

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

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The manuscript aims to establish a theoretical framework for understanding the social and economic changes brought about by the new plantation agriculture. Basically, through the concept of "normalization", it proposes that there are processes of adaptation from an economy in which the farmer has broad autonomy, to another dependent on this type of agriculture that subtracts land, water and capital.

The author's objective is estimable. However, I consider that the text has serious limitations. On the one hand, it is very unbalanced. On the one hand, it presents a broad and complex theoretical framework. On the other hand, the case in which it is applied is presented in a very cursory manner. To understand this process of "normalization", it would be necessary to know whether the producers, prior to the emergence of the plantation economy, were exclusively engaged in agriculture or whether they were multi-activity. And if so, what other activities did they engage in and how did they organize their pluriactive strategies? Did they all have the same access to land and water? What was the impact of inheritance, if any? Did they articulate themselves in the same way to the new plantation economy? Without this information, this "normalization" seems to be the result of a psychological process of habituation to a new context. But perhaps, behind it, we find strategies of articulation and pluriactivity; that is to say, economic processes. All the questions that the author asks in section 4.3 show, more than the limitations of the concept of "normalization", a lack of in-depth knowledge of the dynamics and strategies of the small farmer. I strongly recommend reading Ploeg and other authors who have analyzed the processes of decampesinization and recampesinization from the point of view of adaptive strategies.

Another limitation is that he applies new concepts to explain old debates. What the author calls the morphogenetic debate looks very suspiciously like the classic structuralism-functionalism debate.