COFFEE PRODUCED BY WOMEN IN CAUCA, COLOMBIA: WHERE HAS JUANITA VALDEZ BEEN?

by

Olga Lucia Cuellar-Gómez

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SIGNED: Olga Lucia Cuellar-Gómez

APPROVAL BY THESIS DIRECTOR

This thesis has been approved on the date shown below:

_________________________________            April 30th 2008
Scott Whiteford
Director, Center for Latin American Studies
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ABSTRACT

In order to meet the demands of a European roaster interested in coffee produced by women, a Colombian coffee cooperative developed a female growers’ program in 2000. Today this program has grown into an association of 390 women. This thesis evaluates how marketing strategies have impacted women’s lives, gender roles, experiences of leadership, and expectations of improving profits as well as individual and communities living standards. In addition, it examines how women have taken advantage of gender equity, female leadership, and empowerment discourses as a marketing strategy. The lessons learned from the successes and challenges that these women have experienced is documented. This research examines how new circumstances and struggles have increased women’s participation in coffee production and how these transformations have opened new opportunities for women in the market. The study is based on interviews with members of the Asociación de Mujeres Caficultoras Cauca, in the summer 2007.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Changing Women’s Roles and Participation in Coffee Production and the Market

Gender inequalities have permeated all aspects and processes of agriculture and coffee in Colombia including its production, harvesting, post-harvesting, distribution and marketing. Throughout Colombian history, coffee has been the second largest international commodity (after petroleum) (Pendergrats 1999:15 2000; Palacios 2002). The coffee industry today is constantly changing due to new standards (of coffee quality) and demands for social and environmental responsibility. In Colombia, these changes, as well as the socio-political context, are providing a new paradigm for Colombian women involved in coffee production: women seeking advancement through the global market.

Critical for analysis is the manner in which new circumstances and struggles have increased women’s participation in coffee production and how these transformations have opened new opportunities for women in the market. This research seeks to answer the following questions: a) Which factors have contributed to women becoming significant coffee growers and marketers? b) How have women become engaged in the international coffee market? To answer these questions this research examined how women have taken advantage of gender equity, female leadership, and empowerment discourses as a marketing strategy; and documented lessons learned in relation to the successes and the challenges that these women have experienced through the production of high quality coffee in Cauca, Colombia.
Neo-liberal policies of free trade and open market have led to transformations in agricultural work and impacted households in various ways including influencing labor divisions and activities between men and women, increasing the demand for industrial and agricultural labor, reducing labor wages, adding marketing requirements, and an increasing demand for high quality in agricultural products (Crece 2002; Lance 1999; May 2000). Women’s presence in coffee production has increased in the last decades (Farah and Perez 2004:144). Aside from these economic changes caused by free trade in the 1990s in Colombia (Ahumada, 1996), there are still other factors that have also impacted the dynamics of coffee labor in Colombia: migration patterns, and the transformation of production, marketing and consumption of coffee.

Within the Colombian context, domestic socio-political disturbances such as guerrilla activity, violent displacement of communities, male migration to urban settings, and the lack of job opportunities have increased Colombian female involvement in coffee production (Farah and Perez 2004:151). These factors present a range of new challenges and opportunities for Colombian coffee production and sales, generating new market interest in buying coffee produced by women, creating female associations in order to increase the visibility of women’s needs and attracting the attention of national and international organizations to increase access to financial support.

Since the mid-1980's, a number of new coffee markets such as Fair Trade, organic and other labels have developed projects and opened new markets around social and environmental concerns, leading to new coffee denominations and labels. These include: Fair Trade, organic, environmental conservation, Rainforest Alliance, and specialty
coffees (Bacon 2007; Jaffee 2007; Pendergrats 1999). New concerns within the coffee industry, and in some cases national and international programs with producers, have led to an increasing commitment to provide equal opportunities for men and women; thus creating more balanced socio-economic opportunities for producers without discriminating based on gender, race, class and ethnicity. This new awareness has also influenced how buyers and consumers think about the coffee they are buying or consuming, specifically in regards to where it comes from, who has produced it and under what circumstances it has being traded from the producer to the consumer.

Migration patterns, new methods of coffee production, a growing global market, and a decrease in income due to the absence of male producers, have all led to an increasing number of women becoming more actively involved as coffee producers in order to provide daily sustenance for their families. As Deere and León (1979:64) indicate, in the 1960s, women’s presence in agricultural labor was related to the lack of alternative employment opportunities and male migration to urban settings. Although women did in fact contribute to agricultural production, men were still considered the primary agriculturalists. Also these authors (1979:65) suggest that agricultural decision-making was part of the male domain. Today, the demands of capitalism and the modification of local circumstances are reflected in the transformation of labor divisions and perceptions of what was considered appropriate work for women. In regions where men migrate to find a job in other areas, changes in gender-related labor division most clearly have affected local ideological systems where men are the primary agriculturalists and are in charge of the main income to sustain their families.
In the last decade, policy makers, researchers, and agricultural development organizations have begun to acknowledge the increase in female participation and have sought to engage women in development and sustainability projects. Before early 1990s, very little attention had been paid to the results that transformation in the coffee industry may have had on women’s everyday activities, and how this new trend of coffee had impacted women, if it has in fact brought any modification to their lives and to their families’ economic and social dynamics. There is also a gap in the literature about the transformation of women’s participation in coffee production, as well as a lack of data on women’s economic participation in Colombia in general.

It is now apparent that development projects are incorporating a gender perspective, moreover, some development agencies, including the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the United Nations (2005) have established that one of the goals to be achieved in 2015, besides that of the eradication of hunger and poverty, is the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, especially in rural areas. Several programs within the coffee industry have also reflected interest in helping women obtain leadership positions and enhance marketing. Some programs such as the Coffee Quality Institute (CQI), the International Women’s Coffee Alliance (IWCA), among others, are still in the process of evaluating how programs could better address women’s needs. This thesis intends to spread the voices of those who have not been heard at the national and
international level regarding their experiences and perceptions about their participation process in the coffee value chain; from production to marketing.

This study occurred in one organization the Asociación de Mujeres Caficultoras del Cauca (AMUCC), in the state of Cauca, Colombia. Cauca is well known by coffee buyers for having the appropriate altitude, climate and soil to produce exceptional coffee (Cuellar Interviews August 2007). Due to the socio-political context, the State of Cauca has struggled to obtain better access to new advances in coffee production with the purpose of improving market opportunities.

This case study focused on the formation of a women’s association and the adoption of new coffee quality standards in order to participate in the international market. AMUCC fits into what Goodman (2004) calls the “moral economy”\(^1\), being constituted due to an appeal from a medium-sized coffee roaster from Spain, SUPRACAFÉ.\(^2\) This partnership supported the creation of a women’s coffee association in Cauca, Colombia. In this sense, SUPRACAFÉ established a direct-trade\(^3\) with AMUCC to sell their coffee in Spain. Consequently, quality and ethical values in this market relationship will translate into premium-prices\(^4\), economic and tangible benefits

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\(^1\) “Using labels and other discursive devices, intensively local narratives of coffee-growing communities and their farming practices are transported to distant global markets, building a relational “moral economy” between producers and consumers (Goodman 2004)”

\(^2\) Since 1990 Supracafé S.A. has specialized in the import and buy exclusive high quality coffees. They exclusively sell high quality, naturally roasted 100% pure Arabica coffees with gourmet classification, amongst other products such as specialty teas, sugars and chocolates and a range of coffees (http://www.supracafe.com/ingles/empresa.htm).

\(^3\) Direct-trade, a term popularized by Geoff Watts, Vice-president and coffee buyer from Intelligentsia Coffee & Tea. Direct-trade means a close relationship and continued contact between the buyer and the producers or a coffee association, assuring better prices, quality and traceability (New York Times 2008).

\(^4\) It is a surplus price that this group receives from the Spanish Roasting Company.
such as assistance to build infrastructure, and organizational aid to female members of AMUCC.

In this thesis, I examine the structural changes affecting the production of coffee, new trends in coffee marketing and consumption, and how these factors have impacted coffee producers in Colombia. I also describe the production of coffee in Cauca and the impacts the global industry has on this region. Likewise, I address the increase of women’s involvement in coffee production, their rise as primary coffee growers and marketers, and how these changes have also affected households and communities.

After describing these issues, I present the results from the surveys and interviews I conducted during my field work with AMUCC. Then, I describe AMUCC and the composition of its membership, after which I illustrate this women’s association’s constitutional process, and then compare these results with women’s perceptions of their involvement in production in other coffee regions throughout Latin America.

In the final section, I analyze the results of the AMUCC case study and discuss a gender market-oriented framework and gender issues in coffee development. I explore women’s access and ownership to land, as well as the economic and social benefits of being part of AMUCC and explain how association membership is an instrument to compete in the international market that increases women’s visibility as part of the industry. I also offer recommendations and considerations based on the analysis of this case study and within the perceptions of AMUCC’s members. Finally I conclude by presenting the impacts of this research on the AMUCC organization today.
Methodology

This research evaluated two trends: one trend at the international level in which the coffee industry is currently changing its way of producing, buying, and consuming coffee, and one trend at the local level, in which Colombian socio-political circumstances are transforming family patterns and the gendered division of labor. This research also provides data regarding social and cultural norms in gender relationships: in contexts where women are taking a lead role and have identified themselves as coffee producers, household economic providers, land owners, and coffee association members. These two trends represent new challenges and opportunities for coffee producers, specifically for women who are members of the Asociación de Mujeres Caficultoras del Cauca (AMUCC). This study documented how new perspectives in the global market and the globalization processes can impact social dynamics at the community level.

This research demonstrates how new conceptions about coffee marketing are an integration of global processes that affect the local identity of producers and of women as heads of household. In addition, the establishment of a direct relationship between buyers and suppliers can empower producers and facilitate their access to information and practices that will increase their ability to improve production and access to land, economic benefits, and information regarding coffee quality standards. In other words, local responses to global incentives could create social, political, and economic opportunities for coffee producers, families, and communities.
In light of these local and global trends, this research bases itself on a case study with the AMUCC, Women’s Coffee Grower Association of Cauca, Colombia (see Appendix 1). This women’s association was selected as a case study because the idea of creating this association did not arise from the community itself but emerged as the result of an international request from a Spanish coffee importer. This group has also been affected by the international market, which demands high quality coffee while also supporting coffee produced by women. AMUCC’s goals, as well as those of the Spanish coffee buyer, include coffee production that focuses on social and environmental sustainability, in addition to the improvement of living standards for coffee producers themselves and their communities. Negotiation with the Spanish buyer generates more opportunities for women members to sell their coffee at better prices and establishes networks that create more options in the international market. In addition, producers are becoming familiar with marketing processes. They are learning how to negotiate with coffee buyers, becoming aware of the quality of the coffee they have produced in order to obtain better prices, executing a production cost and revenues analysis, interpreting coffee price fluctuations and learning how to adjust to them, among other practices that are contributing to their access to the international market.

The research with AMUCC was conducted during seven weeks in the summer of 2007. Qualitative and quantitative research methodologies were used, including participant-observation in the field, in the market, at cultural celebrations, and in daily interactions with association members. I conducted in-depth interviews with nine members of the AMUCC and other key informants. These nine members are leaders,
board directors, and representatives of some of the municipalities that form part of this association. These women are the connection between their community and the CAFICAUCA cooperative and, in this sense, have a better understanding of the relationships between these two groups. Additionally, these leaders have faced difficulties, such as delivering the coffee produced by AMUCC members in that community, organizing meetings in the community, transmitting information and updates in relation to the process among the cooperative, the Spanish roaster, and AMUCC, as well as being in constant contact with others leaders and AMUCC general headquarters.

Women were key participants and great contributors to this research. I conducted surveys with 21 women, 18 of which were from AMUCC and three from another coffee producer association, Asociación de Productores Agropecuarios Nueva Integración (ASPROANIN), to learn more about farm production, coffee production, and the formation of the AMUCC. I interviewed women from ASPROANIN because these women have been selected several times by the coffee growers’ committee and the Specialty Coffee Program developed by the Agricultural Cooperative Development International and Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance (ACDI/VODA) in Colombia, as leaders of their associations. I wanted to explore how women perceive themselves and their level of participation when they form part of a mixed gender association and how they perceive themselves as coffee growers and members of these associations, as well as their agency in the association’s decision-making process.

I established my first contact with members of AMUCC in the spring of 2007 in order to request research authorization from the group. Once they accepted, I met with
the group in the summer of 2007 during one of their monthly board meetings. During this meeting I explained to the Board of Directors as well as to each municipality leader the objectives of my project. I additionally scheduled visits and trips to some communities. I visited a total of six municipalities out of the twelve that this association represents due to the limited amount of time I had to conduct my fieldwork (seven weeks), and to security reasons (areas with guerrilla and paramilitary presences). As a result, I interviewed some of the leaders, from those municipalities I couldn’t visit, in the cooperative when they were delivering coffee.

In each one of the municipalities I was able to visit, I stayed at the members’ homes with their families. During visits, I had the opportunity to interact with and interview men, husbands, sons, and relatives of these women, as well as their children. I established positive relationships with group members and their families, allowing me to get to know most members in the household and observe daily activities and household dynamics.

My experience working with coffee producer associations in Colombia in 2005 and 2006, lead me to focus my research entirely on women producers and their organization. Prior to visiting the field, I had planned to address these issues from women’s perspectives only. I wanted to give a voice to those often muted ones in a place where men are usually socially recognized as agriculturalists and women are regarded only as “helpers”, or secondary family workers, irrespective of the amount of time they dedicate to agricultural activities (Deere and León 2001:3). Once I began conducting my

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5 This association represents 12 of the 44 municipalities in the State of Cauca
research, I realized that in order to understand the complexity of coffee production, I needed to include male producers’ and other family members’ perceptions and understanding of the coffee value chain, and its significance to men, women, and other members of the family. The research became more holistic by incorporating these additional perspectives. Therefore, I spent a great amount of time with various coffee-producing families. I had open conversations with all of the household members, including men. Male producers’ opinions were relevant for this research, as their opinion could shape women’s responses in requests for land, labor and capital. In addition, coffee production is a family endeavor and, in this work, family members negotiate power relationships. I therefore wanted to explore how women’s participation in AMUCC might impact intra-household relationships and decision-making processes related to coffee production.

In each municipality I visited other members of AMUCC and in four municipalities I conducted a focus group. These focus groups were planned in advance and included women from diverse communities within the same municipality. I conducted focus groups in these areas since some women suggested that it was better to hold a general meeting than individual visits to each household. Some municipalities and households were difficult to access due to lack of roads and transportation, and in others, women were in the last week of harvesting; thus making it easier for them to attend a meeting than to spend half a day in an individual interview. )

A focus group is a qualitative method, involving the engagement of a small number of people in an informal group discussion, focusing on a particular topic or set of
issues (Silverman 2004:177). This method was flexible and allowed participants to be in a familiar environment with women from the same municipality, consequently making them feel more comfortable talking and giving their opinions. Women who attended these focus groups had been members of AMUCC for at least two years and thus already knew each other.

These focus groups with AMUCC members sought to elicit reasons why women started participating in the group, their motivations and objectives, as well as which factors encouraged them to continue participating. In some focus groups, we discussed cultural gender assumptions and stereotypes in this region and the gendered division of labor both in the households and the communities. I conducted three more focus groups with other coffee associations in Cauca with the purpose of identifying differences and similarities with AMUCC. Therefore, I conducted one focus group with eight women, from ASPROANIN.

In one municipality, I conducted participant-observations of the marketing process in which group members were selling coffee to the local market, called *agencia de compra*\(^6\) (a buying agency of the CAFICAUCA cooperative). Additionally, I followed the marketing process for women who decided to sell their coffee directly to the Cooperative. I observed the procedure the cooperative goes through to evaluate coffee quality and to follow through with the payment process.\(^7\)

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\(^6\) The cooperatives’ buying agencies are located in several municipalities in the coffee regions. It is managed by an *agente de compra* (middleman) who buys the coffee according to daily coffee prices. The coffee the middleman buys can be sold to a coffee cooperative or to private buyers.

\(^7\) Depending on the quality and physical test in the coffee lab, the cooperative determines the price according to that day’s price.
I interviewed the founders of this organization, who provided information as to why the first attempt of a female coffee growers group did not work as expected, as well as women who were originally excluded from the association, but are now a part of it. I also talked with women in the association hierarchy, including members of the Board of Directors, municipality leaders, and coffee growers in AMUCC; in order to explore how this association was created and how they perceive their successes and struggles. Additionally, I interviewed other women and men that belonged to different coffee associations so as to compare their situations.

I spent the last week of the fieldwork in Bogotá conducting interviews with several officials, two from the National Federation of Coffee Growers (Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia) FNCC and three from ACDI/VOCA. Both organizations have been developing specialty coffee projects in Cauca. These interviews provided historical data about specialty coffee programs in Colombia, insight into the roles these organizations are playing in gender-based discourse as international-marketing strategy, and the national context in which the AMUCC is located. Also, I had the opportunity to interview the Spanish roaster and importer who has been working on this project with AMUCC and who requested the formation of AMUCC and coffee produced by women. In that interview we discussed the reasons and objectives for forming a female coffee-grower group and his interest in buying coffee produced by women. I asked him about the type of agreements he currently has with AMUCC regarding prices and quality standards. We also discussed his perceptions of quality and
the impact of the international market on AMUCC and what he saw as his future relationship with AMUCC.

In addition to the fieldwork conducted in the summer of 2007, I participated in two conferences; the SCAA (Specialty Coffee Association of America) 2007 Conference and Exhibition and Let’s Talk Coffee 2007, organized by Sustainable Harvest. These meetings represent an array of perspectives focused on the coffee industry, including its producers and intermediaries, and on coffee buyers, roasters, importers, and non-governmental organizations, among others institutions and people from the world of coffee. I attended talks addressing producers’ issues in recent years regarding price fluctuation, certification, and environmental and socio-cultural topics. Additionally, I had conversations with coffee producers, including several women from different countries in Latin America, which allowed for additional comparisons as to the difficulties and struggles that producers, specifically female producers, currently face.

I adapted my research to daily circumstances and to the participants’ needs. Producers and families kindly received me in their homes and I felt welcome in every municipality. Nevertheless, I was always aware of my role as a researcher. My behavior in the field was influenced by a constant awareness and reflection of this position. During several conversations and interviews, participants asked my opinions and thoughts about coffee prices, the relationship with the cooperative, and information about the North American market. I answered their questions, but I felt that some of my answers may have caused them to reevaluate their own roles as producers and members of the association. They began to question the role of the CAFICAUCA cooperative and of the
Spanish coffee buyer, current coffee market prices, and the financial procedures that take place before they are paid.

Socio-cultural researchers must be aware of the complexity of gender, political, cultural, and socio-economic relationships in the communities in which they work (Naples 2003:49-67). We cannot ignore how people construct relationships and organize their world, and must embrace all possible factors that influence the interpretation of our findings. Our personal experiences, political views, and research skills inevitably interfere and shape the way in which we understand the world.

On the other hand, as Schultz –Lavenda (2005) questions the validity of researchers working in their home environment, I too questioned the legitimacy of conducting research in my country of origin. Even though I worked in a region with which I was not previously familiar, I was well aware of the broader socio-political and economic context in which I was situated. I feared that my own personal experience might bias my interpretations, but felt that my familiarity with these contexts aided in interactions with participants. Colombia has a complex political history. In order to be able to establish relationships with the research participants, it is necessary to be familiar with and sensitive about political violence and the socio-cultural context, as Naples (2003:64) addresses in her debate about the advantages and limits of outsider/insiders, being an insider facilitated my introduction to the communities as well as to understand the socio-political context in which this group is emerged. In some cases, insiders can have a better understanding of “how things work”. This position will help to comprehend communities’ norms and cultural rules and create a greater empathy with participants.
during the research process. In the process of analyzing data, I realized that this awareness was, in fact, a significant advantage of conducting research at home; thus helping to shape many of my reflexive interactions and collaborative relationships.

Table 1 presents the number of participants, which institutions they belong to, and the type of methodology employed in this research.

Table 1: Research’s Project Interviewees and Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Interviewees</th>
<th>Affiliation/Organization</th>
<th>Type of Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Members (women) of AMUCC</td>
<td>Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Member and Board Representatives of AMUCC</td>
<td>In-depth Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 participants in 4 focus groups</td>
<td>Members (women) of AMUCC</td>
<td>4 Focus Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Members (women) of ASPROANIN</td>
<td>Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Members (women) of ASPROANIN</td>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Members and Board Representatives of AMUCC</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Staff from Federación Campesina del Cauca</td>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Members of ASOAGRO</td>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Members of AMACA</td>
<td>In-depth Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Representatives of CAFICAUCA cooperative</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Staff of CAFICAUCA cooperative coffee lab</td>
<td>Interviews and participant-observation during coffee quality evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Representatives of ACDI/VOCA NGO</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Representatives of Specialty Coffee FNCC</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Owner of SupraCafé</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Site Description

AMUCC is located in Popayán, the capital of the State of Cauca (see map below), in the southwestern corner of Colombia (see Appendix 1), facing the Pacific Ocean to the west. The State of Cauca has approximately 1,250,000 inhabitants (Solis-Gomez 2000), and AMUCC has members in 12 of Cauca’s 41 total municipalities. The regional economy is mainly based on agricultural production including coffee, sugar cane, fique\textsuperscript{8} and other cash crops (Misión Rural 1998:60). Cauca forms part of one of the seven coffee production regions in Colombia according to the national census in 1981 and the coffee national census/survey in 1997.

\textbf{Figure 1: Map of the State of Cauca}

Source: Geographic Institute Agustín Codazzi 2008

\textsuperscript{8} It is fiber that comes from the plant called \textit{Furcraea macrophylla}. It is used to make crafts such as hats and bags, or other type of handicrafts.
This region has been populated by indigenous peoples, their Afro-Colombian descendants, and peasants (mestizos). Historically, land distribution and ownership have created conflict among these diverse populations. As a result of the resistance of the large haciendas’ owners to the redistribution of land, struggles have occurred in the past. In the early 1970s the Páez and the Guambianos (indigenous communities) as well as some peasants who occupied private land, invaded more than twenty haciendas in the State of Cauca (Zamosc 1986:82). Agricultural laborers in coffee have also demanded a regulated wage, welfare and social security benefits in order to avoid exploitation, and have claimed abuse by land-owners (ibid 1986:144). According to Adams (1966), land was distributed in the agrarian land reform between diverse reforms and counter reforms of the 1960s and 1970s. The 1959-60 Agricultural Censuses showed that almost 50,000 Colombian farmers did not have titles to the lands they occupied and that over one-third of Colombia's land in farms was operated through a farm manager (Adams 1996:45). Therefore, a principal objective of Colombia’s Agrarian Reform Law during this period was to eliminate and prevent the inequitable concentration of rural property.

It is clear that most of the land struggles during the late 1960s and early 1970s were combined with the emergence of agrarian capitalism (Zamosc 1986:74). Most of the economic struggle of Caucan peasants still include a lack of access to land, inequality of land distribution, difficulties in agricultural production, and competition with products imported from Ecuador—which have moreover been subsided by the Ecuadorian Government. The combination of these economic and social struggles has led some peasants to begin cultivation of illicit crops (Misión Rural 1998:60). Cultivation of illicit
crops has some strategic benefits, such as a secure market, ease of transport, and greater profit than other agriculture products. Thus, controlling production of illicit crops was and continues to be a complex challenge for the government and local agencies.

An unfavorable economic outlook for agricultural production is not the only factor that affects the Cauca region. Armed conflicts and socio-political violence have created an increased displacement and migration among Caucanos (Consejería Presidencial para los Derechos Humanos 1998). Moreover, as the research of Misión Rural (1998:100) has pointed out, there is a lack of information about the current situation of small agricultural producers. The lack of research in this region is due to lower economical resources, lack of human and economical resources and infrastructure, as well as difficult access to the most vulnerable communities where there is great presence of subversive groups. Additionally, knowledge about agriculture quality is not easily disseminated. This is due partly to few assistants that provide technical extension to all coffee producers in Cauca. According to conversations with some coffee technicians in Cauca in 2007, there were only 800 technicians for more than 85,000 coffee producers (FNCC, Coffee Census 1997).

In addition, land distribution is a key factor in agricultural production. The Land Reform in 1994 reassigned around 12 million hectares9 to be redistributed to 65,000 families among rural areas in Colombia from 1994 to 1998 (Borras 2003:377). Nevertheless, this reassignment was inadequate because it resulted in an unequal redistribution; peasant and indigenous communities had to resettle and migrate to other

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9 One hectare it is equivalent to 2.4 acres
areas. Many poor peasants were excluded due to their inability to acquire credit with the required paper work, previous unpaid financial debts, and overpricing of the land (Forero 1999). Moreover, some distributions were based on political favors and gave preferences to certain local elites. This unequal distribution only created more conflict among populations. The new legal codes promoted colonization, and caused the movement of peasants from one state to another and overpopulation in some regions. The privileged titling of empty lots (“titulación of baldíos”) also created a division in the distribution of land among agriculture and private property, which generated re-accommodation of communities, displacement and migration (Echeverri, Misión Rural 1998:134-37).

According to Grusczynski and Rojas, in 2003 more than two-thirds of the land distributed in 1994 presented high levels of desertion, indebtedness and, in many cases, abandonment of lands.

Agrarian reform in Colombia in the early 1990s recognized the increase of women as heads of household and included that potential beneficiaries would be poor peasant women or women heads-of-household who did not own property in the reform. (Deere and León 2001:173-196). Despite the aforementioned, change in Colombian land reforms in the early 1990s remained, in practice, unremarkable, or there is a lack of data to measure who has received the benefits of these new policies according to gender, class and ethnicity. In 2002, legislators established Law 731. Its proposal was designed specifically to benefit rural women. This new policy had the goal of improving women’s lives in rural areas and gave priority to women who lived in vulnerable poverty conditions and who lacked access to economic benefits.
Another main objective of this new policy was to generate equity between women and men. Thus, the policy demands more support from the Minister of Agriculture and agricultural aid programs, such as FINAGRO\textsuperscript{10}. Nevertheless, in practice, there is no noticeable evidence of change. Women in rural areas remain unaware of the new law and of the benefits they might be eligible to receive from diverse governmental and non-governmental institutions (Cuellar Interviews, June-July 2007). Participants in this case study were not impacted directly by the reform inasmuch as women did not benefit from land property redistribution and/or access through this land reform.

There is no formal or specific statistical data, or qualitative research about coffee producer’s access to land and the impact that the 1994 agrarian reforms had on coffee production. Nonetheless, researchers decided to analyze data from the coffee census in 1997. From conversations with producers and according to coffee history in Colombia, it is evident that coffee production transformed from large haciendas (farms with more than 20 hectares) to small micro-lots (farms with an average of 3 hectares or less). There are two reasons for this transformation: 1) the coffee crisis that started in the late 1980s, in which producers who had large properties had to sell in order to survive; and 2) agrarian reforms and the redistribution of land (Perez and Farah 2002). One of the impacts of the agrarian reforms was a reduction of hectares cultivated in coffee and cash crops. In 1990, there were 1,021,000 hectares planted with coffee, and in 2000 this number reduced to 800,000 (Perez and Farah 2000:143; Contraloría General de la República 2002).

\textsuperscript{10} Fondo para el Financiamiento de Sector Agropecuario. This Institution provides credit for rural projects in Colombia.
Additionally, the number of coffee farms increased from 297,000 in 1970 to 668,000 in 1997.

This led to a decrease in the size of these farms. Farmers went from an average of 14.5 hectares with 5 hectares of coffee cultivation to an average of 3.5 hectares in each farm with 1.3 hectares of coffee in 1997 (García 2002:4). Even though the new census has not been published, it is evident that this average has not changed today and could even be lower than one hectare of coffee area cultivated per farm. Moreover, cash crop cultivation reduced by more than 875,000 hectares between 1991 and 1998. These decreases made by coffee farmers, were also considered by economic analysts (García 2002:6) as a coping strategy. Coffee growers had less coffee cultivated in the farm, in order to lower cost of production, decrease dependence on coffee and lessen investment in industrialized technology for coffee -- use of chemical fertilizers and machinery-. The use of chemical fertilizers started to be incorporated in the 1970s in Colombia by the FNCC in order to increase coffee productivity, which increased the costs of production for farmers.

Complexity of land distribution among diverse communities, as well as political violence led to an “underdevelopment”—lack of access to technology, information and mechanization for coffee production -- and under-industrialization of coffee production in the State of Cauca. As mentioned by Barona and Gnecco (2001:13), Cauca is one of the most marginalized departments in the development context, often excluded from projects and governmental plans. Thus, it has become more challenging to achieve high quality coffee production and obtain access to financial, technical and market aid for coffee
producers. Moreover, coffee production in other Departments closer to Cauca, such as Antioquia, Caldas and Quindio, have successfully achieved industrialized production, thus was generating more competition for small-scale producers (Correa 1992).

In order to fully understand Cauca underdevelopment in coffee production, it is relevant to mention the socio-political context in which is emerged. In the last twenty years, Colombian conflict between guerrillas, paramilitaries and militaries has cost the lives of at least 70,000 people. More than 3 million people have been internally displaced and many have "disappeared." Civilians have been the main victims of Colombia’s long-running internal armed conflict between the security forces and their paramilitary allies on the one side and guerrilla forces on the other.

Violence experienced at the hands of the paramilitaries and guerrillas, has become an essential element of historical memory in Colombia. In the twentieth century war was a political mechanism. It was the scenario in Colombia and was the way to achieve political policies, presidential campaigns and to control territories. War was a cycle without end. War and violence were not considered a perversion of politics but the efficient mechanism to achieve them. (Sánchez 1990). Therefore the violence turned inherent in the democracy. It was a way to negotiate the differences among society, governors, insurgency groups and paramilitaries. All of these acquired the habit to impose what each of these actor considered their law and trying to create a homogenous group. As Restrepo (2002:50) pointed out, what we have been seeing in Colombia through the years is the legitimization of violent mechanism as efficient instrument to solve any conflict or disagreement. Consequently, political violence has interrupted the
possibility of implementing projects that might have opened new markets for coffee. It has also created high unemployment rates, which has caused the emigration of men and thus, an increasing number of women as heads of household (Cuellar Interviews, June 2007).

In addition, small producers, including women, faced other struggles in coffee production that involved the mechanization of production and the use of new techniques and infrastructure. A 2006 Food and Agriculture Organization study about women within the Colombian rural context indicates that, as a result of the limited access to production improvements in other words more industrialized, extensive family labor is required. In some cases, men have to look for employment outside of the farms, while in other cases young men migrate to urban areas. At the end adult women are forced to remain in charge of the farm and the agricultural production. Those that remain on the farm are women. Thus, women alone must contribute to the entire process of coffee production: from cultivation to harvesting and post-harvesting. This process often requires more work and a set of specialized skills and knowledge of international standards, (FAO 2006:63) in order to produce coffee they can trade in the international market.

Before free trade and the spread of a globalized economy, agricultural production did not require specialized training since farmers learn how to cultivate from their parents and grandparents, as well as from everyday chores. Nevertheless, in order to satisfy the new demand of high quality production, coffee producers require specific methods and particular infrastructures (Bacon 2008; Jaffee 2007; Pendergrats 1999; Lewin 2004). In order to be competitive in the coffee marketing process, they need to know about market
strategies, how to interpret the fluctuation of coffee prices, have administrative skills, and obtain information about international market supply and demand. Women have traditionally been excluded from the transfer of knowledge and from new technologies within the agriculture business (Boserup 1970). This situation creates difficulties for those who remain in rural areas -- in some cases women -- and want to improve their production and access to the market. This exclusion also explains women interest in create a women’s group in which they can obtain access to information on coffee quality and new advancements in production.

In general, Coffee production in Cauca has greatly impacted the local economy and land distribution, as well as the development of agriculture. Coffee production has changed in Cauca to become more specialized, producing origin and differentiated coffees, which have special qualities that add market value. At the same time, factors such as migration patterns, violence, land distribution struggles and economic crises, new definitions of coffee quality, and increased specialization have led women to become more involved in coffee production and to actively participate in all stages of the coffee value chain. This change prompted local initiatives to organize women’s groups or organizations, such as the Asociación de Mujeres Caficultoras del Cauca (AMUCC).
A Portrait of AMUCC (Asociación de Mujeres Caficultoras del Cauca)

AMUCC was formed in 2002 at the request of the European market, and specifically, through the interest of a coffee buyer and medium-sized roaster from Spain, SUPRACAFÉ. This company, another Spanish foundation, and the local cooperative CAFICAUCA, were interested in developing a line of coffee produced by women. The first attempt took the form of a program for women that later turned into an association, AMACA (Asociación de Mujeres Agropecuarias del Departamento del Cauca). This first association was formed by 300 women from a single municipality. After just one year, a misunderstanding took place between AMACA, SUPRACAFÉ and the cooperative, thus leaving AMACA to continue their work alone and end their agreement with the cooperative and the Spanish company.

Nevertheless, the two sponsoring organizations decided not to give up and tried to form a new association that included women from across different municipalities in Cauca. Thus, AMUCC (the Women’s Coffee Grower Association of Cauca) was formed. Today, this association has 390 members—all women- who are producing coffee.

Each one of the participants in this process has a specific role. The Spanish coffee buyer plays the role of buyer and evaluator of the coffee’s quality. The Spanish

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11 Café Mundi was founded in 2004 by diverse small and medium-sized coffee roasters and has the objective of developing some programs in coffee producers’ countries. Its mission is to develop programs with a social responsible perspective, and its main goal is to improve coffee growers conditions http://www.cafemundi.org/quienessomos.htm

12 Cooperativa de Caficultores del Cauca CAFICAUCA, was formed in 1961 by 297 coffee growers. Today it has more than 3,353 members. CAFICAUCA headquarters is located in Popayán (Revista CAFICAUCA 2005).
The foundation provides financial backing to the association. The role of the cooperative is to stock the coffee, hull, pack and export it to Spain.

This association covers 12 of the 41 total municipalities in the State of Cauca, which makes it widely heterogeneous. Within the association there is a difference among socio-economic status, defined by the municipality women belong to. For example, municipalities close to Popayán are more developed. Thus, women from these communities have better access to economic conditions, more access to land and greater assets. Likewise, there is easier access to main roads and transportation, thereby creating the possibility of visiting cooperatives more frequently. On the contrary, women that live in southern Cauca, far away from Popayán, have less access to the aforementioned conditions and facilities. This situation makes a difference in the cost of production and the challenges women face in order to produce, transport and market the coffee.

On average, members of AMUCC have from one to three hectares of land per producer. In the State of Cauca, this plot size is considered small-scale production. Medium-scale producers have from five to eight hectares, and large producers have more than ten hectares. In terms of the amount of production, during the last harvest in 2007 AMUCC production was 2,500 60-kg bags, the equivalent of 10 exportable containers. From these, the Spanish coffee buyer bought 40 percent and the rest of that coffee was sold to local buyers.

One of the requirements that women had to fulfill in order to become members of AMUCC was to own at least one hectare of land (with a legal title), on which they must produce high quality coffee. By becoming a member of AMUCC, women had access to
land, the coffee market, recognition as coffee producers, credit and cash income, training, and other services. These factors, in some cases, transformed the way women, families and community members perceived gender roles and women’s participation as producers and members of a coffee association in the coffee sector. In contrast, when women have the opportunity to become active participants in commercial production, they often increase decision-making power within the household and the community (Spring 2000:1).
CHAPTER TWO
AN OVERLOOK IN THE COFFEE INDUSTRY

Coffee History in Colombia

Colombian agricultural economy has been structured for more than two centuries around coffee production, export, and marketing. This crop was introduced in the XVIII century and since then has been one of the main sources of foreign exchange, employment, and added value in Colombian rural economy (Palacios 2002; Pendergrats 2002). Several studies have identified coffee as the principal driving forces of business in Colombia (Banks, McFadden et al., 2003; Chalarca, 1987; Junguito & Pizano, 1991; Palacios, 2002; Pendergrast, 2002; Romoli, 1943). The coffee system has been controlled by the National Federation of Coffee Growers (FNCC) since 1927. This institution oversees a wide range of functions and responsibilities, including setting a minimum price for growers, developing agronomic and technical research and extension, monitoring quality standards, processing coffee, investing in rural infrastructure in coffee growing regions and exporting coffee (Ramirez-Vallejo 2003).

The coffee sector in Colombia represents a source of relevant economic growth and development. Coffee production and marketing involves both social and economic resources and symbolizes a significant portion of the exports. Today, it represents 10% of Colombian agricultural export (Robinson and Urrutia 2007). In the 1920s, Colombia exported 2.3 million 70-kilo bags of coffee, valued at over $106 billion dollars, which
represented 65 percent of Colombian exports for that year, according to Ramirez-Vallejo (2003). In 2001, with exports of over 10 million bags representing $1.4 billion in revenue, coffee continued to play a key role in the Colombian economy. As of 2001, Colombia produced 10 percent of the world’s total coffee exports. As you can see in the tables below Colombia, in the last decade, continues to be the third largest coffee exporter after Brazil and Vietnam, and one of the principal producers of the Arábica\textsuperscript{13} variety (Roseberry 1995; Ukers 1992; UNCTAD/WTO 2002).

\ \textsuperscript{13} The two major coffee varieties produced and traded in the world are Arabica and Robustas. There are four kinds of coffee groups mainly traded: Colombian Milds, Other Milds, Brazilian Naturals, and Robustas. However, around 12 countries share different productions of these kinds. Whilst Vietnam is specialized in Robustas coffee, Colombia specializes in Arabica, still being the major producer in Colombian mild coffee (ICO 2003). There are two types of coffee: Arábica from Ethiopia and Robusta from the Atlantic coast. (Ukers 1922; UNCTAD/WTO, 2002). In Central and South America production is based on Arábica
In 2006, Colombia exported 10.95 million 60-kg bags of coffee, worth US$1,676 billion, a 4 percent increase from 2005. Of this volume, in 2006 the Federation exported 2.92 million bags, 27 percent of the total, whereas other exporters shipped 8.02 million coffee bags, equivalent to 73 percent (FNCC 2006:9).

Since 2002, coffee sales with added value have represented some additional income for producers. In other words high quality coffee sales have increased as one can see in the table below. Specifically, the specialty coffee market, freeze dried coffee (instant coffee), the Juan Valdez coffee businesses in Colombia and in North America, and its sales of roasted coffees, as well as other types, have increased sales from 975 thousand 60-kg bags in 2002 to more than 1.56 million bags in 2006. There has also been an increase of 60 percent in the exported volume, as shown in the table below (FNCC 2006:10).
At the present time, coffee cultivation in Colombia is, for the most part, located in the Andean Mountains (see Appendix number 2: Map of Coffee Areas in Colombia); in the Departments of Antioquia, Boyacá, Caldas, and Cauca, as well as Caquetá, Casanare, Cundinamarca, Guajira, Huila, Magdalena, Nariño, North of Santander, Quindío, Caldas, Risaralda, Santander, Tolima and, on a smaller scale, in the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta (León Guevara 2006; FNCC 1997).

Coffee also embodies a significant source of economic sustainability for many rural families in Colombia. It is the most important economic source of income for 60 percent of the municipalities in Colombia (Robledo, 1998:50). Around 566,000 families depend directly on this crop production. It also significantly contributes to the informal economy by providing employment for more than 800,000 people, representing nearly one third of...
total rural employment (FNCC 1997; Garcia 2002). Today, the typical coffee grower of Colombia is portrayed as a small-scale producer who uses micro lot cultivation. These small-scale producers represent 64 percent of all coffee growers in Colombia. They own an average of one hectare per producer: 28 percent own from one to three hectares, 5 percent own from three to five hectares, 4 percent own from five to 20 hectares and just 0.56 percent produce coffee on more than 20 hectares (SICA 1997). According to the latest coffee census in 1997, there are approximately more than 500,000 families growing coffee, who own a total of around 870,000 coffee hectares and produce an average of 11 million bags of coffee per year (SICA 1997).

A historical explanation of the increase of small-scale coffee producers in Colombia was that in the period of 1970-1997 the area of coffee property was reduced (Figure 5 and 6). This crisis was caused by lower coffee prices, instrumentation of production costs, competition from mechanization and lower costs from Vietnam and Brazil (Fridell 2007). This had consequences on regional specializations in coffee production (CEPAL 2000). As a result, today 64 percent of coffee growers (364,300 producers) are *minifundistas* (small pieces of land owned by peasants) who have in average of three hectares of land, and who contribute to 15 percent of national coffee production (FNCC, 2001).
Table 4: Structural Changes in the Size of Coffee Region Areas from 1970 to 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coffee regions</th>
<th>Farm areas thousand of ha</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1993/97</th>
<th>% change</th>
<th>Coffee area thousand of ha</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1993/97</th>
<th>% change</th>
<th># of Farms thousand of ha</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1993/97</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>-27</td>
<td></td>
<td>290</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>-12</td>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripheral</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>-23</td>
<td></td>
<td>204</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>-19</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>-51</td>
<td></td>
<td>127</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>-42</td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santander</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>-10</td>
<td></td>
<td>109</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>-36</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>117</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>-24</td>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>-15</td>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>177</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>145</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Tolima</td>
<td>826</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>184</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>-17</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>273</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4384</td>
<td>3622</td>
<td>-17</td>
<td></td>
<td>1051</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>-17</td>
<td></td>
<td>298</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Cafetero (FNCC 1997)

Table 5: Transformation of the average of coffee farms from 1970 to 1997

![Evolution in the coffee farms' size, 1970 - 1993/97 (hectares)](chart)

Source: Coffee Census 1997
One key actor in Colombian coffee history is the Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia (the FNCC), a group of important and large coffee growers and exporters created in 1927. The main objective of this organization was to improve their members’ incomes, assure a market, and stabilize the coffee price. FNCC’s objectives today are threefold: 1) to accumulate inventories in the country's commitments under the International Coffee Agreement (ICA), thus helping to reduce volatility in prices; 2) to act as a last resort buyer for coffee growers, helping them by giving them a minimum and transparent price for their coffee, and 3) to help finance public works in coffee growing areas, as well as investment in research (Robledo, 1998). With the help of the FNCC and the support from the Government, coffee growth expanded all over the country. By the end of the 1960's, there were 1 million productive coffee hectares and production was over 8.5 million bags per year (SICA 1997).

Moreover, coffee production increased and there was an expansion of coffee production around the world. However, a coffee crisis occurred in the late 1980s, which some people believe still continues today. This crisis had multiple causes. One of which was the end of the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) in 1989. The end of this agreement and the impossibility of negotiating a new agreement that included price regulation mechanisms caused a sharp decrease in international coffee prices (Bacon 2008; Garcia 2002; Fridell 2007). Thus, between 1989 and 1993 Colombia had the lowest revenues from coffee exports, despite the increased cultivation in this area (Suarez

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14 The ICA emerged as a result of over-production followed by a price decrease in the early 1960s. This is an agreement including both exporting and importing countries, in order to stabilize the market and to halt the fall in prices according to supply and demand (http://www.ico.org/history).
“Overnight, coffee growers around the world were exposed to free-market forces, with devastating results. Producing nations dumped their stocks on the market, and prices plummeted, reaching a low of 49 cents per pound in 1992, well below production cost. Small producers abandoned their coffee plots and migrated out of coffee-growing regions”

It is evident that neo-liberal free trade policies and the monopolization of the coffee market by multi-national corporations influenced the end of the Coffee Agreement (Robledo, 1998:39). The United States, a main coffee buyer, was the first to leave this group and support the end of the agreement. As Robledo points out, (1998) it is not a coincidence that the World Bank, an institution that controlled Colombia’s internal market and exported one half of its harvests, proposed the end of the ICA and supported the subsequent increase of multi-national corporations’ regulation of the coffee market.

Twice during the 20th century, international coffee prices were below the production costs; once at the turn of the century and again during the 1990s. This situation caused growers to give up on coffee, or to lower their standard of living. Coffee growing regions endured high levels of unemployment, which brought insecurity and violence to what had been previously considered the most prosperous regions in the country. Some coffee growers even resorted to growing illegal crops in order to survive (Robledo 1998; Suarez 2001; Wild 2005; Bacon 2008).

A small inability to compete in the international market was seen by government officials as an achievement; part of the inevitable evolution of the free market. Thus, in the early 1990s, they decided to reduce any subsidies to coffee producers, focusing on
other commodities, such as those in the oil and mining sectors. At the same time, coffee exports were decreasing, dis-empowering the FNCC of its roles in coffee export control and ability to sustain prices, thus making it impossible to increase or maintain domestic coffee prices (Robledo, 1998:45).

This coffee crisis confirmed that modernization in the coffee industry was more an “illusion” rather than an effective process with successful results for the economy. However, this modernization delivered at least some benefits, such as the construction of roads, electrification, sanitary services, schools and health centers in some coffee regions. These improvements led to a general misunderstanding about coffee producers experiencing an increase in their standards of living. The continued existence of Juan Valdez coffee businesses, opened by the FNCC, contributes to perpetuating the romanticized image of the successful coffee producer who always receives a fair price and lives well.

Only a minority have economically benefited from modernization. This minority is mostly composed of producers who sell their product to large transnational organizations such as Cargill, Philip Morris-Kraft General Foods and Nestle (Robledo 1998; Wild 2005). These companies market 46 percent of the 68 million bags of coffee in the world. In comparison, in the late 1990s, 30 percent of the coffee plantations continued employing traditional practices and 60 percent of total coffee producers were still small farm owners (Robledo 1998:47). It is significant to emphasize that the “modernization” of coffee industry did not reach everyone.

In addition, FNCC’s multiple roles as coffee buyer, importer-exporter,
government party, and a representative of coffee producers, make it difficult to successfully meet producers expectations (Wild 2005:254). The FNCC has historically been associated with an elite group of large scale coffee producers who have been known to monopolize control of the organization and the coffee industry in Colombia. As a result of the aforementioned coffee crisis, however, the FNCC has been forced to change its strategy and in some cases, this has negatively affected producers’ income and access to credit, technological advances, and social services.

The FNCC structure is the following (see figure 7): first of all, this federation represents 380 thousand coffee producers. It has 16 regional committees in coffee growing areas and 356 municipality committees are elected every 4 years. National committees are comprised by governmental representatives, such as the Ministers of Agriculture, Foreign Trade and National Planning and one representative from each coffee region (a total of 10). The Board of Directors is comprised by the Manager and some representatives from regional committees, and the National Coffee Congress comprised by six delegates from the regional committees. National committees are democratically elected or reelected in the National Coffee Congress every year (FNCC, 2008).
Moreover, the FNCC has been a core institution in maintaining stability in Colombian coffee production. This institution created a regulated system in which producers have a secure market. Also, it established a controlled stock system in each State and the municipalities, and formed the research institute Cenicafé, which developed investigations of technologies to improve coffee quality and to adapt to the market (Suarez 2001:140). All of these new developments have helped position Colombian coffee in the international market, as well as innovate and create new strategies to be highly competitive in the global industry.
Transformation of Coffee Production, Marketing and Consumption

Coffee is considered the second most valuable trading commodity in the world after oil (Pendergrast, 1999). However, the share of producers’ coffee trade has fallen by two-thirds in ten years, while transnational coffee companies have received the economic benefits from the low price they pay producers (Wild 2005:3). One of the reasons for this inequality of revenues was the end of the International Coffee Agreement, ICA, which regulated the price according to market supply and demand. Therefore, even though coffee has become one of the most traded commodities, its cultivation historically has been one of the most profitable agricultural activities for producers. In the early stages of coffee marketing coffee was treated as a generic commodity status, with its connotations of bulk supply, homogenized attributes, and lack of refinement qualities (Bacon 2008:08).

Nevertheless, by the mid-1980s, producers organizations in alliance with small specialty roasters, founded the new market segmentation by appealing to the environmental and social ethics of socially activist and reflexive consumers (Banco 2007; Goodman 2008; Giovannucci 2004). Thus, coffee buyers and consumers began to demand knowledge about specifications, such as who is involved in production and marketing and where it is grown, and details such as the type of plantation, kinds of procedures, type of soil, altitude, weather, and other factors involved in the cultivation process. Thus, different denominations and labels emerged such as Fair Trade, organic, environmental conservation, shade coffee, and specialty coffee (Bacon 2008:08).
Therefore in the coffee industry, high “quality” coffees started to acquire material and symbolic value according to its distinctive flavors, which is shaped by the unique characteristics derived from the soil in which they are grown (Bacon 2002; Fridell 2007; Pendergrats 1999). This new way to buy and consume coffees is translated, in some cases, in ethical norms and economic benefits for producers through premium prices. In addition, the specialty coffee industry promotes a educational project geared towards making consumers more aware of coffee characteristics, production costs, amount of labor required, and all the conditions involved in the production and marketing processes.

Coffee roasters and organizations from the coffee industry have been highly involved in this process; and in 1982 a small group of coffee professionals seeking to set quality standards for specialty coffee and its trade founded the Specialty Coffee Association of America (www.scaa.org). Currently, the SCAA is the world's largest trade association made up of 2,500 member companies. With the proliferation of gourmet coffee retailers since the 1990s, specialty coffee has become one of the fastest growing food service markets in the world, netting an estimated $9.6 billion in the US alone in 2004. (Lingle, Ted SCAA May 2007). Consequently, in 1996, the FNCC realized the need to promote the production of specialty coffee in Colombia to meet marketing demand. The FNCC acknowledged that if they wanted to continue to be competitive in the market, they had to respond to its needs and produce what consumers were buying. In the search for producing a unique bean, the FNCC made it mandatory that producers utilize certain cultivation techniques, such as the use of chemical fertilizers, the construction of wet-mills to wash coffee, the application of a specific time for fermentation, the building of
solar dryers and the compliance of certain procedures for quality standards. According to the FNCC these specific methods could be “easily achieved” by rural communities if they had the economic and technical support from the FNCC and the Government. Therefore, FNCC decided to pay an additional cash bonus to members interested in producing specialty coffee (Olga L Cuellar Interviews June 2007).

These new developments represented a range of new challenges and opportunities for Colombian coffee production and sales and, in this case, a chance to increase women’s involvement in the market and new projects. As Goodman (2008:13) mentioned, these processes, in turn, strengthen the producer’s ability to negotiate collectively with buyers, acquire knowledge of specialty markets, and undertake investments in processing facilities to improve the quality of their coffee and add value.

In one interview with some producers while participating in the SCAA\(^\text{15}\) 2007; they mentioned how different they see coffee production today, “this is a great opportunity, now we can see the other face of the coffee industry. Before, we did not know what happened with the coffee we sold or where the coffee was going. Now, we can meet the demands because we have the chance to talk with buyers and consumers” (Cuellar Interviews, May 2007).

In addition to new market demands, including a demand for social and ethical responsibility, consumers and buyers are becoming more aware of how, where and by whom the coffee they buy is produced. Additionally, some coffee buyers even demand

\(^{15}\) The SCAA is the trade association for the specialty coffee industry, one of the fastest-growing food industries in the world. One of SCAA's primary functions is to set the industry's standards for growing, roasting and brewing. Thus, every year members of the SCAA, including coffee retailers, roasters, producers, exporters and importers, get together to improve the specialty coffee industry (http://www.scaa.org/).
coffee produced by women. For example the coffee buyer from Spain pointed out that, “in the coffee industry women are recognized as high quality producers” (Olga L Cuellar Interviews August 2007). In other informal conversations, people mentioned that women were winning the Cup of Excellence\textsuperscript{16} in multiple countries in Latin America. In some cases this was translated into their capability and strength to apply quality standards in their production and post harvesting (Cuellar Interviews, May 2007).

The emergence of specialty coffee and the new demand of a responsible consumer have changed how policy makers, in order to fulfill international standards, address improvements in coffee production (Giovannucci 2002; Lewin 2004; FNCC 2006). But most importantly, it has encouraged small coffee producers to move forward in the value chain through the improvement of their coffee’s quality, an increase in the number of coffee associations, as well as an increase in production yield. This request has also facilitated women and their families to take advantage of the market. As a result, national and international NGOs, as well as governments, have created programs which focus on an increase in family participation, including women. These organizations are changing from a male-oriented development agenda to those that take inter-relationships within a household into account (ACDI/VOCA Representatives Interview August 2007). These projects have sought to promote gender equity and develop new strategies to support coffee producers reach the global market. These programs also seek to help women gain new skills and increase their ability to produce and market coffee according to the high

\textsuperscript{16} The Cup of Excellence is a strict competition that selects the very best coffee produced in that country for that particular year. The final winners are awarded the prestigious Cup of Excellence\textsuperscript{®} and sold coffee to the highest bidder during an internet auction. \url{http://www.cupofexcellence.org}
quality standards the global market demands today. Nevertheless, this interest of a “socially responsible economy” is not totally altruistic and the market wants something in exchange.

Thus, coffee marketed as high quality, and the fact that it is produced by women, increases its value. As Jaquette and Summerfield (2006:43) point out, this new “responsible trade” represents the pursuit of commercial interests and the involvement not only of the coffee industry but also of consumers. Hence, the market uses women’s involvement as a marketing strategy to request more inputs from consumers and charge higher prices. On the other hand, impacts from globalization and liberal trade have also led women to obtain leadership positions within coffee cooperatives and organizations, therefore this new interest in coffee business’ support and purchase of coffee produced by women will represent a more equal future in the coffee industry. As Tocancipá (2002) pointed out, it is relevant to observe how these new principles are symbolized and comprehended by the coffee producers themselves; therefore, offering a complete picture of the new coffee production, marketing, and consumption system.

**Coffee Production and Gender Relationships**

Coffee labor in Colombia is traditionally characterized by a patriarchal system. Patriarchy has been defined as “a system of social structure and practices in which men or institutions led by men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (Waldy 1990:20). Men are publicly recognized as those in charge of coffee production and marketing. They are
the representatives and the leaders in a coffee organization, and they are in charge of the
decision-making process, aid benefits and access to land, technical assistance and credit.
Even though it is well-known that this crop, like many others, requires all family labor,
however, in the public sphere male producers represent and are in charge of decision-
making. Women are often distinguished as subsistence food producers, and when it
comes to main production women are merely considered as helpers or assistants (Spring
2000:1).

A perfect example of this patriarchal domination is the formation of the National
Federation of Coffee Growers in 1927. First of all, around 60 percent of its members are
men. This information is according to the survey conducted in 1993-1997; the new
census is not yet finished, thereby creating the impossibility to compare the former data
with a more recent one. This Federation has been traditionally constituted by men
(FNCC, Census Cafetero 1997). In order to become a member of the FNCC farmers must
have at least ½ an hectare with coffee. Coffee production is based on the family’s farm. If
a woman is married to a man who is a coffee producer, the hierarchical gender-related
division of labor usually operates to the extent than the man is the manager and the
woman is a worker (Sachs 1983:81). Because it was expected, in the early stages of the
Federation, that the head of the farm – who were in most cases men -- joined the FNCC,
women were therefore excluded from membership. Agrarian ideologies continue to
portray men as the primary agriculturists and heads-of-household, which privileges male
coffee producers as FNCC members or members in other coffee organizations. At the
same time, another limitation that keeps women from becoming members is the lack of
access to land or of the proper documents to demonstrate that the land belongs to them. Second, this federation has been led by male producers throughout its history; the first woman joined its National Board only last year, in 2007. This low proportion of women leadership and the data mentioned above suggest an analogy between men thinking of women as valued “helpers” in the long run, and male leaders of the FNCC assuming women members as secondary members through their husbands, what in other words implies the exclusion of women in board and committee representation. In this sense we can see how female representation and leadership in the Federation system and in some organizations shapes the traditional gender division of labor. Partly as a result of these factors, women had little bargaining power within the cooperatives, being viewed by male members as second-class workers and members (Deere and León 2001:341).

Third, the international icon created for external recognition of Colombian coffee is Juan Valdez, a male figure instead of a family icon, which would better exemplify the reality of family production and collaborative work. Therefore, this international icon recognition transmits the symbolic power that men maintain through this male figure, which contributes to the material and political power that they derive from such international visibility of the primary coffee producer. Therefore, men have power over women because men have preference and more access to the political and economic forces that control policies and decision-making processes, thus making men the primary beneficiaries of financial aid, access to land and natural resources, access to credit, access to benefits from Government programs or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs),
technical assistance from the National Federation, and other benefits (Cuellar Interviews, June 2007).

Moreover, the tradition of coffee production relapses into male representation, as well as the recognition of men as primary coffee growers and marketers. Economic struggles and the coffee crisis transformed this pattern and forced rural families to seek newer economic opportunities, such as male migration to other areas, as a coping strategy with the purpose of increasing income in rural households. In addition, even if the man does not migrate, families are forced to seek other sources of income. This circumstance has increased the number of people migrating from rural to urban areas or larger cities over the past two decades. At the same time, this pattern has increased economic responsibilities and contributions of females as heads of households, and as primary agriculturists. As discussed by Jaquette and Summerfield (2006:143-45) women and young children frequently remain in rural areas in general, while the husband and teenage sons and daughters migrate. In some studies this is called the “feminization of agriculture” (DAWN 1988, Farah and Perez 2004; Jaquette and Summerfield 2006).

According to women interviewed for this research, women always participate in all coffee production activities. They prepare the terrain, make compost, and fertilize the soil to grow coffee. They also participate in coffee harvesting, de-pulping, fermenting, and drying. However, they constantly pointed out that women rarely participate in selling the coffee or making decisions about where the coffee is to be sold or how the money from coffee sales will be distributed. In one of the focus groups, a woman said “Before, we [women] did not know which coffee our husband took to sell to the local town, we did
not how much he earned, how much he spent, nothing. We were outside the business.” (Cuellar Interviews, May-June 2007). This also means that women rarely were formal members of the association. In the rare case a woman was a member, she did not go to sell coffee. Instead she stayed at home and either her husband or some other relative was on charge of the selling process.

Because women were not in charge of the sales, women did not receive a formal remuneration. This confirms Sachs’ statement that

“The position of a woman farmer cannot be understood without considering male domination in society in the family. Most women are taught to view their work in the home as their most important work. Whether or not women engage in the field work they are still expected to have the major responsibility for child rearing, food preparation, laundry, and general housework” (Sachs 1983:82, see also 1996:6).

Even though women actively participate in the majority of agriculture activities at the global level, older men are still owners of the land and also the sellers of agriculture sales, which reinforce men’s position in the household decision-making process.

A case study conducted in the 1980s in Colombia (Townsend 1993:270) demonstrates how gender roles changed dramatically during the time that the farming system evolved and the capitalist economy started to convert agricultural production as a commodity. Men were involved as marketers while women were in charge of helping with the production and of performing household chores. Therefore, women were either invisible or considered as important agricultural helpers.

However, today in Cauca, an increasing number of women are obligated to assume a more active participation in the coffee market, as a result of their integration in
AMUCC, as well as the temporary migration of family members to seek work elsewhere, which requires them to increase their income, better support their families, and cover the high cost of production. Thus, women changed from “helpers” to coffee producers and marketers. These and other factors have led women to expand from subsistence to smallholder commercial coffee production in Cauca. Women have become land and farm owners, members of associations or women’s associations, coffee marketers, and in some cases, the primary agriculturalist in the household. In this case study, women have taken on new roles as market analyzers, resolving to pay attention to international coffee market demands and the moral economy that accompanies the certification and labeling process that has begun to gain momentum in coffee marketing. Therefore, NGOs as well as female coffee producers viewed specialty coffee production as an opportunity to improve women and the living standards of their communities and to call the attention of governments and organizations that formulate projects and policies in rural areas in Colombia. In other words, because the women in this study are members of coffee associations, when women’s roles change so do those of the NGOs (Olga L Cuellar Interviews August 2007).
The Gendered Coffee Production

Coffee production in Latin America is a family endeavor: all household members work in the value chain in different intensities, depending on their abilities, time and other responsibilities in and outside the household. As Hamilton states (1998:73) there are no “women’s crops” or “men’s crops”; women do not specialize in one specific area more than others. Both men and women report that agricultural work for men and women is equal. Nevertheless, women usually struggle to rise to prestigious and visible positions as primary coffee growers, active members of associations and coffee marketers.

As I have discussed, it has only been in the last few decades that women in coffee regions have begun to speak up, become more actively involved in the entire coffee process and be more visible to outsiders such as coffee buyers and development programs. This increase is the result of diverse reasons that I have already mentioned, such as migration patterns, coping strategies in rural areas, violence, and socio-political and economic struggles. At the same time, the coffee industry, in response to recent circumstances of women coming into more primary and visible positions, has begun to appreciate the importance of women as growers, leaders, and that this is demonstrated in the industry’s support of women taking on new roles. As some coffee buyers said to me when I did my research: “Women add a special and unique touch to the coffee industry, their ability to translate the theory to the practice, to produce quality, also their community focus and their capability to establish priorities in order to benefit their
families and their communities, create a better scenario in coffee trade” (Diverse independent coffee buyers, May-June 2007).

Women have had some successful experiences in coffee production in Latin America, despite the challenges they faced at the beginning. Most of these cases are of women who belong to the cooperative or association system. In the capitalist system, cooperatives provide a model for an alternative social organization that would protect and equip marginal producers to face a capitalist market system and a political and social context characterized by inequality (ICA, 2007; Fals Borda 1971:147; Torgerson, Randall, Reynolds and Gray 1997). In the agriculture system, small-scale producers in Latin America must work together in order to have a certain amount of product to export. Additionally, international markets prefer to work with organizations so both sides can benefit; the market supplying enough quantity and the association benefiting more producers and communities.

One case is from Cristina Gonzalez, a coffee grower from Guatemala who has produced coffee since she was young. The culture of coffee and the land on which she farmed it were passed down to her from her grandmother and mother in a period in which Guatemala suffered from several land expropriations during the civil war. However, she continued to produce coffee as her family did, saying “growing coffee is a maternal and family inheritance” (Evans 2006:2). According to the author: “she is one of many talented women who have come to the forefront of the specialty coffee industry, representing a growing trend of feminine leadership and success throughout the industry. Specialty
coffee is a global catalyst that is uniting, empowering and driving women to the forefront of international business” (Evans 2006:3).

Another woman coffee producer is Aida Battle, a fifth-generation coffee producer from El Salvador and a participant in the Women in Coffee Leadership Program from CQI17 who is supported by private coffee buyers such as Phyllis Johnson from B&D Imports of Chicago. These private buyers established a partnership in which they committed to buy coffee produced by Battle’s share in her local coffee growers’ organization. Battle describes her experience in the coffee industry as: “Amazing! [The program] has given me the opportunity to interact with women that have been in the coffee business for a long time, and not only roasters and importers, but also producers and exporters—all women that have incredible knowledge and experience” (ibid 2006:4)

Lastly, another well recognized experience is the case of Las Hermanas (the Sisters) from Nicaragua, a cooperative that has women predominantly as members and a brand of coffee sold by Peet’s Coffee and Tea (Sustainable Harvest 2005). This group of women emerged from the impacts of violence during the Sandinista revolution of the 1980s. They became landowners and managers of the coffee farms when their fathers and husbands were called to participate in the violent civil war, to the point that one of the women assumed the position of Manager of the cooperative. In 2006, this cooperative

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17 The Coffee Quality Institute® (CQI) is a nonprofit organization working internationally to improve coffee quality and the lives of the people who produce it. The purpose of the Women in Coffee Leadership Program is to bring together women in coffee industry from on-going relationships of strength and empowerment; this program brings 23 women together from different countries to share their experiences with producers, buyers, community leaders, among other actors in the coffee market. (http://www.coffeeinstitute.org)
had 184 women, from a total of 600 members, producing coffee for the international market since 2001 (Olga L Cuellar online Interview with Fatima Ismael, Representative Las Hermanas October 7 2008). Even though this cooperative has 600 members, women sell their coffee separately with their own brand known as Las Hermanas. Women in this community state that they have been positively impacted from this direct-trade market relationship, reinvesting their profits to create more schools and local pharmacies and to respond to other needs within their community (Evans, 2006:4). Currently, the most visible female-grown coffees marketed in the United States are Las Hermanas and Café Femenino (from Perú).

The market where women sell coffee is characterized by buyers that are small to medium-sized roasters and/or owners of coffee businesses. Buyers are generally young and have a strong interest in creating better conditions for coffee producers. Also, they seek to promote their practices and educate consumers, so they can know where the coffee comes from. These projects regarding partnerships between buyers and coffee suppliers are usually supported by NGOs or Non-profit foundations that provide local support to help coffee producers organize and transmit information in order to compete effectively in the international market.

For example, Café Femenino was created from the interest of diverse actors, specifically from that of Smith, a woman who works in a fair trade company and who became more aware of and concerned about the subjugation of women in coffee-growing communities with OPTCO (Organic Products Trading Co). Thus, she felt a need to address the problem, particularly since she herself had overcome profound personal
challenges in the past that tested her strength and courage as a woman (http://www.cafefemenino.com/).

At the same time in 2003, the first conference of Women Coffee Producers was held in Northern Peru. The concept of separating these women producers' coffee from the rest of the fair trade co-op's production was a new idea, developed by the fair trade co-op, their organic coffee trading partners, and the women themselves, who had been searching for ideas that would improve their living conditions. (http://www.cafefemenino.com/).

In 2004, OPTCO, along with several other organizations, founded Café Femenino Coffee Project, a social program with female coffee growers in rural communities around the world. Today, OPTCO is the exclusive importer of Café Femenino coffee. There are currently 464 female coffee farmers from Perú involved with Café Femenino. Over the next few years, their plan is to strengthen the work of these women through regional and zonal conferences and by promoting activities that give them greater economic opportunities (http://www.cafefemenino.com/).

Clearly, as we have seen, there is a transformation coming from small coffee buyers pursuing new niches, strategies and opportunities to market coffee, as well as making direct links between producers and buyers from consuming countries. Additionally, this new awareness in the coffee industry could represent a romanticized picture that portrays coffee produced by women. Therefore, we have two different ways to look at this: one as a vehicle to make women visible in coffee production, as well as to romanticize women as coffee producers in order to sensitize consumers. It is great that consumers are questioning the market, however, it does not seem enough. Small scale
coffee producers are inside a bigger picture/hegemony of instability and lack of agency to control prices, trade, coffee quality and external factors such as the weather, natural disasters, climates change, and other processes involved in the value chain that might affect coffee quality such as storage, packaging and transportation conditions.

This is why it is relevant to complete the other side of the picture through the voices of women, AMUCC members, and to see how they have experienced this process. This research provides data about the impacts and experiences of women throughout the process of forming a coffee association and producing high quality coffee for the international market.
CHAPTER THREE
THE EMERGENCE OF JUANITA VALDEZ IN CAUCA, COLOMBIA

The State of Cauca has been characterized as a colonial region in which class, gender, and ethnicity have played a relevant role in the construction of socio-cultural and political relationships. Cauca was populated by Spaniards, and a Catholic heritage has influenced Caucanos’ patterns of behavior, activities and labor division. In Cauca, additionally, there was a big difference in the sense of gender roles and family traditions between people who lived in the city and those who lived in rural areas. In this context women in rural areas were expected to belong to what in feminist theory is called the “private sphere.” In other words, they were expected to do household chores and participate in communal responsibilities that did not require a long commute from home. As a result, Caucanos assumed that there was a strong labor division, excluding women from active participation in “public spheres” such as the market and other political and economic institutions. Nevertheless, in reality women and men share the same spaces and they divide their responsibilities according to their necessities.

These patterns stereotyped “women’s roles” and “men’s roles,” a dynamic reinforced by political and religious organizations. For example, it is evident, according to agrarian ideologies, that the FNCC and other coffee organizations exclude women’s leadership and membership. Women started being excluded in the mid 1960s from formal activities such as the formation of coffee associations and the membership to it, in the community, as well as from being part of the communities’ decision-making processes
(Cuellar Interviews June-July 2007). Nevertheless, as this paper has discussed, local and external circumstances have caused women to get close to the “public sphere”. In this case study one sees the emergence of women in the market and the recognition of women as primary coffee growers.

AMUCC is an exceptional case study that shows the different levels of coffee production, such as cultivation and harvesting up to the marketing process, including the stages in coffee sales. This association has experienced the dispute and challenges of creating a women’s organization. At the same time, it shows interactions among the diverse participants in the coffee industry (coffee producers, associations, cooperatives, FNCC, NGOs, buyer, roaster and consumers) and how complex it is to establish direct-trade, which includes traceability and a secure market for women. Women in the AMUCC have demonstrated their capacity to improve quality practices in coffee production and to strengthen their organization. By sharpening these skills, women have been able to target a promising international market.

This transformation and approach of creating a women’s association led members of AMUUC to address topics such as access to land, technical knowledge and assistance, inputs (agrochemicals, infrastructure, and transportation), credit and capital; and the implementation of high quality standards and sustainability. In order to meet the demands of European roasters interested in women-produced coffee, the cooperative CAFICAUCA developed the program *Mujer Caficultora* (Woman Coffee Grower) in 2000.
In the next section, I discuss AMUCC’s history, activities, production and impacts on its members, as well as its formation process and the impact of producing for and marketing coffee to Spain. I also describe the process of implementing new standards for high quality coffee production.

Emergence of AMUCC (Asociación de Mujeres Caficultoras del Cauca)

The first attempt to create a women’s group in the cooperative CAFICAUCA occurred in 2000. This group was created as a request from the coffee buyer from Spain, one of the main goals of SUPRACAFÉ is develop social projects in the countries where its buy the coffee to sell in Spain. The cooperative did not receive a sufficient number of responses and women mentioned that the high cost of affiliation kept them from being interested in joining. Also, because the cooperative did not promote itself or offer much information, women did not know much about it and were afraid to become its members. In 2001, with its Spanish buyer, CAFICAUCA decided to promote the women’s organization in a specific municipality and see if that strategy could increase the numbers of responses. In addition, they thought that by focusing on just one municipality they could create a model women’s organization they could use for the rest of the Cauca region.

This second attempt was more successful and they received quite a number of women interested in becoming members of was called at that time the Mujer Caficultora (Woman Coffee Grower) program. One of the things people said influenced them in
obtaining a better response in this municipality was that the manager of CAFICAUCA was originally from this municipality. With the high interest demonstrated by these women, CAFICAUCA and SUPRACAFÉ saw at that moment a great opportunity to formally create a female association. Thus, AMACA (Asociación de Mujeres Agropecuarias del Departamento del Cauca) was created in 2002. After one year of their constitution, AMACA had recruited around 300 members and had established a direct line of trade to sell coffee to Spain.

In 2004 the partnership started to weaken due to conflicts regarding price expectation and negotiations, coffee quality and other issues related with the responsibilities and duties of each partner. Furthermore, the cooperative changed its manager and the new manager wanted to open the doors of AMACA to all female coffee growers in Cauca. Members of AMACA disagreed. They thought it was not the appropriate moment to increase the number of members, since members of AMACA envisioned creating a better economic and social position in order to offer a better condition to new members. This disagreement and misunderstanding eventually resulted in the dissolution of the partnership and negotiation among AMACA, the CAFICAUCA cooperative and the Spanish buyer. AMACA decided to become independent and continue its journey in the coffee market by itself. Today they have two market alliances, one at the international level, selling coffee to North America and the other in the local market (Cuellar Interview July 2007).

However, in 2004 CAFICAUCA’s new manager decided to start a new women’s association including female coffee producers from diverse municipalities in Cauca. A
CAFICAUCA cooperative team visited different municipalities and invited women to participate in the new association. At the end of 2004 the CAFICAUCA cooperative held a meeting in the cooperative’s headquarters in order to formalize the new women’s association, AMUCC (Asociación de Mujeres Caficultoras del Cauca). In this process the cooperative assured potential members that one of its main goals was to reduce gender inequity by targeting a population that is portrayed as a minority and as vulnerable: women. Therefore, the cooperative promoted itself as socially responsible and with a clear development-oriented goal (Cuellar Interviews June – July 2007).

**Different Participants, Different Objectives/Visions**

The establishment of agricultural cooperatives and associations requires participation from diverse agents. In some cases this type of organization emerged from the interest of the community itself or as a result of local and external partnerships. In others, it emerged as an external input, resulting from a market segment that prefers to buy agricultural products from organized groups or emerging as part of a development program from governmental and non-governmental agencies such as international or local NGOs. This type of organization usually requires aid in order to become formally and legally recognized. Legal procedures involve economic, human and social capital, especially if the purpose in creating these groups is access to local and external markets.

This social and/or economic external support generates, in some cases, a paternalistic relationship, as well as reliance on external organizations. This kind of
partnership can lead to two types of interactions. The first is one in which the external organization exerts power in the decision-making process; strongly influencing people inside the organization. The second is a relationship cooperation in which the experience of the external organization is transmitted to the local one, thus leading this local organization to appropriate from the decision-making process and not act as outsiders just accompanying and advising in practice. As discussed below, CAFICAUCA, SUPRACAFE and AMUCC have different roles in the process of creating this women’s association.

During the creation of AMUCC there was a unified overall objective to sell coffee produced by women and to support female producers in Cauca. Nevertheless, this scenario includes diverse actors, which in some cases lead to different sub-objectives, visions and missions. The Spanish coffee buyer and foundation has a mission to develop social programs in the origin country where they buy the coffee they market. Also, as the coffee owner pointed out, “Cauca is a privileged region, it is a paradise that can produce aromatic coffees with special notes [flavors]” (Cuellar Interviews, August 2007). In addition, he firmly believed that women are high quality producers and, echoing the words of other coffee buyers: “women add a special and unique touch to the coffee industry, their ability to translate the theory to the practice, to produce quality” (Cuellar Interviews, May 2007). These assumptions, as well as the new trend to consume coffee that is sold within Fair Trade relations, open a new niche to market coffee produced by women.
The CAFICAUCA cooperative’s objective is to support the program that its coffee buyers pursue, as well as to show a visible and tangible balance of economic and social programs that cooperativism principles promote. This, in some case, could be interpreted as a strategy to take advantage of national and international opportunities in the coffee market.

It is difficult to define the objective of women members, since the constitution of AMUCC did not emerge from the women themselves. Nevertheless, when I asked participants why they decided to become members of AMUCC, the most direct motivations for joining this association was to have a better way to enter the market. They also cited access to better prices and market assurance. Yolima said, “what motivates me to participate is to have another standard of living, that’s what we want to have… our pesitos [money]…” (Cuellar Interviews, May 2007). Women perceive that the buyer prefer established partnerships with unified groups in other words with coffee growers that belong to an association, especially those that include small scale producers. Another reason they gave for joining was to obtain access to financial support. Support from this project can make a substantial contribution to household economy, which allows women to do the work in coffee production; and in many cases, represents an incentive for producers to link with the international market. Also, after the first meeting held by CAFICAUCA in Popayán, women perceived that the program includes tangible and intangible benefits, such as direct-marketing to Spain, financial aid, training in coffee quality, participation in an organization, and an opportunity to meet with other women and share their experiences (Olga Lucia Interview June-July 2007).
Even though AMUCC has only an economical and membership relation with CAFICAUCA, this cooperative highly influences its decision making process. There are different reasons for this influence, one of which is that the cooperative has the experience and the economical, social and material capital to efficiently market the coffee internationally. Export coffee requires specific procedures that in some cases could represent an enormous economic risk if the producer does not have the experience and the networks in the process. This procedural specificity may lead to the paternalism and dependence relationships this paper will address in the discussion, in which the role of the cooperative can be seen in two different perspectives. I will discuss the implications of breaking out of this relation, as the first female organization did, and how women from AMACA, as well as from AMUCC, perceive this type of partnership.

In the following sections, I will describe AMUCC, its members and its coffee production as a main source of income, other sources of income, and processes to access land, credit, financial aid, information and technical assistance in the development of high quality production. Also, I will illustrate the impacts that each of these things has had on multiple levels and highlight the association’s social, economic and personal impact on women lives, level of participation and self-development as coffee producers and members of AMUCC.
Description of AMUCC

Today, AMUCC is an association of 390 women. AMUCC’s membership is heterogeneous, comprised of married women (77 percent), single women (10 percent), and single heads of household (13 percent). Additionally, some members are from the indigenous communities of Guambianos (2 percent). The average age of AMUCC women is 40 years old and there are few young members. Most women have children, at an average of 4 per family. The education level of women in the sample was middle school, while 8 from the 24 finished only first or second grade. Among the participants there is just one professional, an agronomist.

Women must legally demonstrate that they own the piece of land where they are growing coffee in order to join AMUCC. According to a survey conducted by CAFICAUCA in 2005 among all of its members, on average women own 2 hectares of land per producer, a statistic that my survey confirmed as well. In this case study, women gained legal access to land through two different processes by which they could demonstrate legal titles and tenure of the land. Twenty percent of the 24 AMUCC members who I interviewed have title to the property. The majority of women I interviewed, 60 percent, did not have a legal title to the land but did in fact have a legal paper authorized by the notary’s office in which the owner -- the woman’s family or her husband -- specified that he/she gave total right and control of that piece of land to the woman. The other 20 percent did not have any title whatsoever and were in the process of

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18 Information obtained from the base line of AMUCC, survey conducted by CAFICAUCA 2005.
obtaining a legal document; however in order to join AMUCC these women must have a provisional document.

Additionally, there were different methods in which women obtained the land. Of the 24 participants, the majority of these women (50 percent) obtained the land through their husband or partner. Another 30 percent of the women inherited the land through family patrimony. Ten percent made arrangements with relatives who did not want to work the land; some of these women, as an exchange, took care of their relatives’ land and the coffee they grew was their own business. Seven percent had relatives who let them work on the land, but they had to give a small percentage of their income to the relatives. Of the total of women interviewed, only one woman was able to buy the land.

With regard to access to credit and financial aid, participants in this research currently do not have any loan or credit. One of the biggest struggles for producers in Colombia, generally, is the lack of access to credit in agriculture (FAO 2006). Participants mentioned that they were afraid to have a loan because they did not have a monthly salary and/or secure income to repay it. Additionally, when asked to share information about the loan facilities that offer rural credit for women, they were unaware of it. Also, they did not have any information regarding the new legislation established in 2002 on agrarian reform in relation to credit facilities and access to financial support for women in rural areas.

On the contrary, in terms of material support, women members of AMUCC have received support from the Spanish buyer and foundation through their contribution of
materials to build solar dryers. In 2006, 240 women received part of the materials to build one solar dryer per farm. Women supply 30 percent of the materials and the labor to build it. In most of the cases husbands contributed substantially in the process of building the infrastructure. This combination of support allows 62 percent of the 390 members to have solar dryers.

Coffee production in Cauca has only one principal harvest, from May to July. Small scale producers depend mainly on this production period, so coffee producers in Cauca must carefully divide what they earn in the harvest period to cover their expenses through the 12 months of the year. All the participants in this research depend principally on coffee production for their economic sustenance. However, as I mentioned above, 77 percent (of the 390) are married or have a partner with whom they share economic responsibilities. Their husbands mainly produce coffee too. Additional data about net household income was a delicate topic to address in some of the households. It was not that women did not share the information, but they were quite closed to discussing other sources of income. Thus, women usually answered that they do not have another formal source of income.

Of the 24 women interviewed, two women sometimes sell chicken and two women have a small grocery store. These women have their home in a strategic place, close to a road or where a lot people have to cross by. Also, some women commented that when they must look for another source of income, they sell traditional food in the

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19 This is a technique to dry coffee, by which producers can get better prices and assure high quality in their coffee. If producers sell wet, green coffee, the price is much lower and if you dry your own coffee in this type of method following the quality practices, you will almost be assured of getting a better price.
communal market or in special occasions, such as religious and local cultural celebrations. Women also grow a wide variety of local food crops, many of which have been used as cash crops and for food consumption, including plantains, manioc, vegetables, and tree crops such as orange, tangerine, papaya, and breadfruit, among others. Occasionally women sell subsistence crops in the local market, but this does not represent a great source of income. In one interview a woman said, “It is more expensive to bring fruits and vegetables to the market than let the fruits waste here in the farm”. (Cuellar Interviews, July 2007). Therefore, subsistence crops and cattle, such as chicken, cows and pigs, are often used for household consumption.

Coffee producers who mainly depend on coffee have been struggling with price fluctuations and more market requirements to access international trade. This represents a variation year per year that means they have to constantly adapt to the circumstances. Producers often suffered from multiple coffee crises, and some producers pointed out that since the end of the coffee agreement in 1989, they have been in a permanent crisis. When I asked how they survived the crisis coffee or any economic crisis, most of the women said that usually their husbands or sons have to look for a job. Some of them stay in the same region and work in bigger farms during the harvest period, but others have to migrate temporarily or permanently to other regions to work in what job is available, which is not always related with agricultural production. A few women mentioned that men decided to work temporarily in illicit crops (Olga L Cuellar Interviews June-July 2007).
For some families, illicit work could be a strategy to increase their income. One woman coffee producer said, “*It is the reality. Money from coca is easy, you have to work less and get more. But at the same time it brings more violence to the community*” (Cuellar Interviews June 2007). The socio-political and violent conflicts in Colombia have created conditions in which the coca industry has grown and illegal drug crops have become the country's number one export (Fridell 2007:157). With coffee prices unstable, increasing number of Colombian farmers are turning towards the production of coca, which is cultivated under conditions similar to those of coffee beans (ibid 2007:157). The last option for them is to sell the land. One participant said, “*Land is the only asset that we have and its gives us food and something to survive today, we cannot sell it…*” (Cuellar Interviews June 2007). Thus, for them selling was not an actual option to be considered.

Additionally, when I asked women what they do in order to live the rest of the year, they answered that they have to look for credit in informal/private credit institutions, private individuals in the community, and credit in grocery stores. When the money for the current production arrives they pay those credits. In the end, one woman said, “*I do not have any money left and we need to look for credit again in order to start the production once more*” (Cuellar Interviews May 2007) Sara also said, “*…I have to save some money from the harvest… but sometimes I cannot save… we just look for what is available [subsistence production] to cook and eat in the farm [she laughs]*”. (Cuellar Interviews, July 2007)
Another strategy women use is selling coffee to AMUCC from their husband or other relatives in the family. On average women have one hectare where they grow coffee. The highest amount of productivity in coffee production is 100 arrobas\(^\text{20}\) of green coffee (2,500 pounds) per hectare. In order to produce 100 arrobas per hectare, coffee plants must be young (less than five years), soil and conditions need to be great, and coffee would need to have an adequate fertilization process. In most of the cases this is not the reality and coffee growers, on average, produce from 40 to 60 arrobas per hectare. Women members of AMUCC are just supposed to sell the coffee they grow on their piece of land. However, women did in fact sell coffee from their relatives. This strategy, according to CAFICAUCA cooperative officials, could compromise coffee quality standards. On the contrary for women this means receiving more income and better prices for their family’s coffee.

Women from AMUCC identified themselves as high quality coffee producers. Responses of what it meant to be high quality included, “*being careful with the process from picking coffee to sorting*” Also some mentioned implementing specific techniques, modernizing infrastructures, doing more work, and “*do everything with quality, cleanliness and put more work in it*…” Amalia also said, “*we need to treat this coffee with care, from the handpicking to the post-harvest process, it also requires a lot of time sorting the good beans and making sure we sell the best coffee we have in our farm*” (Cuellar Interviews June-July 2007).

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\(^{20}\) One arroba is equivalent to 25 pounds.
Coffee has the following steps: first women have to sow (fertilization) – harvest (coffee handpicking) – post harvest (after they pick the red cherry they depulp coffee cherries (remove the pulp from the cherry)) as part of the wet-processing stage in wet mills for a fermentation process lasting from 12 to 18 hours. After this fermentation process coffee has to dry. There are diverse techniques, but the one that it is usually used in Cauca is the solar dryer structure. Then, they have to sort the coffee, which means to take out the bad beans and carefully pick the best ones. After this, they pack and take the beans to the agencia de compra (local coffee buying agency) or the cooperative directly. This process may vary according to the region, type of coffee and other reasons. The post harvesting process must be done on the same day that producers pick the coffee in order to assure high quality standards.

In regards to the profits they receive from the production of high quality coffee, most of them mentioned that the premium was not enough and in some cases was not what they expected. One producer explained that she received more income compared to selling the coffee in the conventional market, but at the same time she spent more on production costs. Thus, in the end it did not represent a significant difference. In addition, some of them mentioned that although it was too soon to have experienced any real changes, they are strongly hoping that prices rise and therefore the premium will significantly contribute. Women from AMUCC are receiving better prices, even though as one woman pointed out, “we get more but we spend more too, fertilizers are getting expensive, also coffee pickers are requesting a higher wage, we need to renovate coffee
plants and lot or invest time to carefully produce specialty coffees…” (Cuellar Interviews July 2007).

The international coffee market has historically been highly volatile and subject to repetitive cycles and bust caused by discrepancies between supply and demand (Fridell 2007:117). The price for coffee changes every day. In 2007 the average was $1.07 per pound, a better price than in 2005 and 2006, which averaged $0.90 and $0.96 per pound respectively (ICO 2008). Today, women from AMUCC are receiving approximately 30 to 40 cent per pound as premium. Women can produce an average of 60 arrobas on one hectare of land, equivalent to 1,500 pounds of coffee. Nevertheless, every day coffee price fluctuations affect the premium. Thus, if the price is high on the day women sell coffee, this premium will represent more income; on the contrary, if the coffee price is lower than premiums, it won’t represent a profit for them.

According to a local newspaper, El Colombiano (2007), in its special edition celebrating the 80 years of the FNCC’s creation, it determined that less than 10 percent of the millionaire profits that coffee generated ends up in the hands of producers. From the 85 billion dollars that coffee generates every year, producers do not even receive 6 billion dollars, which have to be divided among approximately 25 million producers around the world, that depend mainly on coffee.

The coffee industry has been particularly susceptible to prices fluctuations and uncertainties due to two reasons; one is the specific nature of coffee cultivation. Coffee beans are grown on a plant that takes three to five years to mature and requires a major commitment of capital to produce proper quality and quantity (ibid 2007:117). Therefore,
it is uncertain for producers when prices are going to be higher or lower, especially if they expect that the moment prices are higher agrees with the moment their coffee is mature enough to sell.

The second reason for this price instability is the chain that the coffee market requires. Commonly, in transactions, coffee is passed from the producer, to the association, to the cooperative, to the exporter-importer (the same agent or different), to distributors, and eventually to retailers, such as coffee shops, roasters, grocery stores or local markers, each of which tales a profit along the way. As Jaffee points out “the distinguishing (factor) of the conventional chain is the lack of transparency, it is virtually impossible for those on the production end of the chain to even know what country their coffee is consuming and equally unlikely that consumers of this coffee could trace the source of the beans there are drinking” (2007:78).

Even though AMUCC has a direct-trade relationship, there are still many intermediaries because of the composition of the Colombian coffee system (Chalarca 1987; Lune and Rodriguez 2002). Women sell coffee to the local buying agency or to the cooperative directly. Then the cooperative has to store the coffee, sometimes waiting until prices are better, and then gives it to the exporter through the FNCC (Expocafé). The importer in Spain then gives the coffee to the coffee business and finally to the consumer or other supermarkets and local grocery stores, among others.

In this case women have two options when delivering the coffee: one is selling their coffee in the local buying agency and the other one is going directly to Popayán and delivering to CAFICAUCA. Both options are complex situations. Selling coffee to a
middleman (*agente de compra*) is an ambiguous transaction. Middlemen are cooperative members; however, they are independent and not regulated by anyone. Thus, they independently create their own system for buying coffee. Usually they have to base their price with the price of the day. Nevertheless, this system misleads producers because there is one international price and one national price established by the FNCC, but at the same time there is a regional price. Since there is no regulation, middlemen set up their own prices. As in any business, there is a “mafia” behind coffee and people take advantage of the unregulated system. Here we must question the roles of the Government and the FNCC in regulating and controlling that middlemen transactions be more transparent.

Women complained that when they sell to middlemen they do not receive the real price of the day plus the premium. Contrary to this, when they deliver the coffee directly they are supposed to receive the higher price of the day. But in many cases I observed, they have to know the price and are not aware of the payment process. Thus, in some cases there were some misunderstandings or some women were paid less. Additionally, women struggle to bring coffee to Popayán. In some areas there is no access to roads and they have to bring their coffee on animals like mules or horses to the main road, then pay transportation and cover food expenses as well as those involved in riding on a private truck or public transportation, depending on the amount of coffee women have to bring to the CAFICAUCA cooperative.

In the case of Florina, a leader of one of the municipalities and who represents 80 members, she has to contract a truck at a rate of USD $45 per ton, which allows her to transport approximately 158 coffee bags from 25 members. In doing this, she has to
travel more than 6 hours each way and at the end expend the coffee premium on transportation costs, lodging and food. In the coffee harvest women have to wait two to three days in Popayán to get paid, cash the check and return home. Amanda said, 

"...when I want to sell my coffee to AMUCC, I have to walk 45 minutes or more to get to the main road, then take a bus for 3 hours, finally I have to wait in Popayán for 2 or 3 days until I get paid…” (Cuellar Interviews June 2007)

In order to understand the coffee value chain and the process that coffee follows from the producers to the consumer, see the graph below:21

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21 i) At the coffee producer level there are factors that might affect the coffee quality: climate, agro-ecologic conditions and biodiversity of the producing regions, and some times the arábiga varieties cultivated in the coffee zones. The others factors are the institutional capacities of research and technology transfer in each region, and the transfer of knowledge and capability to producers so they can handle their production, harvest and pos-harvest processes, those that might alter the quality of the product. Coffee quality provides 50 percent of the conditions of the coffee that are given by the conditions of climate and the environment and the other 50 percent is given by the harvest and post-harvest processes; which can be different in each region. Thus, quality arises from the link of the production chain and remains as an external factor in the links of dealers, roasters and importers, in which measurement this factor is considered to determine the value of the product.

ii) As far as the associations and/or intermediaries are concerned: the external price and the determination of the internal price of coffee also become internal conditions and different variables in each region, as well as the structure of existing marketing in each region.

iii) As far as the FNCC and Cooperatives are concerned, as well as the exporter, external factors constitute their marketing capacity, structures and negotiations, as well as the programs, services and benefits of commercialization that each one of them has established.

iv) On the importer and roaster side, external factors are intrinsic, such as quality, whereupon it comes to the product and other characteristics level. They evaluate coffee depending on its origin: identification of origin, denomination of origin, added value by means of certifications, fluctuation of international prices, as well as variations of harvest in each country that determine the volumes to be offered and alter international prices, and fluctuations of prices according to New York and London stock exchanges, which establish their price daily.

v) At the consumer level, external factors are establishes by the tastes, habits and customs of consumers in the countries, as well as the buying capacity for purchasing coffee that is based on families income. It is also necessary to consider that as far as coffee is concerned, in some cases this product happened to be a basic one to become a commodity, which comes from the specialty coffee industry (especially in the USA), thus external developments have incidence on the product’s price and the consumers as well. (Cuellar Interviews August 2007)
In addition to the large coffee value chain, Women frequently say that one of the biggest reasons for the financial crises were the lower prices versus the higher costs of production. A study in Oaxaca, Mexico (Jaffee 2007) demonstrated that not only producers lose money during the crisis but also fair-trade and specialty coffee growers lose nearly as much money as conventional producers. Frequently, women complained how unfair pricing is; compared to all the time and work that producing marketable coffee requires (Olga L Cuellar Interviews, June-July 2007).

Florina mentioned that one bag of fertilizer costs more than what she gets for one bag of coffee. Also, with one bag of fertilizer she can fertilize 500 coffee plants (one hectare has around 3,000). She has 3 hectares, which means she needs 18 bags of
fertilizer, which will cost 450 dollars. Usually, producers might fertilize coffee plants at least two or three times before the harvests, thus assuring productivity. This represents twice the amount she received last year as premium. Also, when I asked about organic compost, she said that her coffee plants were a little bit old and needs to add more than natural compost in order to assure an adequate productivity. Additionally, she cannot produce enough organic compost in her farm to fertilize all the coffee she has.

In regards to who is in charge of selling the coffee produced by members of AMUCC, women in this study reported that they were the ones selling the coffee. In just two cases women reported that their husband sometimes helps selling the coffee when they could not go. However, women were really enthusiastic and proud of being the coffee marketers. In various occasions, while I was in the cooperative, I saw women coming to sell their coffee and receiving payment. While women were waiting for their check, I interviewed them. In one occasion I asked them if their husband supported them and a male coffee grower commented, “Today women are taking the lead in coffee production, [laughing] I kind of like it and I will support my wife because now they are the ones that can take care of us [men] and help educate our children” (Olga L Cuellar Interviews June 2007).

Women can sell their coffee to other sources, but all participants sell the high quality coffee to AMUCC due to loyalty. One woman said, “when you are part of an association, you have to do the right thing and commit... “. They sell more than 80 percent of their coffee to AMUCC. The other 20 percent is divided as follows: they sell coffee of lesser quality to the local market and reserve the other part as a strategy for
household savings, in which case they can sell it when they need cash for household or production expenses. Florina said, “the cost of production is more and more expensive every day and what we get from coffee is to pay what we already owe and after we pay that, our hands are empty again... we cannot save...sometimes I see there is no future for us…” (Cuellar Interviews, June 2007).

Because specialty coffee techniques are more labor intensive, coffee growers demand a substantial wage for the labor of pickers during the harvest and when they have to prepare the soil. Payment of workers represents another expense in production costs. Additionally, there are few coffee pickers available because many possible laborers migrate to work in illicit crops or just migrate to other regions to find employment. Also, coffee pickers complained about working with specialty coffee growers, since they demand more labor and less payment. Usually a coffee picker’s wage consists of 5 dollars per day and two meals. Wages vary per municipality and among the individual agreements with laborers. However, because picking coffee for the specialty market requires just picking the ripe red cherries, this limits the amount of coffee laborers pick in a day and therefore reduces the daily wage for them. Picking for the specialty coffee industry also requires being careful with the plant, spending more time per plant and more days picking the coffee. Therefore, many laborers do not want to work with specialty coffees because it requires more work, dedication and carefulness in the process (Olga L Cuellar Interviews June-July 2007).

The women interviewed frequently mentioned that it was difficult to find workers. In some cases this resulted in a positive strategy in which they created a support group
among producers during the harvest and they interspersed the farms, every day going to a different one and picking the coffee themselves. The host coffee grower just needed to provide food and beverages for everyone. At the end, they reduced cost and created strategies to contribute with other producers.

However, when women were asked about the benefits they get for producing high quality coffee, the majority of the women’s responses were related to the premium. Even if it did not signify a great amount of income, they said that at least they were receiving more than conventional coffee and that made a difference, promoting a desire to improve their production in order to reach a broader high quality market. But the question becomes: what constitutes quality? And who defines this quality? According to conversations with some coffee buyers, coffee quality is defined by cupping the coffee (a tasting technique). Professional cuppers score coffee on a scale from 80 to 100, a unique or specialty coffee. One North American coffee roaster defined a cup of 80 as a clean cup; it does not have any special attributes, thus it is a clean cup (with no defects and considered as a regular coffee). A cup with a score of 85 or more has special notes, specific flavors such as woody, spicy, floral, fruity or toasty, among other flavors (Lenoir, 1997:6; Cuellar Interviews, July 2007). Cupping can be very subjective and the score can always change. Also, some cuppers are looking for specific attributes, depending on market requirements.22 Even though this technique has a standard scale,

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22 For example, for a cup of espresso some roasters are looking for a coffee that could be sweet and less acid. But for other buyers this could be different, so what is important is to find cuppers who are consistent and follow the same line. There are different methods to evaluate coffee and people could develop new ones. SCAA and CQI Q graders created a standard protocol to score specialty coffees. Normally, a cupping session starts as follows (this is a brief and simple description):
taste and definitions of quality are subjective and this could confuse producers. Different coffee buyers demand different qualities. This becomes challenging for the producers, specifically if quality definitions are not communicated well. Quality relies on building a consensus of what constitutes variations in quality by having clear communication between local tasters and buyers at the coffee’s origin.

Cupping is a fundamental skill that buyers must have. However, with the development of direct-trade and projects focused on the improvement of coffee growers, producers in Latin America are starting to receive training in order to learn how to identify, evaluate and grade their own coffee (ACDI/VOCA Representatives interview August 2007). For example, the ACDI/VOCA Specialty Coffee program has contributed to the formal training of producers in cupping. Producers are starting to use this method to evaluate their coffees, thus giving them the agency to negotiate their coffee in the market. This technique could be a relevant tool as producers negotiate prices with buyers. It is also a tool that helps producers determine where they are failing and which areas of production they must improve in order to get higher quality.

Women from AMUCC have not received cupping training, however, women today have learned more about coffee quality in the growing and post-harvesting processes. The implementation of new coffee picking, washing, drying and sorting

1. Fragrance (dry roast coffee): some examples could be nut, cocoa, citrus, orange, lemon, caramel, ferment, etc.
2. Aroma (when the put the hot water in): they smell before the crust breaks and after.
3. Cupping: in this process the cuppers determine body (heavy like a whippy cream or light like water), acidity, sweetness, taste and after taste.
4. Defects

This technique requires following certain rules and specific protocols that are more complex, for more information visit SCAA and/or CQI websites. (Cuellar interviews, May - June 2007).
techniques for the specialty market often requires women to invest capital and time in their farms. In this case study, the largest investment was the hiring of more workers during the harvest. The second largest investment was the purchase of materials to build solar dryers, followed by the increase of time they had to invest in each process of the production. In order to produce high quality coffee, a women explained: “we need to pick the ripe cherries, and the same day we need to wash them and ferment them for around 12 hours [average], then we have to dry them, finally we sort them and pack them” (Cuellar Interviews June 2007). In contrast to conventional production, producers can wash and dry coffee accumulated over a couple of days.

In the interviews it became apparent that women, as well as their families and the relationships they have with their husbands, children and the community, are impacted when they become members of AMUCC. In sum, becoming a member of AMUCC has led to women’s redefinition as well as to a change in the perception from their husbands, relatives and their community, and in their roles as mothers, wives, and coffee growers.

Impacts of AMUCC in Women’s Lives, Households and Communities

“More than a housewife, now I am also a coffee producer” (Yolima member of AMUCC, July 2007)

When the women were asked why they decided to become coffee growers, a major pattern emerged among those who were raised in the coffee industry and had never considered another alternative. For these women, being a coffee grower was also a mechanism to survive in the rural areas in which they live. Other women chose to be
coffee growers for the following reasons: some women explained that they decided to become coffee growers because it was easier for them to work at home, thus they could take care of their children and be in charge of household chores; other women started to grow coffee 10 years ago because they thought it was a viable economic option for them. And just one converted from growing illicit crops to coffee because she and her husband realized that illicit crops did not bring them any benefits in the ten years that they cultivated. Rather, the crops just brought violence and more social conflicts to the region.

Given that AMUCC members are only women, some of the questions women had to respond to were: why do they think this association is only comprised of women? And what are the benefits they get and those that they could receive in the future as a women’s association? Women’s responses about the formation of a female group were all related to the new opportunity of being considered as coffee growers and marketers. Ana said, “we [women] did not have any rights... men always have been privileged by the FNCC and other organizations”. Camila also commented, “we were also workers but were not recognized for it”. Finally Amelia noted “women always economically depended on their husbands, they were in charge of selling the coffee, [she said strongly]... Now women can do it also...” (Cuellar Interviews June 2007). In general, AMUCC members were pleased to currently have the opportunity to be organized, united and have experienced a grateful change in the coffee industry.

Women mentioned the following tangible and intangible benefits received as members of AMUCC: access to the specialty coffee market by establishing a direct-trade relationship with the Spanish buyer, the materials to build solar dryers and more
knowledge about coffee, prices, new markets, and buyer’s demands today. Ana noted, “before we produced coffee and did not acknowledge quality standards, prices, certification and better trade for our coffee” (Cuellar Interviews July 2007). In respect of the benefits they imagine they could receive in the future by being part of a women’s association, participants expressed that among women they felt more confidence, received support, and had the opportunity to network with women from other municipalities with whom they could share experiences, difficulties and alternatives in the coffee producing process. Also, women mentioned that being a group of just women could allow them to receive external support from the market and from organizations interested in working with female coffee growers. In sum, women’s associations allow women to feel conformable and create an environment in which they can talk, give their opinions, and learn how valuable their contributions to coffee production are. These feelings were also shared by women members of other coffee associations in Cauca:

“I was afraid to talk, but since I have been participating in the association I am not shy anymore. Now I am not afraid to talk with important people, such as international buyers. If I have to talk, I do. I see how other women are afraid to express themselves and talk in front of multitudes... I understand...but this is a process where you will loose that fear when you start to speak up... ” (Women member of AMUUC, Cuellar Interviews July 2007)

The women present in the study were impacted at a personal level. In several occasions women mentioned that one of the most memorable days as part of AMUCC was the day they got the chance to travel to Popayán and participate in a meeting. They see their participation in AMUUC as the opportunity to escape from their daily activities as housewives and to become coffee growers and marketers. Also they see AMUCC as a
mechanism for being more economically independent of their husbands and have the feeling of contributing to their household expenses. Women members from other associations also described transformations in their lives. A female member of ASOMUCA (Asociación de Mujeres de Cajibio) said, “Since we [women] are members of a group of only women, we learn to speak up, we learn to negotiate with our husbands... this is a great benefit, we have won a space in our homes...” (Cuellar Interviews June 2007).

However, women also reassert the increase in work. As Meertens (1993:264) mentioned, a working day consists not just of a job for women in coffee production but a permanent combination of tasks. On average women work 16 hours a day and men 14 hours in rural areas in Colombia. In extreme cases women work 4 or 5 hours longer than men (ibid 1993:266). Women as coffee growers not only work in the field but also do their household chores, such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for children, among others. In this case study, one of the activities that most demand women’s labor during the coffee harvest was cooking for wage laborers who are hired in large numbers, an average of 10 per day. Preparing food is an activity exclusively carried out by the women. Even when these women had to attend the meeting in Popayán and go sell the coffee to the cooperatives or attend a training day, they were still in charge of getting up early and preparing the food.

What has changed is that husbands and younger members of the family help women more. For example, in the case of providing food to laborers, husbands assumed the task of taking the food out to the fields, serving and also cleaning the dishes, chores
that corresponded to women before (Cuellar Interviews June- July 2007). Therefore we can see how women’s recognition as members of a coffee association brought transformation within household dynamics and relationships.

Nonetheless, this study was carried during the harvest period and it will be relevant to reconfirm if men’s contribution and supportive output was not just seasonal but permanent. When husbands were asked what they think about their wives’ new roles, most of them at the beginning expressed an open acceptance. However, when the conversation continued openly, they complained about women’s new carelessness in some aspects of household tasks. Also some of them protested the fact that women were spending more time outside of the home. Despite the men who complained, most husbands support women because they are receiving economic benefits for the household, thus facilitating the acceptance of women’s more active participation in the public sphere. Natalia’s husband said, “I think her participation has been beneficial for us, now we have solar dryers because of that… that helps improve quality in our coffee” (Cuellar Interviews July 2007).

Finally, being part of AMUCC has brought some changes in women’s communal life. In one municipality in which there are 80 members of AMUCC, the association seems to have had a great impact. The leader of this community mentioned how this association has contributed to unify neighbors and families. This community has suffered from violence and a high presence of guerrillas and paramilitaries. Nevertheless, according to this woman, this women’s association is the first formal organization in the municipality. Florina stated “one of the consequences of violence is the loss of trust in the
community, people tend to isolate themselves, they are afraid and there is no cooperation… Nevertheless, since we have been part of AMUCC there is more collaboration, integration and we are starting to re-create community bonds…” (Cuellar Interviews June 2007).

Additionally, women mentioned that when other women from the municipality observe improvements, coffee producers feel this instills hope. Therefore, as Yolima noted, “a lot of people are seeing women working and getting something back, thus people [women] get motivated and even if they are currently not a member of any association, they get motivated to work in the field…” (Cuellar Interviews June 2007).

In sum, the significance of the AMUUC association for women is a source of “development, peace, growth, a new space for women, a place in which we can share with other women, friends and coffee growers all the difficulties, struggles, as well as the successes we have been through, a context from which we learned a lot, and a significant space in which we come out ahead and we have been able to speak up as women” (Olga L. Interviews June 2007)
CHAPTER FOUR
COFFEE AS A MECHANISM OF WOMEN’S VISIBILITY

Historically, women’s participation in agricultural production in Colombia is strongly linked with household reproduction in terms of women’s roles as mothers and wives. Overall, the increase in women’s participation in agricultural labor is a consequence of the privatization of land and the industrialization of agricultural production in the 1960s (Tilly and Scott 1978:216). This process of modernization brought a functional specialization and a new redistribution of activities within family agriculture, because the crops produced were now treated as commodities and as a source of income for the rural household (Sachs 1996:128). In this new scenario, women began to question their invisible services in the household, as well as the invisibility of their material and economic contributions to the farm.

As several studies estimate, women supply 70-75 percent of the agricultural labor in developing countries. These same studies note that women’s contributions are the backbone of both commercial and household production (Spring 2000:326; FAO 2006; ICA 2006). However, despite the fact that women are significant contributors in coffee production, they are often excluded from coffee marketing. Today, in Colombia, this under-representation is slowly changing as a result of the processes of modernization and specialization in international coffee demands, and the local circumstances previously discussed in other chapters.
The coffee sector in Colombia was affected by the state economy’s emphasis on free trade, which created economic instability and forced coffee producers to seek various economic strategies in order to survive in their increasingly capitalist world. As a consequence of the coffee crisis in the late 1980s, producers started to feel the negative impact of land distribution policies and unstable coffee prices (Robledo 1998:60). Historically, male coffee producers controlled the family income because they were the marketers of the crop. However, with the arrival of capitalism and free trade, as well as the 1980s coffee crises, male coffee growers in rural areas in Colombia began to struggle while trying to economically sustain their families. As a result, women in the coffee sector, often with the help of the entire family, were forced to cope and accommodate to these changed circumstances. In the process, they also restructured their position in the coffee industry.

In order to adequately evaluate the effects and meaning of this social and economic transformation and its impact on the gender relationships described in the AMUUC case study, therefore, women’s visibility in the marketing process must be taken into account. Participants in this research, both women and men, as well as CAFICAUCA, and ACDI/VOCA representatives, stated that women are significant contributors in coffee production (Cuellar interviews, June-July 2007). Nevertheless, women were excluded from the marketing process as a result of their lack of membership in coffee organizations.

Women’s membership in a women’s association such as AMUCC helps women to identify themselves as more than mother and wives. As one of the participants said:
“Today I am not just a housewife, I am also a coffee grower... maybe I always was, but I did not identify myself like this” (Cuellar Interviews, June 2007). As women identify themselves as coffee growers and marketers a socio-economic and political space opens for them. Today, women have different ways to access these spaces, especially in urban areas where women have access to work in the public sector, such as in governmental institutions. Nevertheless, despite these other options women in AMUCC continue to primarily focus on coffee production. For example, Omaira mentioned how important it was to find a job that would allow her to economically contribute to her household, as well as to take care of her children and accomplish her domestic tasks (Cuellar Interviews, June-July 2007).

Coffee production for women in Cauca represents a source of tangible and intangible benefits. Even though coffee revenues today do not represent a high portion of the income for small and medium producers, women are seeking the specialty marker as a strategy for overcoming the crisis and opening new markets. They are hopeful that things are going to get better and they are waiting to receive more economic benefits in the future, once they achieve external recognition in the coffee national and international market. In contrast with other women in Cauca who are members of mixed (mainly men but some women) coffee associations, members of AMUCC are marketing their products as coffee that is produced by women. This symbolizes for the women of AMUCC both external recognition and an appropriation of new roles and a position in the global market. The other intangible benefits of membership in an all-female coffee association includes the fact that it provides a space for women to express and share their experiences
in coffee production, as well as a position from which they can demand their rights and their recognition as valuable workers.

Female members of AMUCC also identify as owners of land with the ability to have property, assets, training, technical assistance and key information for the production of high quality coffee. As Amelia pointed out in the interview, “Today I can say this lot of land, this farm is mine” (Cuellar interviews, July 2007). In sum, women members of AMUCC are today more than coffee growers and marketers: they are also owners of land, economic contributors to their families, role models for their children, leaders in their communities and representatives of a new socio-political position in Cauca. Women’s visibility in both production and marketing of coffee is thus increasing.

**Coffee and Impact of the Gendered Division of Labor**

This study also demonstrated that women and men engage in the same activities in the production of coffee. In a focus group, women participated in an exercise in which they were asked to write down what women usually do and what men usually do (see figure 9). After they listed these activities separately, women were then asked to read aloud the list designated as men’s activities but instead of using “men do…”, they had to substitute “women do…” They did a similar substitution, this time using “men do…”, with the list designated as women’s activities. At the end of the exercise, the women concluded that the only difference between men’s and women’s activities is that a woman can give birth to a child. At the same time they recognized that there are some activities
that an individual may do better than someone else, not because of gender differences, but because of individual capabilities and complementation.

**Table 6: Division of Roles Based on Gender and Cultural Patterns.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WOMEN</th>
<th>MEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think that women cook, we do household chores, we produced coffee, we go out and visit family, we caregivers of our children, and when we have free time we help our husband to do some other work in the farm... we also participated in workshops and meetings in the community...</td>
<td>Men do farm work, they make decisions, work with machinery, practice sports, contribute economic income to the household and manage laborers in the farm...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I or we women: cook, take care of our home, I am agriculturist, take care of animals, I am mistress...</td>
<td>Men, well they produce panela&lt;sup&gt;23&lt;/sup&gt;, they are livestock farmers, agriculturists, weeding the land, grown coffee, work with hard materials...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We give birth to our children...</td>
<td>Men just breed children...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information above was part of a focus group discussion in the Cajibio municipality, July 2007.

In coffee producing farms in Colombia, women typically are primarily responsible for domestic tasks and the cultivation of subsistence crops (Lockwood 2000; Raghuram 1993), while men are on charge of the production of a cash crop like coffee. During the harvest and post-harvesting periods, the women, men and children of a family may all work together but the man is usually still considered the authority in the family and recognized as the principal coffee grower. The allocation of assets and access to land, credit and membership in coffee associations derives from this pattern. Therefore, there has been no drastic transformation of the intra-household division of labor or of the traditional definition of women’s work.

<sup>23</sup> Panela is an unrefined food product, which is basically a solid piece of sucrose and fructose obtained from the boiling and evaporation of sugarcane juice.
What have changed are the external roles of women as coffee marketer and as members of formal organizations. In this sense, women continue to do the same chores, but what they have achieved is a sense of economic independence and have also provided for their families. Women interviewed in this research considered the economic independence the most relevant transformation of their lives. One of them said,

*Now I do not have to ask for money, also if I want I can provide education and supply the need of my children... this is a great feeling. Before my economic contribution was less. Now I could be become a role model for my own children and community* (Cuellar Interview, July 2007).

**Coffee and the Impact on Women’s Access to Land**

Access to land contributes to the complexity of relations of power and divisions of labor in the coffee business in rural areas. Also, land has an economic and cultural value that can empower landowners, establishing enormous differences between socio-economic classes, races, ethnicities and genders (Deere and León 2001:26). Additionally, land rights impacted the division of labor and social and public recognition of coffee producers, as well as the complex and dynamic roles played by women in household and coffee activities. Access to legal documentation proving property ownership has been a struggle for peasant and indigenous communities throughout Colombia, affecting both men and women. Unequal redistribution of land, the difficulties that Caucanos have completing the process of purchasing credit to buy land, and the challenges they face in obtaining legal documents demonstrating that the land belongs to them are all factors that affect land ownership in the region.
Land is a major factor in agricultural production. Patterns of land ownership in Colombia have shaped the type of agricultural production in use and women’s role in agriculture (Sachs, 1983:11). As in many countries in Latin America, women in Colombia have been largely excluded from the benefits of agrarian reforms (Deere and León, 2001:99). In Colombia, agrarian reforms in 1994 and 2002 (described previously) were developed so that women could more easily access land and receive rural credit. However, even after the reforms women still were not well-represented as owners of the land. As women from AMUCC mentioned, the information about land facilities and credit options was not disseminated well and women in rural areas were unaware of the new code for rural women in the agrarian reform.

The history of coffee in Colombia demonstrates that language and symbolism shape cultural dynamics. One of the reasons Deere and Leon noted for the limitations in the agrarian reforms is the language that the reforms use. The authors view these policies and codes as modes of exclusion, which assume that agricultural and household heads are always men. Therefore, men are the ones who receive the benefits (Deere and León 2001:102). Another example is Juan Valdez, who is the most recognized coffee icon inside and outside of Colombia. Even though this icon represents 100% Colombian coffee, what helps into the marketing of coffee. It also shapes the image that men are the primary coffee producers, as well as the heads of the household, and therefore the owners of the land and the members of the coffee organizations.

Additionally, as Fridell (2007:131) reaffirms, “as patriarchal legal systems and notions of private property were imposed in capitalism, many women lost traditional
access and rights to land as colonizers only recognized the male head of household as the legitimate owner.” Therefore, as capitalist social relations penetrated coffee production, women were separated from the economic sphere – deemed to be the domain of men – and assigned to the role of reproduction in the private sphere (Dore 2003; McNally 2002). One woman pointed out, “Before I did what my husband said, I just know about the production here in the farm... Now no, I know about the expenses, I have book case where I am tracking the expenses, investment and profits” (Cuellar Interviews, June 2007).

In Cauca, access to land was not limited for women, but it was expected that women were part of a family farm and that the owner of the land was the head of the household, and this was usually a man. In many regions, moreover, women are not recognized as the primary agriculturalist within a family. This translates into their inability to access or inherit land. In some regions in Latin America, even if a woman can inherit land, it is expected that women renounce, share, pass on, or sell it to a male relative (Deere and León 2001:7).

Women inherit land when they are the only daughter or when there are no male members left in the family. Also, if the mother is a widow or her husband abandons her, this makes it easier for the daughters to inherit the land. In one conversation, a female producer in Costa Rica mentioned that,

*I am glad that I never met my father, I can imagine if he was there I could not be here, I could not have land and my life will be totally different. With my mother as the head of household, I was able to have more independence and be here today as a coffee grower with my own land* (Cuellar interviews, October 2007).
It was not clear how women could have legal access to land in Cauca, due to limited formal information about women’s land ownership.\textsuperscript{24} In the case of AMUCC, land ownership was facilitated by the requirement that women had to complete in order to become a member. Being a member of AMUCC gave women the opportunity to be legally and publicly recognized as owners of the land where they grew coffee. In some cases, pieces of land were already female-owned through family patrimony but the women were not publicly recognized. Being able to demonstrate that they owned a piece of land changed how women perceived themselves – as coffee producers – and at the same time changed how husbands, relatives and community members started to perceive them – as coffee marketers. As Deere and León (2001:7) point out, effective control over land rights includes having power over decision-making processes about how land is to be utilized and directing the benefits it produces. In other words, effective control of land means control over profits. Therefore, women in AMUCC not only were able to have access to land ownership but also were able to be more economically independent and to contribute to the household and family needs. Women’s land ownership not only gave them legal status over their own land but also access to the coffee market.

\textsuperscript{24} In the process of getting formal institution during fieldwork, I found diverse difficulty to obtain data from some institutions, sometimes this information could be very valuable and they do not want or are not allow to share, even if is for research purposes.
Coffee Facilitating Women’s Roles as Marketers

AMUCC today has opened its doors to the international market, a process that has created hope, growth, and new opportunities for AMUCC’s members, although problems remain. Some women commented how appropriate it was to meet the people buying their coffee and to have a chance to talk to them, discussing, negotiating, and hearing what consumers and buyers want versus what the association demands from the buyers.

As a consequence of this close relationship with market processes, specific women and AMUCC more generally have achieved some successes. Now producers can better distinguish between a high-quality and a low-quality coffee. If their coffee does not meet the requirements, producers know how to improve it. Today, intermediaries cannot mislead producers by saying that their coffee is not good-quality and thus force them to accept lower prices. Producers now know the importance of being able to access information about prices and markets internationally. Access to information and buyers is still uneven among producers – and more research and attention needs to be focused on the process – but at least now the producers affiliated with AMUCC are interested in knowing about, and frequently critically question, the market, in other words the prices they are getting from the Spanish buyer and type of quality standards he is asking. They are also developing the capability to negotiate with buyers: knowing the quality of their
coffee allows them to demand higher prices, and checking coffee prices every day lets them figure out how to sell their coffee when the price is highest.

AMUCC members know who buys their coffee. The Spanish coffee buyer visits the projects he has established in Colombia twice in a year and he mentioned how important it is for his business to have a direct relationship with the coffee producers. Thus, creating personal connections works to the advantage of both the AMUCC producers and this buyer. Comparing the relationships that AMUCC has formed with the methods used by other coffee associations in Cauca, however, showed some important differences. Women who were not members of AMUCC also commented about how important it is to know the person that buys their coffee. Nevertheless, many of these other coffee organizations do not know is the buyers and negotiations are established throughout intermediaries. Women in these other organizations often recognized that this was a problem. For example, Rosario, a coffee grower belonging to ASOMUCA, commented “Not knowing the person creates confusion, misunderstandings and, we also are starting to question the price we are receiving, for us this is not clear” (Cuellar Interviews July 2007).

Women in Cauca, even those belonging to AMUCC, continued to ignore some information about the marketing process. Even though women from AMUCC know who is buying their coffee, they do not know the price that the coffee buyer pays for the coffee, nor the amount of money they received for social investment through this

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25 Women in this case study reported that they know about prices primarily from the news (TV and newspapers). Also, each regional committee of the FNCC has a telephone, through which coffee growers can check daily coffee prices, though they have to go to the nearest committee (Olga L Cuellar Interviews, June-July 2007).
program. Women in AMUCC continue to be unaware of the over-prices, the type of agreement they have, the capital that they have as an association, the amount of financial support members of AMUCC received, and the administrative expenses of the association. Their answers were that they really do not know. Some of them frequently asked, “Why is the price that we receive so low?… We do not really know how much we are receiving from SUPRACAFE or from other supporters” (Cuellar Interviews July 2007). They also asked who receives the money, how the money is distributed, and the legal processes of their income, taxes, and payment of employers, the account manager, among other legal and administrative procedures.

Clearly, this is evidence of the dependency of AMUCC on the cooperatives in order to sell the coffee to the international coffee market. The cooperative CAFICAUCA is in charge of the exportation procedures, which requires experience, expertise, good international networks, capital and the ability to assume some monetary risk in the process. The cooperative is also in charge of managing the money received, and legal and administrative processes. It is understandable that women, when first starting in the coffee business, would need an advisor for these procedures, but on the other hand, it is the conclusion of this study that cooperatives need to work as facilitators and to start to give more responsibility to the association. As the situation currently stands, women still did not take the lead in these processes, letting the cooperative CAFICAUCA remain in charge. In other words, there is still a patriarchal and dependent relationship between AMUCC and CAFICAUCA.
On the other hand, the “direct trade” that AMUCC has fostered with the international market (described previously) translates into a direct relationship with coffee buyers in which women have the agency to negotiate their sales of coffee and the conditions of payment. In this relationship, the female producers also have the opportunity to learn about new and better quality practices and marketing strategies. As the *International Research Workshop on Gender and Collective Action* (2005:26) pointed out, access to information is a power resource that allow those who posses it to change the perceived value of the different alternatives (Beneria and Bisnath 2004). As a result, although some of the relationships the women in AMUCC are involved in are still highly unequal, they now coexist with greater opportunities for independent action by the producers.

Moreover, women can share these practices and strategies with other women inside or outside of AMUCC, thus creating an important exchange of knowledge. At this time, they are in the process of learning how to access information, lead, organize and maintain the association. Their experiences with the market are giving women the tools to create better opportunities in this same market, and this translates into women today having the agency to decide and negotiate, while also acquiring experience in the marketing process.

As a result of women’s increased access to land and the economic profits that they are obtaining today, women can now also achieve access to loans and credit. The majority of AMUCC members do not have credit today, but they are planning to apply for credit in the future in order to invest in their farm or to buy land. Also, being a
member of AMUCC facilitates the application and approval of bank loans (Cuellar Interviews July 2007). As is demonstrated in the FAO study (2006:96), in Colombia women have achieved property rights and women who have achieved property rights have also increased access to credit.

The advancement of women recognized as landowners and coffee producers is an essential element of increasing their visibility. Simultaneously, women members of AMUCC have begun to visibly involve themselves in all aspects of production, harvesting, post-harvesting and marketing. As Denton (2002:7) mentions, women worldwide today are assuming leadership roles and are taking advantage of sources of external support to promote their organizations, which is in turn strengthening the capacities of new female leaders. This case study is an example of how women’s visibility has increased through such organizations and collective action.

**Women’s Participation in the System of Coffee Associations**

Forming an organization like AMUCC, one that only included women coffee producers, forced women into the public sphere, both as producers and as contributors to the household. Being part of an association that only included women gave them an open and comfortable space in which they can talk, where they could feel free to give their opinions. Women formed part of the board of the association and most importantly, have to be considered in the association’s decision-making process.
Scholars of Latin American history have pointed out the difficulties that have plagued attempts to incorporate women into cooperative or associative systems on the same terms as men. Recognizing women as heads of household and primary members of formal organizations requires a change in the traditional gender division of labor that has historically dominated the region, as well as a shift in perspective so that women’s work would come to be valued on the same conditions as men’s (Deere and Machetti 1985:76). As a result of the continued prioritization of men as members of formal organizations, women have had little bargaining power within the cooperatives, being viewed by the male members as second-class workers and members (Deere and León 2001:341). In one interview a female member of ASOMUCA mentioned how women were highly criticized by their community when they became members of the association in the late 1990s. She commented that cultural patterns shaped the ways in which people stereotyped women as housewives, and said that her community did not think that it was appropriate for them to join an association, because it takes them away from the home and housework. Another female member from the same community said, “The Church also thought and expressed that those spaces were not appropriated for us [women]. We have to do what we are supposed to do, being a mother and a wife” (Cuellar Interviews June 2007).

By contrast, an organization like AMUCC, where women are the official members, presents these women with the benefits of cooperative and collaborative production. It may be a particularly promising approach for training women and giving them more confidence in their own capabilities, since many of them initially do not consider themselves to be agriculturalists and capable of managing an independent land
plot (Deere and León 2001:342). Here, it is also relevant to point out how collective action and the integration of these women helped them to recognize and name the specific needs of female growers, as well as contributing to the identification of strengths and weaknesses in the region. For example, the members of AMUCC identified the lack of consistent access to technical extension and formal training in quality standards as a major barrier to their success. Today, this is one of the primary objectives that the women expect to address in the following years. Also, when asked how the association will be perceived in five years, the women answered that it will be more united and will provide diverse services and benefits to its members, specifically technical extension and more training in coffee quality (Cuellar interviews, July 2007). Therefore, AMUCC as a women’s association is a mechanism for mobilization, supporting and strengthening women as coffee growers and marketers (Heyzer 1987:29). It also creates opportunities for them in the form of rural credit, training in the use of new technologies, extension services and new information about coffee quality.

Women in this case study demonstrated interest in community participation. As Development Alternative with Women for a New Era (DAWN) mentions, women like to be involved in a number of social and community activities in which they participate with interest and satisfaction (1998:70). In the case of AMUCC, women expressed that they like to participate in workshops and short trainings. They desired to learn about quality standards, how to interpret the market and how to manage a farm; and the association has made some women more aware of the importance of education. Some mentioned that
they wanted to continue with their studies and finish high school or continue with their academic development.

**Cross-cultural Comparisons with Other Female Coffee Growers**

As already mentioned, this research was based on a specific case study in Cauca, Colombia. However, conversations with other female coffee growers and reviewing the literature concerning women’s issues in agriculture production shows that women’s positions and struggles to access land and the international market and have a direct relationship with buyers are sometimes similar, even across very different cultural and geographic contexts. For example, in China, men and women are often dichotomized as farmers and helpers/housekeepers respectively, even when women’s contributions to farming are substantial (Bossen 2000:177). As Bossen points out, usually much of the farm work is actually the women’s domain.

In both academic studies and in development projects, women’s income has often been conflated with family revenue. Men have historically been seen as the primary economic providers of the household and thus, until recently, they usually received the bulk of the available governmental and nongovernmental support. Governmental and non-governmental organizations looked at a family’s well-being and assumed that the benefits received by the “head of household” would benefit the whole family unit (Spring 2001). Thus, these organizations do not consider it relevant to support women’s
agricultural subsistence production. In a research study in Bamenda, Cameroon\textsuperscript{26}, for instance, Kreiger (2001:243) points out that men’s export production has been supported for years by development agencies, whereas women’s small-scale businesses have not received much attention. Other studies of women’s contributions to African agriculture have demonstrated how women were and in some regions continue to be under-compensated, under-recognized, and left out of new technologies, technical assistance and income streams (Spring 2000:317).

Spring (2000:318) mentioned in her case study in Kenya that women were not sought after as farmers, but just as good helpers and workers on the land. She also suggested, however, that an increase in male migration and periodic absenteeism due to economic struggles (which forces them to leave home in search of cash-generating employment), has led to an increase in women working as farmer managers. Therefore, in this case, women used this increased access to farming responsibilities to claim land and credit rights, as well as agriculture services (including financial aid, access to new technology and information and access to better markets) that they otherwise would not have been able to obtain. At the same time, however, women’s labor has increased as a result of higher demand in the global market and the need for agriculture producers to dedicate more work and time in production in order to achieve the quality and standards required. Ironically, women’s workload has also has increased as a result of the gender equity orientation of international organizations, NGOs and agro-industrial businesses.

\textsuperscript{26} Bamenda is the capital of Cameroon’s Northwest Province.
With respect to the increase in women’s participation in coffee production, one woman from Costa Rica mentioned that she is the first woman that joined the board of the cooperative she belongs to. She also mentioned that this idea to include a woman in the board of the cooperative arose because of the requirement of one of the coffee certifications. She said

*My participation emerged as an international request in order to achieved the fair trade market… this I do not think is negative, on the contrary we are considering those market requirements as opportunities to generate more women’s participation, and we need to know to take advantage of them* (Cuellar Interviews, October 2007).

In this case, as well as that of AMUCC, women’s participation emerged as a result of an external request. Many women in this case study viewed such international requirements as opportunities that they could use to increase their participation in the coffee industry specifically and agriculture more generally. Women’s access to the international market would be greatly enhanced by the eradication of patriarchal attitudes at the local level that prevent them from gaining access to land, rights, credit, loans and technical information (Spring 2000:319).

Another experience was related by a woman who was a coffee cupper for the same cooperative in Costa Rica. She commented that it was often very difficult to do her job. She needed to go to a farm, taste the coffee and give technical assistance to the coffee grower in order to improve production, but when she visited farms where the owner was a man, she had difficulties, especially when she had to tell him his coffee was not good quality or that he failed in some of the post-harvesting processes. She firmly stated “Women are considered not to know about coffee, for me it is a challenge make
male producers believe me first as cupper and second as a woman that has knowledge about coffee production” (Cuellar Interviews, October 2007). Other women agreed with her comment and mentioned how culturally-patterned stereotypes of women as only helpers in coffee production represent a serious challenge for them. They not only have to demonstrate to the market that they can produce high quality, but also they have to demonstrate to their own community that they are as capable as men.

A representative of a development program in Tanzania who was interviewed for this study said that the situation of female coffee growers there is more complicated. She noted that in her region of Tanzania, women are in charge of the entire coffee production and harvest. Despite their involvement, however, they do not get any benefits as coffee growers because women are not members of the local cooperative – only men are allowed access to the coffee association. She also commented that coffee production in the area has serious problems with quality because when the association organized meetings, trainings and workshops, those that attend are the men but the actual work is done by the women. Land ownership is another factor that influences this gender-based (and biased) dynamic. Traditionally in this area, men inherit and own land. By contrast, women cannot inherit or own land. The representative said, “For example if the husband dies the one who inherits land is the son or a relative, but never the woman” (Cuellar Interviews October 2007).

In Kenya access to and care of resources such as land, economic capital and education are shaped by gender differences, with men usually having more access and greater resources than women. Women traders, for example, have access to land mainly
through their husbands, but the best way for a woman to secure land is by purchasing it herself, because the inheritance system actually deprives women of land (Spring 2001:323). A similar situation prevails in other coffee-producing African regions, where land is mostly owned or controlled by men, with traditional tenure and inheritance based on patrilineal descent (ibid 2000:324). On the other hand, women do, in fact, have some access to land because they have developed multiple alternative strategies that include land purchase, renting, borrowing, joining parcels, buying, pooling land and squatting. Nonetheless, in general women engaged in coffee production often cannot access land and/or the market easily. In the case of AMUCC, women had to use entry into the association as a strategy for accessing land and the market.

It is clear that cultural patterns and family relationships shape gender divisions of labor in rural areas. Even though women do have more economic control and power over decision-making within the household, in this case study women and men agreed that coffee production was shaped by the patriarchal system of values that dominates in rural Colombia. Nevertheless, as a result of local circumstances, coffee-producing families were forced to include some transformations in the household structure and work patterns, which led to better visibility of women’s contributions to coffee production.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Power Relationships and Paternalism

This study demonstrates that the coffee specialty market, as well as local and international alliances, provides significant economic and improvement opportunities for AMUCC, but it also reveals the complexity of establishing a direct-trade relationship. Specialty coffee production requires more economic and social investment. It requires more laborers, and more attention to the harvesting and post-harvesting processes, whereas in conventional production producers do not have to follow the same rigorous standards. However, small coffee producers today in Colombia are opting for the specialty coffee market, because they can obtain better prices through it and because they see in the direct relationships with buyers an opportunity to expand the market, to demand that their needs be met during production, and to be able to identify contextualized household and community needs. In this sense, the buyers will not just have to meet the producers’ demands in relation to production but will also have to meet their social needs.

Following in Table 7, there is a description of the main differences between conventional and specialty coffee.
Table No.7 Differences Between Conventional and Specialty Coffee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional Coffee</th>
<th>Specialty Coffee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Price based on stock market</td>
<td>• Price based on stock market with an over-price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prize for variety</td>
<td>• Prize for quality and type of process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less barriers to entry</td>
<td>• More barriers to access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High national competence</td>
<td>• Less national competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Big market</td>
<td>• Small market (9-12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less cost and time invest</td>
<td>• Higher cost and time invest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the specialty coffee market, a direct relationship between producer and buyer is becoming more and more relevant for establishing a traceable and responsible negotiation between them. Nevertheless, tensions and complexities occur in the process of creating this direct-relationship. AMUCC is a case that illustrates the power dynamics involved in the marketing processes. In some cases the international development discourse has been translated to paternalistic relationships that are nevertheless in some sense beneficial for the actors involved. Furthermore, these paternalistic relationships coexist with movements towards greater independence among some producers.

In the case of AMUCC, for example, it is obviously easier for the association to let the CAFICAUCA cooperative take care of business and the marketing activities. The new emphasis on direct-relationships in the coffee industry, however, forced producers to acquire more knowledge and more information. Therefore, in some cases producers are overwhelmed with information about quality requirements, certifications, fair trade transactions, international and local partnerships and export requirements (Jaffee 2007). This supposedly more equitable and open relationship with the market thus creates more complexities and challenges for producers in coffee production and marketing. Achieving
independence and the necessary tools to enter to the coffee industry without depending on external support requires time, resources and periods of apprenticeship for coffee producers

Simultaneously, the cooperative also benefits from this relationship, in this case sometimes using the social project of AMUCC as a way to portray the cooperative as an entity that balances economic and social benefits for its members. In the process, it gains public recognition in the international coffee market, as well as within the cooperative system. Thus, this relationship has two faces: in one, the cooperative acts as a contributor, in the other it is a constrictor. At the same time, these organizations have to play with and modify international rules in order to claim what is usually called “sustainability”.

These relationships and maneuverings create tension between the cooperative and the association that goes beyond their supposedly amicable collaboration. The cooperative utilizes its power to impose its own model and to project an image of itself as more social responsible. Nevertheless, the association also uses the relationship to get access to external recognition, to develop market models and to create networks and/or strengthen networks, which may eventually result in its becoming more independent from the cooperative. In the future, AMUCC members expect to integrate technical assistance and new models used by other organizations into their own model (Cuellar Interviews, June-July 2007).

In sum, the role of the CAFICAUCA cooperative can be very positive, but in its relationship with the small-scale producers association, the cooperative behaves like a protective father, one who does not let his children grow – in other words, CAFICAUCA
does not let AMUCC explore the marketing sector on its own. As co-sponsor of AMUCC, the cooperative is interested in the well-being of the association. However, this relation should be based on a collaborative partnership, where the cooperative provides the necessary information and background for the association, but later relinquishes its control so that the association can be more independent. Both actors need to be able to contribute to their common goals from an equal level.

One of the lessons that the first group, AMACA, learned from their relationship with the cooperative was to be more independent. In that case, crises and misunderstanding induced them to become more independent, especially in commercialization. However, despite the original problems, the women refer to the experience as a great learning process. A female member of AMACA called it “a process of awakening” (Cuellar Interviews July 2007), in which they strengthened their capabilities. She also thinks women have gained more ownership over the association because of the circumstances; they have had to become more involved in all the processes, as well as learning about all the market. Another member, Alicia, said,

Now we are not anymore in a paternalistic relationship, we were and we did not want that this partnership ended like that... We would like continue to have a market and collaborative relationship with the cooperative... but that happened and now we learned a lot, we think and act by our selves... Now we know where and how to go... We have today a better business vision and we learned about accountability, administrative and management process. For me, we are on the right path (Cuellar Interviews July 2007).

It is the conclusion of this study that it is important for the growth process of this association that they take the lead in such monetary, legal and administrative processes.
This will give them the tools to be more independent and to not let the cooperative make all decisions for them. This will, in turn, increase transparency.

Another issue that must be raised at this point concerns the way in which readers will use the information provided in this case study. I want to clarify that AMUCC as it is portrayed in this case study is in a preliminary stage in terms of establishing and solidifying its organization. As a result, I cannot call women’s involvement in AMUCC a success story yet, but instead show that it helps demonstrate the complexities involved in accessing the international coffee market for many coffee producers in Cauca, as well as giving a description and analysis of the process that female members of AMUCC experienced getting there. Female coffee growers’ experiences in this project provided relevant insights for better understanding gender relationships and coffee production in Colombia. AMUCC women’s lives have changed in diverse ways in response to shifts of the market, migration patterns, the division of labor, new standards concerning coffee quality and growing awareness of international ideals of gender equity. Understanding the strategies members of AMUCC use to enter the international market will create new paths for future projects. One of the main goals of this research was to make more visible women’s voices and perceptions concerning their own, highly contested, processes of transformation from mothers, wives and “helpers” to coffee producers, household providers, members of an association and coffee marketers.

It has already been mentioned that global restructuring of the coffee industry, together with changes in local forms of patriarchy in coffee areas, continually reshape women coffee growers’ lives. Today, no one engaged in coffee production can escape the
demands of the international coffee market. Coffee growers in many countries, for example, are now forced to seek alternative sources of income, such as growing specialty coffee, in response to these new pressures and demands.

At the same time, agricultural production of coffee is being transformed with respect to trade, price, and production conditions (Bacon 2008). The industry is pursuing certain social, economic and environmental goals and enforcing regulations in its drive towards greater commercialization, on the one hand forcing buyers to pay more to agricultural producers, but on the other hand forcing producers to implement quality standards, increase their productivity and commit themselves to being environmentally responsible. Such equilibrium is difficult to implement, to achieve and to maintain.

Fair trade, quality standards, sustainability, traceability, certifications, and other environmental and social concerns are all movements within the coffee industry that represent significant economic, social and environmental benefits for coffee producers and their families and communities. However, the effects of this rhetoric about responsibility on the producers are, in reality, far more complex than the industry acknowledges (Jaffee 2007:4). For members of AMUCC, the guidelines require them to learn more about international quality standards, legislations, and policies; to understand monetary transactions and ideas about “accountability”; to develop skills in business and management; and to make a commitment to invest social, economic and human capital in coffee production and marketing processes. Moreover, the results and benefits in some cases do not arrive immediately; this transformation is often slow. Members of AMUCC are expecting a change in the future. This expectation is keeping women in AMUCC and
coffee producers in general hopeful and dedicated to do what it takes in order to achieve access to direct-trade and the specialty coffee market.

In order to be successful, a coffee grower must have access to actual information about quality and market standards. Coffee growers in Colombia have access to this information through other farmers, coffee associations and the technical extension agents. Female coffee growers were usually excluded from this transfer of technical information. Today, women from AMUCC have better access to this information, but it is still not enough. One woman said,

*Before we just knew a few things about coffee, now we are aware of cost of production, profits and international prices in the market. But we need to learn more... There is a long way that we [women] have not crossed yet...”* Another woman in a focus group said, “*We [women] in this process have been able to improve coffee quality through accessing information about quality standards, but in order to continue improving we need a more consist technical and training assistance* (Cuellar Interviews June-July 2007).

Women have also become more economically empowered contributors to the household. Today, the women of AMUCC are accustomed to earning their own income and they consider this an advantage that has given them independence from the male income and at the same time generated an economic strategy for these families in a collaborative household system. Their interaction with the coffee industry is aimed at producing income that they themselves control and having the agency to decide where to spend or invest that money.

This study reveals that women’s income is important. It demonstrates that women usually use their income in order to supply family necessities, such as food, clothes and education (Sachs 1996; Spring 2001; Stolcke 1995; Stone 1005; Cuellar 2008). Today,
female members of AMUCC seek to invest in their children’s education, especially that of their daughters, as they suggest that the girls’ education is the best investment for their families. A female coffee grower from Honduras, for example, provided evidence of the importance of education from her own experience. Today, she is the manager of a coffee cooperative, a position that she assumed due to her relatively high level of education. Thus, from her perspective one of the factors that prevent women from increasing their participation is the lack of formal education. She noted, “If we [women] are academically prepared, we can assume institutional positions with a greater responsibility as well as credibility” (Cuellar Interviews October 2007).

Women have been more affected by the stratification of the market and have often been excluded from economic systems (Sachs 1983; Spring 2001; Stolcke 1995). This struggle has frequently been the result of women’s lack of control over resources and access to assets, such as land. By contrast, women’s associations such as AMUCC integrate women into the market system and this allows them to become more internationally competitive in creating strategies together for successfully negotiating with the markets and requesting higher prices for the coffee. The association in this sense is how women compete in the coffee market. Today, as one woman said “We now can access our own piece of land, I manage it, and I know how much I invest on it and how much I can earn, that makes a huge difference” (Cuellar Interviews July 2007). Women’s income represents financial independence for them, which could contribute to increasing their sense of agency and of having more authority and decision-making power in the household and community.
As this study reveals, this achievement in accessing the market was not a process that women did by themselves. It involved different actors and was an opportunity, not only for the women themselves, but also for outsiders, who were able to hear women’s voices, opinions and perceptions. As has been demonstrated, women’s invisibility in agriculture had obstructed their inclusion in many related activities (Deere and León 2001). Over many years, women in Columbia have participated in the work of the farm as well as the house. However, involvement in the market was almost always dominated by men, leaving women behind the scenes and underrepresented.

This study of AMUCC demonstrates, however, that this imbalance can change. Moreover, now the National Federation of Coffee Growers, as well as other NGOs and local institutions, have recognized that this association is a collective group of women with similar goals who have created a space in which to make their voices heard in participatory projects and who operate projects targeted to meet the specific needs of women. As a result of international gender equity policies and the creation of new organizations that include women, today governmental and non-governmental programs are highly interested in working and creating partnerships with AMUCC, since they see the association as an exemplary role model for other women’s organization in Colombia. For instance, the President of AMUCC was invited to participate in the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) Exhibition and Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, May 2-5 2008.

Furthermore, women from AMUCC found that this opportunity to increase their access and visibility proved to be a context in which they could develop their roles as
coffee producers and marketers in conjunction with, rather than instead of, their roles as mothers and wives. When I mentioned in the discussion section that women today are more than housewives and mothers, I am not denying the importance of these roles. On the contrary, women can combine their tasks and develop their roles as mothers and wives, as well as producers and marketers. This will undoubtedly increase their work at home and on the farm in certain respects but it is nevertheless an economic opportunity for them and a way to meet household needs.

**Beyond the Romanticism of Women’s Coffee Production**

What I learned for this study is that the process of creating coffee goes beyond coffee production and marketing achievement; it is necessary to take into account the context where these processes take place. For many the idea of coffee produced by women sounds different, interesting, as well as romantic; however, this “fairy tale” where women will rise one day as coffee growers, produce their coffee and sell it to the international market is more complex and has more layers than at first it appeared. This process of women coffee producers beginning to access the international market is not a linear process of growth and development. It is a cycle that changes, that is impacted by diverse factors and that has multiple complexities. This is not a simple commodity transaction of production and consumption. It is also a life-cycle that involves human, economic and social capital, as well as external factors such as price fluctuations,
environmental conditions and definitions of quality set by the buyers and coffee industry in relation to terms negotiations and marketing strategies.

I mentioned in the discussion that coffee produced by women can appeal to consumer interest and consumers are often willing to pay more for it. Some people view this as an example of the connections of the global market with the local commercial opportunities of coffee producers. Nevertheless, this market interest is not altruistic and is more than a simple appeal to be socially responsible. Coffee is a commodity and a business and in order to be commercially viable it has to attract consumers. Women’s participation in the specialty coffee industry is not neutral. Throughout my research, I was aware of the fact that the bigger companies use coffee produced by women as a marketing strategy, without assuming a real social (in addition to economic) relationship with the female producers, one that would go beyond paying a better price, and would recognize coffee producers’ work while taking local circumstances into account.

An example of such a relationship is provided by an organization that has been employing women in coffee as a market interest. This organization was created in order to generate gender equity in coffee origin regions, as well to make visible the work of women in the coffee industry. However, when I talked with producers in a Latin American country in which this organization was working²⁷, I was informed that female small coffee producers were just used to fill the organization’s membership in order to appeal to the international expectations. Women that were producers did not receive tangible (over-prices, materials for infrastructure construction, access to assets) and

²⁷ The name of the organization, as well as the country and other details are not mentioned for confidential and privacy purposes.
intangible (access to information, credit, training and technical assistance) benefits. Those women who were able to obtain some economic benefits were women who were exporters and owners of coffee businesses.

Therefore, while analyzing these processes the limitations that local women face in trying to access the global market become evident. In some cases the market creates more barriers than options and constrains women decision-making. Even though women from AMUCC have been able to open the door to the international and specialty coffee industry, real access to credit, information and training continues to be a challenge. Additionally, negotiations with buyers, as well as local and external organizations involved in the coffee value chain, are complex. These relationships in some cases generate power dynamics, mechanisms of exclusion, and a lack of agency and power in the decision-making of producers.

Furthermore, writing a conclusion is not easy, because this is an ongoing process that changes day-to-day, continuously raising new questions. For example, I have been in contact with AMUCC since I returned, and every time I receive communications from them, something new is happening. They are engaged in new processes and dealing with new improvements, new partnerships and new challenges. Even with all of the advancements that this group has achieved, it must be emphasized that variables such as increasing industrialization of coffee production, the use of new technologies, fluctuations of prices and political violence in Colombia influence coffee production and shape women’s decisions.
In-depth understanding of the transformation of women in rural areas in Colombia is more complex and merits future in-depth analysis. It has been previously mentioned that due to security reasons I was not able to visit some municipalities. There is a substantial difference between areas that are secure compared to those that are not. Women that live in insecure areas, in other words in areas that have guerrillas and paramilitaries, have to factor these pressures into their decision-making processes and these also constrain their participation in AMUCC. Transportation is more difficult for women that live in unsecured areas: the areas are more isolated and they have less access to roads and lack good modes of transportation. Additionally, there is an economic difference between such regions. During my visit, for example, I observed an insecure area, where women owned less land, the houses were smaller and had fewer amenities and younger Caucanos had fewer opportunities to obtain a formal education. Also, women located in insecure areas sometimes have to pay insurgency groups a quota, of the money that they bring back to the municipality. They may have to ask for permission to become members of the association and they are aware that this permission and other agreements could change, depending on the person in charge of a guerilla-paramilitary group28 (Cuellar Interviews June- July 2007).

In the more secure areas, many women have a higher socio-economic status, more access to land, sometimes own cars and trucks and have a better socioeconomic class position. Also, children are able to attend private schools and some of them were even

28 Historically, and from my own experience, subversive groups in Colombia charge a quota in rural areas in order to acquire economic resources. Female members of AMUCC did not directly express this, but in conversations with other Caucanos, people commented how usual this is in rural areas (Cuellar Interviews, June-July 2007).
attending colleges in Popayán. Young populations that belong to these higher socio-economic groups have greater economic and academic opportunities.

Another challenge that the Colombian coffee sector is facing stems from the fact that increasingly, young people are migrating to urban areas in order to look for better opportunities in the main cities. Young people from coffee-growing families are leaving their homes, seeking better employment or more education. Therefore, there is no longer a generational replacement in farming families in coffee regions: as the FNCC (2007) points out, the average age of a coffee producer is now between 40 to 50 years old. Cauca is also experiencing this loss of the younger generation. In conversations with older producers, several points were raised. Some of them considered the situation a problem, when they looked at the future of coffee production. Others said that it was a consequence of free-trade and capitalism systems, one that won’t easily change. Thus, they affirmed that younger populations will continue to leave the rural areas (Cuellar Interviews June-July 2007).

**Recommendations**

Today, women’s involvement in coffee production has become increasingly sensitive to the market, and projects are looking for new insights and strategies for changing rural social relations in order to improve women’s lives. It is clear that the actions of governmental and non-governmental organizations can either deprive or improve the conditions of the small-scale coffee growers. As Garcia (2002:19)
mentioned, in order to create greater international competitiveness in the Colombian coffee sector, programs need to consider the particularities of each region. He also mentions, “The great heterogeneity that exists between the different agriculturists demands designs of programs specific and differentiated who contribute to surpass the faults or insufficiencies that present/display the markets in the rural scope” (Garcia 2002:19). Therefore, I consider it relevant to include the insights that emerge form all the conversations, discussions and analyses that resulted from this research project.

The better integration of the agro-industrial chain involved in coffee and the promotion of strategic alliances needs cooperation articulated mainly around the coffee producers’ association, in whose frame actions of agriculture attendance and development of the a traceability chain that foment the establishment of adequate partnerships among buyers and suppliers. In this sense, there is a need to explore new schemes that could lead to the creation of new ways of processing and marketing coffee. Producers could then increase their participation in the process in order to really meet their own needs. In other words, a space could be opened in which producers would be able to participate in the development of these projects.

For example, when you have local community participation you contribute to the co-construction of self-diagnostics, where the community members can describe their own perspectives, situate their own priorities and establish what and where a problem might be located. This also contributes to unifying community resources: human, financial, physical, natural and social capital. The process empowers the community to make its own decisions. Therefore, a vital aspect of developing rural projects is
considering who identifies with and participates in it. Future projects might identify basic and communal needs in conjunction with people from the community.

**The Coffee Farm: A Unit of Solidarity**

Coffee production debates concentrate on the articulation between the forms of production and the complexity of the transition whereby women are becoming politically and economically involved in the coffee industry. As Sachs pointed out, “With the increased industrialization and the gradual transformation of agricultural products previously produced in the household into commodities, the situation of rural women altered” (1983:21). Women’s progress in the market of coffee production requires attention but the other actors involved should not be dismissed and the impact on the entire family needs to be taken into account. In one conversation with some managers and directors from Café Justo in Mexico (March 2008), I realized that people in the coffee industry usually used in the cooperative system a word for a coffee producer member that refers to one individual, whereas I liked that the Mexican cooperative referred to its members as a family unit. We tend to refer to coffee production in terms of the individual, “the producer”. As Stolcke (1995:3) describes “Usually coffee economies take the individual workers as the unit of analysis.” This does not reflect the reality of the situation. For example, in response to the increasing demands of the coffee market women are required more frequently to replace or become heavily engaged in “male tasks”.
According to the Coffee National Census/Survey (1997), 80 percent of small-scale coffee producers used family members as total or partial laborers, especially during the harvest. During this period it is common that children and younger members of the family miss some days of school, in order to contribute to the household and save some of the costs of production. Collaboration between women and men in the enterprise is valued in much the same way as cooperation within families (Allen and Harris 2001; Hamilton 2000). Men place high value on their wives and their agriculture expertise, economic judgment, physical strength and hard work and bargaining skills in the marketplace; women praise their husbands for similar strengths (Hamilton 1998:82). Also, men recognize in Cauca that women know how to manage money. For instance, one man said “Women pay bills, buy food, invest in the farm and also they have more to put in savings, I do not how they do it, I wish I could do the same” (Cuellar Interviews May 2007)

My general aim, then, is to draw attention to the relevance of the family and household gender relations in their cultural-moral as well as socioeconomic dimensions in coffee production and marketing. In the women’s empowerment discourse, authors such as Deere and León (2001:25) state that

The empowerment of women challenges patriarchal familial relations, for it may lead to the disempowerment of men and certainly to the loss of the privileged position they have held under patriarchy. For example empowerment occurs when a change has taken place in men’s traditional domination of women.

Even though in this research women acquired access to land and other infrastructure assets, as well as membership in a legally constituted coffee association, economic
independence and the ability to make their own decisions for their land was often limited where men were still considered the primary coffee growers. Women continued to be immersed in the family system and supported by their husbands. Women and men in this research project considered the fact that women were getting more accessibility and recognition important; however, husbands were concerned about the idea that these new patterns will change established relationships in the family.

There is a generalized dichotomy in the agricultural literature in which women are linked with subsistence agriculture and men with commercial production. Nevertheless, women in Cauca not only could be classified as “helpers” but also as coffee producers to the national and international market (Spring 2001:295). We cannot dismiss the division of labor in coffee production, but we cannot assume that there is a simple gender-based dichotomy. Interviews with producers indicated that women, men and other members of the household divided their tasks according to individual’s abilities, skills and preferences. Also, in some families, men recognized that women have been developing better strategies to produce high quality coffee, and these men decided to apply those same methods to their own production. In one of the families that I visited, a husband said, “My wife goes to those workshops and she learn how to improve our production, when she gets here she teach me and we put in practice that knowledge in our farm” (Cuellar Interviews, June 2007). Moreover, women declared that men also contributed to their improvement and often they complemented each other, helping and establishing a collaborative and efficient system in which each one took turns assuming the same task in the coffee production, depending on the circumstances.
In summary, the objective of the household is to carry out activities that maintain its members, following culturally defined “normal” standards of living as (Jelin 1991:29). Therefore, a new program or policy should not interrupt processes that have already been arranged within the family. Future projects need to understand coffee farmers’ family patterns and dynamics, as well as their mode of work as a family system. The focus on individuals and women as coffee growers and marketers is a recent phenomenon. Hence, the issues over the division of labor and the struggles for greater independence for women are new experiences for the entire family.

Therefore, new projects need to address gender issues that not only target women, but also the family. In daily domestic life, the dynamics among men and women result in confrontations, negotiations and agreements, along with the distribution of domestic and production-related responsibilities (Deere and León 2001:26). Projects cannot dismiss these inter-household dynamics nor should they promote open individualization of women through their involvement in the coffee industry while ignoring their families. Future programs cannot go from one extreme to the other, from male-oriented to female-oriented projects. It should instead be required that programs address gender issues within the reality of family relationships, local customs and internal patterns.

AMUCC brought new alternatives for household maintenance and new doors opening that enhanced women’s visibility. However, these women are immersed in a family, a community and a specific region. Within this complex scenario, all the actors are relevant and must be taken into account, and be analytic in the definition of gender-market oriented, based on the distinction among gender relationships. Coffee production
is constituted in a family context, and its functions are set in its interrelation with broader social and cultural institutions. As Jelin (1991:37) points out “family was never, nor will be, detached or isolated from wider social, political, and economical determinations”.

Central to this research analysis is the idea that the visibility of women as coffee growers and marketers does not occur in a vacuum, the result of external ideological impositions. On the contrary, true change must be the result of a long-term process that is decisively shaped by pre-existing family ideology and gender dynamics. Integrating the family as the basic unit of production will allow projects to understand how local people understand they own reality. This integrated approach is fundamental since it enables a program to comprehend all points of view from all members of a specific community and includes all aspects of the forces shaping that community, including history, physical and natural environment, and other local conditions. From these principles, we must design integrated projects.

**AMUCC’s Post Script**

During my research I observed how women became more aware of production and market processes as a result of our conversations and discussions. In the last AMUCC meeting I attended, women were more active participants. For example, they organized an agenda for the monthly meeting ahead of time, a level of planning that did not occur in the initial stages of my research. Women also included in their agenda topics concerning their relationship with the CAFICAUCA cooperative and the Spanish buyer,
asking for clarifications concerning prices, investments and account balances, as well as for explanations of past agreements that failed and for a discussion about the future of their partnership with the cooperatives. They also expressed a desire to establish a different relationship with the cooperative and the coffee buyer, in which they were planning to assume leadership of the decision-making process in the market negotiations.

Today, AMUCC has new projects and future possibilities for new partnerships. In 2008, SUPRACAFÉ, ACDI/VOCA and AMUCC established a new project in which they will create a revolving fund for credit. Women can use these funds to invest in coffee production or to diversify their incomes. The initial capital will come from the two external organizations, but after that the women will have to manage and control the credit, credit that could be used, for example, when women are starting the harvest, when they have a financial emergency or when they wanted to invest in their farm. The objective of this fund is for the association to distribute capital in the form of a loan to group members, based on major need. Additionally, this fund will be a mechanism by which the association can save and increase its economic capital.

As previously mentioned, the President of AMUCC is participating in the SCAA 2008 Exhibition and Conference in Minneapolis. Her attendance at this conference will be an important opportunity for networking with other small producers from all around the world, including other female coffee growers. The AMUCC President also has an opportunity to participate in the International Women Coffee Alliance (IWCA) annual meeting, in which she can share AMUCC’s experiences with other women in the coffee
industry and learn from their marketing processes. Additionally, her participation will create more market opportunities and the formation of new alliances and future projects.

Finally, in the recently communication I had with AMUCC, they mentioned that in the month of May 2008, Juan Valdez coffee shops in Colombia will produce a limited special edition of AMUCC’s coffee as a commemoration of mother’s month. This suggests the gendered market strategy that these coffee shops will use for their own commercial benefit. It also demonstrates the recent appearance and strategic creation of female coffee growers as a symbol that market industries use to sell coffee. This is a recent development, international in origin, and it will be interesting to see what will happen in the future. Female members of AMUCC and representatives from coffee development projects hope to see an improvement in their lives as a result of it, translated into fair prices and various intangible benefits for producers. Women are also expecting that this feminine leadership in the specialty industry will empower and drive women to the forefront of the international coffee business. The development and support of this gendered marketing strategy could generate more rural improvements, not only for women, but for coffee growers’ families and communities as well.
APPENDIX A: MAP OF COLOMBIA

Source: Geographic Institute Agustín Codazzi (SIGAC 1999)
APPENDIX B: MAP OF COFFEE REGIONS IN COLOMBIA

Source: Geographic Institute Agustín Codazzi (SIGAC 1999)
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