds itself. It has become clear that neoliberalism has failed to deliver its promises of prosperity and economic growth for all. Critics argue that structural adjustments policies, neoliberal models and international economic integration are responsible for an increase in social inequality and decrease in the possibilities of fulfilling needs, rather than offering chances for development (Barkin, 1997). Whereas linkages between wealthier segments of society, on global as well as national, regional, and local levels, continue to strengthen (Murray & Overton, 2014), those that have not managed to become a part of such linkages find themselves increasingly marginalized.

Moreover, capitalist expansion and neoliberal processes are powerful drivers of environmental degradation, as they transform the impacts of industrial activities on the environment through changes in trade, investments and environmental regulation (Liverman & Vilas, 2006). The large-scale industrial projects associated with neoliberalism and its opening up of the global market have been linked to rapid deterioration of the natural environment, including deforestation, land degradation, use of harmful agrochemicals, and drainage of aquatic resources (Kaag & Zomers, 2014; Borras & Franco, 2012; Walker, 2005). Furthermore, the pressure to increase production, exports, and to welcome foreign ownership and concessions leave little room for countries to adopt conservation strategies (Liverman & Vilas, 2006).

Despite these allegations with regard to the harmful consequences neoliberal processes bring about, within a large share of the sustainable development paradigm neoliberalism continues to be promoted. This has spurred critics to argue that the sustainable development movement too often fails to address the biggest cause of environmental problems: our consumption patterns and the economic models that favor these. Whereas many sustainable development thinkers have argued that environmental issues can be solved through the use of technology and growth, others contend that environmental problems have structural causes, rooted in beliefs and behavior, and that sustainable development cannot occur without addressing these issues (Robinson, 2004). According to this view, if countries continue to adopt and reinforce models of neoliberalism, further expansion of environmental problems is inevitable (Redclift, 2014).

The continuation of poverty and environmental problems signals the need to look for strategies that do not necessarily revolve around communities becoming integrated into capitalist globalized economic structures, but rather focus on creating opportunities for development for those parts of the population that this model has made redundant, as well as for environmental conservation (Barkin, 1997).

2.2 Neoliberalism and agrarian reform

Rural communities are amongst those who are most negatively affected by neoliberal processes. In the 1990s, spurred by foreign donors, neoliberalism spread throughout Asia, Latin America and Africa. At the same time land policy became forefront in the agendas of international development agencies and nation-states. Whereas land reforms before this period actually posed limits to individual ownership and freed land up for the peasantry, the new, neoliberal, view was that this led to insufficient productivity and economic growth. Land that could previously not be sold was transformed into private, freehold land. As such, farmers could sell or lease their land to those who could use it to greater productivity (Zoomers, 2010). These new policies have become known as market-led agrarian reform (MLAR), although often nicely presented as 'anti-poverty community based' or 'legal empowerment of the poor' (Borras, 2008: pp. 262). With the advent of corresponding policies, including opening up domestic markets for foreign direct investment as a component of structural adjustment policies, foreign and domestic investors and corporations have been able to acquire more and more land.

MLAR was combined with the adoption of policies that enable increased production in commodity sectors. As a result, overexploitation and destruction of natural resources has grown considerably (Baud et al., 2011). In land used for large-scale industrial projects, such as mono-cropping agriculture and mining, the impacts on the natural environment are often severe. The use of large quantities of pesticides, genetically modified seeds and deforestation that accompany these projects frequently result in land erosion, floods, loss of biodiversity, and the emission of high quantities of CO2 (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005). Moreover, when land is being used to produce export products, local food security can become undermined (GRAIN, 2010).

The environmental degradation, taking of traditional land and loss of livelihoods that accompanied intensification of production for export resulted in increased poverty and stigmatization of many rural communities, including indigenous and peasant ones (Grugel & Riggirozzi, 2012). This is exacerbated by the persistent inequality in access to and control of land and natural resources resulting from policies favoring corporations, investors and landed elites. However, such social and environmental problems are commonly ignored by governmental bodies, as these projects contribute considerably to national economies (Baud et al., 2011).

One can question whether the economic profits that large-scale economic projects bring in for national economies outweigh the negative impacts on local livelihoods and the natural environment, especially when benefits and losses are dispersed unequally over different social groups (Altieri, 2009). Ultimately, the ability of small-scale producers to survive and questions of

how the growth that is promoted can be achieved without destroying the environment are insufficiently addressed within neoliberal economic models (Altieri, 2009; Bennett, 2012).

2.3 Post-development

One paradigm that does emphasize the needs of small-scale producers and others who have failed to become incorporated in the global market is the post-development paradigm. Post-development argues that mainstream development, with its emphasis on neoliberal capitalism, has failed to fulfill its promises of prosperity and progress, illustrated by the fact that poverty, inequality, and environmental issues persisted and even grew in large parts of the global South during the era of neoliberal globalization (Briggs, 2014). It sees mainstream development as a discourse that is rooted in Western science and culture, which has been imposed on those countries deemed to be in need of development envisioned as modernization and economic growth (Ahorro, 2008; Escobar, 1992). Their critique includes sustainable development, which post-developmentalists argue mostly ignores the need for more fundamental and social change, as it does not question the political and economic characteristics of Western culture but rather promotes them (Robinson, 2004) albeit with a 'green' face, thereby ignoring the grave impacts these models have on the environment (Morse, 2008).

Post-development thinkers see mainstream development projects as an imposition of homogenous models of society, without acknowledging the value of diversity in knowledge, economic, cultural, and political systems (Ahorro, 2008). Instead, they stress the need for endogenous discourses about development: people that are the subject of development thinking should be heard, instead of being told what to do by external actors. It views the scientific discourses used in development as problematic, as these are also rooted in western culture. Thus, it is stressed, more use should be made of indigenous and local knowledge (Briggs & Sharpe, 2004). Also, rather than having external agencies initiating and imposing projects to stimulate development, localized, grassroots movements and ideas ought to be stimulated and protected (Ahorro, 2008).

An often-heard critique posed against post-development is that it offers no concrete alternatives to the problems it poses and thus lacks instrumentalism (Nustad, 2001). Furthermore, in rejecting modernity and the previous development efforts as a whole, the positive aspects of such efforts are being denied as well. The promotion of human rights and democratic processes, for instance, form part of the post-development paradigm, but are surely also products of modernity. Another problem that surrounds post-development is that there is a danger of over-romanticizing indigenous knowledge and culture (Ahorro, 2008).

Although such criticism has been widespread, the substantial influence of the post-development paradigm on development discourse remains and the concept continues to receive interest (Bennett, 2012). Especially when looking at current policies and programs aimed at sustainable development it is clear that these are still very much dominated by a Western notion of development that promotes modernization, the adoption of capitalist economic models and finding ways to increase and strengthen linkages with the global capitalist economy, rather than acknowledging the natural environment, local cultures, realities, and needs. Post-development proposes that the new alternatives to development should be inspired and led by those living in the regions on which development thinking is focused, also known as 'subalterns' (Ahorro, 2008). It suggests that rather than the global South becoming more like its richer counterpart, constructive dialogue with the subalterns could benefit all by finding alternatives to the competitive and consumer-led lifestyles that are destroying our planet (Bennett, 2012).

2.4 Food sovereignty

The post-development view that development should be led and inspired by subalterns themselves (Escobar, 1992), is mirrored by the food sovereignty movement, which promotes local autonomy and is in itself the product of efforts made by Southern peasant organization and who have experienced problem stemming from development projects firsthand. The approaches to development takes within these concepts come together in their emphasis on development initiated by subalterns themselves instead of a one size fits all approach to development where communities are pushed to get themselves integrated into the global market by adopting the structures that characterize it.

Neoliberal capitalist approaches to development have gained a large number of opponents. Among them are many who argue that the use of land to produce for export has contributed to poverty, rural-urban migration, hunger, and environmental degradation (Altieri, 2009). International peasant organization La Vía Campesina has taken a leading role in this movement. The organization launched its 'Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform', which was to become its main global vehicle against MLAR, in 1999-2000. Throughout the years Vía Campesina has refined their take on land-related issues, and has moved towards a 'human rights-based approach' to land. Vía Campesina argues that land is critical to peasants' livelihoods. However, as control over land often remains in the hands of a small elite, redistribution is necessary to protect those peasants who are left landless. In their view MLAR is not a tool to do this, and could even aggravate the situation. Thus, genuine agrarian reforms that address who controls land and natural resources need to be designed (Borras, 2008).

Alternatives to MLAR have reached their most consolidated form in the organization's *'Declaration for Food Sovereignty*' in 2006 (Borras, 2008). This concept has attracted an enormous following since its conception, which can be seen as a signal of how neoliberal approaches to land issues have failed to solve the issues at hand. Proponents of food sovereignty argue that small-scale farmers have become a surplus population through the worldwide domination of transnational corporations and a food production model driven by large-scale industrial agriculture. This corporate food regime is upheld by capitalist states and international financial and development organizations governing the global economy. Those that do not have the resources to access this commodified food are bypassed by the corporate food regime. This regime does, however, contribute significantly to exacerbation of climate change and ecological degradation, which surely affects all (Akram-Lodhi, 2013) and the weakest parts of populations in particular.

The main driving force behind food sovereignty are the processes of depeasantization that have occurred worldwide, partly accelerated by neoliberalism and its concurrent globalization of the food system and limited power of the state to intervene and address the needs of small-scale producers. Food sovereignty has gained its current prominence by offering a viable alternative to the neoliberal globalization of the food system. It proposes the creation of an alternative food system, in which control over food production is handed back over to small-scale farmers and other producers of food such as fishermen and pastoralists (Clark, 2013). "*Food sovereignty is the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity.*" (Via Campesina, 1996, in Patel, 2009: 665). Proponents of food sovereignty argue that people and countries should be able to define their own agricultural and food policies. Farmers' access to land, water, and seeds is emphasized, with local autonomy, local production, consumption and markets, energy and technological sovereignty, and farmer-to-farmer networks brought forward as modes of production. It also calls for stopping the 'dumping' of subsidized food in other nations (Patel, 2009).

> *Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets (…). Food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather, it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production*." (Peoples Food Sovereignty Network, 2002, in: Patel, 2009).

Application of agroecological techniques are emphasized in food sovereignty, and have been lauded as an alternative to the neoliberal globalized food regime. Agroecology refers to the

application of ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agro ecosystems, with a minimal dependence on agrochemical and energy inputs. It emphasizes the capability of local communities to innovate, evaluate and adapt themselves through farmer-to-farmer research and grassroots extension approaches (Altieri & Nicholls, 2008). Agroecological systems have demonstrated more resilience than large-scale mono cropping farming systems, while also being more ecologically sound (Altieri, 2009).

These visions have been brought together as the six guiding principles of food sovereignty. It is argued that by adopting such structures, protection of livelihoods, jobs, availability of food, health, and the natural environment could be ensured (Altieri, 2009). These guiding principles are:

1. The right to sufficient, healthy and culturally appropriate food for all should be at the center of policies on food, agriculture, fisheries and livestock;
2. The valuing and protection of food providers and their livelihoods;
3. Localized food systems in which food providers and consumers are at the center of decision making on food issues;
4. Food providers are in control over their territory and land, and have the right to use and share them in socially and environmentally sustainable ways;
5. Building on skills and local knowledge of food providers;
6. Uses nature in diverse, low external input, agroecological production systems, that do not harm ecosystem functions.

Food sovereignty is seen as a replacement of food security, a concept that says nothing about the inequitable structures and policies that have contributed to food insecurity (Akram-Lodhi, 2013). The term food security does not address the social aspects of the food system, nor who controls this system. For example, people who live in a dictatorship can still be food secure. By not addressing such specifics, the term is easier to use in an international political context, as it does not force international political arrangements to be designed. However, seeing the detrimental effects that years of neoliberal policies had on the position of small scale farmers, La Vía Campesina called for exactly such political arrangements to be made. For them, food sovereignty was a necessary and logic step in making food security a reality as true and sustainable food security relies on the people who produce the food and protect the natural environment. In order to make this possible, it is necessary to address the power relations that influence how food is produced (Patel, 2009).

The state can in many cases be seen as both a problem and the way to a solution in achieving food sovereignty. Within the current hegemony of neoliberal policies, the tendency has been to

steer agriculture in a way that makes it compatible with the global corporate food regime. This has included the development of industrial agriculture, with an emphasis on producing for export. Food sovereignty is presented as a political program in which the modes of production are controlled by non-state actors (farmers and their communities). However, this does not mean that it rejects the state altogether. Rather, it is inclusive of the state and depends on the use of its power to react against the neoliberal globalized food system. The dominant conception of sovereignty within the food sovereignty paradigm constitutes a pluralist vision of localized multiple sovereignties. It has been argued that in food sovereignty, sovereignty can be seen as self-determination over a specific territory where ecological and social reproduction comes about. If a true move towards food sovereignty is to be achieved, the state will however be needed, but this will require a change in the way the state uses its power. Furthermore, new policies will have to be designed (Clark, 2013).

Among the strongest social movements that rose in opposition to neoliberalism and the adoption of free trade agreements have been rural movements, especially peasant and indigenous organizations. Although such movements demanded different things, the notion that neoliberal policies were negatively impacting on the livelihoods and natural environment of small-scale producers. A large part of these movements went on to adopt food sovereignty as a pathway to improve the adverse conditions created by years of neoliberal domination. Campesino movements have continued to play a important role in advocating the importance of food sovereignty and opposing the neoliberal policies and industrialization of agricultural production associated with these policies, both of which have negatively affected their livelihoods and natural environment (Clark, 2013).

2.5 Critiques of food sovereignty

Although food sovereignty has gained popularity and a high number of followers since its conception, the model has also faced a certain amount of critique. The way in which sovereignty is depicted within the food sovereignty paradigm has sparked a lot of debate. A major problem with sovereignty as painted in the food sovereignty framework concerns how the local and community-based sovereignties that the model advocates can be guaranteed and exercised in practice. Sovereignty seems to be conceptualized as plural, but pluralizing food sovereignty does not stipulate how multiple sovereignties can be contained and exercised. Patel (2009) states that: “to demand a space of food sovereignty is to demand specific arrangements to govern territory and space” (Patel, 2009: 668: in Clark, 2013). ‘Sovereignty’ is in its contemporary definition “to have independent and exclusive de facto practical authority over a space” (Philpott, 2010 in: Akram-Lodhi, 2013: pp. 4). When applying this definition to food production, food sovereignty can be seen

as striving for independent and exclusive de facto practical authority over food. It is however questionable if this is something that can be achieved within the context of the prevailing social and economic conditions of societies where food sovereignty is called for. The alternative that food sovereignty depicts is not grounded in the state in which the world currently find itself: one in which the dominant social-property relations that producers of food and consumers are capitalist. The small-scale producer model that food sovereignty proposes cannot be seen in isolation from capitalist social relations. With this embeddedness in the system that produces the problems to which food sovereignty states to find solutions, simply attempting to reshape the existing social conditions and relations of capitalism is not enough. Rather, a whole new post-capitalist agrarian alternative would have to be created. However, only a small part of the global food sovereignty movement recognizes this need for true transformation of social relations and conditions (Akram-Lodhi, 2013).

Akram-Lodhi (2013) argues that the notion that the social-property relations of capitalism need to be transcended in order to achieve food sovereignty stems from two contradictions within the model. First, food sovereignty calls for handing control over resources to communities themselves. It does not however explicitly address that these resources are currently in most cases controlled by dominant classes and the state. These groups commonly do not support the vision that food sovereignty lays out, as it goes against their vested interests and power status. In addition, it remains unclear if the food sovereignty movements are against global political and economic elites, international institutions and transnational corporations who, with their political and economic power, indirectly shape the options that local food providers and food consumer have, even if these latter are in control of their own resources (Akram-Lodhi, 2013).

The second contradiction that Akram-Lodhi points out is that food sovereignty does not say anything about the political situation within which the autonomy that is necessary to build food sovereignty can be achieved. In order to come to this autonomy people need to be able to exercise their individual and collective rights. However, in many countries people do not have the ability to claim such rights as it is in the interest of the state and powerful elites to prohibit them from doing so. As such, the path to achieving food sovereignty may involve a different type of democracy in which the capacity of people to obtain autonomy is facilitated (Akram-Lodhi, 2013).

An important point of criticism is that food sovereignty is mainly an outcome that one can strive for, but for which there is a lack of clear trajectories to accomplish. The social movements that call for food sovereignty basically propose two pathways towards achieving food sovereignty. The first one is to mobilize and demonstrate to show discontent with policies and institutions that are harming the livelihoods of peasants, farmers and workers, with the ultimate goal to change these

policies and institutions. The second one is to enter dialogue and cooperate with state institutions and international development agencies in order to attempt to change policies. These efforts have unfortunately not been very successful. Although the food sovereignty movement is clear in what it favors, the ways to get here, aside from redistributive agrarian reform and local food systems, are not as clearly prescribed. This inability to set out the specific changes that need to occur to move towards food sovereignty can be seen as an indication of a third contradiction: a lack of focus in identifying the pathways that could lead to move away from the corporate food regime to food sovereignty (Akram-Lodhi, 2013).

Lastly, it has been argued that food sovereignty is 'over defined': there are many different versions of the concept, some of which overlap, some of which contradict one another. The fact that this many different definitions exist besides each other can be seen as a symptom of what food sovereignty is: the right of people to design their own food policy. As such, people use this right to explore how to apply the concept, leading to a plurality of definitions, some of which tend to contradict each other (Patel, 2009).

As becomes clear from what has been discussed, post-development and food sovereignty have a lot of common perspectives. Both have arisen from dissatisfaction with the mainstream development model and neoliberal capitalist policies, which in both these views have brought more bad than good to the Global South. Food sovereignty can be seen as offering as a form of endogenous development, as has been promoted within the post-development paradigm. These concepts, together with a number of other theoretical approaches have been formed the framework against which this study will be analyzed, as will be described in the following chapter.

3. Theoretical framework

Within this study the political ecology framework has been used to incorporate concepts of social identity, livelihoods approach, community-based conservation, food sovereignty, and post-development. These concepts lend themselves well for being considered within this framework, as will be shown in the following.

The ZRC model can be seen as an example of instruments that have arisen as a local response to the penetration of processes of globalized neoliberal capitalism, in this case in the rural areas of Colombia. Political ecology scholars study how the unequal power relations, conflict, and the cultural modernization that occurs through the globalized capitalist political economy influence the reshaping of human interactions with their physical environment (Walker, 2005). The framework deals with understanding how local people, national and global political economies, and ecosystems are interrelated (Peterson, 2000). This topical focus makes it very apt to use in a study on the local outcomes that processes of neoliberal globalization have brought forward. With the global south increasingly incorporated into global markets structures, local land users' knowledge and practice have become undermined, even though these have often proven to be more adaptive and resilient than those replacing them (Walker, 2005). Within this study the way that local communities have reacted to these developments will be assessed.

One of the propositions made by political ecologists is to look at ways local cultures process the conditions of global capital and modernity (Escobar, 1996). It has been argued that globalization processes and local efforts to reaffirm identities are set in a dialogic relation where local communities counter the production of images and sign commodities that are imposed upon them by external actors through processes of globalization, with a counter-production of their own particular imagery and social relations. Social identity results from political struggle and as a retort to often aggressive imposition of outside influence. In light of processes of globalization, local communities have been inclined to redefine their identities. In doing so, they tend to adopt certain outside elements and combine these with their own traditional elements, which results in hybrid forms of such cultural identities that are expressed through the adoption of specific discourses. These can include elements from a reinvented past, in which historical and mythological components are combined (Castillo & Nigh, 1998). Social movements can be key entities in developing political strategies for the defense of culture, territory, and identity linked to particular places and territories (Escobar, 1998), and discourse is an important instrument in the development of these strategies. This line of thinking can be found in both the post-development and food sovereignty movements, that stress the need for endogenous discourses about development rather than having external discourses imposed on them (Ahorro, 2008). Escobar has repeatedly pointed

out the importance of identifying the manners in which discourse can be used as an articulation of alternatives. He stresses the need to examine the different ways in which culture, nature and identities are constructed. In line with this, it is important to make the various local ways of producing culture and identity that one can see coming from communities worldwide visible, and to assess to what extent these have the ability to pose challenges to capitalism and Eurocentered visions of modernities (Escobar, 2001). Within the food sovereignty movement one can see how peasant culture and identity is posed opposite the global corporate food regime, as the more sustainable and inclusive alternative (Park et al., 2013)

Political ecology prescribes that policies designed by states are a crucial factor in how humans interact with their environment (Bryant, 1992). When looking at environmental conservation, for example, it has become clear that conservation projects can have negative consequences for the poor. This often occurs when access to natural resources on which people rely for their income generation and subsistence is restricted. This has been demonstrated to occur in cases where areas become protected and people are excluded from entering these regions or exploiting the resources that they offer. Conservation has often been presented as requiring exclusion of people from using the resources that are in need of protection, but in doing so does not acknowledge that it might be more sustainable for both humans and their physical environment to search for ways to combine human activities with protection efforts (Fisher et al., 2008)

But inhabitants are not passive objects who do not react to these policies. Livelihood studies acknowledge the active part that the poor can play in shaping their own future. It focuses on their abilities and capital. The livelihoods approach is characterized by a multidisciplinary view of poverty that goes beyond seeing poverty solely in economic terms and instead includes political, cultural, social and ecological aspects as well (Zoomers, 2014). The approach is based on the assumption that livelihoods are largely dependent on the ‘capitals’ to which they have access to and with which they can build strategies for survival. The capitals that are referred to include human capitals, such as skills and education; social capital in the form of networks; financial capital; natural capital like water, land, minerals; and physical capital, including houses, livestock and machinery. Some scholars have added cultural capital to this list (Zoomers, 2014). Bebbington (1999) places particular attention to social capital, as the relationships that make up social capital allow access and are thus a critical prerequisite for obtaining such access and thereby diversifying and expanding their assets. Social capital makes it possible to increase the access to actors and resources, which can be used to modify power structure and policies. This relates to the ZRC model, as campesino organizations have played a vital role in getting the model designed. It has

been argued that the possibilities for improving livelihoods are dependent on social relations, institutions and organizations. Power relations are an important explanation for variation in access to opportunities (de Haan & Zoomers, 2005), as is emphasized within political ecology. The assets that people have are not merely means to make a living but also give meaning to their lives. These assets also give people the capability to engage with the world around them in a meaningful and fruitful way, and to change this world if they want to do so. As such, assets are not only a way to survive but also form "the basis of agents' power to act and reproduce, challenge or change the rules that govern the control, use and transformation of resources" (Bebbington, 1999: pp. 2022). Failure to obtain access that has resulted in poverty or social exclusion can be part of a mechanism by which certain persons can exclude other persons from obtaining access to specific resources, as this is favorable to maximizing their own returns (de Haan & Zoomers, 2005).

The power that social movements can have in creating political agendas is an illustration of active engagement of citizens in matters of policymaking and thus shaping of a world that provides more favorable outcomes to these citizens. With political ecology addressing the inequalities perpetrated through dominating systems it stimulates the search for models that are not as coercive or exploitative of both humans and the environment (Robbins, 2012). Social movements play a crucial role in this. The ZRC model in itself can be seen as a function of this, as it places a high importance on the creation of circumstances in which both the inhabitants of the zones and the natural environment within these zones can flourish.

One of the proposed ways of approaching environmental protection, which could also serve as a means to improve human development, is community based conservation[3] methods. An important rationale behind community conservation models is that the conservation of natural resources can have important direct benefits on livelihoods, especially those living in rural areas. For a large share of people in the global South natural resources are used for consumption and serve as sources of income. The natural environment harbors a large variety of ecosystem services that are essential to human survival, such as the provision of water and clean air. Having a healthy natural environment can also be seen as a form of risk insurance in cases of market failure, crop failure and natural disaster. In light of malfunctioning social security systems and the absence of reliable market networks in many rural areas, it can be argued that the sustainable use of natural

[3]Within this study, conservation is used in its broadest sense: the sustainable management, use, protection and restoration of natural resources (Fisher et al., 2008).

resources is crucial for protecting the livelihoods of the rural poor. By allowing local communities to play a role in conservation projects they become more empowered (Fisher et al., 2008).

The fact that communities are dealt a role in protecting the environment they live in can be seen as part of a larger worldwide trend, in which countries have started to involve local communities and lower-level decision-making bodies in environmental conservation and management. This stems from the acknowledgement that the fiscal capacity of states to engage in environmental conservation is limited, and that local communities are often more successful in management of their resources than private actors negotiating with market-based exchanges or state actors that use command and control approaches. Communities frequently show a high level of social capital, which entails that collective tasks can be undertaken in a far more sufficient manner than bureaucratic state officials, and in a far more equitable way than market-based approaches. Common property studies have shown that communities have often successfully created institutions that regulate use of resources. However, although scholars have shown that community-based conservation can be a successful guide for sustainable resource use, widespread disagreement on what factors account for reaching this persists (Agrawal, 2003). These institutions have not always been effective in preventing the degradation of resources. Causes that have been identified include establishing rules for behavior that do not have the desired outcome, or that are not respected or enforced. Institutions can also fail because they do not include all groups or people that affect the resource management (Fisher et al., 2008).

Management processes are always charged by power and politics, which needs to be taken into account when studying community conservation projects. The problems from which environmental degradation stems, and the solutions to these problems could be part of a political process. The politics that have led to a situation of underdevelopment and deterioration of the natural environment need to be addressed when searching for solutions to poverty, underdevelopment, and environmental degradation (Agrawal, 2003). Within community-based resource management a recurrent finding is that the most powerful actors tend to dominate the community organizations and institutions. This could lead to the weaker, often poorer, segments of the community to become excluded. The more powerful persons within a community often also have access to more methods to exploit other resources, such as the use of machinery. It has been argued that sustainable development needs outcomes that are the result of negotiation between the social groups involved, and are of equitable, economically viable and socially sustainable nature (Fisher et al., 2008).

Political ecology prescribes that policies designed by states are a crucial factor in how humans interact with their environment. It is however important to understand that states do not design policies in isolation from one another. Modern states are in constant competition and mutual involvement with other states. Political dependence of one state on another, or a number of others, can accelerate environmental degradation (Bryant, 1992), as the spread of global capitalist market structures has shown. This is clearly visible in the global domination of the agro-food system, in which emphasis lies on large-scale, industrial agriculture, an approach to production that has been shown to put detrimental outcomes on the environment. States throughout the Global South continue to promote these techniques however, as products that are cultivated in this manner, such as palm oil and soy, are in high demand on the international market. The food sovereignty movement can be seen as reaction to this system where the more powerful players prescribe to other, less powerful players, what type of policies to follow (Akram-Lodhi, 2013). This links back to the post-development paradigm, with its focus on how the development models that have been used to extend power of Western nations (Sidaway, 2014).

States often tend to facilitate the interests of powerful economic elites (Bryant, 1992). On the international scale this can be illustrated by the power that multinational corporations currently have. On the national, regional and local scale this can be seen in the creation of policies that favor the interests of the vested elite over those of other, more marginal groups. States occupying a less powerful role can feel the need to resort to activities that have proven to be harmful to both certain segments of the population, as the growth in inequality and rural poverty has shown, and the environment, of which deforestation to clear land for agriculture is an example. From this follows that a discussion around environmental degradation should be put in a context of environmental and social changes (Bryant, 1992). When looking at the situation in Colombia, it has been argued that the outcomes of agrarian reform policies have not only favored some groups over others, but have in the process contributed to environmental degradation. In this process of trying to monopolize opportunities to one's own advantage, social characteristics such as culture, gender, ethnicity and language can be used to legitimize certain courses of action. In this case social exclusion and poverty can be seen as the result of social closure: a collective social action that has given rise to social categories of "eligibles and ineligibles" (de Haan & Zoomers, 2005: pp.33-34).

These different concepts come together in their emphasis on how unequal power structures influence local development and how local communities have created strategies to counter external influences that are deemed to have brought negative impact to these communities, a perspective that grounds this study

4. Regional background

4.1 Latin American responses countering neoliberalism

Latin America has been the region in which neoliberal reforms have been applied most rigorously. Unfortunately, the results have been ambiguous at most. Known as 'market reforms' in Latin America, neoliberal policies have been aimed at decreasing the role of states in economic matters, giving markets a more significant role, and obtaining macro-economic stability. Examples include the liberalization of trade and capital flows, privatization of state assets, deregulation and free markets, labor reforms and prioritizing production for export (Escobar, 2010; Kay, 2008). Latin American neoliberal governments have generally shown little interest in designing public policies aimed at improving the lives of poor segments of society. Emphasis is put on the global market, which was to prescribe what happened within a country. The idea was that the market could not be disturbed by creating policies that were aimed at a specific social group (Kay, 2008).

The application of these neoliberal policies brought a number of successes. The region successfully drew large amounts of foreign investments since the introduction of neoliberal policies, albeit mostly speculative ones. Furthermore, exports grew, in specific those of raw materials rather than industrial commodities and services. Other favorable outcomes of neoliberal policies include the introduction of social policies like gender equality, decentralization, and multiculturalism (Kay, 2008).

However, many critics, and even those underlining the above mentioned successes, have pointed out that the costs of these successes have been high. The traditional agricultural exports such as coffee, sugar and bananas, did not manage to increase as much as the new non-traditional exports of vegetables, fruits, flowers and soybeans. The same went for produce for the domestic market. These developments had a big impact on how agricultural production and the associated social relations were arranged, with capitalist farmers and large-scale agribusinesses being the ones who benefited, whereas the rural poor became increasingly excluded. The concurrent rise of food imports also had a negative impact on peasant farmers, who had to deal with unfair competition from subsidized food exports from the rich countries, and on the food sovereignty within the region (Kay, 2008). Furthermore, unemployment grew; links between international trade and national production became weaker; there was more structural unevenness among sectors of the economy; inequality has increased vastly in the majority of countries, as has growth in poverty levels among many of them; and ecological damages, for example brought about by the spread of cultivation of cashcrops like soy, oil palm, sugar cane and eucalyptus, have been grave (Escobar, 2010).

Latin America's share in global trade and production has seen a steady decrease since 1980. Between 1980 and 1989 the world's economic activity grew by an average of 3.1%. In Latin

America however, it dropped from 6.1% (1965-1980) to 1.6% (1980-1989). The volume of Latin American exports grew considerably throughout the 1980s and 1990s, while its share of exports and imports saw a sheer drop. This means that the Latin American region has produced more for the world economy, but have simultaneously become poorer and more marginalized. Between 1992 and 1994, the Latin American export rose by 22.3% but its value only by 3.3%. This deterioration in the terms of trade for the region must be placed in a context where the region's participation in the global division of labor became increasingly asymmetric. Latin America has however, been of great importance in supplying surplus for the rest of the world and has spurred growth of the global economy (Robinson, 1999). The continuous drainage of surplus from the Latin American region is an important factor in the stagnation, declining income, and deterioration in living standards that have spread throughout the region. The deterioration in the terms of trade can be partly explained by the overall dependence on commodity export within the Latin American region. This situation has been worsened by the neoliberal adjustments that shifted resources to the external sector linked to the global economy, and by the dependence on the global capital markets in order to continue economic growth. By being highly dependent on commodity export a structural asymmetry has been created. Latin America had been a net exporter in capital surplus to the world economy from 1982 to 1990, and then became a net importer from 1991 to 1998. In 1999 the region returned to its status as an exporter of capital. In the period from 1998-2000 the GDP in the region dropped for a high number of countries, including a 6.2% decline for Colombia (Robinson, *2004).*

Discontent surrounding these negative impacts neoliberal policies have had led to a number of processes that could counter the hegemony of neoliberalism in the region. Some have argued that these processes can fuel the dismantling of the monopoly that neoliberal policies have had over the last three decades, or signal the start of the formation of a South American bloc. Others have pointed out the potential for *un nuevo comienzo* (a new beginning) that could represent the ending of the predominance of liberal society that is founded on private property and representative democracy of the past two centuries (Escobar, 2010).

There are several processes and measures that can be coined as going against neoliberalism, both at the level of the state and initiated by social movements. A first example can be found in the popularity of the concept of *buen vivir*, which has advocated by social movements for years and has been taken up in the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia. Emerging from the disillusion surrounding the outcomes of classical development theories, including neoliberalism, due to their negative impacts on society and the environment, as well as the debatable effects on economies, the concept has two main entry points: it poses criticism to classic Western views on development, and

proposes to pursue alternatives to development that are based on indigenous traditions, as such moving away from the dominance of Eurocentric views, including neoliberalism (Gudynas, 2011).

Furthermore, several states, including Venezuela, Argentina, Ecuador, and Bolivia, have adopted policies that move away from the neoliberal hegemony to different degrees (Kaltwasser, 2011). These include emphasizing the role of domestic markets and consumption for growth, as well as introducing policies that address poverty (Grugel & Riggirozzi, 2012). Moreover, several states have adopted a rather different attitude towards the poor, development and their discourse of citizenship. Citizens have demanded a new concept of what the state is, based on the view that states are morally obliged to respect and deliver the rights of their citizens, alongside economic growth (Grugel & Riggirozzi, 2012). Although the application of these alternatives is as of yet still slow, the fact that discussions are growing and these concepts are being more and more accepted could lead to a transformation, or new beginning (Villalba, 2013).

Such changes at state level have led several scholars to start speaking of the rise of 'post-neoliberalism', a sentiment that distinctly differs from the dominant view of the 1990s. As of now, it would go too far to suggest that these changes represent a complete paradigm shift, as neoliberalism continues to be strongly represented in policymaking, most importantly the emphasis in production for export and a degree of fiscal restraint (Grugel & Riggirozzi, 2012). The development models that are implemented in the region continue to be based on exploiting the natural environment and its resources, such as sugar cane, soy and oil palm (Escobar, 2010). Post-neoliberalism can thus be seen as a way to keep inclusion in the global economy as a goal, but in doing so remaining focused on fulfilling social responsibilities with regard to citizens. A crucial aspect in this is the fact that the export boom that occurred in much of Latin America following the increased demand for exports, and in particular natural resources, has permitted the expansion of public spending. Between 2000 and 2008 regional exports rose by 42.4 %, making it possible for states to tap resources for the design of new social policies (Grugel & Riggirozzi, 2012).

The opposition to neoliberal policies has provided a breeding ground for strong rural social movements throughout Latin America, in particular campesino and indigenous movements. Such movements have played a vital role in getting rural and agrarian issues on political agendas (Clark, 2013). For now, policy propositions and debates continue to reflect the tensions between economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection (Baud et al., 2011). Much of the current discussion within Latin American societies revolves around the notion that not all cultural worlds adhere to the same views. As such, the application of one single blueprint for the whole society should be avoided. The question now is how to enable co-existence and co-construction of these different worlds within one society: can the new alternatives find ways to coexist with the more

dominant, modern forms of life? It is plausible that the region will be moving beyond the idea of a single, universal modernity, towards a plurality of modernities (Escobar, 2010), or a heterodox political economy (Grugel & Riggirozzi, 2012)?

4.2 Colombia's Zonas de Reserva Campesina

Colombia is one of Latin America's countries where measures that can be seen as moving away from neoliberalism have as yet not been adopted (Kaltwasser, 2011). With a regimes that has been classified as conservative modernization, the Colombian state imposes a rather 'brutal' form of neoliberal modernity (Escobar, 2010: pp. 41) and embraces a social and economic model that promotes the spread of large corporations that are oriented towards production for export, while offering almost no support to small-scale farmers (GRAIN, 2013), nor their natural environment. With a vast share of land dedicated to cattle-grazing and export-crops, food prices have skyrocketed and dependency on both imports and exports has grown, resulting in an economy that is very vulnerable to the highly fluctuating international commodity markets (Thomson, 2011). In addition, these forms of agriculture have contributed to environmental problems, such as land degradation through soil erosion and salinization, and deforestation (World Bank, 2006). Further exacerbating the poor position of Colombian peasants has been the signing of Free Trade Agreements with the European Union and the United States. Unable to compete with subsidized imports, Colombian producers have become even more marginalized (GRAIN, 2013).

Colombia's integration into world markets occurred during a period of rapid agrarian change, in which competing visions - landlord led versus a farmer-peasant path - culminated in violence (Thomson, 2011). In the late 1940s, tensions arose around Colombia's modernization of society and economy, leading to a political crisis that formed the base for the armed conflict that is still going on today. The grave repressions of social movements by the Conservative government, often accompanied by use of violence, stimulated the creation of Colombia's first guerrilla groups. The Liberal government that was in power between 1958 and 1962 attempted to stop such political violence and stimulate colonization of idle lands by making an agreement with liberal guerrilla groups to grant them land titles. However, as campesinos managed to improve and thereby increase the value of these lands, businessmen and traders started to show interest and obtain these lands. Land ownership became increasingly concentrated. The displaced rural inhabitants had to search for new territories, thereby expanding the agricultural frontier. This cycle has repeated itself continuously over the years (Castillo, 2015), with rural populations in Colombia having to face dispossession, exclusion, exploitation, and violence.

With the spread of neoliberalism economic opportunities arising from incorporation into the global food regime favored the spread of commercial agriculture. As land was needed for these projects, members of the peasantry were once again expelled from their lands. Campesinos were left with little other choice than to migrate to urban areas or to land that was less suitable for agriculture and prone to environmental issues such as land erosion, as companies and landed elites acquired the prime agricultural land with appropriate infrastructure (Thomson, 2011).

Campesino communities have reacted by putting forward several initiatives aimed to defend their rights. One of these initiatives is the ZRC model, which was presented by campesino organizations in the early 1990s as part of a process to initiate renewed agrarian reform. The model was legally adopted in 1994, with the Colombian government declaring six areas throughout the country as *Zonas de Reserva Campesina* (Peasant Reserve Zones, ZRC). The objectives of the ZRC include: controlling the expansion of the agricultural frontier in Colombia; preventing and correcting unequal concentration of rural property; to create conditions for the consolidation and sustainable development of the peasant economy; to regulate the occupation and better use of uncultivated lands, giving preference to awarding it to peasants or settlers with scarce resources; to facilitate the coherent execution of rural development policies; and to strengthen coordination between the state and rural communities, guaranteeing their adequate participation in planning and local and regional decision making (ILSA, 2013). The ZRC are meant to have a mere economic significance and do not enjoy political autonomy (Colombia Reports, 2013).

The ZRC model has been lauded as offering a viable alternative to neoliberal development model that the Colombian government adheres to. Although the model is a legal instrument, it is the result of diverse processes of political demand undertaken by peasants, who created the original idea for the model and who completed and achieved its formalization (ILSA, 2012).

Currently the six regions that were declared ZRC in 1994 are still in place. However, in the more than twenty years that have passed since, the actual implementation of the rights and mechanisms surrounding participation and autonomy in ZRC has proven difficult. Successive governments have restricted funds allocated to alternative development plans such as ZRC, as well as the autonomy granted to people living in ZRC (Rodriguez, 2013).

Although the model has a lot of potential from the point of view of farmers, it touches upon a sensitive topic: the land problem. It is certainly quite a bold model, for Colombia or any other Latin American country where concentration of land is a problem. Tensions surrounding the ZRC have arisen again during the recent peace talks between the FARC and Colombian government. In June of 2013, following a series of other strikes by farmers, 16,000 farmers have gathered in

Catatumbo to demand, amongst other things, an immediate expansion of the number of ZRC beyond the existing six (Rodriguez, 2013). Peasant communities and organizations in the country have adopted the ZRC model as a possible instrument to guarantee the fulfillment of their rights, especially with regard to land and territory, and those that are directly related by judicial tenure security (food security, home, work, development) (ILSA, 2012).

These recent events in Colombia signal not only a (re-)emergence of grassroots participatory movements or their influence, but a more fundamental challenge to neoliberal economic and governance models that have been in place since the 1980s (Rodriguez, 2014), mirroring the anti-neoliberal developments in the Latin American region generally. It is becoming increasingly clear that citizens expect now more than ever before that their government enables equitable, sustainable and productive development for all. This will require willingness and creativity, but also addressing persistent barriers in the form of historical injustices and social inequality (Baud et al., 2011). With earlier projects in ZRC having shown that they could contribute to improvement in living standards, livelihood provision and protection of the natural environment (Peace Brigade International, 2012), it is worth exploring the possibility that this model facilitates steps forward in creating the equal, sustainable and productive development that the population needs.

5. Methodology

Different methodological approaches have been used in this research. Firstly, a literature research has been conducted to serve as the base for the research. The focus was on approaches to development, specifically towards agricultural reform, that move away from the mainstream development and neoliberal paradigm. From here, attention was put on Colombia, a country where land is a very important issue around which a lot of problems have arisen. While studying these issues the ZRC model soon came up, and was deemed a good example of alternative approaches to development, as it moves away from the mainstream approaches used in development programs aimed at land tenure security, and is the result of a bottom-up approach, with farmers themselves being the ones who have designed and pushed for the model. The fact that very little international scientific research has been done on the model adds to the relevance of the research. A desk research on ZRC and their place within Colombian policy and society has been conducted, in order to deepen understanding of the issues at stake, processes of agrarian reform, and land ownership. This desk research has been conducted in order to prepare for a 15 week fieldwork period in Colombia.

The majority of the fieldwork period has been spent in Bogotá, as the capital city's central location provided the most opportunities for reaching the ZRC. Furthermore, several leading organizations affiliated with the ZRC are located there. Upon arrival in Colombia I received assistance from Tropenbos Colombia. Tropenbos Colombia is the country program of Dutch NGO 'Tropenbos International'. It is a platform for the (tropical) forest and development agenda, with a goal to achieve 'sustainable management of tropical forest lands for the benefits of the people, conservation and sustainable development' (http://www.tropenbos.org/about_us). This organization has many contacts with Colombian farmer organizations and has helped with making the first contact with organizations and individuals who are involved in the ZRC model. By using their network, relevant interviewees have been found, who have then been asked for further recommendations in order to find key-informants for interviews: the so-called snowball technique.

Purpose sampling has been used to select the research population, which can be divided into roughly three groups. The first group consisted of experts in the field of ZRC, including those working for NGOs and academics doing research on the topic. The people belonging to this group were not a part of farmers organizations or organizations whose only focus is on ZRC, but rather people who have had experience with working with people in ZRC and have gained extensive knowledge on the topic. These interviews have served as a stepping stone for the research: questions were focused on obtaining more general knowledge about the ZRC and their organization

model, and respondents have been asked for recommendations for approaching other interviewees. Being introduced by people who are known contacts has made it much easier to gain trust from other respondents.

The second group of interviewees was made up of persons who work in leading organizations surrounding the ZRC, to obtain knowledge about their approach to sustainable development, as well as the tactics and strategies used within the ZRC and towards increasing the number of ZRC. There are different leading organizations in each ZRC, as well as one overarching organization: ANZORC. ANZORC, or *Asociación Nacional de Zonas de Reserva Campesina* (National Association of Peasant Reserve Zones) is an organization that promotes dialogue, coordination, and visibility of the peasants organizations that are affiliated with the ZRC (Source: www.anzorc.org). Their head office is located in Bogotá. Ultimately, this study has been executed in close cooperation with ANZORC, who have helped to reach out to farmer organizations within several of the ZRC, as well as providing in-depth information in the form of documents and reports. Furthermore, several of key people working for the organization have been interviewed.

The third group of interviewees consisted of farmers who work and live in the ZRC, and who are members of peasant organizations within those ZRC. Visits to three ZRC throughout the Colombia have served as case studies to see how peasants live and work, and to interview them on the topics related to food sovereignty. The choice for which zones to visit has been mainly based on recommendations made by ANZORC and Tropenbos Colombia, as well as their location, due to time and budget limitations. Another factor that played into the choice of which ZRC to visit was the safety situation. Unfortunately, the ZRC are still subject to violent outbursts and clashes between the FARC and the Colombian army, which meant that not every region could be visited.

A total of 33 respondents have been interviewed. All interviews have been in-depth and semi-structured, so as to give interviewees the chance to elaborate beyond the topics chosen beforehand. As more and more interviews were conducted the topic list became more set, as it became clearer which topic were the most important to obtain more information and elaboration on. The way the interviews were filled in differed deeply, as some respondents felt very free to talk and started a long narrative without needing much stimulation, whereas in other a more traditional question pattern was followed, with a number of set questions to which interviewees could respond. All interviews have been conducted in Spanish, as to optimize understanding between interviewer and respondents. Furthermore, they were all recorded, in order to allow for transcription. These transcriptions have then been coded and divided into key themes.

In analyzing the interviews special attention has been paid to the discourse used by the respondents. In quite an early stage of the research it became clear how the campesinos used a

specific discourse created around their campesino identity to legitimize their claims to territorial and cultural rights. By placing the language used by the respondents during interviews, but also in articles and social media produced by campesino organizations, within the social and historical context that surrounds the issue of the ZRC model, it became clear how this was a tool that could be used in their battle to promote, legitimize and expand the model.

Information has also been gathered by attending several gatherings of campesinos. These have included a number of meetings in which the importance of preserving campesino culture was the central point, as well as a several day-long meeting between campesinos involved in the Ecobufalo project in Valles del Río Cimitarra. A certain level of participatory observation has been executed. Visiting and staying in two constituted ZRC as well as one that is awaiting constitution provided insight in how the campesinos live their everyday lives and how big the differences between the ZRC are, for example in terms of size and their climatic characteristics, all of which influence the development of these zones. Furthermore, it provided firsthand experience into the living conditions in these zones, that can be rough as there are few basic services, including electricity and potable drinking water.

In addition to the interviews and observation, a large number of relevant documents, including the Sustainable Development Plans that have been designed for each ZRC, have been studied. Furthermore, newspaper articles on the topic have been studied, so as to assess the public stance towards the ZRC, as well as providing insight into the social background against which the ZRC are developing. Lastly, social media outlets used by campesino organizations involved with the ZRC have been followed, to allow for updates on the situation and to provide insight into the discourse and methods used by these organizations in reaching out and getting the ZRC model and campesino related issues known to the wider public. All information gathered has been weighed against each other, as to allow for triangulation between resources and to assess whether information provided was in line with other information gathered.

The chapters in which the results are presented are based on a combination of the data collected during interviews, the campesino gatherings, and personal observations with the data gathered from studying relevant documents, reports and newspaper articles. Throughout the text references have been included for these documents, but the interviews are not specifically referred to. This derives from the wish to keep the respondents' identities anonymous, which was deemed important as the situation around the ZRC model is still quite unstable and dangerous for the people who are involved, as is illustrated by the fact that campesino leaders have been continuously stigmatizes and in some cases even incarcerated, something that is still happening at this point in time.

Risks and limitations

With every research certain risks and limitations will be involved, as was the case for this study. The research had a somewhat slow start, as it took a while to get access to the right people who could make the research move forward. When this contact was established it took quite a long time to get permission to the ZRC themselves in order to gather data for the case studies. The fact that it took so long can be explained by the fact that the campesinos can sometimes be a bit weary for outsiders visiting them, as they have suffered from marginalization and stereotyping for many years. Furthermore, and perhaps more important, the people working for ANZORC wanted to be sure that the situation in the ZRC were safe enough for them to be visited. The safety situation in Colombia is not always stable, which meant that there were a number of ZRC that were off-limit. The safety situation in the different regions were continuously monitored and assessed and discussed it with experts in the field and local inhabitants, so as to avoid dangerous situations. This did pose a limit on the research, as there was no free choice of which regions could be visited. The differences between the different zones are quite big, not in the least because their ecological conditions differ greatly, as is the case for the socioeconomic background. This has been partly solved by concentrating the study on the ZRC model as a whole. Furthermore, the differences between the visited regions also provide an interesting insight into the various situations in which the ZRC model has been applied.

Certain topics were deemed too sensitive to bring up during interviews, the most important being the involvement of campesinos in guerrilla groups and cultivation of coca leafs. These issues have brought a lot of suffering to campesino communities and I felt it rude to bring up. In certain cases coca leaf production was brought up by respondents themselves though, and these references have been included in the report.

The situation around the ZRC model specifically, and around agrarian reform in Colombia in general, is subject to continuous change and development. This is especially true right now, as the peace talks between the Colombian government and FARC are currently underway, and land plays an important role in these talks. As such, there is the risk that certain situations that are described in this report will not be up to date. Therefore it needs to be taken in mind that the data collection for this study has taken place between February and September of 2015, with the fieldwork having been done from the end of March to mid-July.

One thing that is has to be kept in mind when reading this report is that as this research is focused on those who are affiliated with the ZRC, it is certainly biased towards their view, which has as expected provided a quite positive view of the ZRC model. When studying social movements this is always a danger. However, it has been a deliberate choice to study the model from the view

of these social organizations, so as to assess the vision of development that they pursue and to gain more insight into the way these movements try to challenge the dominant view of development that is upheld by the Colombian government. By addressing the fact that this research is biased towards the view, and by comparing the data collected from interviews to other resources in the form of policy documents, scientific literature, and new resources efforts have been made to ensure the most objective picture possible when taking the approach of highlighting one point of view in particular.

Part II: Findings

6. History of agrarian reform and campesino struggles in Colombia

The ZRC model is the result of decades of struggles fought by campesinos and other rural community members to get the government to recognize their rights as citizens. If one wants to discuss rural development in Colombia, it is necessary to address the structures in which economic and political decisions have been framed in the last century, and that have created the current rural context, especially with regard to concentration of land ownership. There are various social, economic and political conditions, as well as cultural and environmental ones, that influence land tenancy and have historically determined and limited the campesino population's access to land. Among these conditions are the large landholder structure of the country, the history of violence, armed groups that have managed the forced displacements, the increase of narco trafficking that is associated with the concentration of land, the unsuccessful processes of agrarian reform and the weakness of the institutions that are in charge of executing the public policies in the rural areas (Bohorquez, 2013).

One of the most important aspects in the unequal development within Colombia, with rural areas lagging behind, lies in the historical tensions that surround land tenancy. To truly address these tensions, profound agrarian reform and equal distribution of land is needed, an issue that has been debated over the last sixty years. In light of this, when looking at productive agrarian activities and campesino livelihoods territorial dynamics must always be taken into account. These dynamics have often been aggravated by the armed conflict, which has triggered displacements that negatively affect rural development. Furthermore, drug traffickers and miners have been coercing people to leave their land as the value of land increased. These different issues have together transformed the values, organization and behaviors that affect life in rural areas profoundly (Bohorquez, 2013). In order to understand the significance of agrarian reforms, it is important to look at the attempts to address issues surrounding land ownership and production that have been executed over the last century.

6.1 The colonial legacy

The agrarian structures in Colombia, of which the struggle for access to land is one of the main characteristics, can be traced back to the times of Spanish colonization of the country. Just like various other countries colonized by Spain, Colombia is characterized by an initial distribution of land and other economic resources according to the criteria of lineage and caste of a society that was segmented between whites, *mestizos* (those of mixed indigenous and white heritage), indigenous and black slaves. Upon their arrival in the 1500s, the conquistadors granted settlers large landholdings and rights over the labour and surplus of the indigenous communities. Over the next

four centuries the land tenancy structures of the *hacienda* (large estate) system remained the model for economic organization of agrarian systems within the Spanish colonial system. In Latin America, it was made up of large estates that were self-sufficient. The land titles for these estates could solely be granted by the Spanish crown. The results of this were unsurprisingly very unequal, with influential persons, army officials and those working in the high ranks of the government being the ones who received large parcels of land. When one was granted the ownership of a hacienda, this included having power over all people living on this land (Castillo, 2015; Bohorquez, 2013; Thomson, 2011).

When in the mid-19th century independence was declared, the hacienda model remained in place and continued to have a grip on the social, political and economic life in Colombia. The model first became challenged in the mid- to late nineteenth century, when more and more people began to colonize the agricultural frontier. Often from poor segments of society, these colonizers moved to settlements that were inhabited by indigenous communities, mestizos, *cimarrones* (rebel African slaves) and poor whites, following the example of other peasant communities who had already settled themselves outside the haciendas (Castillo, 2015).

Colonization of the agricultural frontier was partially driven by the emerging coffee export market. The decision-making of the first 30 years of the twentieth century, which was very supportive of large-scale landownership, favored the growth in coffee cultivation, making it into the most important base for expansion and consolidation of Colombian capitalism until the 1950s. It became the brand of the Colombian economy and public investments were made, such as the construction of roads, ports and railways in order to respond to the international demand for coffee (Bohorquez, 2013). The coffee industry was located in the Andean region, where a large share of peasant colonization had settled. As such, coffee production was in the hands of both small-scale campesinos and large-scale landowners, also known as *latifundistas*. As the campesinos were working independently from the landlords, the latter's dominant position became threatened. Wanting to continue their monopoly over the agrarian structure landlords started pressuring the campesinos to sell or clear their land, which was met by thorough resistance. Tenants and sharecroppers wanting to become free peasants began to demand the fulfillment of their right to property titles for the unoccupied land on which they had started working. Many of the colonizers who were sent to open the agricultural frontier by the big coffee plantations refused to hand the land over after they had cleared it. All in all, tensions between these communities and the powerful businessmen and large landowners who wanted to appropriate the land themselves rose, resulting in a growing number of clashes between landowners and the autonomous communities living in the settlements that became increasingly violent (Bohorquez, 2013; Thomson, 2011).

6.2 Attempts to agrarian reform

The 1920s marked the first decade in which the agrarian question was on the national political agenda. The agrarian conflict was growing, with tenants on the haciendas defying the landlords who owned the estates. This period saw the emergence of a rural proletariat, who demanded better wages and working conditions. Meanwhile, the large-scale landowners continued their attempts to extend their territorial control by expelling the colonists who were living on the uncultivated lands. In order to protect themselves campesinos started to unite in agrarian unions and peasant leagues (Thomson, 2011). In 1928, this led the Colombian state to establish and create the legal foundation for agricultural colonies that could guarantee access to land to peasants through Decree 1110 (Castillo, 2015). This decree established the model of agricultural colonies (*colonías agrícolas),* thereby opening up the possibility to create campesino settlements. It was an important development for campesino communities, as it gave them the opportunity to title the land and obtain territories. But although the legislation was created, very little was done to execute it. Eventually, it would take until 1990 before the idea of creating campesino territories was back on the table, this time in the form of the ZRC model (Orjuela, 2013).

The first significant effort to organize land ownership since colonization ended came in 1936 with the creation of Law 200, which was to become the primary norm for arranging land ownership. The law did not settle redistribution of land but it did strengthen private property, as its main goal was to modernize the agrarian sector and stimulate production by favoring those who economically exploited the land, which became an obligation for anyone who wanted to own land. Unfortunately, this led to more turmoil as in many regions landlords violently attempted to evict tenants and squatters of their lands. Ultimately, the regulation did not stimulate agricultural production but it did give an impulse to extensive cattle breeding, as this was an easy way to both occupy the land and use it for economic output. During this period the state clearly demonstrated their willingness to support the capitalist development of large-scale landownership, and to protect this model from more democratic aspirations that the campesino communities had. The tendency that so-called ‘land judges’, who were to mediate disputes over land, had to favor the landed elites, thereby keeping the latifundios intact, were a clear illustration of this (Bohorquez, 2013; Thomson, 2011).

Although most latifundios remained unscathed, members of the traditional ruling class still felt like their dominant position was threatened and expressed strong anti-reformist sentiment. Such sentiments coerced the government into undoing many of the changes that had just years before been introduced. The establishment of Law 100 of 1944 ensured the landlords’ control over land by defining the right and obligations that tenants had in a way that was preferable to the latifundistas.

The law was created with the intention to establish rental and sharecropping contracts for public use. It gave way for participative exploitation of the land and increased the period of expiry of control from ten to fifteen years. However, if tenants or sharecroppers wanted to plant perennial crops, which last for more than one season, they required the permission from their landlords. At the same time, long-term activity was obligatory if one wanted to apply for a land title. This lessened the potential for equal land distribution, as power was placed in the hands of the elite once again (Castillo, 2015; Bohorquez, 2013; Thomson, 2011).

The conservation of the ruling class, continuous concentration of land ownership and the precarious rights surrounding land ownership, as well as the low levels of education and political conflicts fed a growing dissatisfaction among the peasantry. This culminated in massive riots in 1948, after Jorge Eliécer Gaitán,, the leader of the Liberal party that many of the peasantry supported, was assassinated. It has been argued that the developments of the 1940s, including these attempts to modernize the Colombian society and its economy, paved the way for a thorough political crisis which can be seen as a key factor in the armed conflict that continues up to this date (Castillo, 2015; Bohorquez, 2013; Thomson, 2011).

In the 1950s the era know as *La Violencia* commenced. Concentrated in the Andean coffee producing regions, during la Violencia over 200,000 people died and an estimated two million people were displaced. The conflict originated in struggles between the conservative and liberal parties, but led many campesinos to flee, joining existing and newly-formed armed resistance-communities. Gradually the conflict became more and more based on class, with campesinos standing against landlords (Bohorquez, 2013; Thomson, 2011).

In an attempt to stop the political violence, the Liberal government of 1958 to 1962 came to an agreement with Liberal guerrilla groups: if they agreed to hand over their weapons, the government would grant them land titles, as well as access to health care and education. Unfortunately, after several years many of these lands ended up in the hand of businessmen and traders. This led to a cycle in which peasants obtained and improved land, thereby increasing their value and leading businessmen and traders to come and acquiring the land as an investment, making land ownership become monopolized and leading again to the displacement of rural inhabitants. Those displaced persons then went on to find new vacant lands, which led to the expansion of the agricultural frontier, whereupon the cycle started again (Castillo, 2015).

6.3 Modernizing the agricultural sector

During the 1960s Colombia, as well as other Latin American countries, started getting economic support from the United States' 'Alliance for Progress' (*Alianza para el Progreso*). The main objective of this program was to establish political and democratic stability in the continent, as well

as stopping the spread of socialism. The projects that were started under the flag of this program reflected many of the views of the Latin American 'structuralist' school, or ECLA (Economic Commission for Latin America), which had gained strong influence in the region. This school described how throughout Latin America economic problems were often linked to the dominance of powerful landowning elites who controlled the agrarian structures characterized by their inequality. Agrarian policies, including land reform that would lead to equal distribution of land, were seen as a key element to stimulate economic development (Bohorquez, 2013; Thomson, 2011).

Following from this, the Colombian government developed and passed the Agrarian Social Reform Law, or Law 135, in 1961, which proposed the creation of a core institution that would support agrarian reform. This institution was INCORA (Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform, *Instituto Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria*), a public organism that was set up to deal with the issues surrounding land. The main guidelines INCORA had were to grant land to the campesinos who did not have access to it, to adapt the land in order to incorporate it into production and to aid in basic social services. Although this can be seen as an attempt to solve the crisis around the distribution of land, it still worked within the traditional structures and patterns that were the cause of the problems in the first place. This was not surprising, as the land reform act came about through negotiation between the political representatives of ruling classes, but did not include other social groups such as the peasantry. To please the large-scale landowners, little was done towards redistributing established private property. Rather, laws were passed that made it easier to colonize uncultivated land, which spurred processes of colonization in these regions. By the end of the 1960s, 96% of the land titles that had been granted concerned public lands and areas that had been recently colonized. However, INCORA also granted titles for large landholdings in the regions that were set out for new colonization, which meant that in certain regions unequal land distribution was extended rather than halted (Bohorquez, 2013; Thomson, 2011).

In this decade, USAID, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank were involved in setting an agenda for Colombia's agricultural production in order to spur development. The production of commercial export was given high priority, as was reflected in the allocation of loans by these institutions, which went towards the commercial sectors, cattle ranching, and mechanization programs. Small-scale farming projects were not included in these loans, as it was argued that Colombia's small-scale agricultural production activities constituted a "mal-use, misuse and under-use" of land and labor (Thomson, 2011: pp. 337). Rather, a development model that worked towards a growth of the number of large-scale agribusinesses and stimulation of migration from rural to urban areas was favored. With the support of both international and national funds haciendas became modernized and mechanized, transforming them into labour-saving commercial

estates that produced sugar cane, cotton, rice and sesame. In the second half of the 1960s, commercial export projects, which included the cultivation of African oil palm, soya and cotton, received an increasing amount of money. Through these projects, the total output of large-scale commercial agriculture grew from representing 13.4% of the total output in 1950 to 42.6% by 1976 (Thomson, 2011).

But while agricultural production for export soared, cultivation of food for the domestic market suffered, and the price of food staples increased quickly. At the end of the 1960s, around 75% of the Colombian population was using half of their income to obtain food. In addition, the disintegration of the peasantry spurred enormous rural-urban migration, for which there was too little employment. On the other hand, employment opportunities in rural areas also decreased as agricultural production became mechanized and livestock grazing activities expanded. Once again, resistance and unrest was growing among the campesino communities as well as other social groups, spurring the recently formed guerrilla groups to threaten the government and elites. In 1968, then-president Carlos Lleras Restrepo attempted to appease the tensions by proposing to intensify and expand INCORA's task, which would include obligatory redistribution of land from the latifundios. But once again, the landowning class succeeded in diluting agrarian reform into a bureaucratic gesture with very little content, as had happened with the previous attempts to agrarian reform of 1936 and 1961 (Thomson, 2011).

Lleras acknowledged that constructive agrarian reform would not come from within the political establishment. But he wanted to continue his attempts to counter the latifundistas' influence on agrarian policies and created the national association of users of state agricultural services (*Asociación Nacional de Usarios Campesinos*, ANUC). This was to be an organizational platform through which campesinos would be enabled to participate in legislation processes, such as agrarian reform. By 1971, the organization had attracted an enormous following, which made it far less dependent on the government (Cardona, 2015; Thomson, 2011).

Unfortunately, Lleras' successor, Conservative Misael Pastrana Borrero (1970-1974) did not share his reformist views. His economic plan saw traditional production as performed by campesinos as an important impediment to national economic development. His government launched counteroffensives which were characterized by their use of torture, murder, kidnapping and collective detention. The expropriation of land from absentee landlords would be firmly restricted, while financial and institutional support to industrial large-scale agriculture would continue (Thomson, 2011).

1976 marked the launch of the Integrated Rural Development program (*Desarollo Rural Integrado*, DRI). The program reflected the global policy views of the time, which saw the transfer

of green revolution technology to small-scale farmers as a means to alleviate rural poverty. The goals set for the program included increasing salaries by boosting productivity in production of staple foods, to link the campesino economy to wider markets, and to introduce the provision of social services in rural regions. Tapping into the campesino economy, at that time accounting for 44% of total agricultural production in Colombia, was seen as an unexplored market for multinationals and financial institutions. As such, those who were in the program were encouraged to use new types of seeds, pesticides and fertilizers, which cost way above what traditional inputs had cost. A way of getting the campesinos to go with this was the promise of social services such as health care, education, and food support as well as much needed infrastructure like roads (Thomson, 2011; Vargas del Valle, 1999).

ANUC criticized the counter-reformist policies and repressive tactics that the government upheld, and declared that DRI was in no way a solution to the campesinos' problems. With a government that was unresponsive to requests for negotiating agrarian reform, new campaigns for land invasion started, as well as mass rallies, as a result of which the government came back with more state terror and repression. Towards the end of the decade, ANUC slowly disintegrated, which combined with the campaign of terror that the government pursued is seen by some as contributing factors to the growth of the armed conflict, which until then had remained fairly invisible. The 1970s have been called a 'turning point', where the central government turned its back to their responsibility for solving social conflict, and handed it over to armed groups (Thomson, 2011).

6.4 Towards the creation of the ZRC model

By the 1980s, Colombia, just like many other countries, encountered economic decline. The concentration of land and the dependency on foreign technology were named as important causes of the structural agrarian crisis the country was in. There was a continuing absence of institutional support for agricultural development, as well as an overall absence within the rural regions. Ultimately, with the cultivation of legal crops becoming ever less profitable, there were few guarantees for survival, leaving many campesinos with the feeling that there were scarcely any other options than to turn to the illegal cultivation of marijuana and coca leafs. The rapid development of a drug economy in Colombia can be seen as a product of the path towards agrarian development that had been followed and which had resulted in large numbers of poor people, who had often been forced of their lands and pushed towards isolated rural areas that were perfect for cultivation of illicit crops (Bohorquez, 2013; Thomson, 2011).

Between 1980 and 1987 the battle fought by campesinos to get their rights recognized and to fulfill their demands of agrarian reform materialized in several ways. First, campesino movements

undertook a number of public marches in which both those producing food and those involved in illicit crop cultivation were represented. Second, in 1985 discussions between the government and rural communities were held with the goal of moving forward in territorial planning and looking for alternatives to the ways in which rural areas were occupied, the colonization and the ever-continuing expansion of the agricultural frontier. This resulted in the signing of an agreement between the INDEREMA[4] and communal action groups of the low and medium Caguán region for the implementation of a first attempt for territorial legislation for the protection of the environment and of natural resources. It was to establish the sustainable extraction of resources from forests, fauna and flora, and for the sustainable management of fishing, by operating under a scheme that assigned specific conservation tasks to individual producers, within a context of regional development. Another important step towards the creation of the ZRC model was undertaken by the compassion communities in the Parque Natural Serranía de la Macarena, who wanted, among other things, the titling of their land, access to social politics, credit and technical assistance. They demanded land titles for medium sized lands, and as a compromise for their demands they would help with conservation of the forest and its natural resources[5] (ILSA, 2012).

1991 saw the creation of a new constitution. An important part of this constitution was the establishment that the Colombian state would recognize and protect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the country, and the acknowledging of their obligation as well as that of all others to protect the natural and cultural richness of the Colombian nation. This new road was especially visible in the proclamation of collective territories for indigenous and afro-descendant communities. The campesino population, however, was given few institutional tools that were directed at them and that they could use to their own benefit. As such, campesino and colonist communities took it upon themselves to initiate processes of political demand. One of the initiatives put forward by the campesino movement came in the early 1990s, as part of the process through which new agrarian reform was to come about. The aim of this National Agrarian Reform System that the government promoted was based on neoliberal premises, as recommended by international financial institutions, and included recommendations such as letting the price of land be based on the principles of supply and demand as driven by the free market (Castillo, 2015). The campesino movement entered the process of creating a renewed agrarian reform with their introduction of the ZRC model.

[4] INDEREMA was the National Institute for Renewable Natural Resources and the Environment (*Instituto Nacional de Recursos Natural Renovables y Medio Ambiente)* of Colombia. It was part of the Ministry of Environment until it was dissolved in 1993

[5] This proposal was included in Law 160 of 1994, which established the creation of the ZRC model

Ultimately, these campesino movements created the original idea, as well as completing and achieving the model's formalization (Castillo, 2015; ILSA, 2012).

7. Zonas de Reserva Campesina: model, legislation and current status

In 1994, in a final attempt by the state to answer to the needs and demands of the rural communities, Law 160 was presented. This law would be the legal foundation of the ZRC model, which was established with under chapter XIII of Law 160: "Colonization, Zonas de Reserva Campesina and Business Development" ("*Colonización, Zonas de Reserva Campesina y Desarollo Empresarial*"). The decennia-long battles, cooperative efforts and demands of campesinos and colonists to get their right to land recognized and respected has been a major catalyst for the creation of the legislation, which was pushed for and designed by the campesino communities themselves (Bohorquez, 2013; ILSA, 2012).

7.1 Establishing the legislation

The creation and legal establishment of the model in 1994 can be seen as driven by two developments in that same year: first, the growing concern of the Colombian state with regard to the rapid deterioration of the natural environment in regions where colonists and displaced campesinos were living, which were often located in protected environmental zones; and second, the pressure generated by campesino marches in which 130,000 persons took part, asking for solutions to the fumigation of illicit crops, the intensification of the armed conflict in several regions, and the lack of social services, such as health care and education, in rural areas (Bohorquez, 2013). As one of the interviewees put it, the creation of Law 160 of 1994 was the result of a process that had started in the 1950s, which, with the enduring battles and effort of the campesinos, including the several mass marches in 1994, led to the achievement of having a model that could be the answer to the campesinos' woes.

Although Colombia's constitutional framework does not offer many references to the rights of the peasantry, the campesino organizations have appropriated several constitutional articles in order to create a framework that can help legitimate the creation of ZRC. The constitutional framework used by the campesinos can be found in table **FILL IN TABLE NUMBER** Using this legal framework, as well as postulating from the international human rights discourse, campesino organizations have set out the model of the ZRC (ILSA, 2012).

The law was created during the mandate of president Trujillo (1990-1994). His government was characterized by its emphasis on spreading neoliberalism and opening up the Colombian economy, under the banner of the 'pacific revolution'. With regard to agricultural productivities this entailed a roll back from the state to work towards letting the sector be directed by the laws of the market (ILSA, 2012). However, under pressure of the campesino communities and their public

mobilization, it was decided that they could enter the process through which new agrarian reform would be established.

Law 160 called out the necessity to progressively improve access to land ownership for agrarian workers. In the absence of agrarian reform that set out conditions for creating equality, the ZRC model became of great importance for the Colombian campesinos, who see it as a way to redistribute land fairly; to diversify use of land; to improve their human capital; to guarantee their rights, especially to territory, land and judicial land tenure security; and to offer the overall assistance that is needed to achieve the wellbeing of campesino communities, their territories and regions in which they live.

Constitutional framework for legal model of ZRC	
Article 2	Establish the guarantee of the principles and rights as essential goals of the State
Article 7	Mark the recognition and protection of ethnic and cultural diversity of the nation by the State
Article 8	Follow the obligation of the State to protect the natural richness of the nation
Article 11	The right to life cannot be violated. There will be no death penalty
Article 13	All persons are born free and equal
Article 25	Recognize work as a right that should especially be protected by the State
Article 51	All Colombians have the right to a dignified life
Article 58	Refer to the social function of property, which is inherently an ecological function
Article 60	Prescribe the State's role in promoting property
Article 64	Refer to the obligation of the State to promote the progressive access to land for agrarian workers, the conditions for production and the guarantee of their economic, social and cultural rights, with the goal of improving their incomes and quality of life
Article 66	Refer to the special conditions for livestock credits????
Article 79	Establish the right to a healthy environment
Article 80	Prescribe the responsibilities of the State with regard to the exploitation and management of natural resources and with regard to prevention and control of environmental deterioration.

Table ?? Constitutional framework for ZRC model. Source: ILSA, 2012. Translated by author.

Within Law 160 various objectives for the ZRC model have been set out. These include:

- Regulation of colonization processes, with a specific emphasis on avoiding concentration of land ownership in colonized areas;
- Countering the effects of soil erosion in forested zones;
- Protection of the natural environment in strategic zones;

- Regulating the hoarding of private property by handing out rights over the territories to campesino and colonizing communities;
- Establishing governmental support in productive activities by these communities in order to help with integral and sustainable human development.

Rather than being a model to manage the redistribution of land, it works more towards limiting further continuation of the monopoly in land ownership, which has characterized land ownership in Colombia for over a century. The law states that the model is especially meant to be applied to uncultivated public lands and regions where special environmental management is needed (Bohorquez, 2013; ILSA, 2012).

Although the law in which the model for ZRC was established was created in 1994, little was done towards actually executing the law and allocating the necessary resources to do so. After the pronouncement of Law 160 of 1994, in order for the regulation to be put in place popular pressure was needed once again, which this time came in the form of massive marches undertaken by coca leaf farmers, or *cocaleras*, in 1996. Campesinos, colonists and workers involved in coca production opposed the restrictions on commercialization of fertilizers for the processing of coca leaves. Furthermore, they addressed the negative effects of the aerial fumigations undertaken by the government to destroy coca crops, but which simultaneously destroyed the only economic alternative that many coca farmers had: the cultivation of pastures and food crops such as yuca, plantains, beans, and corn. One of the demands of the marchers was that the government recognize the importance of ZRC as an alternative development plan for those zones that were marginalized in terms of social investment. They saw the ZRC model as a functional scheme to allow them to switch from their illegal crops to legal ones. They wanted the government to start establishing regulations for the zones' creation, proposition and development. Although the marches initially led to further stigmatization of campesinos and their being called out for associating with guerrilla movements, the demands of the campesinos were eventually heard by the government and a step forward was made by the creation of Decree 1777 of 1996 (Castillo, 2015; ILSA, 2012).

With Decree 1777 of 1996, the pressure of the campesino movements gave way to rapid development of the law. It established the regulation for the part of Law 160 that concerns the ZRC model, Chapter XIII. The decree maintains the same definition as Law 160, emphasizing that the zones will be constituted and specified by the Board of Directors of INCORA; that they will be established in colonized zones, in regions with predominantly unused public land; and in areas whose agroecological and socioeconomic features require regulation, limitation and legislation with regard to property and tenancy of rural land. An addition of Decree 1777 was that ZRC could now

also be created in zones bordering National Parks. Furthermore, the regulation states that the objective of the model is to boost and establish the campesino economy, overcome the causes of social conflicts that affect them, and to create conditions for achieving peace and social justice in these areas (Decree 1777 of 1996, article 1) (ILSA, 2012). From the government's side, the main intention was to take care of the colonized areas that were affected by violence, illicit crop cultivation and poverty, through consolidation of the campesino economy (Velasco, 2014).

The first step towards the realization of the ZRC model as proposed in law 160 and decree 1777 was taken by setting up ZRC pilot projects with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture and the World Bank. Three ZRC were to be set up in country, and these would serve as a way of measuring what the positive contributions of the model could be for campesino communities and rural development. The pilot projects were set up in Cabrera, Pato-balsillas and Calamar Guaviare, all of which have been eventually constituted as ZRC and still exist today. One of the main conclusions of this project was the confirmation that the ZRC could indeed be a catalyst to local rural development, as long as the associated development plans were in line with local realities and the institutions involved in their development (Velasco, 2014; Bohorquez, 2013).

From there six ZRC have been established between 1998 and 2001, in various colonized regions and regions that have been the setting for conflicts over land; that were situated in the surroundings of the agricultural and livestock frontiers; in regions highly affected by the armed conflict; and in regions where state presence is limited. The zones are spread out over the country and cover very different ecosystems: from plains to Amazonian rainforest, the Páramo[6], forested regions, and riparian areas[7] (See figure 1 and table 1). The majority of those came into being through requests of campesino organizations, who see the model as an alternative in solving their socioeconomic problems, as a way to substitute the cultivation of illicit crops and as a strategy of limiting the violent dynamics that characterize these territories. With campesino associations and organizations working together in a network many of the processes toward the establishment of ZRC have been made possible (ILSA, 2012).

[6] The páramo is a high mountain ecosystem that grows at altitudes of between 2,800 and 4,500 meters above sea level. It can be found in the Andean regions of Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador (Zimmer, 2013)

[7] A riparian area an ecosystem located along the banks of rivers, streams or any other water networks. Flora and fauna in these zones are often distinctly different from those in adjacent areas due to the water-rich soils found in these zones (www.eoearth.org)

Figure 1: Location of constituted ZRC

7.2 Specifics of the ZRC model

The following objectives that the ZRC model should fulfill have been taken up in the law:

1. To control the excessive expansion of the agricultural frontier in Colombia, especially with regard to cattle farming and breeding;
2. To correct and avoid phenomena of unequal concentration or anti-economic fragmentation of rural land ownership;
3. To create the conditions for consolidation and sustainable development of campesino- and colonist economies in these zones;
4. To regulate the occupation of unused public lands as well as improving the use of these lands. In the allocation of land titles in these regions preference will be given to campesinos or colonists who have few resources at their disposal;
5. To create and establish an integral proposal for sustainable human development, territorial legislation and political administration for these zones;
6. To strengthen the coordination between the state and rural communities on social, political, environmental and cultural topics, while guaranteeing communities' proper participation in local and regional planning and decision making (ILSA, 2012).

Constituted ZRC					
ZRC	Resolution of constitution	Size	Territory covered	Number of inhabitants	Organization
Guaviare	Resolution 054 of 19 November 1997	469,000 hectares	Municipalities Calamar, El Retorno and San José del Guaviare	38,000	Cooperative Multiactiva Agropecuaria del Guaviare (Cooagruaviare)
Pato-Balsillas (San Vicente del Caguán, Caquatá)	Resolution 055 of 18 December 1997	145,155 hectares	Inspecciones Balsillas and Guayabal	7,500	Asociación Municipal de Colonos de El Pato (Amcop)
Sur de Bolivár (Municipios de Arenal and Morales)	Resolution 054 of June 22 1999	29,110 hectares	Municipalities Arenal and Morales	3,500	Asociación de pequeños productores de la Zona de Reserva Campesina de Morales (Asoreserva) and Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio (PDPMM)
Cabrera (Province Sumapaz-Cundinamarca)	Resolution 046 of November 7 2000	47,336 hectares	Municipality Cabrera	5,300	Sindicato de Pequeños Agricultores de Cundinamarca (Sinpeagricun)
Bajo Cuembí and Comandante (Puerto Asís-Putomayo)	Resolution 069 of December 18 2000	22,000 hectares	Bajo Cuembí and Comandante	4,700 inhabitants	-

Constituted ZRC					
Valle del Río Cimitarra (Magdalena Medio)	Resolution 028 of December 10 2002	504.259 hectares	Municipalities Yondó and Remedios in Antioquia deparment; Cantagallo and San Pablo in Bolivår department	29,000 inhabitants	Asociación Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra (ACVC)

Table 1: overview of constituted ZRC (INCODER, 2012a; ACVC, 2012)

The interpretation of the norm takes quite a broad position, which was necessary as the model had to be applicable to whichever region in the Colombian territory where processes of rural legislation that protect the campesino economy and smallholdership needed to be developed (ILSA, 2012). These regions can differ greatly in socioeconomic, climatic, geographical and cultural characteristics, as well as being under the mandate of different provinces and municipalities.

The law is further specified through several articles. Article 1 states that ZRC should be established as the preferred model to promote small-scale land ownership in rural areas, to regulate the occupation and better use of unused land of the nation by handing titles to campesinos with little resources under a framework of environmental conservation and that of natural resources and the land related regulations. The environmental conservation aspect comes back in the fact that one of the prerequisites for establishing a ZRC is that communities need to design a sustainable development plan, with input from the community. The environmental sustainability aspects of the ZRC model will be discussed in more detail in chapter 9.

Article 79 sets out that regulation, limitation and legislation of rural property ownership needs to be defined. The state should work towards elimination of land concentration and the hoarding of unused land by taking these as fundamental aims for the present and future processes of colonization. The law prescribes that this regulatory framework needs to be developed by INCORA, and that this should be done in such a way that it promotes small-scale landownership by campesinos while preventing the decomposition of the small campesino economy within the colonized areas. The planning is based on boosting the campesino economy through ownership of land. It also announces that legislation for ownership should be created in such a way that works toward correcting phenomena of unequal concentration of rural land and create conditions to consolidate the economies in the colonies. The regulation also states that the objective of the model is to boost and establish the campesino economy, overcome the causes of social conflicts that affect

them and to create conditions for achieving peace and social justice in these areas (Decree 1777 of 1996, article 1).

Article 80 indicates that ZRC are those geographic areas that have been selected by the Board of Directors of INCORA, which has been done by taking the agroecological and socioeconomic regional characteristics into account. It establishes that regulation for the minimum and maximum extensions that one can accumulate will be designed, for which Agricultural Family Units (*Unidades Agrícolas Familiares,* UAF) are used. This regulation will also state how many UAF one can own, as well as the prerequisites, conditions and obligations that should be fulfilled and proven by the occupants of these zones in order to be able to apply for one. It establishes that the actions of the state in these territories will be oriented towards the effectiveness of social, economic and cultural rights of campesinos, and their participation in planning and decision making in regional matters.

When asked what the ZRC model meant for campesino communities, interviewees repeatedly stated the importance of the ways in which it proposes putting a limit to land ownership, as is set out in article 79. Within ZRC people can own UAF. Article 38 of law 160 defines these UAF as basic companies involved in agricultural, cattle, aquatic or forestry production whose size conforms to the agroecological conditions of the region and on which adequate technology is used in order to reward families for their work and to create a surplus that can be capitalized on by these families and contributes to the formation of their wealth. Law 160 established that unused lands will be titled as UAF, and marks the maximum and minimum extensions that can be awarded to basic production companies for each specific case, region or municipality. Furthermore, it states that when the maximum size of land that is allowed for ownership is violated, this is seen as illegal occupation of the nation's land (IICA, n.d.). Within the ZRC one family can have two or three family agricultural units at most. This allows for avoiding that after land titles have been allocated a big landowner, or *latifundista,* arrives and monopolizes all land titles, which is what has happened in many territories throughout Colombia over the last century.

To the campesinos and those affiliated with campesino organization that were interviewed another important part of the model lies in the fact that law 160 elaborates on a sustainable development plan in which the government and ministry of agriculture allocate resources for these development plans to be executed. These sustainable development plans are designed with input from the whole community, with a public hearing as a central point. This hearing is meant to explain the advantages that the constitution of a ZRC could bring to the community, to discuss the objections and recommendation that will be formulated in the selection proposal and the sustainable development plan and to arrange the activities, programs, and investments that have to be made by

public and private agencies as well as the organizations that represent the interests of the colonists and campesinos. It is a place for them to express how they see the path to development in their region with regard to productive activities and the necessities for infrastructure, education and the environment. This is important, because legally these development plans have to be taken up by local governments and resources have to be allocated towards their execution, as is stated in article 84. This article makes it obligatory for mayors, as well as organizations of interest to the colonies and the municipalities in which the ZRC are located, to cooperate in the formulation and execution of development plans for the processes of colonization. The responsibility that the state has towards fulfilling its tasks in the ZRC model is reiterated in Decree 1777 of 1996, which stipulates the governmental entities that finance and co-finance the plans, programs and activities in the ZRC, and delegates the coordination of policies of the state and ZRC to the Ministries of Agriculture and rural Development, and the Environment, Housing and Territorial Development (ILSA, 2012).

Perhaps the most relevant aspect of the ZRC with regard to the problems of occupying and using the land is that it is a legislative figure that enables the creation of territorial planning in Colombia. As set out in article 80 of law 160, the ZRC can be constituted in geographical areas determines by the directive board of INCORA, taking into account the regional agroecological and socioeconomic characteristics. It is a strategy for territorial planning that can be adopted in whichever part of the national territory where the campesino economy predominates, with the goal to protect it from the advance of latifundismo and to open these regions up for the construction of an equal agrarian structure. Article 81 establishes that the colonized zones and those where the majority of land is unused are to be made ZRC and presents the campesino communities as the preferred population for obtaining titles in the unused land of the nation. Article 81 refers concretely to colonized zones and zones where land is largely unused as those zones where the ZRC model should be prioritized in legislation concerning rural property. This entails that the ZRC model serves to strengthen small-scale rural property and its implementation contributes to regulating the occupation of unused public lands as well as their use.

In Agreement 24 of 1996, INCORA set out the areas and regions where no ZRC could be constituted:

a. Those covering National Natural Parks;
b. Forest reserves, except for those exceptions that are referred to in Article 1 of Decree 1777;
c. Indigenous territories;
d. Afro-descendent territories;
e. Those reserved by INCORA and other public entities for other goals defined by the law;

f. Those that already have been named Zones for Business Development (*Zonas de Desarrollo Empresarial*).

Another important aspect is article 14, which sets out the possibilities of evaluating the state of the ZRC and whether the same way should be continued. It includes in this evaluation process the campesino organizations with the objective of speeding up and perfecting the strategies and mechanisms of the process of selecting and constituting the ZRC. This normative body was what maintained in force during the period of implementing pilot project of ZRC and during the constitution of different ZRC in Colombia. (ILSA, 2012)

The regulations of the law were not the subject of major discussion, as the ZRC model did not get much objection at the time of its creation. When the time came to actually regulate and implement the model however, difficulties started to arise, as will be explained in the following.

7.3 Production within the ZRC

"As campesinos we have to be able to be the producer of our own food" (Campesino, ZRC Montes de Maria). The ZRC model has a very productive character, with an emphasis on production of food. The campesino agricultural model is based on smaller scale production, which is also promoted through the use of UAF. The number of hectares that families can own differs greatly per region. For example, one UAF in ZRC Cabrera consists of 18 hectares, but one in ZRC Guaviare can go up to 175 hectares. This is also due to the fact that the ZRC themselves range extensively in size, with Cabrera covering 44.000 hectares, and Guaviare 464.600 hectares. Families within ZRC can own up to two UAF. The establishment of UAF within ZRC does not entail that these are never exceeded. Even within zones that have been constituted as ZRC there were still landowners that owned massive stretches of land, which goes to show once again that what the law states is not always how it works in reality. It has to be noted that these landowners are not campesinos, but latifundistas, often managing agro-industrial companies on their land.

But, as said, within the campesino model production takes place on a small- to medium scale. If families own animals, they may have between 50 to 200 of them, and only if this is their main productive activity. A lot of the production in the zones is for auto-consumption. Examples of the food that is produced in the zones include plantains, rice, beans, corn, and yucca as well as animal husbandry of pigs, cattle, chickens. These foods are all staples in the Colombian diet. Often families have a combination of food that is produced for the market, and then on a smaller scale cultivation of certain crops or keeping of a small number of animals for consumption within the

household. Campesinos also engage in exchanging products with other members of their community.

The fact that production in the ZRC is small-scale helps build its image as a model that aids the establishment of a more sustainable future, as the negative effects that agroindustrial production can have on the environment have been widely reported. The small- to medium-scale farming model that is used within the ZRC on the other hand, has been gaining support as a way to both feed the world and preserve the environment. The Colombian campesinos that have been interviewed for this research seem to share this vision, as they continuously pointed out the benefits of their agricultural model.

A goal of those involved in the promotion of the ZRC model is to make the most of the conditions that Colombia offers. Colombia has an enormous richness in nature, and offers great opportunities for agricultural production. However, in the international market there are certain products that are far more interesting than others. The continuous pressure presented by the Colombian government to become a player in the globalized food production model stimulates the setting up of monocultures that are undertaken on a large scale. Important examples of this in Colombia include the production of sugar cane for biofuel, as well as the more recent growth in African palm production for palm oil. Another example of harmful agricultural practice is made up by extensive cattle breeding, with companies owning tens of thousands of animals. Respondents pointed out the negative impacts of this production model repeatedly.

The campesino production within the ZRC is focused on promoting the production of food for the Colombian people, an aspect that is very important in the food sovereignty scheme. By taking production into their own hands, campesinos are able to ensure that the food that they and their community consume comes from known sources and that the food is ‘clean’, as respondents put it. With food that is imported, it is difficult to know how it has been produced, and whether genetically modified seeds and agrochemicals had been used. ANZORC is set on the provision of healthy, chemical-free food for Colombians, and sees the ZRC as a way to achieve this. Respondents working for ANZORC pointed out that the Colombian government is only set on providing food, which at this point entails importing a large share of the food supply. Although this helps achieve food security, the campesinos are focused on achieivng food sovereignty, by having local producers providing food for the Colombian people, thereby lessening the dependence on foreign markets and international companies.

The fact that currently a large share of the agricultural production is still for auto-consumption or exchange on a small scale, does not mean that the campesinos are not willing to commercialize their production. But this is not always easy. Several of the ZRC, as well as the regions waiting for

constitution, are dealing with a lack of the infrastructure that is needed to commercialize production. Roads are often not in place or in very poor condition, making the transport of products very difficult. Furthermore, there is often no electricity in these areas, which make the storage of products such as dairy and meat difficult. Communication is also difficult, as these areas are often remote and are lacking cell phone reception. As such, the costs of production are high and the circumstance are difficult.

7.4 Threats to execution of the model

With the legislation and tools to execute it in place, the way forward for the ZRC model seemed to be largely paved. Unfortunately, the model and those wanting to see it enforced have had to endure many setbacks over the years. Perhaps one of the most important aspects of this is the seeming unwillingness of the government to allocate resources to the ZRC or to even publicly accept and support the model.

Right after the last of the current six ZRC had been constituted, in 2002, president Álvaro Uribe Vélez came into in power. As one interviewee put it, during his mandate, which lasted until 2010, the possibilities to establish a ZRC were "broken". The model was stigmatized by using the argument that it stimulated the presence and strengthening of guerrilla groups in the ZRC, as they had often been established in regions in which armed conflict occurred and where the presence of armed groups prevailed. This is not completely surprising though, as the armed conflict would often take place in marginalized rural areas, which is exactly where the ZRC model was needed most, and for which it was designed in the first place.

Nevertheless, during the eight years of Uribe's government the ZRC the model was discredited from national policymaking. Those ZRCs that had already been established were suspended, which meant that the zones could not count on institutional support of national nor regional governmental bodies. Furthermore, there would be no new ZRC declared. The revision of the law that arranges the ZRC has never been agreed upon by campesino organizations and leaders, not by those who had already been established nor those who were still in the process of getting established (Bohorquez, 2013; ILSA, 2012; personal communication).

The unwillingness to support the ZRC model could be explained by the affinity to global capitalism that president Uribe's government showed, which led to the adoption of several regulations to steer the agrarian sector towards incorporation in the global food regime. An example of this is Law 1152 of 2007, which has a markedly productive character. It frames agriculture, food and the economy in a globalized manner, and presents a clear tendency of the state to emphasize and promote privatized initiatives. It does not however, show any move towards investing in the development of the most vulnerable sectors in rural areas, which are often predominantly inhabited

by campesinos, indigenous and afro-descendant communities. The law can be seen as a landmark in the process of constructing a capitalist model for the rural territory (ILSA, 2012).

The discrediting of the ZRC model led to en masse eviction of rural inhabitants in the years of Uribe's mandate. These evictions have led to the creation of a saying that is often heard in Colombia and in various of the interviews undertaken for this research:

"no solo hay desplazados porque hay guerra, sino especialmente hay guerra para que haya desplazados" (ILSA, 2012: pp. 8)

This means as much as that there are not just displacements because of the war, but that there is war mainly in order to be able to displace people. This sentiment comes from the idea that the government fares well by continuing the conflict, as it gives them the opportunity to displace people and make room for the arrival of national and transnational agribusinesses (Castillo, 2015). Although such statements are quite harsh and perhaps difficult to factually prove, they do illustrate the tense relationship between the government and campesino communities.

President Uribe was succeeded by Juan Manuel Santos in 2010. His government, still in power today, has presented a change in the governmental discourse towards the ZRC model, as high functionaries of the administration have expressed that it would be a preferred model in the Santos government's politics towards land. Under this mandate the government returned to the ZRC model by including it in their rural development strategies. In addition, INCODER[8] issued Resolution 240 of 2010, under which all of the constituted ZRC were reactivated, the suspension of certain ZRC was lifted and all of those ZRC that had fulfilled the necessary steps for constitution were constituted. It also started the execution of the sustainable development plans that had been created by the organizations in each one of the ZRC. Furthermore, the model was included in the rural development strategies as a way to consolidate the major conflict zones as well as those where the natural environment was threatened (Bohorquez, 2013).

Although these seem like positive developments that signal a way forward for the ZRC model and its proponents, the discourse that the government has adopted should be considered in the context of the other agrarian policies that this government is pursuing. Within the document 'Foundation of the National Development Plan 2010-2014, prosperity for all' (*Bases del Plan Nacional de Desarollo 2010-2014, Prosperidad para todos*) the vision for steering Colombia to

[8] INCODER (*Instituto Colombiano de Desarrollo Rural*, Colombian Institute for Rural Development*)* has replaced INCORA as the governmental institution that deals with rural development and is as such the institution that is concerned with the mandate over the ZRC model (ILSA, 2012)

development is presented. What can be seen here is that the vision that is upheld by the government is difficult to work in harmony with the ZRC model and the philosophy of small-scale, traditional farming that is behind it. In the Development Plan different 'motors' (*locomotoras)* for development are named, with the motor of the agricultural and livestock sector, and the motor of the mining-energy sector, focused on supporting mega-mines and foreign-owner agro-industrial companies. To give room for these sectors, the unused public lands, that by law should go to campesinos without access to land, are now being used as agroindustrial enclaves that have no connection to local realities or needs. This is done by arguing that it is for the wellbeing of the country (ILSA, 2012).

It has been contended that the failures to which the plan refers originate in policies that are inspired by the free market, and that maintaining such policies will help to reproduce them. Historically, the primary objective of agrarian policies in Colombia has been to insert the agricultural sector into the capitalist structures that dominate the global market. This is also clearly the case in this Development Plan, which is very much focused on the necessity of improving the rural households' access to productive processes and to work towards their integration in rightful and competitive insertion into the market. This is steering towards the insertion of the total Colombian rurality into the capitalist agrarian system (ILSA, 2012).

When asked why the governments that have been in charge since the model was created did not allocate resources and even openly did not support the model, interviewees pointed out a number of causes. Firstly, the government seems altogether unwilling to recognize the campesino culture as part of the country's heritage. There is a stubbornness towards getting to know the campesino culture. In the media and the governmental discourse, campesinos are often portrayed as being associated with coca growers, guerrilla groups and FARC. Furthermore, the model is portrayed as a way to spread communism in the countryside, and that the campesinos want to establish communal land use in these zones, which would be highly autonomous. This is simply false: the ZRC model works with individual landownership and titling, unlike for example the indigenous reserves. Although there are campesino cooperatives active in the zones, these are often an addition to the work that campesinos do individually. With regard to the autonomy part, the campesinos are actively trying to get the government involved, as they need their resources to fulfill the development plans. However, with a government that continuously turns its back on them, they have few other options that to seek other ways to generate resources, which adds to their autonomy.

Furthermore, there is often a clash of interests at stake. The public lands on which the ZRC are supposed to be built often are rich in natural resources such as water, minerals, petrol and forest, that are of interest to the government as they could sell these lands to big agribusiness. What can be

seen is that there are also conflicting interests within the regions where campesinos are asking for declaration of ZRC, for example because there is national park in this area, or because there are indigenous communities living there. Furthermore, the government continues to twist the campesinos' claims in a way that makes it seem like their requests are over the top. Recently, in the peace talks, the government claimed that the campesinos want nine million extra hectares for the establishment of ZRC, an amount of land that is simply not available. However, what the government does not tell is that these territories are already in use by campesinos, often as ZRC *de hecho*, and that they are only waiting for approval from the government to legalize their occupation of these lands, to which they have the right by law. This makes for a difficult situation, as the campesinos and those working for affiliated organizations that have been interviewed state that these factors are taken into account when going through the process of applying for the constitution of a ZRC. Furthermore, the law clearly states that the unused public lands are for campesinos.

The government is following the capitalist theory that is based on competitiveness and productivity, and that wrongly sees the campesino agricultural production as an unproductive model that should be steered towards transformation into a capitalist agricultural model. This is illustrated by the governmental support to large agribusinesses that produce predominantly for the foreign market and thus follow its demands. Meanwhile, campesinos are unsurprisingly trying to propel the campesino economy, which they see as the road to development for those segments of society that have been excluded from benefiting from the adoption of such neoliberal capitalist models. For them, the economic system that currently prevails in Colombia goes against what they are proposing. The objective of the campesino economy is not to maximize profits through food production, but rather to produce healthy, nutritious food for the people, in a way that preserves cultural heritage, respects human rights and give people an opportunity to live a dignified life. The vision upheld by successive Colombian governments does not acknowledge that small-scale farming can be as, if not more, productive than large-scale farming, in a way that benefits the rural communities more than the agro-industrial model. In Colombia, campesino agricultural production represents 67% of the total agricultural output. Large-scale agriculture, on the other hand, does very little to feed the Colombian population, as the food that is produced is often for export, and as a lot of land is used for the cultivation of crops that can be used as biofuels or as other primary resources, such as sugarcane and palm oil. The government resolves this by importing food, which is facilitated by the Free Trade Agreements that Colombia has with both the United States and the European Union. In this way, the government is mainly working towards establishing food security, whereas the campesinos that were interviewed expressed the need to work towards food

sovereignty. The ZRC model is seen as a way to reach this goal, and to be an alternative to big agri-businesses (GRAIN, 2013; ILSA, 2012).

The unwillingness of the government to cooperate and fulfill their obligations as stated in the law makes for a very complex situation in which most campesinos themselves have to execute tasks that should be executed by the government. INCODER is acting as if they are deaf with regard to continuing the processes, which implicate fulfilling the stages of planning, empowering, clarification of property (constituting what will be campesino territory) and assuring that the necessary resources to improve living conditions are in place. The campesinos know that it will not be easy to get these rights fulfilled, which is why they continue fighting in order to get this model recognized. They do this by making demands at a constitutional level, mostly through ANZORC, the National Association for Zonas de Reserva Campesina, as well as other campesino organizations, who work together in a network. As one respondent put it: "*Whatever resources we have been given by INCODER are the result of our own battle and we will have to continue battling to get more*" (Male, affiliated with ANZORC).

At this point there are six officially constituted ZRC. There are seven other regions in which campesinos are fighting to get ZRC constituted. Although the necessary steps have been made by creating the Sustainable Development Plan with input from the community, and by organizing a public hearing, the government is not willing to legalize these areas. Without support from the government, communities have decided to organize themselves in order to get their rights to organize, have self-determination and defend their territories respected through internal agreements for which official recognition was not needed. As such, the execution of the ZRC is mainly driven by processes initiated by campesino movements, who construct territories and look for alternative ways to go through with sustainable development plans.

Although several of the constructed ZRC did not get official approval, they exist in a legitimate manner as an alternative territorial construction These areas are called ZRC '*de hecho'*, which means that although all requirements have been met, and the inhabitants themselves consider a region a ZRC, the government has not come through by approving the constitution which would make it a legal ZRC. For the campesinos living and working in these areas the most important thing is that the objectives for which the model has been created are fulfilled and that the government helps doing this by allocating the necessary resources that would enable dignified living in these areas. Commercialization of their production is very difficult, as the infrastructure that is needed to connect to the market is often lacking, with roads in very poor condition. Furthermore, basic social needs are often not even met, with many areas having poor access to drinking water, electricity, health services and education (Bohorquez, 2013).

At this point, the government seems set to not constitute any new ZRC until the peace talks between the government and FARC, that are currently being held in Havana, Cuba, are completed. Land plays a very important role in these talks, as is illustrated by the fact that the very first forum undertaken for the peace talks concerned land ownership. One interviewee mentioned that the subject is now 'captured' for political reasons and as a form of leverage in the peace talks.

Getting the ZRC model established has been the fruit of decennia-long struggles that campesinos had to fight in order to get recognition. With the legislation in place, the way forward seemed to be positive, as it handed campesinos the tools to sustainably develop their regions in a way that was in line with their needs. However, with the lack of support from the government, who clearly refuse to acknowledge their responsibilities in fulfilling their obligations as stating by law, by rewarding the resources necessary for completing the Sustainable Development plans, campesinos have deemed it necessary to continue their battle. In the following chapter their strategies to do so will be discussed.

8. Campesino strategies

Colombian campesinos have developed several strategies for survival and to confront their government about what they perceive as a lack of involvement in rural development, the persistent inequality in Colombia, difficult living conditions and their unwillingness to support the ZRC model as prescribed by the law. In this chapter these strategies will be set out.

8.1 Campesino organizations

The backbone of the ZRC model are the campesino organizations who work to promote the model and to pressure the government into fulfilling its duties as prescribed by law. These together form a network that has the ability to challenge the government with far greater power than they would have if they had not been united. By using civil society initiatives to express demands and concerns, social change can be achieved, as has been established by the creation of the ZRC model. The campesino movements seem most of all to have a desire to positively influence politics in a way that is effective for their own wishes.

Cooperation and gathering in the form of social groups has been an important instrument for the campesinos involved in the ZRC movement. Although organizations such as the ones that are involved in promoting and fighting for the ZRC model can at times fail, as has happened after the model was established by law but had to face the governmental backlash and lack of economic support in the years thereafter, the 'social energy' that their members have can manifest itself in other forms in later efforts for change (Edelman, 1999).

Within Colombia, a number of successive governments, including those led by President Uribe (2002-2010) and the current government led by President Santos, have restricted the funding and decision making power of societal groups such as the campesino organizations. This constant hampering of popular power has perhaps worked in a reverse manner and led to the promotion of a certain level of vigilantism. Social organizations have fought back and are showing that they are no longer willing to accept governmental policies that are detrimental to their own cause, such as is for example the case with the promotion of large-scale agro-industrial projects that displace campesinos. Another illustration of the fact that campesino organization are no longer waiting for support and approval from the government when it comes to the ZRC model are the *de hecho* declarations of several ZRC throughout the country. With the continuous existence of governments that make choices with negative impact on rural communities without much thought about what these communities need and want, it is perhaps unsurprising that people feel the need to take matters into their own hands and to follow a more autonomous path. During the interviews, respondents continuously referred to the lack of governmental assistance, and the need to cooperate amongst the campesinos to get their desired territories and ways of living established.

On a national level, the push for expansion of the number of ZRC is steered by ANZORC, the National Association for Zonas de Reserva Campesina (*Asociación Nacional de Zona de Reserva Campesina*). This national organization unites the interests of campesinos from different regions in Colombia. It defends the ZRC, contributes to the construction of peace in campesino territories and to the strengthening of human rights, access to land. It also acts as an interlocutor with the state in matters that concern the strengthening of ZRC. ANZORC aims to influence public rural policymaking through getting the campesino recognized as a political subject. This is done through actions, activities and projects that intend to fulfill the demands of the campesino community, with a focus on the right to land and protection of territory. In addition to the national organization, ANZORC has a team that is made up of delegates of campesino organizations, who execute action plans locally and guarantee its functioning. Recently ANZORC has organized itself locally, through the appointment of seven regional coordination nodes that act between the regional organizations and local events to strengthen the stimulation of ZRC.

Its goals are to promote the ZRC as the campesino approach to agrarian reform, food sovereignty, protection and stabilization of the rural territories. This happens through constant deliberation with actors that are involved in and are part of the campesino territories. Furthermore, the organization works towards promoting the ZRC model in public policies, and to ensure that campesino organizations are represented and involved in policymaking that concerns the ZRC. It drives and strengthens the processes of both the constituted and to be constituted ZRC, while taking into account the political, technical and methodological characteristics that each organization process has.

ANZORC is the result of the campesino struggles of the 1980s and 1990s, out of which the ZRC model developed. At the end of the 1990s the first pilot projects were launched, and in this light the ANZORC was created with the goal of promoting the implementation of the model and to highlight its potential. However, between 2002 and 2010 the organization had to declare itself inactive. This was the result of the strong pressure against and stigmatization of the model and the campesino organizations associated with ZRC by the government. In October of 2010, during the national meeting regarding ZRC, the association was reactivated. From this moment on ANZORC has concentrated on creating a political agenda that allows for making the ZRC model more visible in politics, and to strengthen the model within Colombia. Furthermore, an important aspect of their work is to get campesinos recognized as a political, socio-cultural and economic subject that should be granted its own rights.

ANZORC prioritizes the strengthening of the ZRC that are already established as well as the constitution of new ones. It works towards creating strategic alliances with different sectors, such as

agrarian institutions, most notably INCODER, universities, social movements, international organizations, and mayors of municipalities that are connected to the ZRC. These alliances are set up with the aim of getting the ZRC model noticed and acknowledged as an agrarian model that makes the most of capacities that campesino communities have and the contributions that they can make to rural territorial legislation, alternative development plans, and the protection of natural resources in marginalized zones. In addition, they act as a communication conduit between rural and urban communities in order to contribute to food sovereignty.

ANZORC has been successful in establishing an arrangement that states that INCODER has to contribute with resources for the execution of the Sustainable Development Plans that are part of the ZRC model, as well as for the constitution of new ZRC. It also contributes to the dissemination, coordination and delimitation of the territories and to make them be known as campesino territory. Through setting up strategic alliances they have contributed to the creation of space for articulation of initiatives that can help to achieve a solution to the agrarian problems that Colombia faces and to create guidelines for a rural development model that is inclusive of campesino communities.

Another approach that has been taken is the setting up of an investigation network that collects academic research that is based on the experience and needs of campesino communities. The findings of such research can serve as a tool and evidence in processes of claiming the campesinos' rights to territory, as well as presenting the benefits that the ZRC model can provide for improvement of the campesino economy and rural development in general.

Where ANZORC coordinates actions on a national scale, on the local and regional scale there are a great number of campesino organizations involved in the management and establishment of ZRC. Currently, there are 59 processes that aim at establishment of new ZRC, which have been initiated by such organizations, mostly working on a regional scale. There is a great diversity in forms of organization and the trajectory these local associations have. Some have been created from state institutions in order to channel resources and support allocated to specific causes, others are the product of private interventions, and there are those linked to political processes. Lastly, one can find organizations that are the product of the desire of campesino leaders to unite their forces for more demanding topics such as the establishment of ZRC, but also issues such as how to enter the market and political decision making processes. The diversity in organization is also related to the type of activities that campesinos undertake: productive, administering services (commercialization, tourism, environmental protection) and the defense of small-scale producers. Other groups that can be more or less formalized can take responsibilities for communal problems or interests. For the

most part, these groups work separately on their own causes, but can come together for subjects that apply to the community as a whole.

The ZRC model can be seen as a stimulus to the formation of social groups: by gathering together, rights can be demanded and protection from outside forces is made less difficult. This is also stimulated by the creation of the Sustainable Development Plans that are a mandatory part of the process of getting a ZRC constituted. These plans are made with input from the community, for which public hearings are made. ANZORC helps regional organization by explaining the processes of establishing ZRC, and giving suggestions on the proposals that are made when organization establish the wish to create a ZRC in a certain region.

8.2 Protests

Without support from the government, matters need to be taken into one's own hand, and this is something that the Colombian campesino communities know better than anyone else. As discussed in the previous chapters, campesino protests and marches have played a pivotal role in the establishment of the ZRC model, and without this constant struggle, fighting, and expressing of demands through such mobilization the campesino's situation would most likely be far worse than it is now. But, as many problems that the campesinos face remain unsolved, protests continue to be an instrument for these communities to gain attention for their problems, mostly connected to campesino, social and human rights, and agrarian and land reform. Often the adoption of certain policies, mostly steered towards neoliberalism and capitalist globalization, is the spark for such protests.

In 2012, Colombia signed Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with both the United States and the European Union. Amongst other things, these FTA made it easier to import food from the United States to Colombia. Although the FTA was adopted under promises of increased employment and a growth in export numbers, so far the results have not been very positive for the Colombian people. With regard to the FTA with the United States, exports to the United States actually dropped between the adoption of the FTA in May 2012 and May 2013, by 4.5%, while imports from the United State rose by 19.7%. With regard to the agroindustrial sector, which has the most impact on campesinos and their livelihoods, exports to the United States rose by 11.5%. However, the imports from the U.S. saw a massive increase of 70%. This has a negative impact on campesino livelihoods for two reasons. First, campesinos cannot compete with the low prices of the imported food, as its production is subsidized by the U.S. government. Second, the FTA actually goes as far as to prohibit the Colombian government from subsidizing its own farmers, making it all the more difficult for campesinos to get by (Duranti, 2013).

To make matters worse, the FTA went hand in hand with a number of Colombian laws that made implementation of the FTA easier. Of these, there are two that seemed to have made the biggest impact on campesinos, being repeatedly referred to in the interviews. These laws are both connected to the storage and sharing of seeds, with Resolution 970 of 2010 controlling the production, use and marketing of all seeds in the country, and Law 1518 of 2012 expanding intellectual property rights to include seeds. Part of the FTA, both with the United States and the European Union, is that the Colombian government is obliged to provide legal monopoly rights over seeds that have been sold to Colombian farmers by Unites States and European companies as an incentive for such companies to invest in Colombia. If farmers are caught selling seeds of the varieties sold by these companies, but also simply the indigenous seeds that have not been formally registered, they could be punished with fines or even incarceration. In order for seeds to be registered and allowed, they need to meet specific criteria that connect to agroindustrial processes. Following from this, criteria include genetic uniformity and stability, which entails that campesino seeds, also referred to as criollo varieties, are excluded, since these are mostly diverse, adaptive and dynamic. These laws state that if anyone farming wants to use such criollo seeds, authorization of the government is necessary; the seeds can only be planted once on a land area of five hectares or less; and the produce is solely meant for auto-consumption and can thus not be sold on the market (GRAIN, 2013).

With the criminalization of storage, exchange and selling of seeds, an important part of the campesinos' cultural heritage becomes threatened. Respondents repeatedly stressed the need for seed storage and exchange for their production, and to keep a certain degree of autonomy from the influence of multinational corporations such as Monsanto. Furthermore, a diversity in seeds plays an important role in agroecology, and safeguarding biodiversity.

There was a public outcry over the FTA and the laws that spun from its adoption, especially amongst campesinos, who see the FTA as a threat to their livelihoods as well as their very survival. This unrest resulted in protests in June of 2013, which spread throughout the nation in August of that same year. More than 200,000 campesinos, producing rice, potato, fruit, coffee, dairy and livestock, ceased their productive activities and blocked 30 key roads all over the country. Their demands included the suspension and renegotiation of the FTA with the US; the allocation of financial and political support for agricultural production; access to land; support for small-scale farming; guarantees for the rights of rural communities, including indigenous, Afro-descendant and campesino populations; social investment in education, health care, housing and infrastructure in rural areas; and the immediate constitution and delimitation of ZRC (GRAIN, 2013).

Attention grew, and soon the protest, started by campesinos, saw support from other sectors, including workers in the oil industry, miners, truckers, health care workers and others, as well as from indigenous communities. On August 29, over 20,000 students gathered in Bogotá to express their support, call for food sovereignty and respect for campesino culture and its heritage. FARC also expressed their support for the campesinos' cause, stating that they could count on their fighters and weapons, and that the protest fully expressed their political positions (Brodzinsky, 2013b).

The strikes lasted for 21 days. The government initially met the protests with suppression and violence, which ended up killing 12 protesters and injuring 485 others. Eventually, they recognized the need to start a conversation with the protesters, and agreed to negotiate a 'National Pact for Agricultural and Rural Development' (*Gran Pacto Nacional por el Agro y el Desarrollo Rural*), that would address the poverty and inequality in the agricultural sector. The creation of the pact was to happen with a high degree of involvement from the campesinos themselves, as well as businessmen involved in the agrarian sector, and other relevant players (De Rivas, 2013). The pact was established through Decree 1567 on August 20 of 2014. The fact that the protesters managed to get the government to listen to their demands and adopt these changes illustrated the power that popular mobilization can have in changing policies.

The 2013 protest was one of the bigger marches that were undertaken by campesinos, and the fact that the protests spread out nationwide made it gain a lot of attention, even internationally. However, this is certainly not the only protest undertaken by campesinos. Marching and gathering in large numbers seems a tool of choice for the community to counter policies that fail to support them. By coupling efforts and demands into a common cause, protests can work as a way to show grievances with governmental policies to a wider public and subsequently to gain the support of this wider public. Furthermore, it can spread into a bigger cause, as was the case with the protests of 2013, when students joined to show their discontent with the neoliberal politics of president Santos' government, which also influenced their own situation.

8.3 Discursive strategies

Use of specific discourse was very obvious when talking to campesinos and people working for campesino or ZRC organizations. Most importantly, campesino culture or 'being' campesino was something that was repeatedly referred to as being an integral part of the respondents' construction of their world. It is important to highlight that campesino, besides being a rhetorical concept, is part of the construction of a discourse: it says something about social and political relations. As such, it

can be seen as part of a discursive strategy used by campesinos to obtain the rights that they feel they are entitled to. And this strategy has been used since the campesinos have started to organize themselves, which has been over 50 years already. As one respondent put it, the demands have not changed since then: "*we want our land, territory, the right to property, the right to education, the right to health and that we can pursue living the way that our ancestors have done*" (Male, affiliated with ZRC Montes de María).

The ZRC model can play a very important role in moving towards recognition of campesino as a specific social subject with its own connotations, culture, and history. Although behind the term campesino one can find a complex heterogenous identity that differs from locality to locality in terms of particular social and productive aspects, it remains a valid cultural category within Colombian society, as well as a manner of self-referencing for a large part of the rural populations. The campesinos use positive auto-representation by emphasizing positive characteristics of their culture such as independency, integrity, capacity to work, intelligence, ways of living, ancestral knowledge as distinctive attributes that are part of their identity. This is done both amongst themselves and in the public realm. Within ZRC a collective campesino identity is maintained and promoted, for example through education, social contacts, elderly telling stories about their fights for recognition and the history of the social movements, and the organization of campesino festivals and markets. While visiting the areas it became clear that it was important for the inhabitants of the ZRC to pass their cultural heritage on to the next generation in order to preserve it.

Being acknowledged as a specific social group can bring certain benefits and the entitlement of specific rights, not the least of which are territorial. This has been the case in the recognition of rights of indigenous and afro-descendant culture and the allocation of specific territories that is part of this move. The laws that protect indigenous and afro-descendant communities in Colombia seem to offer a great example for the campesinos, who often refer to these legal entitlements as something that they strive for.

" Campesino rights is something that we are looking for, to enlarge these, in the same way as happened for these communities" (male, affiliated with ANZORC).

Campesinos see themselves as a social group, a community that has its own culture, similar to the recognition that Colombian indigenous and afro-descendant communities have received. Colombia has been a frontrunner in establishing such rights for indigenous and afro-descendant communities. Throughout Latin America, the adoption of constitutional and legislation reforms has created space for increased forms of autonomy. One can distinguish three models for indigenous autonomy in the region: the regional, municipal, and territorial modalities. In Colombia, the territorial modality is

used, which means that the state has given indigenous communities the right to self-government or autonomy to govern and administer justice in their territory, through their own governance institutions based on customary law. Within Colombia, these territories are the *resguardas indígenas*. *Resguarda* comes from the verb *resguardar*, which means to protect, and that is what these areas are meant to do: to enable indigenous peoples to live protected from outside forces such as large-scale companies (Feiring, 2012).

It is important to recognize that the campesinos do not seem to strive for an exact replica of these resguardas indígenas. First and foremost: the model does not prescribe that the ZRC are autonomously governed regions within Colombia. When asked about the level of autonomy that the ZRC had respondents often reacted with answer that indicated that this is not something that they want, with many pointing out that they needed the government for resources and proper execution of the model. Ultimately, the strategies used by the communities are still very much shaped by the governance practices of the state, which they see as necessary for the execution of their demands and projects. Besides being necessary they also see it as the government's duty to allocate resources towards their cause and help the rural areas develop. Furthermore, the development plans and productive models used within the ZRC show the desire these communities have to commercialize and work to a certain extent within the capitalist system. The autonomy as used in indigenous and afro-descendant territories was not something that they envisioned for themselves. This could be explained by the fact that campesino communities are historically far more grounded in Colombian society and social structures than the indigenous and afro-descendant communities, who have a strong own culture and history. Around 32% of the Colombian population lives in rural areas, and although this population is quite diverse, the majority of this percentage is made up of campesinos. Furthermore, many of those living in urban areas are descendants from campesinos who have at one point chosen to move to urban areas. As such, linkages with the general Colombian society are quite high and this is something that the campesinos seem to want to preserve.

But the campesinos do strive for a legal model that recognizes their rights, as well as respect for their cultural heritage and customs. They feel like such a model would protect them in the same manner as has happened for the indigenous and afro-descendant communities. As such, the fight to enlarge these continues. The application of social, economic and cultural rights for campesinos is an approach that is also expressed in Law 160, and as such an integral part of the ZRC model.

The notion that campesinos make up a specific social group in Latin American societies has gained momentum in recent times, as has the appreciation for small-scale, peasant, farming and their contribution to worldwide food security in a manner that is more socially inclusive and environmentally friendly than a large-scale, industrial agricultural model. La Vía Campesina

released their ‘Declaration of Rights of Peasants- Men and Women’ in 2002. In 2012, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution that established an open-ended intergovernmental working group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. As of 2014, they have been working on drafting an international declaration on peasant rights (Source: http://www.ohchr.org).

Whereas the campesinos themselves seem to have a very clear concept of what being a campesino is, this is not the case in the rural and agricultural laws, planning and projects used by the government. What type of social subject the campesino is seems unclear to the government, and this might be part of the reason that their policies often work against rather than for the campesino population. Within the governmental discourse it is clear that campesinos are seen as ‘backwards’, and unproductive, and need to be steered towards a model of maximization of profit and output, as prescribed by the neoliberal ideology (Velasco, 2014; ILSA, 2012; Varona, 2011;Thomson, 2011). Moreover, the government seems set on repeatedly using a rather negative discourse when it comes to campesinos, by connecting campesino culture to rebelliousness, illicit crop cultivation and guerrilla groups. The negative stereotype that campesinos have been giving, that they are guerrillas or involved in coca production, has given the government justification for not responding to the demands of the campesino population and to solve the rural problems. This was also the base for suspending the ZRC model, detention of campesino leaders, and abuses of the military forces that is used to stop narco trafficking, all of which occurred during the governing period of President Uribe. The fact that this notion is still very much alive, though, is illustrated by the National Development Plan of 2011, in which the vision that the campesino agricultural model is unproductive and lacks competitiveness is once again reiterated (Velasco, 2014; ILSA, 2012; Varona, 2011).

8.4 Searching for support from the international community

Another discursive strategy that has found its way into the campesino’s mindset is that of the international human rights language, to which respondents often referred when talking about the lack of governmental support for their cause. The use of this rhetoric seems justified when looking at the circumstances in which campesinos are living. In many of the rural areas basic social services are either completely absent or when they are in place, are often lacking. Lack of electricity is a widespread problem in the Colombian countryside. Furthermore, and perhaps more pressing, education is often of a very poor level. Schools are small, with very few amenities, and often house all grades in one class. Due to a lack of teachers it is hard to set up a proper educational system, which is exacerbated by the absence of proper educational materials. Healthcare is another important issue, as there are very few health clinics in rural areas and health care is thus insufficient

and difficult to reach. The continuous threat of paramilitaries is still something that campesinos in certain zones have to deal with. Furthermore, the campesino territories are characterized by extreme poverty. These territories have also suffered from the politics aimed at eradicating the cultivation of illicit crops, which include the use of fumigation, which is detrimental to the cultivation of other crops as well as human health. There have been many reports of human rights violations, including assassinations, executions, disappearances, forced displacements and stigmatization of campesinos. These techniques are seen by the campesino community as a way to clear their territories in order to implement agroindustrial, mining and infrastructure mega-projects

By using the human rights discourse, campesinos have found a way to legitimatize their claims from the government. Furthermore, by using a globally recognized language a wider public can be reached, as happens through the support certain campesino organization receive from international agencies. With lack of help from the government, campesino organizations have reached out to international cooperation agencies for issues such as technical assistance and funding, in certain cases with success. In some areas the international agencies have given more financial support than the Colombian government itself. The money of these agencies is used to set up productive projects, which will be described in more detail in the case studies about the ZRC visited. Several interviewees expressed their wish to have the international community be more involved in their cause, in order to spur the Colombian government to assume their responsibly towards protecting their citizens. The adoption of discourses such as international human rights can be an effective instrument in getting the international community to do just that.

One of the international agencies that has showed itself as a supporter of the ZRC model is the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), who have financed several projects within the ZRC. They have set up a program aimed at promoting the creation of agrofood systems with the ZRC. Within this program FAO, in cooperation with INCODER, assisted in strengthening of the campesino economy in the ZRC of Bajo Cuembí y Comandante, Guaviare, Cuenca del Río Pató y Balsillas and Valle del Río Cimitarra. The project focused on capacity building, technology transfer, technical assistance, strengthening of local institutions and implementation of productive projects. The project included measures such as the creation of small ‘family gardens’ (*huertas familiares*) (FAO, 2012). Involvement of the international community in the ZRC model has also come from the World Bank, which has co-financed the pilot projects that were the start of the ZRC model. The model has also seen support from international cooperation projects. The support of these groups is actively sought out by campesino organizations, as they see it as a strategy to obtain the necessary resources for the fulfillment of the projects in their development plans, something that more often than not the Colombian government fails to assist in.

Campesino communities in Colombia have developed a number of strategies to get their demands recognized by the wider public and thereby influence policymakers. An aspect that has made the model attractive to not only the campesino organizations, but also other actor such as international cooperation agencies and also the Colombian government, is the emphasis that is put on environmental conservation within the ZRC. In the next chapter, the approaches taken to promote protection of the natural environment will be set out.

9. Environmental conservation within the ZRC

The ZRC model is continuously presented as a model to promote sustainable development in the rural areas of Colombia. The fact that the deliverance of a sustainable development plan is one of the main requisites for the constitution of a ZRC illustrates this. But when thinking of sustainability in relation to the ZRC model, it is important to note that the sustainability that is referenced needs to be seen in the broad definition of sustainability, the well-known three-pillars: economic, social, and environmental. The ZRC model seems to contribute to each one of these pillars, although the extent to which seems to differ between different zones. It becomes clear though, when reading the development plans and listening to campesinos, that sustainable development is not perceived in the narrow sense of environmental protection, but that a rather more holistic approach is taken. As the economic and social aspects to which the ZRC model aims to contribute have been discussed in previous chapters, in this chapter the environmentally sustainable components of the ZRC model will be explored.

9.1 Approaches to environmental conservation in the ZRC

The ZRC model is presented as having strong environmental components. One of the factors that contributed to willingness of the government to agree on establishing the model was the rapid environmental degradation that was occurring in areas in which the natural environment was protected, due to the colonization processes and displaced farmers who had taken up residence in these areas. During the processes of colonization, people were most focused on looking for secure places. The places where they eventually settled were also used for engaging in the productive activities that were part of their livelihoods. In these activities the possible vulnerability of the natural environment was not always taken into account. This has led to deterioration of the natural environment in some of these places.

There have been a number of human interventions in these colonized regions that are now ZRC, or in the process of being declared as ZRC, that have been harmful to the natural environment. Although the impacts differ from place to place, with the ZRC being spread out over Colombia, which has landscapes ranging from the Amazonian rainforest to the colder, high Páramo ecosystem, there are a number of recurring impacts. First, a lot of deforestation has taken place, either by cutting trees or starting deliberate fires, mostly with the goal of clearing the land in order to make it suitable for agricultural production or cattle keeping. Furthermore, the collection of forest resources can also be an important source of income for inhabitants of these regions. Deforestation comes with a number of negative impacts, including soil erosion, sedimentation, and salinization of aquatic resources. Also, the agricultural production that takes place in these regions

often goes hand in hand with the use of agrochemicals like pesticides, fertilizers and herbicides. The widespread use of the chemicals has in certain cases led to the contamination of soils and aquatic resources. The aquatic resources in these regions have also suffered from overuse for agricultural practices, as well as other productive activities such as mining, which takes place in and around a number of ZRC. Furthermore, several of the colonized areas are part of vulnerable ecosystems that have suffered from the undertaking of agricultural production in an area that was not apt for such extensive use.

With such environmental damage following the colonization processes that took place in the regions in which ZRC would be declared, it was necessary to include an environmental conservation element in the model, to ensure that further degradation could be prevented. Agreement 26 of 2000, part of the legislation of the ZRC model, refers to the protection and conservation of the environment. It also orders the support of the National Agrarian Reform and Rural Development System (*Sistema Nacional de Reforma Agraria y Desarrollo Rural Campesino*), the National Environmental System (*Sistema Nacional Ambiental*) and other public and private institutions, who according to the legislation are to be responsible for the formulation, financing and execution of the Sustainable Development Plans, as well as other activities, projects and investigations that could help the environmental protection within the ZRC. Within Law 160 of 1994 the formulation and execution of the Sustainable Development Plans is set out. It states that the mayors of the municipalities that are involved in the zone in which the ZRC will be constituted are obliged to participate in the formulation and execution of these development plans, as are the organizations that represent the interests of the inhabitants of the colonized regions. This article establishes that the ZRC model should include the basic norms that regulate the conservation, protection and use of natural resources under the criteria of sustainable development (Varona, 2012).

The ZRC model has made campesinos an integral part of environmental conservation in the areas that they inhabit. When asked what role environmental sustainability played in the ZRC model, respondents who were part of the organizations that work within the ZRC answered unanimously that it was very important. It was said that the zones have a very strong environmental component and that environmental agreements have been made with the organizations, the communities, the communal boards that are part of the ZRC, as well as the design of the sustainable development plan that is for the most part in the hands of the community itself. With campesinos being very dependent on their natural environment for production, preservation of biodiversity, aquatic resources, and soils was deemed important. This was also seen as necessary in order to make the territories inhabitable for future generations. An important tool in this are the Sustainable

Development Plans. In the process of setting up these plans the community is consulted, for which a public hearing is set up. As such, the plan that is the result of this process has a participative character, so as to ensure a plan that included the interests of those to which it applies.

The sustainable development plans are typically divided into social, economic and environmental sections. With regard to the environmental side, the development plans set out several types of projects devoted to increasing the protection of the natural environment. The campesino communities living in the ZRC are expected to play a vital role within these processes. To increase the capacity of the community to do so, training programs are a recurrent approach taken within the development plans. These programs aim to increase the knowledge of the campesino community about biodiversity and other characteristics of the natural environment in which they live. Through these trainings mechanisms for environmental preservation and conversation are also taught. Furthermore, there are projects that establish a number of communal nurseries within the ZRC, to enable the cultivation of native species of vegetables, fruits and plants. These nurseries are also part of the agroecological schools that are set up within the ZRC, which will be discussed more in-depth in the following section. Knowledge on sustainable production is also built by the encouragement of work experience on farms that are already working in more sustainable manners.

Another approach is the development of ecotourism in certain zones. This is perceived as a way to generate employment within the zones, as well as opening up possibilities to establish protected environmental zones. Furthermore, it can give the model promotion as it gives people the opportunity to visit the zones with their own eyes. This could also help boost infrastructural development, which is much needed in quite a few of the marginal areas in which the ZRC are established. In addition, a number of reforestation projects have been set up to revitalize the forest resources within the ZRC and counter processes of soil erosion, salinization and sedimentation.

9.2 Agroecology

The main instrument that has been taken up to ensure an environmentally sustainable approach to agricultural production within the ZRC is agroecology, around which a number of projects had been started and the promotion of which was brought up many times during the interviews as one of the main priorities at this time. Agroecological production seemed to have been conceived as a way to produce healthy food in a sustainable manner that is also in line with the campesinos' history and knowledge, and can help the conservation of these ancestral techniques. It is presented as a method to improve production and to make the most out of the land that campesinos have access to within the zones. The emphasis within the agroecological approach taken is on local and chemical-free

production, protection, conservation and spreading of native seeds, biodiversity, organic cattle keeping and the smart managing of insects, plants and microorganisms.

ANZORC is very much involved in the promotion of agroecology, with it being referred to as '*one of our main priorities*' (Male, affiliated with ANZORC), and '*agroecology is something that we feel as campesinos*' (Female, affiliated with ZRC Valle del Río Cimitarra). One of the agroecological initiatives has been the creation of an agroecological national network, of which one of the main goals is to change the food production model within Colombia. The network is nationally coordinated by ANZORC, and regionally by the different campesino associations that are working of the strengthening of sustainable processes within the ZRC, as well as other campesino organizations active in these regions. It takes an integral approach to establish a process that can strengthen knowledge amongst campesinos on agroecological approaches towards and ancestral customs in agriculture. Through working together in a network, the existing experiences with regard to the formation, production, conservation, income generation and organization in the framework of the territorial processes can be identified. Furthermore, the network brings together campesinos with more technical parties, such as universities and NGOs, who can make recommendations and offer support in setting up agroecological processes.

Agroecology is seen and promoted as the most important alternative to the current state of agriculture, and its problems in productivity of food production and food crises, both around the world and within Colombia. The approach that is taken focuses on creating innovative solutions and perspectives that highlight the role of the people and of campesino culture in the resolution of historical conflicts related to agrarian production and conservation of the natural environment. The network is set up to make the exchange of knowledge, seeds, products and experience stronger and more dynamic, and to make agroecological practices into something concrete in order to have it be successfully applied in campesino territories. It is regarded as a way to confront the crisis in which the Colombian campesino communities find themselves and to spread the implementation of sustainable production models that are inclusive and efficient, and as a way to help build national food sovereignty.

A project that aims to bring agroecology into the campesino productive system is the setting up of agroecological schools throughout rural areas, including ZRC. These schools are aimed at teaching campesinos about agroecology, to start discussions on the topic and to share experiences. By working in a network, these experiences and knowledge can be shared amongst campesinos nationwide. The schools offer an arena for both people who are new to the approach, and those that already have knowledge and can share this with others. Furthermore, the younger members of campesino communities are encouraged to take part in the activities organized by these schools, so

as to spread awareness on agricultural production that is in harmony with its environment. Within the schools a number of topics related to agroecology are treated. First, people get offered more knowledge about what agroecology entails and how it can be beneficial for campesinos to adopt such an approach to agricultural production. The material goes into how agrochemicals can be detrimental, not only to the environment but also to the personal health of those getting into contact with it while producing, such as the campesinos and their families. Furthermore, attendees are being taught about the specifics of the natural environment they are living in, such as soil qualities, in order to be able to make the most out of their surroundings, to incorporate these into their productive strategies and to protect them while doing so. Students are also taught how to feed their animals in a more sustainable manner.

The focus in these agroecological projects is very much on organic production, as this is one of the pillars of agroecology. The benefits of producing organically obviously include the preservation of the natural environment upon which the campesinos are dependent, but it was also named as a way to commercialize campesino production by tapping into new markets. In urban areas, young, 'hip' people are increasingly interested in buying organic and artisanal produce, which is something that the campesino can offer.

An attractive feature of the agroecological approach is the fact that it emphasizes the use of ancestral knowledge in agricultural production. As explained in the previous chapter, an important aspect of the ZRC model is the conservation of campesino culture, of which such ancestral knowledge is an integral part. By stimulating agroecology, people are encouraged to return to cultivating as they did in earlier times and to preserve the knowledge that they inherited. This is seen as important, as much of this knowledge was already lost by newer generations. Now, with these generations going back to such knowledge, agroecology can be used as an instrument in the preservation of campesino culture, as well as a way to protect the environment from deterioration from agricultural production. Within several ZRC, both those that have been established and those that are still in the process, the preservation of ancestral seeds was a big topic. As mentioned before, with laws having been adopted that make the conservation of these seeds more difficult, campesinos have fought back, firstly through conducting the massive protests of 2013. Another way of combating this law, as well as serving as a way to preserve ancestral techniques and preserving biodiversity, is by setting up seed banks, which has happened in several of the ZRC. By using these ancestral, domestic seeds, campesinos can work in a certain degree of autonomy from multinationals, which contributes to the autonomy of campesinos and food sovereignty, both of which have been named as important goals.

Specific plans and programs aimed towards conservation of seeds have been undertaken. In many of the ZRC there are *custodios de semillas,* or custodians of seeds. These persons are in charge of storing seed varieties as well as bringing these to gatherings and distributing them to others. This practice has also been used to exchange seeds from one ZRC to another. Respondents discussed the possibility of commercializing these seeds amongst themselves so as to increase the variety of seeds different regions have access to. By spreading seeds amongst the campesinos, ancestral varieties can be preserved for future use. The campesinos seem keen on continuing these practices, which has been referred to as a strategy of resistance against the policies that they do not believe in as well as a way to maintain a certain degree of autonomy from the multinationals that sell these seeds.

9.3 Difficulties in establishing environmental conservation

With a great number of plans and projects focused on the conservation of the natural environment in place, the future of environmental protection in ZRC seems quite positive. However, plans do not necessarily make a reality. Although campesino communities show their willingness to engage in environmentally sustainable behavior, the necessary changes are not all followed through yet. First, it can take a long time to change behavioral patterns, and campesinos have been used to working and engaging with their natural environment in a certain manner. For example, although there are a number of important projects underway, it has to be noted that at this point in time the majority of the campesinos within the ZRC are not yet working with an agroecological approach and the use of agrochemicals amongst those producing in ZRC is still widespread. Furthermore, these plans need funding, which remains a difficult topic, especially if this funding has to come from governmental institutions. What can be seen is that several campesino organizations call for help from other institutions, such as private partners or international cooperation agencies. But, the fact that the environmental dimension of sustainability already takes up such a big part of the language and planning that surrounds the ZRC makes for a promising future.

The situation in which many campesinos have found themselves over the years may not have been the best breeding ground for creating and applying new, more sustainable, techniques. There was the constant threat of violence due the armed conflict and presence of paramilitary groups, as well as the fact that campesinos were often quite unsure whether they would be able to stay in the ZRC they were living in, with the government putting restrictions on the model and even suspending the ZRC for years. One campesino from ZRC Valle del Rio Cimitarra explained that with the years that it had taken to fight for the constitution of the reserve itself, issues such as sustainability had not been given much attention. However, with things having settled down in

recent years, he felt that there was now space to focus on protecting the environment through setting up specific projects with this goal. For now, although stability has more or less returned in the six ZRC that have been established, the campesinos living in the ones that are still awaiting constitution remain unsure of their future in these zones. But by initiating these projects, ANZORC and the local campesino organizations with which they are cooperating are doing an important job in stimulating people to work in a more sustainable manner, for example through the use of agroecology. As one interviewee put it: changing production might not be simple, but it is also not impossible.

10. Case studies

The findings that have been set out in the previous chapters will be illustrated with three case-studies, based on visits to these zones, attending of campesino meetings and interviews. Of the three ZRC visited two are officially established: Valle del Río Cimitarra and Cabrera. The third, Montes de María, is currently awaiting constitution and for now functions as a ZRC de hecho.

10.1 ZRC Valle del Río Cimitarra

The ZRC of Valle del Río Cimitarra is located in the departments of Antioquia and Bolívar, in the North-West of Colombia (see figure 2). The zone covers 504.259 hectares, and had 29.000 inhabitants as of 2012. It is part of four municipalities: Yondó, Cantagallo, Remedios and San Pablo. The rules regarding the UAF differ for each municipality, with one UAF in Yondó set at 53 to 72 hectares, and a maximum of two and a half UAF per family; for Remedios the UAF are 23 to 31 hectares for mixed use, and 39 to 53 hectares for cattle breeding, with a maximum of three UAF per family; in San Pablo a UAF is 35 to 47 hectares and there is a maximum of two UAF per family; and lastly, in Cantagello one UAF is 35 to 47 hectares and one family can own up to two UAF. The region in which the ZRC is located is characterized by tropical forest, with median temperatures ranging between 27.3°C and 28.8 °C (ACVC, 2012).

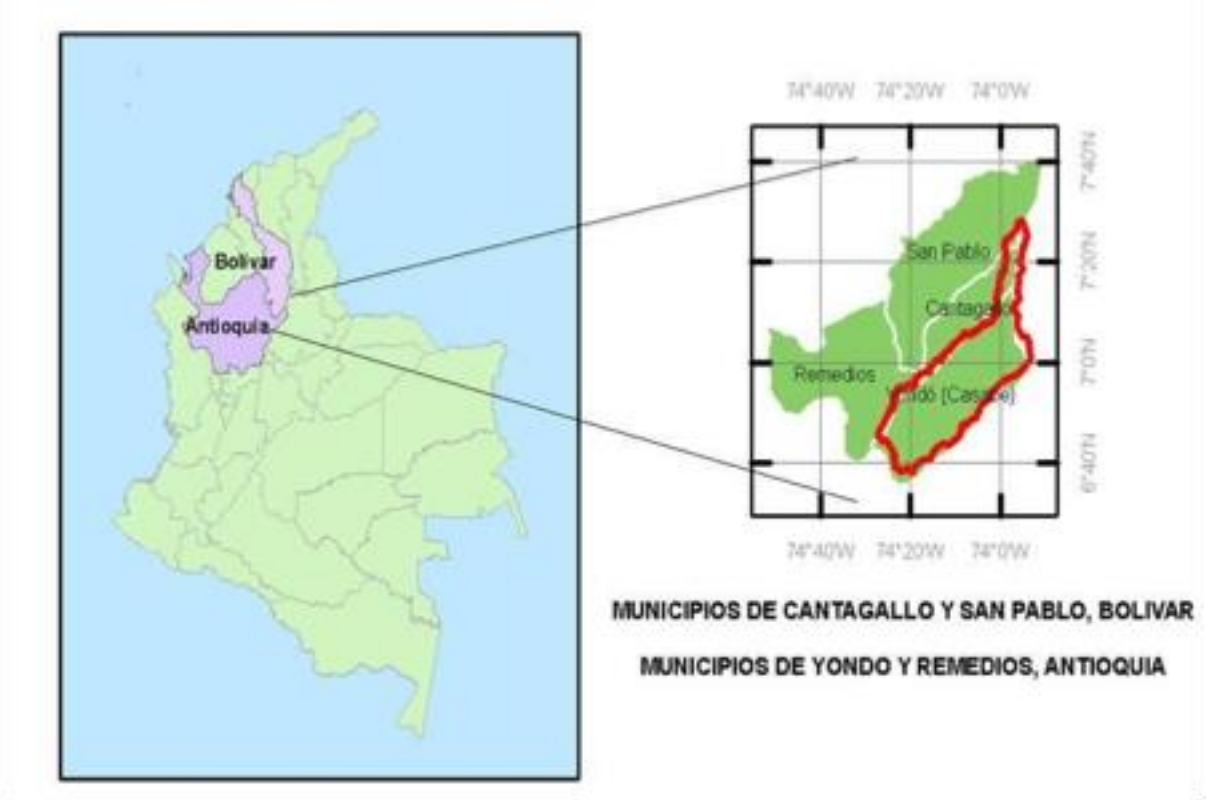

Figure 2: Location of ZRC Valle del Río Cimitarra (ACVC, 2012)

The region is rich in natural resources such as gold, petroleum, forest, aquatic resources, fauna and flora. The area surrounding the ZRC is home to the biggest oil refinery of Colombia, and exploitation of oil is the most important economic activity in the region, accounting for around 70% of the region's total. In recent years the region has seen a boom in extensive cattle breeding and palm oil production. Unfortunately, these have created an increase in social inequality rather than contributing to income generation for the local inhabitants. The conflicts in interest between the campesinos and various industrial companies have led to tensions surrounding land ownership, with campesinos often being the victim of displacement as land was freed up for these projects, that are given priority by governmental bodies due to their ability to generate a lot of money. However, as this money remains in the hands of a small elite, the campesinos in the region do not see much benefits from it.

10.1.1 History

The process through which the ZRC of Valle del Río Cimitarra was created has to be seen in the context of the regional and national mobilization of campesinos. In the 1980s and 1990s the violence in the Valle del Río Cimitarra region led to the displacement of a great number of campesinos. At this time the armed groups (guerrilla groups like FARC and ELN, as well as paramilitary groups) had great influence in the region, whereas the government was unable to establish strong institutions and exercise power in the area. This developed into situation with roads that were impassable; where there was a lack of institutional support to agriculture; and where public services such as education and healthcare were not in place. Sick of this situation, campesino groups had to take care of the protection of their rights themselves.

In 1996 there were many protests undertaken by communities living in the coca farmers zones of Putomayo, Caquetá, Cauca, Sur de Bolívar and Guaviare. It was in light of these events that the campesinos of Valle del Río Cimitarra decided to join the campesino, miners, and coca farmers from Sur del Bolivar in their mobilization, which was aimed at demanding the suspension of paramilitary actions and the use of glyphosate fumigations in the fight against coca cultivation, actions that impacted on the campesino community of Valle del Río Cimitarra as well. As a result, around 10,000 inhabitants of the region gathered in the Santander city of Barrancabermeja with the goal of requesting protection of their lives and cultivation, but also to negotiate their demands for infrastructure, health and education. In other marches later that year, an addition to the demands was made: the proposal of an alternative development model for the region and its inhabitants.

The campesino communities got the government to acknowledge their demands and to commit to addressing the campesino needs. Although these agreements were ultimately not

fulfilled, the mobilizations and the documents that were signed by the government opened up a new context within which the social struggle could be fought out. Furthermore, the events had stimulated the creation of a network in which the campesino organization could cooperate. This made the potential for organized cooperation higher, which added to the effectiveness of their endeavors to get the campesinos' rights fulfilled. The campesino leaders of the Valle del Rio Cimitarra proposed the creation of a new organization: the ACVC (*Asociación Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra*). This was to be an organization that acknowledged and protected the campesino communities of the Valle del Río Cimitarra region. The organization pleaded that it would fight to protect human rights, promote agrarian reform, and work to find a political solution to the social and armed conflict that continued threatening the region.

In 1998 unrest amongst the campesinos in the region rose. This was due to a number of developments: first, campesinos had been forcefully displaced due to raids by paramilitaries in Sur de Bolívar and Valle del Río Cimitarra. In addition, the population had obtained information on the fact that multinational companies had shown interest in settling in the region, which could be the reason that these displacements had taken place. And lastly, the agreements with the government, in which many of the campesinos had put their faith, had not been fulfilled. To add to this, the community was enraged that the government was open to engage in dialogues with guerrilla groups, but had not shown willingness to do so with the campesinos in order to find solutions to their woes. As a result of the mobilization, a participative process was initiated with the goal of designing a Plan for the Development and Integral Protection of Human Rights of Magdalena Medio (*Plan de Desarrollo y Protección Integral de los Derechos Humanos del Magdalena Medio*). This was to protect human rights of the inhabitants in the region and to carry out social investment in the 28 municipalities involved. One of the points in this plan was the creation of a ZRC in the region.

In December of 2002 the ZRC in VRC was constituted. It was the last of the total of six to be declared and the one that took the least time in terms of its legal activation (four months). However, in April of 2003 it was suspended as ordered by the government led by president Uribe. The government argued that the existence of the ZRC provoked social conflict in the region. It further stated that the decision was made because there had been a lack of involvement of several authorities, guilds and communities of the municipalities of Yondó, Cantagello, Remedios and San Pablo, in the public hearing that was held in August of 2002. The argument for the suspension was perceived as a move that reflected the economic, politic and criminal interests within the region. "*Political and economic regional sectors, with close ties to the paramilitaries, have communicated with the directive board of INCODER to attack the ZRC and ACVC as the driving campesino organizations*" (ACVC and Cahucopana statement, October 2009).

In 2005, social organizations, action committees and ACVC organized themselves in the Communal Board for a Dignified Life (*Mesa Comunal por La Vida Digna*). The Communal Boards for Dignified Life engage in dialogue with the local government to work on development and peace in the region. Their goals are to get the municipal institutions to fulfill their obligations with regard to creating conditions for a dignified life, to guarantee social participation and an equal distribution of public investment in the ZRC. Through this board the population can participate in public policy making. Al four of the municipalities of the ZRC have one of these communal boards.

In 2007, more than 5,000 campesinos got together in Barrancabermeja to demand the fulfillment and guarantee of their rights, as well as the reactivation of the ZRC. By this they achieved the creation of a cooperative board and the start of a dialogue with president Uribe. However, two months after these negotiations, an order for the arrest of 16 member of the directive board of the ACVC was given out for committing rebellion. Six members were locked up for more than six months, while the rest of the board lived in exile. With the persecution of the board, ACVC was set back, but continued to work on getting the ZRC reactivated. The campesino communities remained in the territory and fought to conserve the campesino identity. By remaining in place they strengthened the political and social processes in the region. Ultimately the long battle fought by the campesino community resulted in the suspension being lifted in February of 2011.

10.1.2 Sustainable Development Plan

The community cooperated to design the Sustainable Development Plan in which the vision for the ZRC has been set out. The final plan is the product of a number of assemblies in which inhabitants have come together to discuss their vision for the future of ZRC Valle del Río Cimitarra, in terms of productive projects and environmental conservation. In this process inhabitants were also asked what they felt that the region needed in terms of investment in services, upon which the community expressed their need for basic services such as electricity, healthcare and education. With this input the plan was further designed with the help of a technical team. The assistance of this team helped the organization to be sure that the plan that they designed was actually sustainable, and would be so for the next ten years, which is the time period for which the plan is made. Respondents emphasized the importance of the Sustainable Development plan, stating that "*a ZRC without a Sustainable Development plan is nothing*" (Female, Valle del Río Cimitarra). In this plan the ideas and necessities that are needed to create the living conditions that the community wants are collected. The plan sets out the need for agroecology, social investment, infrastructure, education and health care, amongst other topics. When looking at the plan, one can see how it could serve as an instrument to collect funding, as it very neatly sets out the projects envisioned by the

community, including time management and the expected costs, in a manner that is in line with international requirements for such project outlines.

The definition of sustainable development for the campesino and mining communities of ZRC Valle del Río Cimitarra as taken up in their development plan is: "*an organized region, in peace, with good living conditions for its inhabitants, with quality of live, guaranteed public services, health, education, opportunities for all, a region that commercializes, that exchanges products, with good infrastructure in the form of roads and bridges, with adequate extraction of its cultivation, its richness in renewable and non-renewable resources, with inhabited centers as foci of development*" (ACVC, 2012: pp. 26). What can be seen is that it refers to the three pillar model of sustainability, in which economic, social and environmental dimensions come together.

When respondents were asked what the importance of having a ZRC constituted in this region a number of reasons were given. The model puts limits on private property ownership and the concentration of land. According to the campesinos, this helps to build a climate of peace in the region, while also weakening the paramilitary groups. By establishing land ownership and handing out land titles further displacements can be prevented. Furthermore, the establishment of a ZRC in Valle del Río Cimitarra should entail that the state allocates resources for the much needed social investment and establishes it as an area that should be given priority. Also, it has become easier to legally establish areas for special use and management, which mean that the campesino organizations can better plan and regulate the use of the land, and set up projects for sustainable development. Furthermore, the communal protection of the aquifers, flora and fauna, all of which are of great importance to the region, is strengthened by the constitution of a ZRC. In this light sustainable agriculture projects that can help protect the environment as well as boost the commercialization of production have been launched. By doing so, the stimulation of knowledge about environmental protection can be combined with the generation of incomes for the population. In addition, this can help solve the problem of food insecurity that occurs in the region by achieving self-sufficiency in food supply. Another important aspect is the creation of women campesino groups in the region, who through the model have started productive projects and as such have a higher level of participation in the development process in the region.

With the reactivation of the zone, authorization and funding for productive projects stimulating the economic development for campesinos should be made easier. It has to be noted however that respondents indicated that as of now they have not seen much of the promised investments yet. INCODER has made an investment, but, according to the respondents, this was very little and insufficient to execute the Sustainable Development Plan. The FAO has been active in the region, and has supported a project for agroecology. In addition, the organizations work to

find funding through international cooperation, which has enabled the execution of parts of the Sustainable Development Plan. The funding of these international partners has been fundamental, with respondents stating this if this funding had not been in place, the ZRC would not have been able to survive.

Inhabitants refer to the duty that the government has to fulfill human rights of its population. Therefore, they argue the government should invest in the region and assist in the fulfillment of the right to life, the right to land ownership, the right to housing, to health, education, freedom of speech and to income generation and commercialization. Through the campesino organizations and the work of ACVC they continue their fight to get the funding they feel they are entitled to. The organization of marches is an important instrument in this, as well as coordinating actions and working together as a block to increase the impact of the efforts.

10.1.3 Livelihoods in the Valle del Río Cimitarra

The campesino community of ZRC Valle del Río Cimitarra has established rules of cohabitation, for production, and exploitation of resources through the organizations that represent the interest of the different groups in the region. The agricultural production model that is upheld in the ZRC is largely small-scale, with production mostly being for auto-consumption, as well as for exchange with other inhabitants of the region. Some of the crops that are cultivated in the region are corn, cacao, yucca, plantain, rice and sorghum. Another activity is fishing, also for auto-consumption. Furthermore, the richness in natural resources like petroleum and gold means that there is small-scale mining undertaken by certain parts of the population. Unfortunately, mining has grave consequences for the environment as well as being a threat for campesino culture. The Sustainable Development Plan states that land that is used for mining cannot be used for food production, which leads to a decrease in agricultural production in certain parts of the region. Mining has also led to contamination of soils and aquatic resources, due to the use of mercury and cyanide in the mining process. It has also been associated with deforestation and soil erosion, leaving the land unusable for agricultural purposes. One of the most important sources of income in the region is the exploitation of forest materials for wood production, with 26.98% of the families in the ZRC sustaining themselves through working in the wood-mills. The area also sees a great deal of cattle breeding, both extensive and intensive. Cattle breeding covers an important area of the zone, mainly on the natural pastures.

Although the majority of the population within the ZRC refers to itself as agricultural producers, due to their descendence from campesinos and the involvement in campesino culture, only 2.22% of the families in the region are able to sustain themselves solely through agricultural

production. Many of the campesino community in the region have found it necessary to engage in different activities that are more profitable and pay more directly. Examples of such activities include working in sawmills, mining and in some cases cultivation of coca leafs. Although the cultivation of coca has decreased in the period from 2000 to 2010, there is still a share of the community that engages in this activity. In order to stimulate producers to move away from this illegal source of income, a number of projects aiming to provide alternatives to the cultivation of coca have been initiated (ACVC, 2012).

The campesinos in the region are looking hard for ways to commercialize agricultural production, but stated that this is hard due to lack of social investment. The difficulties of commercialization are exacerbated by the fact that infrastructure in the area is lacking. Roads are bad and not always accessible, and certain parts of the zone can only be reached by boat. This makes the costs of trading goods outside of the ZRC high. Houses that are not in the settlements are very far from one another, and often people move around by horse, which means that traveling time from one part of the ZRC to another can take several hours. Only 60% of the farms in the region have access to a road or river, which means that the rest of the population does not have a direct way of transporting goods (ACVC, 2012). As such, infrastructure is a necessity for successful implementation of productive projects and one of the main points of focus for the campesino organizations.

Priority has been given on generating development for the community, which is shown through the initiatives for communal productive projects. Respondents referred to communal projects focused on the production of panela[9], for which a communal sugar mill was used, as well as a communal rice project. There have also been projects through which a number of family gardens have been set up, mostly focused on getting women involved in production. The main objective in these projects is to promote development that is in line with environmental sustainability.

10.1.4 Environmental sustainability

The campesinos acknowledge that they have not always worked in the most environmentally friendly manner, which is for example illustrated by the fact that 80% of the farms in the region use agrochemicals. The Sustainable Development Plan confirms the need to reduce the use of agrochemicals in the region because of the health and environmental problems it produces. A

[9] Panela is unrefined whole cane sugar and is a Colombian staple food used for sweetening

number of projects that stimulate the use of agroecological methods have been started in order to reduce the use of agrochemicals. These including communal sustainable cattle production systems; trials with agroecological systems; creating agroecological gardens in artesanal mining enclaves as a more sustainable alternative that also adds to food security in the region; and creating a network of farms that can serve as demonstrations of agroecological techniques.

ACVC has sought out a connection with international campesino organizations, as is shown by the agreement that has been made with the Network of Agroecology Formation (*Red de Formadores en Agroecología*), which is an initiative of the sustainable agriculture commission of La Vía Campesina. This network looks for strengthening of the agroecological endeavors of campesino organizations, through exchange of experiences, methods, materials, documents and experts. In light of this program agroecological schools have been set up throughout the country, including in ZRC Valle del Río Cimitarra. With this educative project campesinos are shown how valuable the campesino economy and small-scale production can be within different geographical contexts, as well as showing how agroecological methods can help combat climate and ecosystem change and strengthen social organization.

When asked what role environmental conservation played, respondents answered that the natural environment was very important to them, as they depend on it for their livelihoods. Some people referred to the knowledge on conservation and agricultural production that was passed on to them by their families as a way to approach sustainability and take care of the environment. Others referred to the projects that had been started in order to promote environmental protection by the community.

In line with this thinking is the *Línea Amarilla* (Yellow Line) project, which has been initiated by the campesino community in order to preserve the rich biodiversity that the region has to offer. The area is home to a massive number of animals and vegetation species, among which several that are in danger of extinction. The Línea Amarillo refers to a region within the ZRC that is free from any form of exploitation of natural resources. The reasoning behind this project, according to respondents, was the need to protects natural resources, such as wood, water bodies, the animals and the vegetation. The Línea Amarilla zone covers approximately 80.000 hectares. The communities, through their communal action boards, have agreed to conserve this zone by not inhabiting it, nor engaging in any form of human activity, such as hunting, cutting down trees, mining, cattle keeping and agricultural production.

The protection of the zone has been made official in July 2015 by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development through the adoption of resolution 1628 (Gomez, 2015). The adoption of this resolution has established that there cannot be any mining concessions in this

area for the next two years. During this period, the local communities will be involved in the decision making process through which the model, or models, will be used for the environmental protection of this area. This conservation model is very communal in nature, with the community autonomously managing the protection of the region, which is communicated and established through the communal action boards. The actions initiated by the local communities have helped to get the area recognized as one of the main priorities zones for conservation and preservation of the biodiversity within Colombia.

One of the most successful productive projects in ZRC Valle del Río Cimitarra is the *EcoBúfalo* project. This project was initiated in 2000 with the help of international cooperation funding as well as funding from a private partner: La Caixa, a Spanish financial institution. The campesinos expressed hope that the state and government agencies would start helping as well. The project sprung from ideas of the campesinos, who were asked what kind of project they envisioned as providing an alternative to cultivating coca leaves, which was widespread in the region. The area in which ZRC Valle del Rio Cimitarra is located is home to a number of wetlands, which makes it very suitable for keeping buffaloes.

Currently, 44 families are involved. The production model is based on family production, with families currently owning up to 20 animals, a number which might go up to 30 in the future. These animals provide buffalo dairy products as well as milk, both of which have properties that make them a healthier alternative to dairy and meat products from cows. All production is completely organic and uses agroecological methods. With this emphasis on organic production, campesinos hope to tap into a growing market of young people in urban areas who are interested on healthy and sustainably produced food. Furthermore, it helps portray Colombian campesinos as an important player in the preservation of biodiversity and the natural environment. In doing so, the hope is that people start seeing campesinos not only as providers of food for the Colombian people, but also as integral players in the sustainable development of the country.

The project aims at creating conditions for income generation for a number of campesinos living in the region by providing opportunities for commercialization and linkage to the market. This has been achieved, as currently the demand is even higher than the supply, which has made the project profitable. By setting up these projects, campesinos can get linked to urban communities. It is presented as a win/win situation: the campesinos get to work in a just manner, and the consumers are able to obtain healthy products that they know have been produced fairly. Furthermore, the project has been used as a method to tie the campesinos to their territories in times when the future

of their existence in the region was still unsure. It has been a successful tool in helping the campesinos build up their lives in the region.

The project is very much communal in nature, with issues being discussed in meetings where the involved people get their say and discuss what is on the agenda. Furthermore, it is a way to lessen the impact on the environment, as it provides an alternative to the far heavier damage that extensive cattle breeding can bring to the natural environment. It is the start of setting up campesino companies that are communitarian and social, which gives the small-scale producers a chance to enter the market and commercialize their production.

If the project was to be viable for 10 years, options for spreading out to a different region would be explored. This has now happened, with a new project having been started in Catacumbo. The campesinos have been working very hard to make the project work and showed great pride in the successes that have been achieved. Producers that were involved emphasized that the high level of participation that was given to the campesinos has made the project viable and most importantly sustainable.

10.2 ZRC Cabrera

The ZRC in Cabrera is part of the Cundinamarca department that is located in the center of Colombia (see figure 3). The ZRC lies at 144 kilometers distance from the country's capital, Bogotá. The region is located at between 1,650 and 4000 meters above sea level. The median temperature is between 15.5 °C and 16.3°C and there are three types of climate that can be found in the zone: temperate, cold and páramo, with the cold climate dominating, covering around 64% of the total area. ZRC Cabrera covers 47,336 hectares, of which 47,256 are rural and 40 are urban. The extension of the UAF in the zone is set at 18 hectares, with a maximum of 2 UAF, of which one can be used for farming and the other for conservation purposes. According to numbers collected in 2011, Cabrera has approximately 5,300 inhabitants. The majority of the adult population engages in agricultural work. Other occupations are business owners, fishermen and laborer (INCODER, 2012a).

The geographic and climatic characteristics of ZRC Cabrera allow for high production potential. This potential is fulfilled by the inhabitants, who have held up an important level of agricultural production, despite the blows that have been handed out by the neoliberal model on the Colombian countryside. There is a weekly market where vegetables are sold, and in which producers from the whole district, as well as those from neighboring regions, participate. There are also livestock markets, which are held at a monthly basis. In the region one can find cultivation of local fruits such as tomate de árbol, feijoa, blackberries, uchuva, and passionfruit. The cultivation of

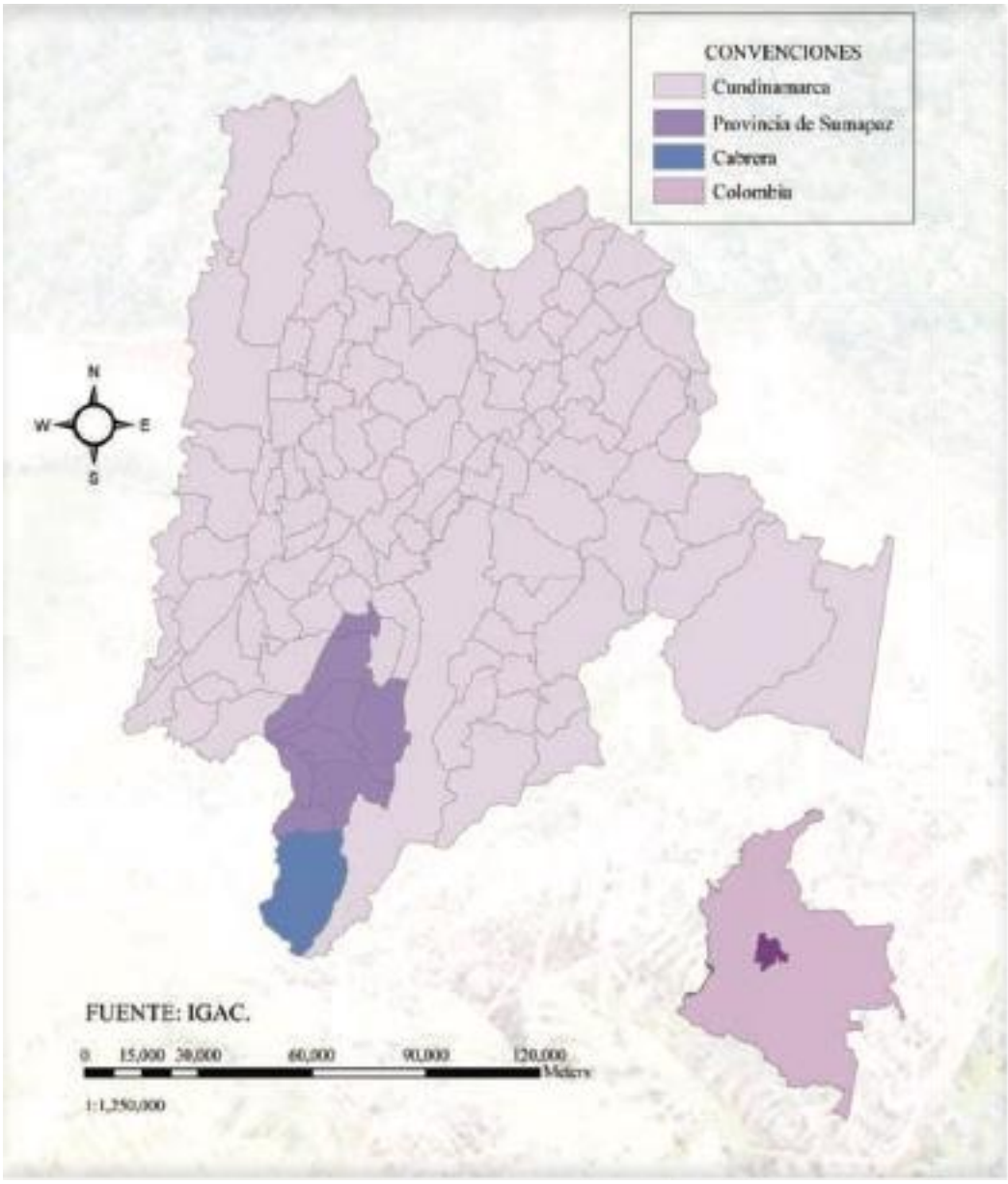

Figure 3: Location of Cabrera within department of Cundinamarca and Colombia (INCODER, 2012a)

these fruits is permanent. Other cultivations are transitory, such as beans, onions, green beans and peas. In addition, there is livestock production, mainly that of cattle, poultry and pigs.

According to INCODER, there are fifteen organizations within Cabrera, of which twelve are focused on improving production and commercialization processes, with specific topics such as beekeeping, small-scale farming, defending producers rights, meat production, protection of campesino culture and heritage; women's rights; women producers; protection and development of the campesino community; communal campesino organization. The other three organization are concerned with improving the access to water for both human consumption agricultural production (INCODER, 2012b).

Within the ZRC several specific areas can be found that are vital for the preservation of biodiversity and water supply. First, there is the páramo and subpáramo ecoregion of Sumapaz, which is characteristic of the Andean region and can be found above 3000 meters above sea level. This part of the páramo ecosystem is considered one of the most important regions of Colombia, due to its richness and diversity in natural resources, water, flora and fauna, as well as representing an important part of the historical, cultural and economic patrimony of the campesino and indigenous communities. Then there is the zone that preserves important water resources, which has been marked as a special management and conservation zone due to its importance for water supply. The ZRC is located in the basin of the Sumapaz river, which has a very important function in the generation and regulation of water and environmental resources for the whole region, including Bogotá. Lastly, there is a forest reserve zone that houses a great diversity of fauna and flora, and brings great benefits to the local and regional communities. It is thus essential that there are institutional and communal programs that protect and conserve this biodiversity and the integrity of the ecosystems, as well as to strengthen education aimed at preservation of these important assets.

10.2.1 History

ZRC Cabrera is the smallest of the six ZRC. Its constitution in 2000 reflected the decades of battle for integral agrarian reform in which the campesino community of Sumapaz, the region in which ZRC Cabrera is located, was highly involved. As early as the 1910s, the local campesinos organized and mobilized themselves to fight for improvement of the living conditions of the campesino communities in the region. These efforts have continued up to the current day, with inhabitants of Cabrera declaring themselves to be persistent fighters for an integral agrarian reform, a structural solution to the social and armed conflict, and for the construction of an alternative form of agricultural and livestock production, one that offers guarantees for a dignified life for producers and that can establish food security and food sovereignty within Colombia. Currently, the communities have embraced the ZRC model as a fundamental tool to achieve the fulfillment of these demands.

There are a number of factors that have worked in favor of the establishment of a ZRC in Cabrera. First, the community has a high degree of organization and as such has been able to work in a concerted and focused manner. Second, the ZRC is located in the vicinity of the Sumapaz National Park, which is home to an ecosystem that is of high importance due to its central role in providing water for the region, of which the Colombian capital, Bogotá, is a part. Third, Cabrera fulfills a dominant position within the regional campesino economy, and has maintained this status.

Fourth, the high level of poverty in the region justifies the need for a model that can boost local production and increase the living standard of the inhabitants. And lastly, it was considered necessary to initiate a process that would arrange the ownership of land in the region.

As a result, the campesino organizations united and started the process of creating the first Sustainable Development Plan for ZRC Cabrera. This was done in a participatory manner. The communities received logistic and financial support for the design of the Sustainable Development Plan. This funding was part of the ZRC pilot projects undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in cooperation with IICA (*Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para la Agricultura*), which was financed through a loan from the World Bank. Subsequently, this plan was approved through a public hearing that was held on the 12th of August of 2000 in the city center of the Cabrera municipality.

There were a number of economic and social problems present in the zone at the moment of its constitution. First, the infrastructure in the region was lacking due to lack of maintenance of the roads. The local communities were living in poor conditions as there were no governmental programs or institutional presence to support the inhabitants. The educational system was in very bad shape as there was insufficient teaching staff, a low degree of educational capacity within the community, no availability of secondary education in the vicinity, and physical conditions within the schools were deteriorating. Also, there was insufficient access to drinking water as there were no treatment facilities in place. Another problem was the deficiency of first aid facilities and adequate staff. Lastly, the agricultural development in the region was facing problems as the campesino economy was breaking down after the wave of commercial liberalization of the 1990s.

As an answer to these problems, the Sustainable Development Plan set out three main objectives: reduction of rural poverty in the zone; conservation of the páramo ecosystem of Sumapaz; and the strengthening of the political force of the local organizations. In order to achieve these objectives, emphasis was put on the necessity to establish proper coordination between the economic, political, environmental and cultural spheres of the region. This was to happen through the formation of local social capital; the transformation of the campesino economy into one of small agricultural businesses; consolidation and integration of the campesino economy of Cabrera with the economies in the region; setting up local agroindustries; consolidation of territorial planning at the environmental and social level; and involving the community in the process of agrarian development planning, in order establish direct representation of the campesino community. Socially, programs to update teachers, programs to improve the educational centers and the implementation of secondary education were proposed.

With the establishment of the ZRC and the creation of the Sustainable Development Plan, the campesino communities were hopeful that their future would be safe and prosperous. Unfortunately, this moment of hope was followed by a period in which campesino leaders and organization saw themselves and the ZRC model increasingly stigmatized. Then, the suspension of all ZRC was declared, which led to a fracture in the organizational fabric that the organizations of Cabrera had built up in the previous years. In 2010 the ZRC were reconstituted. The organizations came back together, with the vision of really working on the fulfillment of human rights of the campesinos and to create the opportunity to support the communities through the campesino economy, rather than having to be involved in the neoliberal model that had taken over Colombia.

10.2.2 Sustainable Development Plan

The second Sustainable Development Plan was created in 2011, after the suspension of the ZRC in Colombia was lifted. In this plan, emphasis was put on using the ZRC as a way to stimulate the protection, promotion and realization of the economic, social, cultural and environmental rights of the inhabitants of ZRC Cabrera, by using the legal and constitutional mechanisms that are available in Colombia. The plan also highlighted the need for the campesino communities to be able to participate and influence the formation of public policies and to organize and mobilize themselves in such a way that they can get the government and its bodies to fulfill their obligation with regard to guaranteeing these rights. With regard to economic development, the plan set out that it is essential to come to a strategy that would enable advancement in economic terms while working in harmony with the ecosystem in the region. Furthermore, it stresses that the campesinos need technical assistance that would enable them to progress in the processing and commercializing of their produce. By obtaining access to commercialization channels, campesino could turn their production into small businesses. In the Sustainable Development Plan the campesino community is set out as a ‘special group’ that deserves recognition as such by granting of rights aimed especially at them, most importantly with regard to land and territory.

When asked what the importance of having the ZRC being officially constituted was respondents came up with a variety of answers. With Cabrera constituted as a ZRC, the community should be protected from the advent of multinational companies that want to develop megaprojects in the region, which could lead to the breakup of the production chains and campesino economy that the local communities have managed to sustain for a long time. The ZRC was explained as a region where campesino women and men are united. Cabrera has historically been a region where the agrarian struggle has been fierce, with their ancestors fighting for access to land and rights for campesinos. This was given as a reason for the campesino to want to live in this region even more.

The ZRC was described as a prosperous, peaceful region. The respondents referred to campesinos as fighters (*luchadores*), who want to practice agriculture in order to be able to provide a dignified life for themselves and their families. It was also deemed important that with the model a territory has been established where the campesino culture can be protected and carried through by the next generations, who can live in the zone in peace. The ZRC was also seen as giving the community the opportunity to unite and come to a sustainable agricultural production system in a communal and concerted manner. Another important aspect, which was often repeated, is that the establishment of the ZRC obliges the government to focus their efforts on this region and to provide funding for the execution of the Sustainable Development Plan.

10.2.3 Environmental protection

With the region in which the ZRC is located harboring a number of highly important and biodiverse ecosystems, environmental protection is an essential part of the sustainable development of the zone. Throughout the decades,human activity has heavily impacted the natural environment in the region. When communities started to move to the region as part of the colonization processes, the fragility of the ecosystems in the region was not taken into account when engaging in productive activities, which led to a high rate of deforestation as people wanted to clear land for agricultural production. Trees and vegetation would either be cut down or removed through the use of intentional fires. Deforestation has led to soil erosion, sedimentation and salinization of aquatic resources in the area. The páramo has an immense ecological richness as there is a high level of biodiversity, with some of the highest levels of diversity in plants in the world. Due to the impacts of deforestation and climate change there are currently many species in danger of extinction. Another threat to the natural environment of the ZRC has been the presence of a military garrison for more than 13,000 officers within the fragile páramo ecosystem. The presence of such a high number of people in this fragile zone has led to high levels of contamination.

Agriculture is the main economic activity in the region and as such of high importance to the local community. Unfortunately, there are a number of negative aspects related to agricultural production in the Cabrera ZRC. The use of agrochemicals in the agricultural production undertaken by members of the community is widespread. This has had negative consequences for both the natural environment and human health, with campesinos reporting the contamination of soils and water due to the use of agrochemicals. The fact that agricultural production has taken place in the fragile páramo ecosystem has had a high impact. There are two productive activities that are especially harmful that are undertaken in this region: the cultivation of potatoes and cattle rearing. Extensive cattle raising transforms the territories greatly, as producers often clear land to create

pastures, which can lead to deforestation and soil erosion. And the cultivation of potatoes goes hand in hand with the use of high quantities of agrochemicals.

Although the region is very rich in aquatic resources, there are certain parts where the water supply is not sufficient to accommodate the demand for water for domestic and agricultural use. This is due to the fact that the region is characterized by moderately dry conditions, which means that if there is little rainfall throughout the year, the water supply can decrease substantially. It has been predicted that this problem can get exacerbated by the effects of climate change, but this has not been sufficiently researched yet. The lack of proper irrigation systems in the region has exacerbated the water shortage problem. In addition, there is need for sanitation systems in the region, as the absence of such system has also led to the contamination of aquatic resources in the region.

As such, it was necessary to include an environmental conservation element to the model, to ensure that further deterioration and depletion of natural resources could be prevented. Within the Sustainable Development Plan the need to steer agricultural production to a more sustainable form and to have an organic and agroecological production system that moves away from dependence on agrochemicals and that does not impact on the natural environment in such an obtrusive manner is continuously stressed. Forest reserve areas and water conservation areas cannot be occupied nor exploited.

Within the ZRC model there is an important role set out for communal participation in environmental conservation efforts. The fact that communal involvement in environmental conservation is not always without its struggles has been proven by the situation in Cabrera. A number of problems that the ZRC has encountered are described in the Sustainable Development Plan of 2011. First, it has become clear that the level of environmental awareness and training of all actors involved in the mechanisms for preservation and conservation of the natural environment is insufficient. The main problems that arose amongst community organizations and individual campesinos that are involved came from the limited knowledge and lack of practice in agroecological matters. Furthermore, there is an apparent lack of strategies and mechanisms to manage the use of agrochemicals, as well as insufficient knowledge about the fragility and importance of the ecosystems in the region, which is proven by the fact that there are no management strategies and that the natural environment has been deteriorating. In addition, governmental institutions are not improving the situation, as they do not have institutional strategies with regard to protection of the ecosystems, nor do they acknowledge the role that institutional actors, such as the army, play in the deterioration of the ecosystems (INCODER, 2012a).

In order to address these problems, the Sustainable Development Plan sets out several projects devoted to improving the protection of the natural environment in the region. Firstly, training programs to increase the knowledge of the local campesino community about biodiversity and other characteristics of the natural environment in which they live. Furthermore, in these trainings mechanisms for environmental preservation and conversation are taught. Another aspect is working with stewards that guard forests, rivers and soils. There are also reforestation projects. Projects aimed at transforming and improving agricultural practices to lessen their impact on the environment. Another aspect is the environmental legislation. The development plans set out the coordination between the community and institutions involved, to cooperate in a participative environmental management plan by promoting the involvement of the campesino population in decision-making processes about projects that have socio-environmental impacts on the ZRC and making or updating the flora, fauna and hydrographic inventory.

10.3 Montes de María

Montes de María is one of the seven areas in Colombia that is still awaiting approval from the government to officially constitute a ZRC. It is an example of a ZRC de hecho, which means that although the region fulfills the requirements that have been set up within the legal framework, and the organizations within the region who want to constitute the ZRC have fulfilled the necessary steps, such as the public hearing and creation of a Sustainable Development Plan, it cannot call itself a ZRC yet, nor is it entitled to the allocation of resources from the government that are needed to execute the Sustainable Development Plan.

The Montes de María region is part of the Sucre and Bolivar department, on the Caribbean coast in the north of Colombia (see figure 4). It includes seven municipalities that are part of Bolívar (El Carmen, María la Baja, San Juan Nepomuceno, San Jacinto, Córdoba Bolívar, El Guamo and Zambrano), and eight in Sucre (San Onofre, Toluviejo, Coloso, Chalan, Morroa, Los Palmitos, Ovejas and San Antonio de Palmito). The proposal made by the communities is to create two ZRC in the region, with ZRC Montes de María I covering 254,680 hectares in the municipalities of María La Baja, San Juan Nepomuceno, El Carmen de Bolívar, San Onofre, San Jacinto, Ovejas, Los Palmitos, Chalán, Colosó, Tolú Viejo and Morroa, and ZRC Montes de María II covering 49.509 hectares in the municipalities of El Guamo, San Juan Nepomuceno, Zambrano and Córdoba. The UAF in ZRC 1 is set at 47 hectares, with a maximum of two per family, in ZRC the UAF is the same, but there is a maximum of one UAF (INCODER, 2012a; INCODER, 2012b).

Figure 4

1. Location of Montes de María 2. Montes de María region 3. Location of ZRC Montes de María within the region

The Montes de María region has a total of 438,911 inhabitants, of which 5.16% are indigenous, 28.96% afro-descendant and the remaining 65.88% campesino (MIC Montes de María, 2014). These inhabitants and their ancestors have lived in the region for a long time and thus have historical ties to the region. Respondents stated that the fact that these different ethnic and cultural groups have cohabitated the area for such an extended period of time has allowed them to construct relations of cohabitation and for use of the land and other natural resources. Interviewees described the region as an intercultural territory.

The main economic activity in which the inhabitants of the proposed ZRC engage is agriculture, accounting for 84% of the population. Other activities include trade (4.17%), livestock keeping (1.57%) and fishing (1.04%), of which the majority is undertaken independently (72.6%) (MIC Montes de María, 2014). These campesinos use little technology, are having difficulties with commercialization, do not see much support from the state and have an inefficient organization of small producers, which has led to a situation in which producers feel unsafe and uncertain about their future.

10.3.1 History

Over the last 30 years, there has been a high rate of conflict and violence in the Montes de María region, due to illegal armed groups who operated against the population. The brutality in the region was particularly heavy at the end of the 1990s and start of the new millennium. The violence was initially associated with the armed conflict, with guerrilla groups fighting for control over the region, and with the fact that the region was a known route for drug trafficking. In this period of

time there was little government presence, leading to somewhat lawless environment. This developed into a situation where human rights were continuously violated, with the forced displacement of more than 230,000 persons, use of sexual violence against women, disappearances, destruction of foods that are indispensable for the survival of the local communities, selective murders, and restrictions on mobility of the population. Furthermore, the sociopolitical dynamics were changed in such a way that the productive activity of smallholders decreased. In these times, the institutional capacity of the state was very low and local power was captured by the armed groups, which created a very uncertain and unsafe situation for the local inhabitants.

Over the first decade of the new millennium Montes de María steadily grew more peaceful. The paramilitaries that had been dominating the zone entered a negotiated demobilization process with the government, and Colombia's Marines forces started opposing the groups in the second half of the decade. The FARC guerrilla groups that had been present in the region were forced to split up and leave the area after their commander had been killed in a 2007 bombing. The governmental security forces have managed to keep violent opposition at bay at this point. However, illegal activity remains present in the region as it is an important route for drug traffickers. New paramilitary groups have taken residence in the region, especially the northern and western parts.

In recent years, tensions in the region have risen due to conflicts over access to land. This can be attributed to the high rate of commercial activity in the region, with some of Colombia's largest companies launching agribusiness projects in Montes de María. The large parcels of land acquired by these businesses are used for extensive cattle rearing or for large-scale plantations, such as commercial forest plantations for teak, sugar cane, and African oil palm cultivation. In 2014, an estimated 70,000 hectares had been devoted to oil palm cultivation and commercial forest plantation. Although these vast monocultures are profitable, they do not need many employees. The region is also home to a number of mining exploitations, often executed by foreign companies. The mining is aimed at limestone, construction materials and coal and covered 18,820 hectares in 2014. The interest in increasing production in this region is high, especially since the discovery of gas and oil in the area. New concessions have been requested, which would allocate an additional 74,600 hectares for mining purposes (MIC Montes de María, 2014). The companies have been converting the natural environment in order to make it more suitable for agricultural purposes. This has entailed deforestation, as well as filling up parts of the river with sand in order to dry these parts and free up land for mono-cultivation.

These developments have created a situation in which the campesino economy, with its lower productivity and alternative development model, has suffered from increased marginalization in political and social terms, with very little response from the government with regard to the

problems that the rural sector in the region has been facing. This had been to the detriment of the food production in the region, as the land use for food crops has decreased significantly. The lack of basic social services, such as well-kept infrastructure, most importantly roads, access to drinking water, electricity, gas, and sewer system can also be attributed to the absence of governmental involvement in the region.

According to testimonies of local inhabitants, violent displacement was used to free up land for companies that showed economic interest in the region. Campesinos have stated that these parties would hire paramilitaries and other allies to expel local inhabitants from their farms in order to seize their lands. Another strategy was to pressure landowners to sell their land at prices far below their worth. Although these actions were carried out by paramilitaries groups, accounts of local inhabitants state that local functionaries were complicit.

The situation has put many campesinos in a difficult position, as they lost part of their land, which is part of their heritage and essential in their livelihoods provision, in the conflict. This is worsened by the fact that business owners have exploited the situation by buying up land for prices that are far below the full value. The agricultural, livestock and fishing sectors are in a crisis due to a lack of land and programs that support their production. Throughout the years local communities have shown their resistance and mobilized to get their rights fulfilled. This has historically happened through cooperation between campesino communities and the afro-descendant and indigenous populations that live in the region. Together, these movements would demand the protection of the territories where these communities have lived for decades and where they engage in production with the use of traditional campesino and ethnic practices.

10.3.2 Constitution process

The process of constitution of a ZRC in Montes de María started in 2009, with the first assembly of the Regional Campesino Board (*Mesa Campesina Regional*) of Montes de María. This assembly was organized as a way to communally discuss the woes of the local communities, and to cooperate in finding solutions to the problems they were facing. The ZRC model was not well-known in the region up until that point, but when it was suggested, it fitted very well with the problems that the communities were facing: the inequality in land ownership; displacements; the marginalized campesino economy; and the buying up of land by big companies. The agrarian agenda of which the proposition for delimitating and constructing a ZRC in the region was a part, was presented and approved.

In September of 2010, the Minister of Agriculture announced in Bogotá the proposal to declare one or two ZRC in the Montes de María region, as a strategy to focus the support of the

government on a specific territory. The model was to stimulate the campesino economy in the region, help fulfill the social, economic and cultural rights of the campesino communities and to give these communities a voice in regional planning and decision making. With this, the constitution process was started, and the first step was a meeting with governmental institutions and campesino organizations, in order to set up a strategy for entering a dialogue with the different public and private actors, so as to come to an agreement between the different parties. The creation of a ZRC was presented as an instrument to achieve peace and development in the region.

In January of 2011, a number of campesino organizations involved in the region made the decision to cooperate in the Operative Committee for the Impulse of the ZRC (*Comité Operativo de Impulso a la ZRC*). This committee has been created to coordinate the input from civil society, producer, commercial, social and cultural organizations, with the local, regional and national political bodies involved in the actions that should lead to the delimitation and constitution of the ZRC. By doing so, the committee ensures the involvement of the local inhabitants, who can turn to the committee for involvement in the constitution process. Its first action was presenting an official request to establish a ZRC to INCODER, which is the first step that has to be taken in order to be able to constitute a ZRC. INODER gave way to the process with resolution 0189 of 2011.

Unfortunately, as of 2015, the proposed ZRC have still not been constituted. Respondents referred to a number of factors that have played a role in this. According to a number of people closely involved in the process there have been a number of mistakes made by the organizations themselves, including the wrong use of financial resources, a lack of involvement of the local community during the process of designing the Sustainable Development Plan, and hiring external parties who were not informed enough about the agenda set out by the community to assist in the creation of the development plan. These and other developments led to locals losing trust in the committee and the committee has been working hard to mend the mistakes that were made and regain the trust of the community.

In 2014 the organizations involved in the ZRC process proposed setting up a pilot project, to test how well the model could work in the region. Lamentably, this proposal was shot down by government institutions. Communication about the further advancement of the process has been quite unclear. Respondents stated that they had been told that they will have to wait until the peace talks between the FARC and the government that are taking currently taking place have finished, but in May of this year there was talk about the ability to constitute the ZRC but a smaller one than was proposed by the communities. At the time of the research they had been told by officials that there has to be a new public hearing before anything can happen. Overall, the regional government

officials do not seem very keen on moving forward with the constitution of the ZRC and have been said to be more committed to the legislation surrounding large-scale landowners. As such, the communities have decided to turn to national institutions and to intensify cooperation at this level.

Another problem lies in the fact that the proposal that the campesino groups have made covers a larger area than the government is willing to assign. The government on the other hand, is proposing an area that is located high up in the mountains, which poses difficulties for agricultural production. The campesinos themselves would thus rather see the ZRC located lower and around the river, where the soil is fertile and apt for cultivation and have made a counter-proposal.

The central concern in the situation around the problematic constitution of a ZRC in the zone is that the region is highly attractive to a number of parties who each have their own agenda. There are the companies who want to make the most of the region's fertile soil and richness in resources, as well as its strategic location on the Caribbean coast. The campesinos want their own territory, where land rights are guaranteed and in which they can build up their small companies and provide a future for the community. There are also the indigenous communities, who according to respondents have expressed the will to increase their resguardas and do so in the area that has now been proposed as ZRC.

Some functionaries of the government have asserted that the ZRC model restricts the land market too much. Investors who have been buying land in the region are fiercely opposing the model, and have been accused of trying to buy as much land as possible before the ZRC will be constituted officially. According to locals, the large landowners have found allies in local political institutions. Companies have been accused of bribing certain politicians who are in charge of allocating subsidies or are involved in the promotion of mega-projects. According to the respondents, these persons feel like their economic and political power is in jeopardy if a ZRC is constituted, and as such do everything in their power to stop this from happening.

10.3.3 Vision

The vision that the campesino organizations have for ZRC Montes de María is that it will be acknowledged as a democratic territory for peace, with proper environmental legislation in order, where the equal distribution of land and sustainable human development, based on the campesino economy, are guaranteed. They envision an area that is productive, with its own cultural identity, where the rights of the population are respected, and where inhabitants have the opportunity to participate and organize themselves in social and political ways. The organizations see the constitution of a ZRC in the region as a way to strengthen productive, social and environmental legislation, as well as that surrounding land ownership. The constitution should also be a way to

make the most of the strategic geographic location, which can be used as an advantage in the strengthening of the campesino economy and the overall development of the communities in the region (INCODER, 2012b).

With regard to production the objective for the communities of the Montes de María region is that agricultural production remains the main economic activity. It is suggested that for each parcel of land or productive system at least two traditional cultivations will be rotated, both of which have the potential to be commercialized and are essential for food provision for households in the region. This is an approach that should help conserve the soils, as well as moving away from the mono-cultivation model that is typical within agroindustries. It is also suggested that there should be an area of land set aside within each productive unit, where a garden for the production of fruit, vegetables and other food supplies can take place. These can be used for auto-consumption, and can as such strengthen the potential of food sovereignty for each household in the Monte de María ZRC.

For each UAF or productive system in the ZRC of Montes de María five fundamental uses have been set out. These are not required, but serve as a framework through which a campesino economy based on diversified productive systems can be established. The five proposed uses are:

1. Commercial agriculture
2. Agriculture for livelihood provision
3. Cattle keeping
4. Rearing of other animal species (e.g. chickens, pigs)
5. Forestry protection

The development of industrial agriculture within the ZRC is not encouraged, as this cannot be sustained on the small-scale production level that is promoted within the region. However, agricultural and livestock production cooperatives could be developed within the framework of the proposed productive systems within the ZRC, as long as these can guarantee environmental sustainability.

The human potential and that of agricultural and livestock production in the region is very high, due to the climate, fertile soils and availability of water. However, currently the exploitation of this richness by the campesinos is quite low. As such, the development plan emphasizes the need for creation of productive projects that enable the inhabitants to use their surroundings in a sustainable manner, so as to improve their income and living conditions.

Earlier proposals have failed to address the social inequality and growing poverty that characterizes the region. The proposed new model moves away from earlier initiatives and sets out the idea of a farming cooperative that is based on a solidarity economy, is characterized by ownership of the production methods, and a fair distribution of the earnings. With the creation of such a cooperative in the region, a number of aspects have to be kept in mind. First, agricultural production needs to be increased, which means that campesinos have to have access to land that can be used for keeping animals and cultivating crops. Crops that are preferred because of their cultural resonance and commercial potential are: yucca, yams, tobacco, avocado, corn, plantains, cattle and pigs. Furthermore, there is need for capacity building plans focusing on topics such as sustainable forms of production, programs aimed at recuperation of traditional seeds and how to increase their potential; trainings in management and conservation of soils; plague and disease management for crops; cultural practices; and the process of harvesting, post-harvesting, transformation, processing and transport of products in order to commercialize production. In order to be able to set up communal companies it will be necessary to set up an organization that can oversee this process and to create clear rules and agreements for those involved in the project.

The campesino organizations and communities believe that in order to achieve the constitution of a ZRC in the area, it is necessary to continue to press and keep a watch on all the institutions that are charged with fulfillment of the constitutional mandate and the law with regard to social politics and rural development in the region. Respondents have stated that these institutions are not respecting the needs of the campesino communities and do not seem to stimulate the socioeconomic development in the region. There are a number of institutions involved, and there seems to be little communication and cooperation between them. The organizations continue to believe that the government wants to make use of their normative mechanisms to compensate the enormous social, economic, cultural, political and environmental debt that they have to the territory, and that if they do, the ZRC will be constituted.

An interesting aspect of the Montes de María region is the presence of different cultural and ethnic group, with afro-descendant, indigenous and campesino communities living in the same area. Historically, these communities have cooperated in their struggle for better living conditions and land tenure safety. These communities have come together in the Board for Dialogue and Coordination of the Montes de María, or MIC (*Mesa de Interlocución y Concertación de los Montes de María).* MIC has proposed the formation of an Intercultural Zone for Protection of the Territory (*Zona Intercultural de Protección Territorial).* Within this zone there would be space for the creation of one or two ZRC, as well as collective territories for both the indigenous and afro-

descendant communities. These territories could form the stage where strategies would be created to secure access to land for all social groups involved and the land would not be for sale for external parties. Within the zone small-scale agricultural and a campesino economy would be prioritized and strengthened.

The organization is now working on the formulation of a strategy to achieve this goal, a process in which the campesino, indigenous and afro-descendant organizations are highly involved. To complete this plan, the assistance of third parties, including universities, research centers, and technological partners, has been called upon. The plan has been handed over to INCODER and is awaiting approval (MIC, 2014).

11. Conclusion

This study has focused on if and how the ZRC model can enable sustainable locally driven livelihoods for rural communities in Colombia. In the following, the findings that have been discussed in the previous chapters will be linked to the theoretical framework that has been used in order to provide an answer to this question.

The study started with the hypothesis that the ZRC model is an alternative model for development, due to the fact that the model has been created and pushed for by members of the Colombian campesino community and that it places emphasis on a campesino model of agricultural production that deviates from the neoliberal model and policies that dominate Colombia and from a wider view, much of the past and present development practice and policies. What can be seen from the findings is that the model does fulfill these expectations. Years of agrarian reform that was biased towards the interest of vested elites led to a situation in which Colombian campesinos found themselves more and more marginalized. Through continuous mobilization of the campesino community, the government was eventually pushed towards accepting the design for the ZRC model that had been the product of this community itself. The model can thus be seen as a form of endogenous development that has been put forward by subalterns and is a clear representation of their needs and vision: the right to a territory where they can produce food for themselves and the Colombian population, in a fair manner that is in line with environmental needs and circumstances and where they can advocate and preserve their own culture. The ZRC are a legal option that has been created by the people themselves, and allows the campesinos to reconstruct their own territories and visions for development, thereby opening the possibility to form areas outside of the traditional political administrative institutions. The view of development that the campesino communities involved with the ZRC model put forward is reminiscent of those proposed in the post-neoliberal movements in other parts of Latin America, most importantly buen vivir: one in which local culture, harmony with the natural environment, human rights and small-scale production are central. This deviates from the view that the Colombian government adheres to, and in which economic growth and involvement in the global market are central. But this so-called *via campesina* approach to development is only possible if a number of factors are in place, such as market access, and sufficient land and capital (Zoomers, 2014). This is an important factor in the ZRC model, where precisely this is being argued: in order to make development in Colombia's rural areas a possibility, campesinos will have to have access to land, which is done through the model, and to the market, for which projects in line with the model are set up. But to do this, a certain degree of support from the government is needed. Although this is acknowledged in a legal

manner through the framework on which the model is built, the reality for now remains that much of this support, most importantly the provision of social investments and funding, is lacking.

The vision that is proposed in the ZRC model adheres to a high degree to the vision that is set out in food sovereignty. When looking at the guiding principles for food sovereignty and the characteristics and objectives for the ZRC model, it becomes clear how similar these are. The first principle is the right to healthy food and the second is the valuing and protection of food providers and their livelihood, both of which are expressed goals for the ZRC. The production of food is prioritized within the ZRC. Although the share of inhabitants that are involved in food production differs from zone to zone, it is clear that the production of food is the envisioned production model for these zones. Respondents have expressed how the communities within the ZRC want to move away from the focus on food security that the Colombian government has, but which entails that large quantities of food are imported from other countries, which undermines the production potential of the Colombian campesinos, who have to compete with the low prices of food that has been produced with governmental subsidies, something that the Colombian government cannot provide for their own producers as this is prohibited by the FTA with the United States and European Union. As such, the campesinos propose to pursue food sovereignty instead, which means that Colombian producers can provide food for the Colombian population, and that this food is produced in a healthy manner without depending on outside inputs such as seeds and agrochemicals. They see in this a valid alternative to the current model in which production for export and high quantities of imported food are prioritized, but which has led to marginalization of the campesino community, as well as deterioration of the environment. In this the third principle, localized food systems, can be found. The markets that are undertaken in Cabrera and the fact that most of the inhabitants of the ZRC produce food for local consumption serve as an example how local producers can come together to produce and exchange food.

The fourth principle constitutes that food providers should be in control over their territory and land. This is very clearly the goal of the ZRC and of the campesino movements, who are fighting to get access to their own territories. The zones have developed along the lines of what food sovereignty postulates, as it has allowed for the construction of alternative territories, where campesinos enjoy a certain amount of autonomy and have a voice in what local decision making and planning processes. The fourth and fifth principle refer to the right to share these territories in socially and environmentally sustainable ways and the importance of building on skills and local knowledge of food providers. The Sustainable Development Plans and projects that are taken up within these mirror these visions, as can be seen in the setting up of communal farms and farming projects, for example the EcoBúfalo project in Valle del Río Cimitarra. By incorporating

agroecology, which is the sixth principle of the food sovereignty, campesino organizations are attempting to return to a model in which the cultural heritage that the campesinos have is used in a productive matter that is also in greater harmony with the natural environment. Agroecology has been named a priority for agricultural production in the ZRC model. The cooperation of ANZORC with international organizations like La Vía Campesina through the agroecological network helps creating linkages, information exchange and building an international block, which shows how social capital can enable and stimulate the creation of a stronger organization which enables the multiplication of efforts to make agroecology a more viable alternative model for production.

With regard to agroecology though, the current reality seems still quite far away from the wish to establish a full functioning agroecological campesino economy. Agroecological methods, although given priority according to the respondents, do not seem to be widely applied as of now. However, it has to be acknowledged that by prioritizing agroecology and spreading knowledge through projects the ZRC model provides a fertile breeding ground on which the agroecological and food sovereignty models can be explored through real practice.

The ZRC model sets out an important role for campesinos in the conservation of the natural environment in the zones that they inhabit, something that can be seen as part of the wider trend of community-based conservation (Fisher et al, 2008). The extent to which the campesino communities in the ZRC that have been visited have managed to create institutions to regulate the use of resources differs greatly. Whereas in Cabrera respondents pointed out the difficulties in creating and enforcing a model for community based conservation, the campesino communities in Valle del Río Cimitarra have not only created such a model in the form of the Línea Amarillo area within the ZRC, but have also been successful in getting the government to adopt their model and legally enforce it. The fact that the aquatic resources that lie in this area provide water for the whole region could be an important factor in this, although such resources can also be found in Cabrera, where protection so far has proven difficult. The contributing factors to failure of the conservation project in Cabrera that were presented by respondents was the lack of knowledge and of effective strategies for conservation, aspects that have been named by Fisher et al. (2008) as often occurring in failure of conservation projects in which community plays an important role. Once again, the lack of financial resources was also named an important factor in not achieving the environmental conservation objectives that were set out within the Sustainable Development Plan.

As set out above, the ZRC model incorporates a number of the suggestions made both within the food sovereignty and post-development paradigms. But what also can be seen, is how the criticism that has been put forward to these models comes back in the application of the ZRC model. As Akram-Lodhi (2013) has pointed out, food sovereignty insufficiently addresses how

control of resources that are necessary for the achievement of food sovereignty can be handed over from one group to another. The fact that the groups with the most power, in the Colombian case large agribusiness owners, mining companies, latifundistas and the government itself, fare well by the current state poses a very large obstacle in achieving the goals that have been set out for the ZRC model. This is first of all the case in getting new ZRC constituted, as has been clearly illustrated by the situation in Montes de María, where the richness in resources has attracted various powerful actors, who have more opportunities to influence the government in a way that is beneficial to them. But this also becomes clear in fact that the government is still quite unwilling to set aside resources to invest in the ZRC, as is prescribed within the legal framework that constitutes the model.

The human rights situation poses another issue for the ZRC model. Akram-Lodhi described how for a model based on food sovereignty to become reality, people need the ability to exercise certain individual and collective rights (Akram-Lodhi, 2013). However, as the situation in Colombia illustrates, people do not always have the ability to claim these rights. As respondents continuously pointed out, their human rights are not fulfilled. For years, the Colombian government has restricted the power that could be executed by social movements, Furthermore, basic social services, such as functioning infrastructure health care, electricity and education, in many of both constituted ZRC and those awaiting constitution are lacking. Issues such as the lack infrastructure seriously hamper the prospects of commercialization in the zones, which is necessary for providing prospects of development and income generation for the inhabitants. Possibilities to obtain access to land have been restricted for years, often with the use of violent displacements. The government does not fulfill the obligations that have been set out in the legal framework for the ZRC model. As these examples show, the possibilities to claim the rights the campesinos are entitled to are surrounded by difficulties. However, the campesinos have adopted strategies that are aimed at fulfilling these rights, such as using the discourse of human rights as a way to legitimize their battle and the ZRC model itself and organizing marches to make their grievances visible to the wider public.

As these strategies show, the importance of the social cohesion amongst campesinos communities, as well as the cooperation through organizations and creation of networks cannot be stressed enough. The case study of Montes de María shows how the malfunctioning of the local campesino organizations involved in the process of constitution has posed a serious obstacle in achieving the constitution of a ZRC, as trust by the local population was lost and as external actors used this against them to slow down the constitution process. In Cabrera on the other hand, the high level of organization has been named an important factor in enabling the constitution and successful

development of the ZRC. This social capital is the most powerful instruments that the campesinos have and by using this they have proven to be able to challenge the government and the established elite. As Bebbington (1999) points out, the relationships that form social capital make it possible to increase access to actors and resources, which in turn increase the possibility of influencing and challenging policies and power structures. The ZRC model is an illustration of social movements can express their opposition to neoliberal policies towards development and how this expression can form a challenge to the hegemony of these structures. An important strategy in this is the use of social identity. Such social identity often is the product of struggles and can be used as a tool in processing and solving these issues. The campesinos in Colombia have used their being campesino as a way to present themselves as a specific social entity, one that is entitled to specific rights. In this, their historical bond with Colombian society and their contribution to this society are stressed. The emphasis on campesino culture can be seen as not only a strategy but also as a reaction to the outside forces that have impact on their lives. It reflect the tendencies of local communities to hold on to strong forms of expression of social identity (Castillo & Nigh, 1998). By posing themselves as small-scale producers with a rich cultural heritage they propose the opposite of what these outside forces do: aggressively promoting economic growth through enhancement of production and modernization.

The ZRC model would not have existed without the decennia long struggle and efforts that Colombia campesinos have undertaken, and it poses a clear move away from this neoliberal view of development, albeit for a specific segment of society, the campesinos. But, as Baud et al. (2011) have pointed out, the debates and propositions that are undertaken by social movements are often surrounded by tensions: should priority be given to social inclusion and environmental protection, such as is proposed within the ZRC model, or to economic growth, which can be achieved by the support of megaprojects in the field of mining or agriculture. In this debate power relations play an important role. The fact that the ZRC model has been undermined and challenged ever since it came to existence, and the unwillingness of the government to allocate resources illustrate how power relations have an impact on the opportunities that actors have. Although the campesinos' social capital is strong, that of the vested elites is too, and this enhances their possibilities to fight the existence and further expansion of the ZRC model. Furthermore, these elites have access to a greater arsenal of other forms of capital, most importantly financial, than the campesinos have. In this scenario the collective social action undertaken by these elites has produced the eligible and ineligibles that de Haan and Zoomers (2005) refer to, in which the campesinos have historically been given the lesser position.

In achieving alternative models of development, such as food sovereignty and the ZRC model, the state can be both an obstacle and a necessity. The state is needed, but the way it uses its power has to be modified in such a way that rural communities are given support. During interviews respondents emphasized over and over how important the government was in achieving the goals that had been set out, but also how it has been an obstacle, which can be seen in the fact that the model has been suspended for almost a decade, or in the mixed messages that are currently given about the possibilities of further expanding the number of ZRC in the country. This pushing and pulling makes for a complex situation, which does not add to the effectiveness of the ZRC model.

It has been argued that in food sovereignty, sovereignty can be seen as self-determination over a specific territory where ecological and social reproduction comes about (Clark, 2013). Territories are a very important part of what the ZRC model sets out: campesinos want their own territory, that can exist side-by-side with the other forms of management that exist within Colombia. They set up their own rules, development plans, projects, production etc. However they are still dependent on outside actors, not the least of which the government. This already starts with the fact that the government has to approve the ZRC for them to be constituted, and does not show much willingness to do this. As political ecology scholars have pointed out, the policies that states design do not necessarily come about in isolation from what is happening on a wider regional or even global scale (Bryant, 1992). Countries are in constant competition with one another and Colombia is no exception to this rule. With an economic model that revolves around production of export, as well as the Free Trade Agreements that have been made with both the United States and the European Union, Colombia may have given up a share of their sovereignty to develop policies that are to the detriment of its own population. It is clear that with policies such as the ZRC model the local situation might be improved somewhat, but that as long as the global food production system is designed the way it currently is, it will be difficult to truly change national policies and move away from the linkages to the global market.

In this an important downfall for the prospects of fulfilling the objectives that are taken up in the ZRC model can be detected: the majority of the structural issues that have led to the marginalized position of the campesinos remain intact. Although the zones themselves differ in various ways, the problems that the communities have been facing and that have led them to fight for the constitution of ZRC are similar throughout the country: little assistance from the state, poverty, marginalized areas that lack services and infrastructure, and heightened competition with agroindustrial and other businesses that fit better into the model of development that the state envisions are the recurrent themes here. The Colombian economy shows no signs of moving away from the neoliberal hegemony, as has happened in a number of other states within Latin America

(Grugel & Riggirozzi, 2012). The development plan that has been set up by the current government led by President Santos reiterates the a vision of development that includes large-scale agroindustry and mining among the most important motors for development. The ZRC model does however, perhaps open a way forward to a more heterogeneous model of society in which different visions of development and production models can exist side by side. Escobar (2010) points toward to difficulties in enabling the co-existence of such different models within the same society, an issue that is very clearly illustrated by the backlash that the ZRC model has received in the form of accusations of conspiring with FARC, that they encourage illicit crop cultivation and that the production model is in need of modernization to increase production. But, an important fact is that the first step has been made by establishing the model. This has opened up a space for discussion and a way forward in the recognition of campesino rights and their culture. As steps in the direction of a more heterodox political economy have been made in other Latin American countries, it is not unlikely that this lies in the future for Colombia as well. The legal framework is there, now the support of the government is needed.

The perpetration of a model in which neoliberal has a monopoly position leaves few options for reaching a truly sustainable model, both in social and environmental terms (Redclift, 2014). The policies and production processes associated with the model simply do not fulfill the needs of a large number of people living in Colombia. This has led to unrest amongst the population, which is voicing their discontent louder and louder, making it harder for the government to ignore their demands. Furthermore, the expansion of the prioritized sector for development, mining and agroindustry, are associated with an array of environmental problems that are bound to multiply as the number of such projects undertaken grows. Although the national economy might grow, the question is if this will continue if the land is simply unusable due to overexploitation. It is therefore of great importance that the Colombian government acknowledges that these problems will only continue to grow if there is no room for other, more sustainable approaches to development. By creating a society in which different forms of political economies can exist side by side, these problems can be addressed and their impact can be mitigated. As is asserted by post-developmentalists: the value that lies in diversity in knowledge and economic, social and political systems should be acknowledged and used to its full potential.

In order for true alternatives to the dominant neoliberal structures that the government upholds, a fundamental shift is necessary, and people would have to start developing forms of governance that are not existent yet. Although finding a balance in which different models and visions for development could co-exist in Colombia could provide a sustainable solution to the troubles that the country is facing, one cannot expect such changes to occur overnight. A step by

step process might be the way forward in achieving a truly sustainable society that is supported by inhabitants of all social groups. And the existence of the ZRC model can be seen as opening a door towards this pathway as it is an instrument that enables processes of capitalism and globalization in a dual reality with other processes. It gives social groups that have not found their place in capitalist society an opportunity to live their own lives, pursue their own culture and preferred models of production, rather than being forced to adjust to a view that has been developed by external actors. It also provides the campesinos the chance to be included in this capitalist society while maintaining their own culture and activities. And ultimately, this is what the campesinos envision for themselves: to live dignified lives and provide food for the country to which they are indisputably deeply connected.

Future research

The ZRC model provides ample opportunities for research, which clearly could not all fit in this study. First of all, an in-depth study on the environmental sustainability issues in one specific or several of the zones could provide interesting insights. I found it a shame that it was hard for me to truly asses how environmentally sustainable production in the ZRC was, first of all because this is a social scientific research and it is difficult to use research methods that could clearly provide such insights, although this could perhaps be done by taking a larger sample of producers and using questionnaires. Another obstacle in assessing this was that ultimately the focus of the research was more on the macro level, which meant that I have not looked much at production processes on a more micro level. Such future research could perhaps be of a more natural scientific kind, so as to truly assess the extent of environmental damage, the environmental sustainability of current models and testing of possible, more environmentally sustainable models.

Another interesting entrance could be to focus on the role of gender. Gender issues were brought up a number of times in the interviews, with respondents referring to women's rights and the existence of specific women campesino organizations that were active within the ZRC. Scholars have been keen to present women as 'guardians of the environment', and a study that assesses this view with regard to the women in the ZRC could provide possible fascinating insights.

Lastly, something that is perhaps a bit of a missed opportunity and that I have been wondering about is whether the programs that are part of the Sustainable Development Plans, such as the agroecological schools and communal farms, reach large shares of the inhabitants of the ZRC, or if these mostly involve those that are closely associated with the dominant organizations in the zone. With some of the ZRC covering very extensive areas, it seems unlikely that all people can

be reached and highly involved in these programs. As such, more insight into this would be an interesting topic.

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