

EDITORIAL

COFFEE REGION: SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF TERRITORY

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Following, you will find a vision about the processes of territory construction and economic, environmental and social regional development variables in the denominated “Coffee Axis” in Colombia.

EXPLORING THE TERRITORY

These Mediterranean lands of the central-western of Colombia, that join snowy volcanoes and intertropical valleys and that mark the furthest septentrional foldings of the Andes in América, were explored from the west since mid-16th century by Jorge Robledo when he founded Anserma (1539) –in the lands of the traditional settlement of the Ansermas– and Cartago (1540) in the ancestral lands of the Quimbayas. From the East, it was explored by Gonzalo Jiménez de Quezada, who founded Mariquita (1551) and Victoria (1553) in the lands of the Panches, Gualíes and Marquetones.

Beaten and diminished the indigenous community, and plundered their wealth during the Conquest; during the colony, the anthropic activities are focused on two fronts: one for the exploitation of the huge mining potential of some rivers and mountains, which introduced slavery in the areas of Marmato, Supía, Arma and Victoria. There, it is worth highlighting the founding of the *Real de Minas de Quiebralomo* in 1540, converted in a slavery center. The second front, for the study of the biota of the *Nueva*

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Granada in Mariquita, thanks to the Botanical Expedition started by Mutis as central point to the illustrated proposals of Charles III to make América a profitable project for Spain.

In the 16th century, the provinces of the New Kingdom get to provide up to the 39% of the world gold, and the construction of the wall defense of Cartagena de Indias the starts.

When the need to strengthen the local government becomes evident, the Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada is started in 1717, with Santafé as the capital city. While the mining in the Province of Cauca –which provided 70% of the precious metal- was supported on the slavery of black and indigenous people; in Antioquia, with a 20% contribution, the production was fundamentally performed by independent mining labor.

At the dawn of the Republic, when the lands from the south of Antioquia up to Quindío and the mountains of the Mesa de Herveo belonging to the Tolima Grande were deserted and disconnected from the province center, but fit for agricultural and mining activities; a migrating flow called “*colonización antioqueña*” starts. After being closed for over 200 years, expelled by poverty and attracted by dreams and opportunities, they get to these lands creating a social phenomenon as important for our history as the Revolution of *Comuneros* and the Independence.

After the invasion of the vacant lands in Antioquia between 1770 and 1874, the colonization that advances through the jungle lands of the western slope of the Central Mountain Range, over which property titles had been issued, leads to confrontations among settlers and representatives of the Concesión Aranzazu and the Concesión Burila. However, the expeditions settled in colonies and founded towns as Sonsón in 1800, Abejorral in 1805, Aguadas in 1808, Salamina in 1825, Santa Rosa de Cabal in 1844 and Manizales in 1849. These towns served as starting points to advance to other regions and to divide the lands, to start villages. From those conflicts between settlers and concessions, sharecroppers and large state owners, according to historian Valencia Llano (2000), the

landowners advanced with their assault brigades –inspectors, judges, guards, clergymen, majors, pettifoggers- destroying crops, tearing down cement plants and burning houses.

FROM SURVIVAL TO ACCUMULATION

By the end of the first presidential period, Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera (1798-1878) –who promoted steamboat navigation along the Magdalena, the tracing of paths and the improvement of the mailing services– and the start of General José Hilario López in office, when the Republic is getting ready to declare the manumission of 16 thousand slaves (1852), the emancipation, feared in the big feudal lands of the provinces of Popayán and Cauca and in the big mines of Antioquia, Chocó and Barbacoas happens, and fundamental changes as the Land law, the separation of Church and State, the free press and the federalization of the Republic.

Half a century after the loss of commercial importance Honda had during the colony as navigation center of the Magdalena, in the path from Barranquilla to Bogotá, Antioquia, Cauca and Quito; which was generated by the openings of the ports over the Pacific in Guayaquil, Tumaco and Buenaventura and the opening of the path established by Nare, Manizales appears as the most strategic village in the South Province of the State of Antioquia. This settlement, that is built over a grid, centered by a main square, emerges at the pace of the mule driving. At the same time that they develop a *bahareque*¹ out of soil, constituted by a mix of manure and inorganic lime, put on a grid of cane sticks, located over a shield of stems from the same bambusa.

During this half of a century closing the 19th century, after years of hard work put one by the settlers with the hope of getting a piece of land as surviving means and in the search for social escalation, Manizales becomes the theater for the armed confrontations between the states of Antioquia and Cauca of 1860, 1876 and 1884; where the necessary provision of the troops favors their economy and survival.

¹ mud construction technique

For 1876, the population of the *bahareque* and rammed earth village got to 10 thousand inhabitants and the country's to nearly 3 million. In the meantime, the promising economy of the fertile valley of the Cauca River, where the benefits of constructions as that of the Cauca railway were expected, fell down as a consequence of the instability these civil wars brought.

After this difficult period, the small farms with food crops in the Quindío and Manizales areas, that were cultivated under a family work model, are now cultivated with commercial purposes; first with rubber and later on with coffee. This led to a social and economic system different from laborers and estates which was characteristic of the big lands in the states of Cundinamarca and Cauca, based on the waged labor, as with the colonization of the 19th century the principle that "the land is for those who work it" the bases for a capitalist production mode are created.

THE GOLDEN GRAIN FOR DEVELOPMENT

The inhabitants of the coffee region have a cultural background that is strongly influenced by those of Cauca and Antioquia, connected to the ways of the production modes for the mining during the colony and the farming activity of the 19th century. As the people from Cauca gravitated towards the slavery mode to mining and the feudal to the estate land owning, in the settler coming from Antioquia, the coffee growing culture will be an activity of small farms sustained by the wage labor of small owners, where the culture is enriched by the contribution of the middle class people from Cauca, characterized by free-thought ideas; which shaped a hard-working entrepreneurial society in this coffee growing land, and a blooming economy during the first seventy years of the 20th century.

This way, in a socio-environmental perspective, the inhabitants of these lands, formerly known as Gran Caldas, inherit deep traces of the rationality proper from the land of the axe and the *ruana*² and the open liberal mind of the Cauca culture interwoven in their culture; which leads the citizens not linked to the earth or the mining, towards the commerce and the manufacturing production.

² Traditional wool cover similar to the Mexican poncho

Even though Manizales appears when the political and social transformation in Colombia starts (1849), Pereira is founded when Mosquera fights Ecuador for Tumaco (1863), and Armenia rises when the war of the Thousand Days breaks (1899-1903); even if the foundation dates of these three intermediate conurbated cities of the land of coffee, set on the alluvial fans, are from the Republican Period, the greatest splendor of the region could only be lived in the decade of 1920, thanks to the impact of the railways and the coffee cables, where the coffee and these means (20 times more efficient both in costs and time to transport the grain), appear as moving forces of the population of the Colombian central west.

To that moment, the appearance of Manizales changes, a little village that starts to have a city air thanks to the rising of an eclectic architecture where Victorian, Italian and French-like styles participate. At the same time, the new urban model abandons the octagonal Spanish grid and starts following the level curves along the steep topography; the numerous papers and get-togethers announce a current of intellectual and craftsmen as well.

In Colombia, Carlos Eduardo Pinzón (1874-1925), in the decade of 1920 got to export near 35% from the Colombian coffee, after opening the market to the United States. Now, having coffee become the engine of the national development, that business man from Antioquia could fund the Aerial Cable Manizales-Mariquita, built by Englishmen between 1912 and 1922, in order to cross the Central mountain range and find in the port in Honda a way out to the Caribbean, crossing the Magdalena River. The emeritus businessman did the same promoting the Caldas Railway as an appendix of the Pacific Railway. When the Panama channel was inaugurated in 1914, Buenaventura, which was responsible for 8% of the total exports of the country, with the impact of the train and the new isthmus construction arrives to a 32%.

Likewise, thanks to the coffee, the navigation along the Magdalena River bursts. The importance of the “golden grain” would be fundamental; first, to encounter the viability for the Department of Caldas, that is created in 1905 as Manizales becomes a prosperous town of 25 thousand inhabitants –Medellín got to 60 thousand-; also, for what would be seen

in the decade of 1920, when the economic meridian of Colombia crossed that city as a source of foreign currency for the industrialization of the country. This condition allowed the city to rebuild after devastating fires in 1922, 1925 and 1926.

COMMITTEES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND CATURRA FOR THE CRISIS

Even though the old Caldas just arises in 1905, after the territorial reform of Rafael Uribe Uribe (1859-1914), in the blink of an eye, it moves from a survival economy with big mule driving companies that aim at the local market, to an accumulation of railways and aerial cables that go towards the ocean ports. Thanks to coffee, the new society starts to know the benefits of a crop of small surface with a high profit distribution effect, which would be valid up to 1970.

However, in 1927 the Federación Nacional de Cafeteros was founded in Colombia, an institution that through committees achieves the goal of spreading the benefits of the coffee growing activity to the rural areas; funding and co-financing the construction of new roads, water systems, health centers, electrical networks and rural schools. It is the time for the *chiva*³ y the *yipao*⁴, when the economy and the life of the communities of towns and small villages in the rural areas of our region are thriving; at least up to 1970, when the caturra with the effects of the green revolution arrives. The land owning peasants could not afford the technological and financial packages: the consequence, their lands ended up in the hands of merchants and professionals; while they migrate to the city, precisely in moments in which the technological reconvention establishes higher work demands and starts modifying the structure of productivity and costs.

As the population polarizes over the axis Manizales–Pereira–Armenia, and the centralism that after the crisis of 1929 ends up reproducing in the provinces, the division of the *Gran Caldas* would be facilitated, with the creation of the departments of Risaralda and Quindío in 1966, at the

³ Big wooden buses traditional to the area, characterized by bright colors, transportation capacity and the possibility to travel through small roads.

⁴ (from Jeep) Small trucks used traditionally to transport people and groceries to the rural areas. Usually filled in excess.

time that the economy starts an accelerated process of outsourcing, as the industrial society fades off. Besides, as the territory neighboring the coffee lands has been conurbating, the agriculture and livestock rationality in the land owning changes for another perspective on the potential uses of the urban land, at the same time that the coffee growing map changes, moving the production to other regions where the low costs associated to less productivity are viable facing the price crisis of coffee.

It is worth pointing out here that, in terms of infrastructure, the region has profound differences and asymmetries: on the one hand, the urban areas of the capitals and the municipalities closer to them, where the infrastructure and the income are concentrated; and, on the other hand, the rural areas far from the conurbated capitals, less equipped and in which the relative conditions change, either if they are (1) coffee zones, where the rural transportation has accomplished an essential function as catalyst of the poverty reduction, given the high density of their road network, or (2) of the higher banks of the rivers where the low density of the population and the poor connectivity of the territory affects the rural isolated towns as Marulanda (Caldas) and Pueblo Rico (Risaralda). About this particular condition, Quindío has been able to profit by having an integrated territory, which is not the case of Caldas nor Risaralda.

FROM SEGREGATION TO INTEGRATION

In the last generation -25 years- the population of the three capitals of the coffee axis has grown like this: 41% in Manizales, 96% in Pereira and 60% in Armenia; an increase that evidences the asymmetry in the levels of internal and external connectivity of the three urban centers. While the region has near to 2,2 millions of inhabitants, the employment and migration (in spite of its geostrategic position) problems indicate that the advantage associated to their location on the denominated "Gold Triangle of Colombia", is unexploited as it has not conformed a city-region among the coffee capitals, they have not complemented their economies, nor they have implemented an integrated efficient inter-urban transportation system to develop a big internal market with scale economies. Now, with the highways Autopistas de la Montaña and the ones to Valle del Cauca, the advantage of the coffee axis for the integration of the great conurbation

between Cali and Medellín, will depend on the conformation or not of such city-region, not to fade away and achieve greater benefits together; especially so if the railroad connection is also done, with the Coffee Railroad suggested between La Dorada and Irra, for articulating the cargo transportation in the Andean Region to the hydro-way of Magdalena and to the seas of Colombia.

Today, the new urban developments, yet to be implemented in the land organization plans (Plan de Ordenamiento territorial, POT) of the country, must aim at the integration towards the inside and the outside of the urban centers. That is, the cities must structure their metropolitan areas and interact articulating functions that take advantage of their strong points and those of the peripheral municipalities. This is an obligation for the conurbated intermediate cities, which must integrate to form a cluster based on three elements: that the economies of the urban centers complement each other instead of competing among them; that the distance among those centers is reduced to less than three hours and that the centers that interact have the same level of relevance.

However, the challenge in Manizales must start by organizing and reconverting its industry, directing it to three specific lines that have not yet reached business awareness: one, to industries of a high added value associated to the digital economy, green and orange, combining the production of goods and services in ICT, biotech and creativity, that make use of the aerial transportation in an airport that overcomes the regional limitations, as suggested by Aerocafé, extending the tracks to operate as a low cost heavy load airport. This would complement El Dorado and José María Córdoba airports, taking on functions of aerial transoceanic node. The second line, to industries that satisfy the national market, which was their original purpose, when the model of substitution of imported goods was being applied. And third, to chemical industries based on mining that must be established near the raw material and not near the consumer, that can use a logistic path that goes towards the sea, as the one suggested with the hydro-way of Magdalena and with the rail road of the west, starting from Urabá and Buenaventura. To close, it is necessary mention three structural projects that have derived from this section: one, the Coffee Railroad, a mountain train between La Dorada and the 41st Km to be

able to integrate the Andean region and structure the cargo transportation system of Colombia; second, the Coffee Airport, with a 3.800-meter track, to be able to impact the region and make the coffee cultural landscape of the region viable, as the Matecaña airport will always be limited to medium reach planes; and three, a deep port in the Pacific conceived under the idea of the interoceanic axis between Urabá and Cupica. The first one, supposes to build the new Cumanday tunnel pierced on the stable graniodorite next to Cerro Bravo, in such a way that, in the articulation of that railroad to the West Train, a container can be transported to a lower cost between Bogotá and Buenaventura and the exit of the Andean charcoal to the Colombian Pacific can be becomes easier. The second, as fundamental aerial means to solve the Mediterranean condition of the Coffee Axis, getting to Asia, North America, Europe and the South cone at a low cost; and third, the construction of an interoceanic channel through the Atrato in the biogeographic Chocó as logistic checkpoint in the interface of both the oceans of the planetary economy.

CHALLENGES AND APPROACHES FOR THE AGENDA

It is evident that today's society claims for a State that should implement cultural, educative and sector policies locally; urgently pay attention to the environmental, poverty and inequity challenges and, along the way, eradicate corruption and coherently adapt the land distribution in conformity to the cultural and natural offer of the regions and serving to their social and environmental problematics.

However, we know these are not the times of the industrial society of the past, of the solidary State that expands the benefits thanks to the Keynes postulates, nor of the productive forces supported on intensive processes of labor. These are the times of the society of knowledge, in which the labor structure has changed. In the case of Colombia, though, each time more changed by technology and where knowledge reaches the first line in the production factors, the State has stayed at the service of the market; due to that, it has not faced the big needs of a Nation where poverty and social fragmentation impose other priorities. Then, the new employment, that is not based on muscle strength or physical ability, but on the development of intellectual competences to articulate to intensive

processes in technology must be supported in education, implementing another educative model, one that develops human talent, creativity and social and emotional intelligence, as factors required for entrepreneurship and innovation.

Besides, to close the productivity gap between rural and urban environments, it is urgent to start an educational and cultural development that makes it possible to transform the agricultural sector, oriented to the clean production models, in which knowledge, information, learning and experiences integrate for the social and cultural development of a region, that of the coffee Axis. For that, the symbolisms and values that give support to its identity as biodiverse, multicultural and multiracial territory must be re-signified and re-elaborated. Hence, in the high mountain of our eco-region the identity symbols are related to the *pasillo*⁵, the paramo, the wooden *bahareque*, the sombrero aguadeño⁶, the *ruana* from Marulanda; in the center of the Magdalena, with the navigation along the Magdalena River, the Botanical Expedition, the *bunde*⁷ and the *guabina*⁸, the hammock little houses, the shoal of nicuro, bocachico and catfish; in Marmato, Supía and Riosucio, with the indigenous culture of the Embera and Umbra communities, the gold and coal mining, nourished with the afro-descendant communities' meaningful contribution, and with the *currulaos*⁹, in this region of crafts, *panela*¹⁰ and coffee. There is more novel and poetry in gold than in coffee.

Finally, it would be necessary to develop the competences of the region expressed in its natural and cultural potential, and in its own identity, taking advantage of the civility, as registered in the history of the city that has overcome fires, earth quakes and volcanic eruptions thanks to it, not to succumb facing other more devastating actions as the loss of values, that derives in the corruption that explains the ruthless human action over common or public goods. In the end, civility is the supreme value of urban culture.

⁵ Folk music and dance of the region

⁶ Traditional hat from the region, orig. Aguadas-Caldas

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¹⁰ Traditional raw cane sugar melted to divide into big blocks to make beverages, eat as sweet or as raw material to different candy and deserts.

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