



Faculty of Life Sciences

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Title:

Peacebuilding and rural development in post-conflict Colombia:

A departmental problem and institutional analysis of Caquetá

Master thesis in the study programme: **Integrated Natural Resource Management**

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6 Conclusion

The present thesis depicts an approach to understand current problematics of rural development in the Colombian department of Caquetá, with focus on institutional settings in the process of peace agreement implementation. The main aim of the thesis was to find out departmental problems, and whether those are adequately addressed through the agreement. A case study design has been applied to approach the research issue, and qualitative data has been gathered through the involvement of important stakeholders of the rural development network in Caquetá. Through the analysis of interviews, observations, and literature, based on institutional- and problem-related frameworks, it was found that problems are mostly covered by the agreement. However, institutional weaknesses exist regarding its implementation. Following conclusions can be drawn, which correspond with the initial research objectives and questions.

On the departmental scale, “rural development” prevails to be understood as growth in cattle and agriculture industry, whereas the elaborated definition by interviewed national knowledge stakeholders is rather integrated and based on the United Nation’s SDGs. Concerning the responsibilities in the departmental rural development network, competences and policy fields are shared among international, national and departmental actors. However, national state actors cover most fields, with a focus on planning and control. The civil society can show similar representation in the network but lacks execution authority. International actors, like USAID, engage in functions where there is little state presence, as in peace implementation policies. Also, unclear competences could be identified, especially visible through the newly created peace agencies. Furthermore, coordination and communication weaknesses between national and departmental governance levels exist.

The two major identified core problems in the study area of Caquetá are institutional power vacuums and uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources. Furthermore, bad access to the market, unsatisfactory living conditions, and infrastructure could be sectorally identified. Causes and effects are intertwined in a complex manner. However, institutional weakness depicts the meta-problem in rural development in Caquetá.

First positive lessons from the peace agreement implementation process are improvements of physical security and prosperous outlooks for economic amelioration in Caquetá. On the other hand, attempts on social leaders increased, deforestation strongly exploded after FARC-EP left, and in general, the agreement’s implementation by the

national state lacks advance. Resulting challenges are primarily the commitment of the government to effectively implement the agreement. Therefore, discovered institutional deficiencies need to be tackled, as weak enforcement exacerbates current problems, especially deforestation. The institutional analysis shows approaches for institutional improvement, e.g. by outlining important key actors for a better coordination.

Two main departmental solution paths have been identified for future rural development. Interviewed actors stress the importance of a change of the economic production focus away from the cattle industry, towards alternative small-scale agri-silvicultural production. Furthermore, environmental conservation shall help to gain income, as through tourism or non-timber forest products. To reach those goals, the influence of civil society and international corporations is crucial, as the peace agreement does not cover departmental concepts explicitly. However, actors from civil society, international corporations, and national environmental agencies could depict nodal actors for an integrated, institutional management. As the study's scope and depth are limited, further research possibilities are recommended, like the need for a more profound institutional analysis, a potential comparative departmental study, or research concerning natural resource management's contribution to sustainable peace.

At the beginning of this year, president Santos declared that "peace is the most important fellow for the environment" (ARD 2018). It is to be hoped, that the introduced NAF will limit deforestation to prevent peace at the cost of the environment, and that cooperation among stakeholders is encouraged by the post-conflict to reach a commonly supported sustainable development in rural Colombia. Otherwise, inadequate land management could create new conflicts. The peace agreement exists, also regarding the question of land. But "the capacity and authority of the post-conflict regime [to realize it] will ultimately determine if peace prevails." (WEBERSIK & LEVY 2016, p. 62).