

# Review of: "Theorizing the Normalization of Plantation Agriculture in Colombia"

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This article presents an analysis of what the author terms the "normalization" process of the plantation system in Colombia. The text is reasonably well-written, although in some paragraphs, the sentence construction reflects more of a Spanish structure, indicating room for improvement. The analysis is well-developed, but I have some concerns outlined below:

1. The theoretical framework contributes minimally to the study. I believe it would be more enriching to approach this analysis from the perspective of political ecology.
2. The author's theoretical framework leads to the assumption of "normalization," when, in fact, it is a case of land and water dispossession and environmental degradation resulting from significant power asymmetries within the neo-extractivist system (corporations and the State acting as a bloc, imposing the plantation regime). Even though the framework incorporates the interplay between social structures and agency, the theoretical framework depicts an a-historical system, and power relations between concrete actors operating at different scales is insufficiently addressed.
3. Addressing land and water grabbing in the context of neo-extractivism in Latin America as a starting point in the introduction is suggested, particularly how it has dispossessed, displaced, and destroyed communities.
4. I would challenge the notion of "normalization" since the author himself mentions the role of power asymmetries (the politic-economic system precludes the political mobilization of local people) in inhibiting collective resistance. Moreover, resistance and social movements may not develop given these asymmetries, and because of obstacles for social organization. Therefore, the lack of resistance or open conflict does not imply "normalization". Sometimes people opt to leave or sell their lands, assuming the imposed reality, because they have no other option, nor the means to resist effectively. Social organization and mobilization are absent from the analysis, thus rendering an incomplete view that allows for assuming the normalization process. Compliance with the plantation system is related to receiving benefits from corporations (investing in communities' infrastructure, for example) without acknowledging that this is a traditional *modus operandi* of extractivist endeavors to break resistance.
5. The exercise of discursive power is absent from the analysis, although slightly mentioned in the discussion section. This absence is worrying because of the role of discourses in what the author interprets as normalization. There is ample literature (poststructuralist political ecology) addressing how certain discourses (those of the more powerful actors) become dominant and legitimized as "reality". Here, the depiction of traditional farming as backward and inefficient is paramount, along with the notions of the benefits of "modernization". Taking these notions into account, the normalization hypothesis may be reinterpreted.

6. Supralocal social structures and relations, such as the corporate food system, are taken for granted, and there's a need to address clear, identifiable interests that drive global and national policies affecting the local level.
7. The study lacks details on how the information from interviews was analyzed; a minimal explanation is necessary. I also question the adequacy of having only one interviewee per community, given the complexity of the topic and the assumptions of normalization and duality in the local perspectives about plantations. A more thorough exploration of the diversity of perspectives would be needed to reach any conclusion about normalization and duality. This is precisely true given that selected interviewees have similar profiles and would be solved with a more thorough exploration of the diversity of perspectives, with more interviews per community.
8. Figure 3 is unclear; community names are blurred. Is it necessary to display all community names, or only those analyzed, should be considered? The Figure's caption does not explain the image, but refers to water grabbing, which should be incorporated into the text.
9. Unnecessary use of diagrams and a formula (which does not make any sense in the discussion section). I understand that these derive from the theoretical-methodological framework, but this kind of "formalization" is not necessary for understanding the narrative, which is quite clear in the case study section.
10. The author's argument about the absence of coercion in land sales is not sufficiently supported. The author does not provide evidence of lack of pressures for selling the lands, or the lack of options for small-scale producers; instead, he assumes that selling is related to personal profit.
11. The narrative relies only partially on testimonials, and there's a need for stronger backing of all statements with clear indications of sources (observation, informal talks, literature). Moreover, some interpretations of testimonials may be questioned. For example, on page 15, the author states that there "exist empowerment related to the recognition of the importance of involving local people in the project's introduction to the area", based on the following testimony: "They first have to respect and find out how things on the village and respect the local organization". From my point of view, the interviewee is complaining about the lack of respect of corporations toward local organization, and not empowerment related to the involvement of local people in the project.
12. The discussion contains elements that could be part of the introduction, indicating a need for restructuring.

In conclusion, while the analysis is insightful, addressing the highlighted concerns can enhance the interpretative ability and depth of the study.