Agenda Setting and its Positioning Strategies: a study of asymmetries, tensions, frames and organising choices shaping development interventions in Cali, Colombia.

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Abstract

Modernising the global south is not a new project. Yet, the persistent redefinition of existing and new development challenges – from inequalities to climate-change crises – shapes the agreement on the causes of problems, their solutions, and the organisation of concerted action to ensure successful interventions. Simply put, if the definitions of conditions change, some kind of response to that change might be required or demanded. That could happen by pushing for adjustments to the agenda for development – its problems and goals – and also by pressing for reconsidering how those supposed to implement the agenda, such as not-for-profit organisations (NPOs), do so. So, to shed light on this matter, this investigation studied two interconnected phenomena: agenda-setting and organising development interventions in Colombia.

This investigation establishes how partner NPOs, in two long-lasting programmes, make sense of the global agenda for development and its re-framing. And how that sense-making interacts with the institutional logics and discourses within the field, leading to choices, compromises and the formulation of tactics, all of which impacted how these partner organisations agreed to tackle social problems in Cali, Colombia. The study of this complex causal relationship – between agenda-setting mechanisms, logics and discourses, and the micro-level organising of interventions – was found to lead to several outcomes, such as a municipal hybrid agenda for modernisation and two micro-level tactics (i.e., flexible problematisation and contribution goals); all these underpinning the rise of two paradoxes (i.e., dislocation and disneyfication). These findings resulted from the analysis of three case studies and 35 interviews with academics and professionals with expertise in designing and implementing interventions, municipal planning and public policy formulation. The analysis of the information gathered was contrasted against

development goals and other expectations found in documents generated by UN agencies, Colombian governmental authorities, and accounts presented to international and national funding organisations.

The main contributions of this investigation, relevant to the fields of development and public relations, are as follows: a) the identification of the routes through which macro and meso-level agendas reach the micro-level of development intervention, b) establishing the tensions and asymmetries, which are exploited by funding organisations to ensure institutional agendas are adopted regardless of how those agendas relate to local conditions and hence the problems faced by communities in Colombia, c) establishing the marginalisation of local NPOs and, by extension, the communities these organisations represent and d) revealing the agenda-positioning strategies implemented by NPOs operating in the country.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 About this study

This thesis concerns what multilateral institutions and their funding partners have historically argued is the most important challenge and right for humankind: development[1] (UN, General Assembly resolution, 1986; UN, 2023b). Simply put, the centrality of development to the well-being of the world (UN, General Assembly resolution 2000; UN, General Assembly Resolution, 2015), a paradigm that draws strength from global crises (Larsen, Haller, and Kothari, 2022), justifies this investigation's focal point.

However, with such a vital subject, it is not surprising to face a significant conceptual scope, so what about development was studied by my investigation? And what specific problems and challenges for development are discussed in my thesis? Concerning the first question, my investigation examined how development is communicated and structured, at macro, meso, but particularly at micro level; the level at which organisations implementing the institutional plan for development negotiate how to make sense of a given agenda. This same construct, 'the institutional agenda for development' or 'modernisation', is defined here in simple terms as a set of social problems, attendant goals, and implementation instructions on achieving the objectives and aims of development.

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[1] The UN Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) argues that everyone is 'entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realised'.

More specifically, my investigation aimed to enhance our understanding of two phenomena. One is the agenda for modernisation; in particular, I examined its formulation, a process called agenda setting. The latter could be described as defining social conditions and formulating goals to legitimise and position them in the minds of key stakeholders (from governments to communities). Mainly, my investigation sought to establish the factors shaping the agenda-setting process at micro-level and determine the implications of the interaction of those factors (e.g., the management of funding to direct attention to some specific social problems). In more abstract terms, the focus on the nature of the institutional agenda for development sought to grasp its structuring dimension, in particular, to ascertain this agenda's degree of influence over what other organisations and actors within the field do, its power to determine these stakeholders' choices, and how its implementation contributes to or hinders the achievement of modernising goals.

The definition and positioning of social conditions and their attendant goals concern the communication dimension of the agenda; therefore, the second phenomenon studied by my investigation is the communication function of the agenda for modernisation. I examined two specific aspects of this phenomenon. The first is the routes through which the agenda travels to its intended destination, the micro-level. National authorities were identified as relaying posts of the multilateral institutional agenda(s) for modernisation; hence, it became pertinent to establish how these authorities use and transfer the contents of the agenda, expressly if all its social problems and goals are incorporated into the local authorities plans, and if that is the case, what is the outcome of that process in light of potentially distinctive competing local priorities. This is covered mainly in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

The other phenomenon studied by my investigation, which also relates to the communication function of the agenda, is the actual interpretation of its goals and associated social problems. This interest in how stakeholders determine the whole meaning of the institutional agenda for development was narrowed down to establish the following two matters: a) if and how the meaning of the multilateral agenda is negotiated between different organisations in the field – i.e., not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) and their partners –, and b) if the negotiated meaning of the agenda has any effect on the design and implementation of programmes, particularly those formulated by third-sector partnerships intervening local communities. The findings concerning the focal points a) and b) are discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

Regarding the broader development problems and challenges that serve as the context to my investigation, critics have argued that the institutional modernisation project is the cause of underdevelopment and its intensification, or in simpler terms, modernisation has been deeply damaging to humanity and global well-being (Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997). So, in all its historical forms, the agenda for development may have been responsible for making development unachievable or, in more sanguine terms, unsuccessful. But before I expand on these two claims, in section (1.3), it is vital to elaborate on the meanings of modernisation and development arising from the extant scholarship and, in particular, how these two terms are used in this thesis.

In this thesis, I have used the term 'modernisation' to refer to a way of conceiving development that is characterised by its alleged multilateralism, but it is essentially designed and implemented by North-Western nations as a global project (e.g., Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs) and advanced through sizeable institutionally funded programmes and less ambitious interventions designed to tackle the social problems of

the Global South. This way of using the term does not differ significantly from current definitions of international development (e.g., Concern Worldwide, 2019; Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2023; Dag Hammarskjöld, 2024). However, it is vital to note that I have equated development with modernisation and used the terms interchangeably.

It could be argued, though, that these terms are not interchangeable because modernising thinking and practice has been informed by questionable views – such as social Darwinism and racial theories – and its most contemporary version is underpinned by ideas, such as functionalism[2] and rationalism, which some regard dated or unhelpful in advancing development (Nisbet, 1966; Mazrui, 1968; Nisbet, 1969; Tipps, 1973; Roxborough, 1988; Hofstadter, 1992; Kay, 2018; Rist, 2021; Unger, 2022). So, whatever modernisers propose nowadays is just a way of conceptualising development but not development per se. In line with the latter, it could also be contended that the current agenda for development is a truly multilateral project (UN General Assembly, 1986; UN General Assembly, 2015; Seth, 2024) shaped by a global consensus on a set of ideas (i.e., Haq, 1976; 1995; Haq and Haq, 1998; Sen, 1988; 2001; 2005; 2013), which has led to their formal adoption by the institutions of development (e.g., the UN agencies and the World Bank) and these ideas are antithetical to the principles of modernisation.

Still, I believe equating the terms modernisation and development is applicable. Hence, I have also used the term modernisation disapprovingly, collocating it beside the words 'institutional', 'multilateral', 'development', and 'agenda' to emphasise its persistent historical ascendency. My take on this matter has been informed by the ample historical

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[2] 'Many of the leading contributions to modernisation theory have come from men such as Lerner, Levy, and Eisenstadt who have been schooled in functionalist theory' (Tipps, 1973, p. 201).

critique of the global development project that considers the latter an enduring vital aspect of the North-Western postcolonial enterprise (Escobar, 1995; Quijano, 2007; Fals-Borda, 2015; Gandarilla Salgado, García-Bravo, and Benzi, 2021; Kohn and Reddy, 2023), which has also taken the form of a geopolitical co-opting project that exploits the lack of financial resources of the Global South to keep it aligned to a polyarchic-capitalist order (Robinson, 1996; Rist, 2021).

Expanding on the ascendency or persistent dominance of modernisation-development, for example, it has also been abundantly argued since the late 1960s that key initiatives, remedies and recipes for development – e.g., The Alliance for Progress (1961), Structural Adjustment Programmes (1980), and the Washington Consensus (1989) – have been informed by modernisation principles (Kay, 2018; Rist, 2021). Hence, the contention here is that modernising ideas – under modernisation theory (MT) – have remained highly influential within the field of development. In any case, it would not be fair to thrust my understanding of modernisation on the reader without elaborating first on how its theory (i.e., MT) and its critique (e.g., dependency theory). This is covered below, paving the way for a more focused review of the contemporary conceptualisation of development in section 1.3, where I provide links between modernisation and development and other contrasting views.

1.2 Defining modernisation

In his critical review of 'Modernisation Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies', Tipps (1973) argues that despite its rapid rise to currency and popularity, there is no widespread consensus on the meaning of modernisation. Elaborating on the latter, Tipps explains that: 'the popularity of the notion of modernization must be sought not in its

clarity and precision as a vehicle of scholarly communication, but rather in its ability to evoke vague and generalised images which serve to summarise all the various transformations of social life attendant upon the rise of industrialisation and the nation-state in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' (p. 199).

Tipps proceeds to examine the academic work on modernisation to introduce precision into the matter, identifying the following two types of theories: a) critical variable and b) dichotomous theories. Here, I have used this classification to elaborate on the academic meanings and critique of modernisation.

1.2.1 The critical variable theories of modernisation

Regarding the critical variable theories, Tipps explains that these conceptualisations mainly study two units of analysis, the 'national territorial state' and a factor shaping the latter, such as industrialisation, economic growth, rationalisation, structural differentiation, political development, social mobilisation, secularisation, and cultural-values change (pp. 202-203). To illustrate this category, Tipps points to Moore's work (1963, pp. 89-112), which equates modernisation with industrialisation, explaining that Moore 'proceeds to discuss the former in terms of the conditions, concomitants, and consequences of the latter' (pp. 203-204). Hence, Tipps concludes that an enduring feature of critical variable theories is that the term modernisation is often substituted by another single term, one of the units of analysis mentioned above (e.g., modernisation equals economic growth). However, and oddly, Tipps argues that 'it is because of this trait that the "critical variable" method of conceptualizing modernisation has not been widely adopted by modernisation theorists' (p. 204). However, other scholars' reviews of modernisation theory indicate the opposite (e.g., Gwynne and Kay 2004; Kay 2013; 2018;

Rist 2014; 2021). In other words, modernising work styled as a critical variable theory seems to be the norm, not an exception.

For instance, in Kay's review (2018) of how modernisation and dependency theories have shaped Latin America's policy formulation and academic work on development, Kay categorises Gino Germani (1971) and Guido di Tella, Manuel Zymelman and Alberto Petrecolla's (1973) leading work as modernist. Kay's reason for this classification is that the above scholars applied Rostow's (1959; 1960) stages of growth model to establish the state of development of some South American countries (p. 17). According to scholars studying the evolution of modernisation theory, a foundational device underpinning modernising work is 'a stages model of history'(Roxborough, 1988, p. 758). Rostow named his influential model 'the stages of economic growth'[3], which, as its name indicates, prescribes the study of one central unit of analysis (i.e., economic growth), shaping national development as the other unit of analysis. Hence, conceptualisations based on the study of this causal relationship (i.e., economic growth-national modernisation), like those applying Rostow's model (e.g., Germani and di Tella et al.'s work), should be treated in line with Tipp's classification as critical variable theories. Therefore, contrary to what Tipp assumed above, the latter supports the view that modernist scholars have given sufficient consideration to critical variable theories to advance their views on development. The implications and limitations of adopting this form of conceptualisation are discussed later in this section.

Expanding on the enduring influence of critical variable theories, it is essential to consider the following comment by Rist (2021, p. 103) on Rostow's work: 'his success was not

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[3] Rostow (1960) posited that the following five stages had and will be followed by nations evolving into modern countries: (1) the traditional society, (2) the preconditions for take-off, (3) take-off, (4) the drive to maturity, and (5) the age of mass-consumption. The take-off is the stage at which countries could turn towards modernisation.

limited to the 1960s. Whether one likes it or not, his conception of modernisation has not ceased to nourish the hopes as well as the illusions of the rulers of both North and South'. To underpin that assertion, Rist points to his analysis of the 'Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Guiding Principles for Building a Socialist Society with an Advanced Culture and Technology, 28 September 1986'[4]. Rist argues this transformational/modernist resolution and, therefore, agenda for development was informed by 'a purely Rostowian style' (p. 103). This challenges the currency of Tipp's assumption regarding the popularity of critical variable theories.

On the overall impact of modernising work on development, Rist asserts that 'in many respects, the policies of countries that have emerged from the debris of the Soviet empire are still inspired by modernisation theory' (p. 103). Other scholars support Rist's view of the persistent dominance of modernising ideas within policy formulators (e.g., Gendzier, 1985; Roxborough, 1988; Preston, 2013). For instance, Roxborough and Preston have confirmed modernisation's steady influence beyond the 1960s and attest to the minimal effect critics have had on this approach's popularity despite its weaknesses and contradictions. Some of these flaws and inconsistencies are introduced in this section.

So, we can take from the above that critical variable modernisation theories propose adopting and investing in the processes of industrialisation and/or economic growth, which are deemed vital to paving the way for national development. Also, depending on the scope of each theory, these processes contain elements of rationalisation, structural differentiation, political development, social mobilisation, secularisation, and cultural-values change. Hence, the term modernisation is used to advance a way of understanding

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[4] Rist referred to several passages of the aforementioned resolution to prove his point, for instance: 'By the end of the century, we should have brought the Chinese economy to a level of relative affluence, and around the middle of the next century to a level close to that of the developed countries in the world' (p. 103).

development, which in its contemporary form, according to Rist (2021), involves the following means: 'the spread of technology, industrialisation, [and] exploitation of nature' (p.103). Also, there is agreement amongst those reviewing the evolution of modernisation theory and its implementation on the dominance of critical variable theories of modernisation, including their models, which have continued shaping conceptualisation across the whole ideological spectrum, as progressive scholars also use these theories to underpin views on the transition from modernity to postmodernity[5].

Regarding the conceptual limitations of modernising critical variable theories, one rather evident one is that if modernisation is industrialisation or economic growth or structural differentiation, there are a plethora of definitions of each of these terms – including the other units of analysis mentioned above – which makes more difficult defining what modernisation is[6]. On a slightly similar issue, Tipps argues the following: 'When "modernisation" is employed as a synonym for some already relatively well-defined variable, it performs no useful function and, as a consequence, should be abandoned' (p. 205). In other words, in critical variable theories, 'modernisation' could function 'not as a theoretical term but simply as a synonym' (p.205). A synonym of a term – such as industrialisation – which in turn has multiple and potentially conflicting meanings.

Other limitations of critical variable theories could be gleaned from Kay's following definition of modernisation: 'In sum, modernisation theorists emphasised that social,

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[5] 'Economic modernisation involves the passage from the first paradigm to the second, from the dominance of agriculture to that of industry. Modernisation means industrialization. We might call the passage from the second paradigm to the third, from the domination of industry to that of services and information, a process of economic postmodernisation, or better, informatization' (Hardt and Negri, 2001, p. 280).

[6] To illustrate the point, Oxford Reference (Oxford University Press, 2024) offers almost 6,000 entries on the concept of industrialisation alone – including 'industrialisation' – so there are, for example, different takes on the concept by economists. The same applies to historical, environmental, geographic, social sciences, and managerial definitions of the term, including other subjects.

cultural, psychological, and political factors are also important for economic development. In this way, the non-economic social sciences were put ultimately at the service of economic objectives, although economists were seen as having the upper hand in the design of development strategies. This secondary role of sociological and cultural factors has since been challenged, especially with the rise of post-modern, postcolonial, and cultural studies, which largely dismissed economics and the whole idea of development' (2018, p.16).

Kay's definition foregrounded two deficiencies in modernising thinking: 1) overfocus on economic objectives and 2) inconsistent integration of non-economic factors (e.g., cultural-national values). Dependency scholars have extensively discussed the overfocus on economic objectives. Dependency scholars are a group of intellectuals who reject modernising economic-capitalist principles by exposing their flawed policies (Kay, 2018; Rist, 2021)[7]. It is beyond the scope of this section to review all the dependency critique, so here, the focus is on some of the most acute practical problems created by implementing critical variable theories to the modernisation of Latin America. Also, concerning the inconsistent integration of non-economic factors, this deficiency concerns exclusively critical variable theories because dichotomous modernisation theories have given sufficient consideration to socio-cultural units of analysis.

The practical historical problems caused by the implementation of critical variable theories in Latin America could be classified into two types: a) those that have created

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[7] Rist has provided an account of the origin of dependency theory and a list of 'dependentistas'. These are Marxists and neo-Marxists whose work, named dependency theory, originated in the USA, Europe and Latin America (2021, pp. 109-110). Kay's investigation also offers a comprehensive appraisal of the dependency scholarship (Gwynne and Kay 2004; Kay 2010; 2013; 2018) with a particular focus on the work of Latin American academics. Kay classified these academics as structuralists (reforming capitalism is the solution) and Marxists (replacing it with socialism is the solution). According to Kay (2018), Prebisch's centre-periphery perspective (1982; 1984) and Frank's world systems theory (1969; 2006) are foundational to dependency theorists.

dependent consumption patterns of North-Western's capital, technology and consumer goods for personal use and industrial production and b) those that have created dependent production pattern from North-Western markets. Concerning the former, for instance, Dos Santos (1968; 1970) explains that industrialisation led to some 'limited production of capital goods, but that further progress was stymied by the reluctance of foreign corporations to transfer technology and the inability to develop an indigenous technological capacity'. In other words, 'dependent countries did not have full control over their economies as they had to import the equipment, machinery, and spare parts for their consumer and intermediate-goods industries. They were thus "disarticulated" economies as they could not complete internally the full cycle of capital and were unable to generate their own technological progress' (Kay, 2018, p. 23).

In the same vein, Sunkel's research (1969) also reported the same pattern of dependent consumption due to the unwillingness of transnational corporations operating in Latin America to enable technological diffusion and export their production. Sunkel's work focused on a common aspect of industrialisation in many countries in the region involving the substitution of imported goods for nationally produced ones, also known as import-substitution industrialisation (ISI). In many cases, the failure to complete this substitution resulted in dependent consumption patterns led by those social classes with purchasing power, which in turn determined the incipient structure of national industrial production. According to Furtado (1973), an industry geared towards the needs of most of the population would have been more labour-intensive and less import-demanding.

As for those modernisation ideas that have created dependent production patterns from North-Western markets, Dos Santos (1978, p. 76) argues the following: 'A relationship of interdependence between two or more economies or between such economies and the

world trading system becomes a dependent relationship when some countries can expand through self-impulsion while others, being in a dependent position, can only expand as a reflection of the expansion of the dominant countries, which may have positive or negative effects on their immediate development'. The 'dependent position' mentioned by Dos Santos could be illustrated by the historically significant negative impact that production surpluses accompanied by sharp declines in demand for commodities (e.g., coffee or cocoa) by North-Western markets have on Latin America's economies. While the technology dependencies are more difficult to overcome, the production ones have been resolved by cartelisation (e.g., OPEC) and expanding trade to other non-North-Western markets.

1.2.2 Dichotomous theories of modernisation

According to Tipps (1973, p. 203), dichotomous theories conceptualise modernisation as a process by which 'traditional' societies acquire the attributes of modernity. An example of a dichotomous definition of modernisation is the following one provided by Eisenstadt (1966, p. 1): 'Historically, modernisation is the process of change towards those types of social, economic, and political systems that have developed in Western Europe and North America from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth and have then spread to other European countries and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the South American, Asian, and African continent'. Consequently, Tipps explains that 'modernisation, then, becomes a transition, or rather a series of transitions from primitive, subsistence economies to technology-intensive, industrialised economies; from subject to participant political cultures; from closed, ascriptive status systems to open, achievement-oriented systems; from extended to nuclear kinship units; from religious to secular ideologies; and so on' (p. 204).

Tipps' explanation foregrounds the three following features of modernisation theory, and in particular dichotomous conceptualisation, which are the subject of much debate and critique across academic fields: 1) the nature of the problem getting in the way of modernisation, 2) the means through which the problem could be solved and the attendant units of analysis, and 3) the ideology informing this body of work.

Concerning the first feature, the nature of the problem, it is 'tradition' or 'traditionalism' that modernisation scholars have considered 'a barrier' (Tipps, 1973, p. 208) or 'blocking development' (Kay, 2018, p. 16). As for the meaning of 'traditional', Huntington explains that 'modernity and tradition are essentially asymmetrical concepts. The modern ideal is set forth, and then everything which is not modern is labelled traditional' (1971, pp. 293-294). On the latter, Tipps (1973, p. 212) explains that 'tradition' in modernisation's body of work is mainly presented as a hypothetical antithesis of what is deemed modern rather than being derived from observation. So, for modernisers, the term traditional is synonymous with 'primitive' in a pejorative sense (e.g., traditional medicine). However, other terms are also synonymous with traditional, such as 'rural' and 'Indigenous'; hence, without evidence, these words – e.g., 'rural and Indigenous' – are negative qualities. Nevertheless, traditional means non-North-Western because modernisation is a form of Westernisation (Rist, 2021, p. 102).

In line with the above, Kay ventured a characterisation of 'traditional societies' by saying that they 'were defined as simple and undifferentiated societies with a large rural subsistence economy based on family labour, employing primitive technology, which explained their low productivity and poverty. They were also characterised by low levels of literacy, health, and political participation. By contrast, modern societies were depicted as complex and differentiated, with an industrial economy geared to the market, based on

wage labour and the adoption of scientific technology, which explains their high productivity and standard of living. They enjoyed high levels of literacy, health, and political participation' (2018, p. 15).

Extrapolating from the above, tradition is deemed problematic because it leads to low levels of health and poverty. However, the latter issues require proper characterisation – for instance, what is meant by poverty – and an explanation detailing how tradition causes the above problems. Cases abound, suggesting the opposite. For example, three pre-Columbian dominant cultures emerged in the centre and south of the American continent, paving the way for the Incan, Mayan, and Aztec empires, which had the features of what modernists called traditional societies[8]. However, accounts of the history of pre-Columbian civilisations argue that something else (i.e., colonisation), but not poverty or health issues, brought down these cultures (Galeano, 2010). In any case, neither poor health nor poverty got in the way of them expanding to the point of becoming empires, a historical fact that challenges, for instance, Rostownian-modernising thinking arguing that scarcity is what keeps societies 'primitive' (1960).

Leaving aside these counterarguments, reviewers of modernisation theory explain that it is 'the fatalistic approach to life ("things have always been as they are")' that discourages people from taking action (Kay, 2018, p. 16). The latter has been adopted as a modernist mantra and argued more formally by claiming that traditional or, more broadly, pre-industrial societies are static (Roxborough, 1988, p. 758). This assumption has been underpinned by ignorance of pre-colonial societies and the denial that something akin to

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[8] Also, see Encyclopaedia Britannica's description of the Pre-Columbian civilisations (2024).

transformation-development could have happened before the arrival of North Westerners to the Global South (Tipps, 1973, pp. 212-213)[9].

A more contemporary modernist interpretation of the matter is provided by Huntington (1965), who argues that even what might seem regressive events and circumstances would eventually contribute to the development of a country. Huntington elaborates as follows: 'Almost anything that happens in the "developing" countries – coups, ethnic struggles, revolutionary wars – becomes part of the process of development, however contradictory or retrogressive this may appear on the surface' (1965, p. 390). Huntington's explanation seems more reasonable; however, it remains problematic because it upholds the historical roles of developers and developees, or appraisers and appraisees, established by colonial enterprises. Regarding these roles and the ideas that animated them, Mazrui (1968, p. 82) says that they are underpinned by 'the self-confidence of ethnocentric achievement'. But before I discuss the arrogant thinking that justifies such roles, we focus first on how the obstacle to modernisation (i.e., tradition) could be solved and the attendant units of analysis.

According to Kay (2018, p. 16), modernists believe that 'for traditional societies to progress, prevailing attitudes, beliefs, and cultural and social values had to be displaced by modern viewpoints through the diffusion of scientific knowledge, technical capabilities, organisational and institutional capacities, and so on. Development aid from rich to poor countries would facilitate the process of transition'. Simply put, to tackle tradition, the following three undertakings are necessary: a cultural-values change project, knowledge sharing, and the investment in creating capacity. However, as Latin

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[9] 'In fact, "traditional societies" appeared changeless only because they were defined in a manner that allowed no differences between traditions and recognised no significant change save that in the direction of the Western experience' (Tipps, 1973, p. 213).

American dependency theorists have discovered, the aid or support given has never been suitable or enough to make a meaningful-transformative impact (see previous subsection 1.2.1). So, it is not surprising that these same scholars suspected this was/is a deliberate action to keep in place historical asymmetries-dependencies that support a world order benefiting the North-Western economies, as it is thoroughly explained by the centre-periphery perspective (Prebisch and Gurrieri, 1982; Prebisch, 1984) and Frank's world systems theory (1969; 2006).

According to Kay's observation above, the cultural-values change project seeks to displace the traditional principles of non-Northwestern societies or, to be more precise, to replace them with those considered modern[10]. Modernists have advanced specific values and factors – and hence units of analysis – that are critical for this change project. For instance, Huntington (1968) considers it necessary to nurture political order, while Moore (1963) sees it vital to instil individual merit. Pye, Verba, Almond, and Coleman (1965; 1965) believe it is crucial to foster political participation, and Hagen (1962) thinks it is essential to develop an entrepreneurial and innovative spirit.

So, leaving aside the discussion of any possible justification for this values-replacement project, one has to ask for evidence that the proposed modernist values were not already part of traditional societies. Once again, there is plenty of proof or cases – such as the anti-colonial and independence successful enterprises and all the attempts of the Global South to find its path amidst the persistent foreign illegal interventions – that indicate progressive values were and are present in these societies. I have called them 'progressive' because I find the label 'modern' questionable, for the reasons given above

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[10] Later, I expand on this matter in section 2.2.8 by referring to the specific topics of indigenous knowledge (IK) and the scientification of societies.

and others below. In any case, progressive values are not necessarily antithetical to modernist ones. So, aren't the so-called modernist values just universal values instead of North-Western principles? If the answer is 'yes', why do North-Western nations own these values? And crucially, why have the North-Western nations embarked on a mission to impose on the Global South what it already has?

On the same subject, Tipps (1973, p. 214) explains that many critics of modernisation have argued that traditional values persist in North-Western nations, which in turn sustain longstanding institutions (e.g., European Monarchies or in the UK the Society of Merchant Venturers (SMV), 2024). Hence, any society results from the interpenetration of traditional values and new ideas. In this regard, Rist (2021, p. 21) observes that 'it is necessary to reject the "great divide" between "tradition" and "modernity", for modernity itself lies within a certain tradition'. Furthermore, Rist argues that modernists have failed to explain how to deal with a much more relevant problem: preserving the good things about tradition. I will add that there has been a more relevant gap for the Global South in modernising contemporary thinking: no explanation or meaningful attempt to eliminate modernising regressive principles or anti-values. This topic concerns the last part of this sub-section.

In any case, Tipps (1973) found another critical gap in dichotomous modernisation theories: explaining the role of 'external sources' in shaping social change, such as conflict, conquest, colonial domination, international political and military relationships, international trade and cross-national flow of capital. 'Any theoretical framework which fails to incorporate such significant variables (...) cannot hope to explain either the origins of these societies [Global South] or the nature of their struggles for political and economic autonomy (...) which all societies face' (p. 212). So, what Tipps is suggesting here is that

it is rather odd to prescribe political order as a de-traditionalisation remedy – like Huntington did – while overlooking that colonialism and the subsequent contemporary North-Western interventionist ventures have always killed, among other things, political order. The lost political order takes centuries to re-emerge. Consider, for example, the aftermath of the 1953 Iranian coup d'état and the implications of the US administration's support for dictatorial regimes in South America. What survives these interventions is incipient, unstable and problematic political structures (e.g., Iraq and Afghanistan governments after invasions). All the above reminds us that the modernist values-change programme and the blatant disregard for the impact of its policies are undoubtedly informed by some ideology transmitted or reflected by academic work[11]. Hence, now we are focusing our attention on the latter topic.

So, regarding the third feature of dichotomous theories of modernisation, probably its most influential one, Tipps explains that 'one of the most frequently heard complaints against modernisation theories in the dichotomous tradition is that they are the product of an essentially ethnocentric world-view' (1973, p. 206). This ethnocentric worldview has been underpinned by racial and biological evolutionary ideas, which most critical scholars agree inform the theory of social Darwinism and, by extension, modernising thinking. It is beyond the remit of this section to thoroughly discuss social Darwinism in its different versions (e.g., liberal, individualistic, selectionist and interventionist) or to elaborate on how it is distinct or similar to racists, eugenics, supremacist or evolutionary views (e.g., Hofstadter 1992; Drouard 2001; Drouard 2015; Ruse 2015; Winlow 2020); however, here, I explain how social Darwinism has informed modernisation and, therefore, development.

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[11] Kay (2018, p. 16) explains that Huntington's 'analysis was interpreted (by some) as justifying strong and even authoritarian governments'.

According to Drouard (2001), 'the term "social Darwinism" was coined in Europe in the 1880s and rapidly spread through England and the USA. It negatively refers to the theories and doctrines deriving the social laws from the laws of nature. Drouard (2015) explains that 'whatever form it has taken, at different times and in different countries, social Darwinism' advances the following assumptions: a) The laws of nature apply to all living beings and thus to human societies, b) these laws of nature are 'the survival of the fittest,' 'the struggle for life,' and 'the laws of heredity', c) population growth puts pressure on resources, which leads to a struggle for the existence of organisms, d) the physical and mental traits that provide an advantage in the struggle for existence can be propagated throughout the population via hereditary transmission, and e) the cumulative effects of selection and hereditary transmission over time explain the emergence of new species and the elimination of others.

Most of the above assumptions have been challenged by science, but they are not obviously racist, ethnocentric, eugenist or supremacist, so what makes social Darwinism a negative theory? According to Mazrui (1968): 'In 1859, Charles Darwin's Origin of Species was published. It was soon to produce long term repercussions both for the study of biology and for the study of social science. Racists could now proceed to demonstrate, by the utilisation of the theory of natural selection, that major differences in human capacity and human organisation were to be traced to biological distinctions among races. But to some extent this theory was much older than Darwin. What Darwin added to it was the dynamism converting [the] mere classification of beings into a process'[12] (p.70).

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[12] There is an ongoing discussion on whether or not Darwin's ideas were inherently racist. For instance, Winlow (2020) believes that: 'social Darwinism is commonly understood to mean the application of Darwin's biological theories to the social and cultural realm. In reality, sociocultural evolutionary theories developed in parallel to biological theories, rather than emerging from them. Social Darwinism is an umbrella term which was applied indiscriminately to a variety of social theories that emerged in the late 19th Century, with often little resemblance to Darwin's original theories'. However, Diogo (2024) argues that 'Darwin's intellectual conservatism and biased ideas about women and non-European people were presented as evolutionary 'facts' by him and others, and these have been used by 'populist

So, based on Darwinism, an advanced by social Darwinism, nations are in different stages of their evolution or development as societies, and this could be attributed to biological distinctions among peoples. To this, Mazrui adds that what social Darwinism has done is propagate 'the idea that the backward people [in the Global South] might be on the move toward a higher phase and that those in front [e.g., North-Western nations] might be moving further ahead still' (p. 70). Mazrui believes that quarters of the North-Western scientific community provided the ammunition for propaganda that presented North-Western art, discoveries and sports achievements as evidence of higher capacity on all fronts (pp. 70-71). The latter is the foundation of the North-Western exceptionalism. Consequently, all this self-confidence acquired as a result of chauvinistic propaganda has led to ethnocentric, racist, eugenist and supremacist views and actions, which in turn have informed the modernising development project. On the latter accusation, Tipps explains the following:

'As modernisation theorists began to adapt for their own purposes the dichotomous approach as it was developed by social evolutionists during the late nineteenth century, they did feel constrained to make certain changes. Not only were blatantly ethnocentric terms such as "civilised" and "barbarism" clearly unacceptable, but the explicit racism of the biological school of evolutionary theory had to be laid to rest. However, such changes were in many respects merely cosmetic (...) Thus, though the terminology of contemporary modernisation theory has been cleaned up to give a more neutral impression – it speaks of "modernity" rather than "civilisation", "tradition" rather than "barbarism" – it continues to evaluate the progress of nations, like its nineteenth-century

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political leaders, authoritarians, colonialists, and white supremacists to "scientifically" defend social hierarchies, sexism, racism, discrimination, oppression, and segregation'. I side with Diogo on this matter.

forebears, by their proximity to the institutions and values of Western, and particularly Anglo-American societies' (1973, p. 206).

Some might be tempted to say that Tipps' review reflects modernisation's thinking and policies during the 1950s and 60s; therefore, the author's conclusion is dated. However, Rist (2021, p. 56) follows up on the same accusation, pointing out that current forms of intervention introduced as new were before colonial-modernising policies. He substantiates this point by presenting various examples concerning the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNESCO's practices and programmes (p. 57). He also refers to 'village credit banks', which I found in Colombia (2018-2020) and examined as part of my investigation. These micro-credit organisations were called 'Community Banks' by Colombian third-sector actors (see Chapter 6 for more detail). So, what is wrong with these rehashed forms of intervention? Rist explains that they remain linked to 'the feelings of superiority with which Europeans were imbued' (p. 58).

Whether or not European exceptionalism has shaped current development programmes, such as the concept of Community Banks, is somewhat irrelevant. It seems more pertinent to ask how these programmes sustain or promote systems or practices detrimental to the Global South. For instance, the Community Banks, it could be argued that these micro-lending organisations underpin the current financial system, particularly the idea that credit is unavoidable, even for those who, by universal banking standards, are considered to be high-risk individuals. Others might defend micro-lending by saying that these initiatives are alternatives to those excluded by the financial sector and that a network of these Community Banks could become a way around mainstream banking, as cryptocurrencies are a substitute for pre-existing currencies.

Still, it seems relevant to note that the absence of banks or a reliable financial system in any country is treated as a symptom of underdevelopment. Furthermore, nations that fail to adopt new financial practices and technologies face a demotion in development rankings and the attendant implications (United Nations 1990, pp. 12, 63; UNDP, 2010, p. 65; 2020, pp. 165, 181)[13]. Therefore, the Global South is required to be fully integrated into the North-Western financial system and consent to incorporate its new facilities-products (e.g., open banking). However, what is not stated straightforwardly is that the Global South must also share the pain of the financial system's recurrent crises.

Or perhaps a better way to argue that modernist chauvinistic thinking remains alive and shaping development policy is by pointing to the rise of far-right movements in North-Western nations (Lazaridis, Campani, and Benveniste, 2016; Kazazis, 2024). Through coalitions with conservative parties or by threatening to split conservative constituencies, far-right parties are influencing development policies across the North-West in matters that concern the agendas for development (e.g., SDGs). For instance, in the UK, nativist politicians and their political organisations (e.g., Nigel Farage and UKIP and Reform) are using their increasing popularity among conservative voters to force the hand of the Conservative and Labour parties to review international development policies and, in particular, to reduce the aid budget[14] (Hudson, 2015; Reform UK, 2024). This might be an odd way for development to wither and die, at least in its international form.

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[13] The Human Development Report 2010 sees as a positive development that 'Bangladesh's Grameen Bank model of micro-finance has been replicated around the world' (p. 62).

[14] 'Cut Foreign Aid by 50%. Save £6 billion from the £12.8 billion budget. A major review is needed into the effectiveness of overseas aid. That includes global quangos to which we pay over £7 billion every year' (Reform UK, 2024, p.4).

Summarising, all the above substantiates the reasons why the so-called multilateral institutional modernisation-development project is treated here as a problematic and rather unilateral agenda for development, which essentially advances a cultural-values change project that has not been necessarily consensual and is building capacity based on what chauvinistic modernisers deem progressive. More ideas linked to this train of thought are provided below. So, the next section of this chapter walks the reader through the meanings of development to foreground its challenges and the problematic ways modernisation has been pursued. But before that explanation is attempted, I must note that the research aims introduced in section 1.1 are still broad; they will become more specific by the end of the chapter, as each section will add details to complement the above preliminary research objectives.

1.3 Defining development

On development, Esteva (1992) and Sachs (1992) have argued that the idea suffers from conceptual inflation – meaning many things – and that the term should mean nothing for those concerned with actual human development. Leaving aside the specific reasons underpinning these scholars' similar views, their two points have been used here as boundaries guiding this section's travelling direction. So, here, readers are introduced to different views on the function of development and the sticking points concerning its historical purpose and future to define this idea. Readers will encounter distinctive definitions in this section responsible for the aforementioned conceptual inflation and its implications. Concerning the latter, do the different views on development agree about what needs development? Or, for that matter, is development a necessity? The answers to these simple but essential questions are vital because they concern the design and

implementation of agendas for development, which are the matters at the heart of this investigation.

In line with the above, anyone attempting to make sense of development should examine its political-economic and sociological conceptual foundations. Regarding the former first, Marxism, capitalism, neoliberalism, globalisation, and more recently sustainability, are considered development approaches themselves, a set of dissimilar and opposing political-economic orientations advancing a distinctive view on economic growth, its expansion, its distribution, and the role of the state in influencing these matters (Rostow, 1959; Cairncross, 1961; Baran and Hobsbawm, 1961; Dos Santos, 1970; Tomlinson, 1994; Gwynne, 1997; G. Reyes, 2001; Stiglitz, 2002; Easterly, 2002a; 2002b; Gwynne and Kay, 2004; Gupta, 2009; Pralle, 2009; Andrews and Bawa, 2014; Sachs, 2015; Slobodian, 2018; M. Reyes and López, 2019; Scoville-Simonds, Jamali, and Hufty, 2020; Furtado, 2021).

Hence, to grasp the meaning of development is to understand its eclectic political-economic nature, particularly the repercussions of the unsettled debate on income allocation or distribution (e.g., Dabla-Norris et al., 2015; Elliott, 2022; Crerar, 2022; Biden, 2023). This debate concerns who has the right to benefit the most from the commons (i.e., profiting from the exploitation of resources of any kind) and how that determination has led to disparities in income or not. Socioeconomic classifications commonly express and naturalise income or economic disparity (IMF, 2022). Still, as a state, or optimistically as a temporal condition, it is linked to 'underdevelopment' and 'underdeveloped', reflecting the social and personal dimensions of the state of inequality in which nations and individuals find themselves in (e.g., low economic growth and

facing income poverty) (Warke 1973; Cardoso 1977; Baran 1978; Palma 1978; Bardhan 1985; Chakravarty 1987; Kay 2013).

On the sociological conceptual foundations, two additional sets of ideas have also shaped the meaning of development. Initially, a group of distinctive paradigmatic positions, these being functionalism and rationalisation, each advancing an explanation and prescription of the purpose of development (i.e., social stability, order, and evolution) while emphasising its different dimensions (i.e., national or international focus) (Lerner and Pevsner, 1958; Parsons, 1963; 1964; Bernstein, 1971; M. Weber, 1978; Vandergeest and Buttel, 1988; Giddens, 1997; M. Weber, 2012). This set of paradigmatic views constitutes what scholars have identified as 'the sociology of development', and regardless of the distinctive focal point and ideology advanced by each of these views, they all share an interest in the factors that cause social change or inertia at different levels (e.g., macro or micro) (Kiely 1995; Viterna and Robertson 2015; Kay 2018).

In that regard, the scope of the sociology of development covers the personal and the collective by focusing on the psychosocial dimension to understand how behaviour, attitudes, beliefs and values operate to effect social change or the opposite. So, there is no formal definition of development arising from this set of ideas but the paradigmatic treatment of development as a function to structure society. It is worth noticing that some overlooked clusters of thought within this subject, like the constructionist approach to 'the sociology of social problems' (Kitsuse and Spector, 1973), deserve a systematic reading due to their potential to inform our collective understanding of the interaction between social conditions, problems, and their framing. Hence, the academic work on these topics has been reviewed in Chapter 2.

In line with some of its essential conceptualisation being overlooked, the sociology of development reached 'an impasse', a state of temporal stagnation and receding influence (Booth 1985; Corbridge 1990; Kiely 1995), a state of affairs that created room for the emergence of alternative views, some of which are not necessarily interested in the psychosocial dimension of modernisation, but its economic impact, social order and change function instead. These alternative views are dependency theory, world-systems theory, post-colonial theory, post-development theory, and, lately, degrowth. This third cluster of perspectives constitutes the most contemporary set of ideas shaping the meaning of development: a collection of sociological and economic views, advancing either radical revisionism of the dominant ideologies of the 20th century – i.e. modernisation and capitalism in its different forms – or a total departure from them (Dos Santos, 1970; Esteva and Prakash, 1998; Escobar, 2000; Wallerstein, 2004; Schrank, 2011; Escobar, 1995; Esteva, Babones, and Babcicky, 2013; Mowforth, 2014; Rist, 2021; Hickel, 2021). But bearing in mind the ample scope of this cluster of (post)perspectives, what shared meaning of development have they been advancing?

In attempting to answer the above question, a reasonable assumption would be that these (post)perspectives have proposed a new world order as counter-development. A new order characterised by its anti-globalisation, anti-neo-colonialism, anti-rationalism, anti-capitalism, and anti-dependency of a North-Western-centric structure; a proposition underpinned by two bold claims. Those claims are as follows: development as a project has failed; it has not delivered, at least not for the Global South and the unprivileged in the North-Western nations; also, and crucially, development has caused irreversible damage to the Global South's original way of living, which used to be characterised by its wellbeing (W. Sachs, 1992; Esteva and Prakash, 1998; Escobar, 2000; Rist, 2021; Ghosh, 2021). In a nutshell, development has caused underdevelopment, which is

probably one of the biggest paradoxes of humankind. So, the specific meaning of 'development' emerging from this third set of views seems to be that development is a paradox, or as mentioned before, the term should mean nothing (e.g., Esteva, 1985; Sachs, 1992). The latter is the case because (post)academics presumably would favour replacing development with a new concept. This new notion would signify the construction of their envisioned new world order. I have not yet encountered that new concept, but it does not mean it does not exist.

Continuing with this review of the meaning of development, it is crucial to consider the academic scholarship that offers a defence of the status quo, which I will call neo-modernist, as it provides a critique of the (post)perspectives' critique while it shies away from the ethnocentric and racists views underpinning some of the original thinking of MT (e.g., Lehmann, 1997; Pieterse, 1998; Kiely, 1999; Nanda, 1999; Blaikie, 2000; Pieterse, 2000; Storey, 2000). This body of work has made the contemporary debate about the nature of development more salient by attacking the claims posed by (post)academics, particularly those associated with the 'post-development' school of thought. However, the critique of post-development is not treated here as a fourth cluster of views, as it has not attempted to provide a new route to the achievement of global human wellbeing, but to argue that abandoning development entirely, as post-development has advocated, is unwise, because that action would be based on wrong assumptions. But for the latter point to be meaningful, the reader must first be familiar with the 'wrong assumptions'.

Regarding the above requisite knowledge, the range of arguments against development consistently brandished by post-development scholars is vast. Here, I have relied on Ziai's review (2015) to give the reader a flavour of what post-development scholarship has identified as problematic with the modernising project, the specific points

underpinning the claim of failure and the paradox mentioned above (i.e., development has caused underdevelopment). Regarding the specific points above, for instance, development is a **post-colonial project** to secure access to those places of the Global South that are rich in commodities (i.e., minerals) and other resources and also to discourage these emerging nations from aligning themselves with other competing ideologies of the West (i.e., communist regimes) (Rahnema, 1997, p. 379). Concerning the ideological function of development, post-development scholars have denounced and defined the modernising project as **a homogenising enterprise**, which seeks to de-culture and uproot original values, replacing them with Eurocentric rationalism, to create the conditions for the inception and expansion of the North-Western dominant political-economic orientation, that being capitalism (Escobar, 1995, p. 53).

With the Global South culturally and ideologically flattened, the development project enacts **the economisation of society**, imposing the logic of exchange value and hence de-valuing other social outputs and outcomes, which do not lend themselves to the accumulation of monetary wealth (Esteva, 1992, p.19). So, for this section of the chapter, the above gives an idea of the other meanings of development, defined as a post-colonial, de-culturing and economising endeavour, which has used aid in its different forms, or humanitarianism, to enact the Di Lampedusa Strategy. The latter entails changing to maintain the status quo (Di Lampedusa, 2010). Some aspects of this post-development train of thought will be reiterated under section 1.6 to direct the reader's attention to the specific difficult questions and paradoxes that concern this investigation.

Returning to the critique of post-development views, its range is substantial, and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to offer a systematic analysis of this body of work; however, it is possible to introduce some of its shared counterpoints. For instance,

regarding the claims of homogenisation and imposition of a post-colonial order through the use of force, Kiely (1999, pp. 38-40) has argued that nothing convincingly points to or proves the accusation of the cultural standardisation of the Global South. Also, oppression and exploitation had been part of the Global South's pre-colonisation history. Therefore, the view of development as a project of subjugation-keeping in place the status quo is a post-development Manichaean characterisation of the historical roles of North-West nations and the Global South, the former cast as evil and the latter as noble.

Pieterse (2000, p.178) adds weight to the previous point by noticing that to give credence to the view that 'where colonialism left off, development took over' (Kothari, 1988, p.143) is to believe that the Global South has never had agency. Also, on the matter of how the critics of development have buttressed their claims, Corbridge (2007, p. 190) argues that post-developmentalists have not provided data that could convincingly challenge that living conditions have improved across the globe (e.g., improvements in life expectancy, health care and so forth), at the time he called 'the Age of Development (1950-2000)'. Simply put, development did not fail the world as post-developmentalists have claimed.

While the previous paragraphs offered a sample of the counterpoints shared by the critics of post-development, their pièce de resistance is the claim that even if post-developmentalists were right, they are yet to provide us with a clear alternative to the current modernising project. Storey (2000, p.44) puts it in more specific terms when he explains that 'no clear model of how social change can be effected' has been suggested by post-developmentalists. From this, what follows is that all post-development promises of a more participatory form of improving humanity are risky because, without an alternative model, it is impossible to appraise whether or not these promises are

progressive. Therefore, it is unclear if post-development ideas contribute to creating a genuine democratic project for the world (Kiely, 1999, p.45). This is a swipe directed at the socialist ideological underpinning of the post-development movement.

The above line of reasoning introduced a slippery slope, starting at the point of the dislocation of development and from which the world would never have the opportunity to turn back to avoid an uncertain end at the bottom. At the top of that slope, though, there is safety in improving what the institutions of modernisation and its partner nations have been doing under the banner of 'alternative development' (Ziai, 2004; Corbridge, 2007; Ziai, 2015). So, for the critics of post-development, how does development look? Like the status quo, presumably before the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing increased 'uncertainty' unleashed by the concurrent crises we face at the moment (UNDP 2022a)[15].

At this point, it should be evident that it is not possible to unpack here the whole meaning and impact of the aforementioned political-economic orientations, the sociology of development and all the ensuing critique, as all this voluminous work encompasses historical thinking that stretches from the personal, that is the psychosocial – e.g., Durkheim on deviance (1950) – to the structural, the socio-economic sphere – e.g., Marx's political and economic theory (Marx, 1917). Therefore, whenever possible, the different sections of this thesis will briefly introduce some of the foundational work and critique concerning the multiple dimensions of development (sociological, political, economic and philosophical) to contextualise and enhance my argument. Yet it is still vital to offer some definition of development that enables essential understanding and provides a benchmark for appraising the modernisation plan and its agenda.

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[15] The title of this Human Development Report (2021-22) by the UNDP is 'Uncertain times, unsettled lives. Shaping our future in a transforming world'. Make of that what you wish.

With the above in mind, it becomes relevant to look at how the field has envisioned development to establish the expectations, deliver on them, and mark its work. Therefore, it is worth considering how the dominant organisations and actors within the third sector have attempted to position development in the minds of their stakeholders and, by extension, legitimise the institutional agenda. It is important to note that it is beyond the scope of this introduction to examine this matter from a broad historical perspective. Therefore, the focus here has been on bringing to the readers' attention what the United Nations (UN) and its leading development agency, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have considered the most recent, and since then, important characterisation of development for all the UN's agencies:

'Human development is a process of enlarging peoples' choices. The most critical ones are to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and self-respect - what Adam Smith called the ability to mix with others without being "ashamed to appear in public"' (United Nations, 1990, p.10)[16].

Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq have been identified as the intellectual fathers of this definition of human development due to the significant influence that their pre-existing theorisation had on the formulation and subsequent operationalisation of this concept (United Nations 1990; Stewart and Deneulin 2002; UNDP 2010; Nussbaum 2019; UNDP 2020).

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[16] My review of a sample of the human development reports published since 1990 indicates that the UN has consistently promoted this definition as its baseline idea of what development should be and achieve (United Nations 1990; UNDP 1991; 2010; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016a; 2019; 2020; 2022a). Other UN agencies' documents – at least 30 consulted to underpin different sections of this thesis – have also been informed by this definition of development.

Sen's contribution to the above characterisation of development, and generally to the academic field, is rooted in his 'capabilities approach' (1988; 2001). Capabilities are the doings and beings that people can achieve if they choose; an individual's opportunity to do and be, for instance, well-nourished, get married, study, and travel. 'Functionings', another element of Sen's approach, are capabilities that have been realised. Two additional components to Sen's approach are: 'conversion factors', defined as personal, socio-political and environmental conditions facilitating or getting in the way of realising capabilities, and 'freedoms', not understood as rights but opportunities to do something and be someone[17]. Hence, the possibility of someone converting social resources – such as a public service – into a functioning depends on facing supporting conversion factors and having freedoms-opportunities (Robeyns and Morten Fibieger, 2021).

Expanding on the implications of the above vis-à-vis the aforementioned institutional definition of development, any type of intervention should aim at 'enlarging people's choices' by removing the unhelpful conditions or helping people to face them and creating opportunities successfully. This does not seem to be difficult to conclude after translating the complicated lingo used by Sen to define 'opportunity', 'structural barriers' and 'training'. Removing structural barriers has become a key objective of the UN development programmes in the last ten years[18]. The removal of the structural obstacles refers to eliminating the legal, economic and cultural norms that hinder the achievement

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[17] In his title 'Development as Freedom' (2001, p. xii), Sen argued that 'expansion of freedom is viewed . . . both as the primary end and as the principal means of development. Development consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency'.

[18] Subsequent definitions of development formulated by academics and experts, who had been working closely with the UNDP, show some variation vis-à-vis the 1990s definition. One of these variations concerns the introduction of the removal of structural barriers. For instance: 'in simple terms, human development refers to a process of enlarging people's choices – through improving their capabilities, expanding their opportunities and removing the social, cultural, or political barriers that may work against them' (Fraumeni, 2021).

of human well-being (United Nations 2015; World Health Organization and Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian 2015; UNDP 2018; UN General Assembly 2015; UNDP 2022b).

Also, because the terms 'capability' and 'capacity' both refer to the 'ability to do something', according to popular definitions of these terms (Cambridge Dictionary Online, 2023), some have assumed that Sen's work has informed the two most dominant approaches put in place to achieve the modernisation of the Global South, these being 'capacity building' and 'capacity development' (e.g., Eade 1997; 2007; UNDP, 2002). By the 1980s, many UN agencies had already adopted, promoted and required capacity building and capacity development as formal means to achieve modernising aims. While there has been a significant amount of discussion about what it means to build and develop capacity (Honadle 1981; A. Kaplan 2000; Kuhl 2009; Vallejo and Wehn 2016), presumably, Sen's conceptualisation has been linked to these approaches because they involve creating opportunities through training and building the infrastructure to educate and transfer skills and knowledge. In this way, whether this was Sen's intention or not, his work transcended from the plane of conceptualisation to the plane of implementation (e.g., United Nations 1990; UNDP 1991; 2010a; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2019; 2020; 2022a).

Mahbub ul Haq's contribution to defining development is the 'Human Development Index' (HDI), formally introduced in the first 'Human Development Report' (United Nations, 1990). The HDI factors in three components of human life: longevity, knowledge, and basic income for a decent standard of living; these are combined to generate a ranking of developed and underdeveloped nations, hence advancing a view on

the meaning of 'human development'[19]. I underscored the latter because, as the 1990 Human Development Report stated, development is about humans. Therefore, it should not be 'based on the expansion of commodities and wealth' but on widening human choices (p.105). The UN promoted this same emphasis on 'human development' at the beginning of the 1990s as the new focal point for the field.

Regardless of the blinding logic of its fundamental proposition, the significance of this shift becomes more evident when we are made aware that treating peoples' well-being as the end goal of any intervention was not the main priority for the preceding development paradigms (1950s-1980s) (United Nations 1990; UNDP, 2010; 2020). So, the mainstream view that the UN was challenging was as old as the subject of 'development economics'; the latter held income maximisation as the single objective of development. Simply put, development was economic development. Therefore, since the 1950s, all the alternative approaches to the growth of Gross National Product (GNP) and its distribution (also called trickle-down economics) have failed to dethrone the focus on economic and income growth (Stewart and Deneulin, 2002).

For the critics of 'growth development economics', such as Sen, ul Haq, and all those that preceded them, 'growth of GNP might occur along with growing unemployment, worsening income distribution, even (though this is rare) rising incidence of monetary poverty, poor provision of social services, deteriorating indicators of health and nutrition, and so on' (Stewart and Deneulin (2002, p.61-62). Consequently, it was about time to push for a change of paradigm:

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[19] These components have changed since. For instance, by 2005, they were GDP, life expectancy and education (UNDP, 2005).

'The perception of development has since shifted - first, from economic development to socioeconomic development, with a new emphasis on poverty. Now, the shift is to human development. It emphasises the development of human choices and returns to the centrality of people' (United Nations, 1990, p.105).

However, some have challenged the UN's history of paradigmatic evolution, the premises and utility of the HDI, and the 1990 definition of development. For instance, Srinivasan (1994, p.238) has argued that 'the quality and texture of life' were treated as the end product of economic development in the 1950s (e.g., Buchanan and Ellis, 1955). Hence, it is misleading to say that development economics did not care for human well-being per se. Also, Srinivasan noted that the HDI has had no real impact on national policy formulation since its inception (1994, p.241). Furthermore, in specific allusion to Sen's freedoms, some must be limited (e.g., the liberty of exploiting the commons, such as natural water supply). Otherwise, human development as a universal condition will never be achieved (Crabtree, 2012).

Nevertheless, the UN has continued working since the 1990s on expanding choices and freedoms without significant change in its orientation or ultimate goal (e.g., United Nations 1990; UNDP 1991; 2010a; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2019; 2020; 2022a). And what is the UN's ultimate goal? In line with its rationale provided above, to facilitate the development of a human being able to be and do what she/he/they choose to, through exercising freedoms and taking opportunities. The latter could be achieved by removing structural barriers and developing capacity, which, as explained above, are key objectives of the UN's strategy to create opportunities and freedom.

Another transformational objective of the UN's approach to development is socialisation. This involves promoting the adoption of universal values (e.g., equality, democratic pluralism, sustainability) through different types of interventions (UN, 2024). For example, in Colombia, the capacity development interventions I came across, like technical skills training programmes, have psychosocial support deeply embedded within their objectives; hence, there is no opt-out option for the trainees. This psychosocial support comprises mental health aid and attendant coaching, encouraging individuals and communities to identify and replace the values that hinder their development. In other words, programmes designed in this way are vehicles for socialisation. In Chapter 5 of this thesis, I elaborate on how NPOs in Cali, Colombia, have implemented psychosocial support programmes and the relevant implications of their approach.

Concerning the macro-level approach to psychosocial support, The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development (UN, 1995) offers a glimpse of the somewhat contradictory way the UN has conceived socialisation. On one hand, throughout this declaration, there is expressed commitment to 'respect various religious and ethical values' and 'the cultural values' of indigenous people. On the other hand, education programmes will 'promote' and 'provide' social values, as these values are required to develop people's capacities. So, the pertinent questions are: how has the UN resolved any conflict between traditional held values and new universal values? And how is the provision of values approach different from the values-change programmes promoted by modernisers?

Leaving aside any potential similarities between the above approaches to socialisation, the significant ambitions of the multilateral development project – i.e., developing capacity, removing structural barriers and ensuring the adoption of universal values –

cannot be legitimised, let alone achieved without the power that comes with the status of being an institution. Conversely, there is significant support within the critique of development (e.g., dependency theory) for the deinstitutionalisation of the multilateral modernising structures and all its projects. So, how are these two phenomena and their outcomes conceptualised in this thesis?

The term 'institution' is used to signify different phenomena (Greenwood et al., 2008, p. 4), and some scholars have welcomed that this is the case (e.g., Czarniawska, 2008, p. 770). So, in line with that conceptual variety, in this thesis, 'institution' refers to the following two distinctive phenomena: a) a supra-organisational pattern of activity informed by structuring norms and symbolic practices (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Barley and Tolbert, 1997; March and Olsen, 1989; Staber, 2013) and b) a domain for action sustained by relationships and ongoing interactions (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Weber, 1978; 2019; Lammers and Barbour, 2006). Consequently, and in simpler terms, in this thesis, development-modernisation, together with its norms and logics, is treated as an institution, and the collection or aggregation of agencies and international bodies dedicated to enacting and implementing modernisation is also treated as an institution.

Greenwood et al. (2008, p. 5) explain that institutionalisation 'is the process by which "social processes, obligations, or actualities come to take on a rule-like status in social thought and action" (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 341). Something is "institutionalised" when it has that rule-like status. In a famous turn of phrase, Zucker concluded that institutionalisation means that "alternatives may be literally unthinkable" (1983, p. 5). Tolbert and Zucker (1983, p. 25) suggested three indicators of institutionalised practices: they are widely followed, without debate, and exhibit permanence'. DiMaggio and Powell (1983, p. 150) identified three institutionalisation choices organisations face:

'coercive, mimetic and normative'. The coercive choice is faced by a dependent organisation being formally or informally pressured by a powerful entity that supplies the former resources to adopt a particular norm, practice or procedure. Social expectations could also coerce an organisation to adopt standards, practices, and procedures because organisations depend on the approval of societies to operate. A mimetic choice becomes a suitable approach for an organisation when uncertainty on how to act regarding a development in the field's environment encourages an organisation to model itself or copy other organisations by adopting their practices, norms and procedures. The normative choice concerns adopting practices, norms and procedures because these are deemed pertinent by academia, a trade, industry or a professional body.

As for the opposite of institutionalisation, deinstitutionalisation happens when 'institutions weaken and disappear' (Scott, 2001, p. 182). The abandonment of practices causes the weakening of institutions. Practices are abandoned because they lose meaning due to the erosion of their legitimacy and/or because better practices appear. 'Legitimacy is a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions' (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). Also, 'ambiguities and contradictions' between logics within a field increase the likelihood of deinstitutionalisation, as ambiguities and contradictions 'mitigate certainty and make alternatives more easily available' (Brown, Ainsworth, and Grant, 2012, p. 299). Suddaby and Greenwood (2005, p. 36) expand on the role of logics in deinstitutionalisation, explaining that institutional change occurs as a 'consequence of negotiations and contests over which logic, and thus the criteria by which organisational legitimacy is assessed, will dominate'.

Oliver (1992, p. 566) identified three antecedents of the deinstitutionalisation of norms and practices, which the scholar called 'functional, political and social pressures'. These could originate within an organisation or in the environment. Functional pressures to deinstitutionalise norms and practices arise from the perceived diminishing utility or technical instrumentality of norms and practices (pp. 571-574). Political pressures occur 'when the utility or legitimacy' of norms and practices 'is seriously called into question' due to shifts in power distributions and the interests of those conferring legitimacy to existing institutional arrangements (pp. 568-570). Social pressures to deinstitutionalise norms and practices arise when members of an organisation conclude that specific changes within the organisation and its environment are leading to organisational failure or obsolescence. To prevent that, norms and practices must be abandoned and/or replaced (pp. 574-577). In section 7.4, I elaborate on what my agenda-setting findings tell regarding the institutionalisation or potential deinstitutionalisation of development.

Lastly, regarding how I handled development's conceptual inflation, its different dimensions, and the natural evolution of its meaning, I treated development as discourse. Here, discourse is preliminarily defined as 'not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized' (Foucault, 1981, p.52-53). The 'thing' for which there is struggle is the idea of development, since 'discourses are ideas as well as ways of talking that influence and are influenced by the ideas' (Johnstone, 2008, p.3). But in my view, discourse is more than an idea; it is a logic, a quasi-logical argument advancing a rational and institutional stance, a symbolic construction that guides the production and reproduction of a field's practices (Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012, p. 149). In that sense, logics foreground and make visible discourses and other types of frames, the frames that are specific to the micro-level. Frames convey logics but also aid in the

constitution of discourse. Hence, I posit that this interplay – discourse-logic-frame – confers power to discourses, a power to be seized.

The treatment of development as discourse is not unique to this study (e.g., Escobar, 1995); it is one of the things that made the school of post-development different from other critiques (Ziai, 2004; 2015). However, the introduction of logics and frames as conceptual aids to examine this subject, together with the view of agenda-setting outcomes as simulations, gives distinctiveness to this investigation. The reasons why agenda-setting outcomes are treated here as simulations are discussed in subsection 7.5.2.

The following section introduces the public relations (PR) ideas and paradigmatic assumptions that provided the initial impetus for this research. Also, in sub-section 1.4.2, I identify the relevant gaps in PR scholarship that created the opportunity to contribute to this field.

1.4 Background to the study

One of the challenges that motivated me to undertake this investigation is the opportunity to contribute to the PR field. So, after reviewing the field's body of work, I concluded that my investigation should also examine how organising takes place beyond organisational structures. Organising in this context refers to the designing of processes, the choices made concerning problem definition, the formulation of objectives and goals, and the pursuit of these. Also, an organisational structure is defined here as a consistent pattern of interaction between individuals, shaped by hierarchies and task differentiation, and these, in turn, are established by protocols and norms (Staber, 2013, pp. 5-8).

There is organising outside organisational structures, which requires communication and relationship formation, but PR scholars have overlooked it. Therefore, bearing in mind the room for a contribution created by this lacuna – a lacuna that I will substantiate later in this section – I chose to examine some of the organising processes necessary for the achievement of development goals, specifically the goals and processes pertinent to collaborative relationships formed by not-for-profit organisations (NPOs). Preliminary, collaborative relationships are treated here as informal domains; that is the case because they do not have most of the key characteristics of organisations. More on this matter will be added throughout this section.

The aim above aligns with the other ones introduced in the previous section (1.1), which also concerns the third sector, the agenda for development and the organisations implementing it. More specifically, those aims are a) acquiring a better understanding of problematisation, goal formation and the factors that shape them, b) acquiring a better understanding of how agenda-setting is communicated by examining how it travels to the micro-level and how NPOs make sense of this agenda through the negotiation of its meaning. This commonality between aims, the shared focus on the same phenomena, is evidenced by, first, the emphasis on the study of the organising that concerns problem definition and goal formulation, both critical components of agendas for development and second, the interest in examining the processes that relate to the modernising activities of third-sector actors; actors who work together through collaborative domains.

Furthermore, as was the case with the research aim introduced before, this second aim[20] also has the potential to contribute to the field of development due to the latter historical

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[20] Formally designated aim b (see section 1.5).

interest in the formation of collaborative arrangements of any kind, such as multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) or public-private partnerships (PPPs) (Andonova, 2010; 2014; Bayliss and Van Waeyenberge, 2018; Erdem Türkelli, 2021; 2022; Andonova and Piselli, 2022). Beyond academia, the institutions of development have granted legitimacy to collaborative arrangements through different declarations and protocols. For instance, The Busan Partnership Agreement (OECD, 2011) formalised the role played by collaborative domains within the field, while the Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG 17) mandates the involvement of different sectors and actors through 'partnerships for sustainable development' (UN, 2023)[21].

These 'partnerships for sustainable development are multi-stakeholder initiatives voluntarily undertaken by governments, intergovernmental organisations, major groups and other stakeholders' (...) (UN, 2023). The purpose of these domains is to 'foster stronger collaboration' (UN DESA, 2023). In this context, collaboration is the act of co-labouring, working together with others to tackle problems that require the pooling of resources due to the magnitude of the task at hand (Huxham, 1996; Bardach, 1998). But, because collaboration requires some degree of power-sharing and autonomy, the hierarchies and task differentiation characterising organisational structures are not necessarily useful or applicable to the development context (R. Agranoff and McGuire 2001; Robert Agranoff 2006; Blomgren Bingham and O'Leary 2008). Consequently, it is reasonable to presume that some of these 'partnerships for sustainable development' look like collaborative domains or relationships.

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[21] Under the latter, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) runs a 'partnership accelerator', a training and advisory services programme, 'offered to member States and UN entities/Resident Coordinators/country teams wishing to foster stronger collaboration between stakeholders and sectors, and enhance their capacities in forging new multi-stakeholder partnerships and partnership platforms' (UN DESA, 2023).

So, I considered it relevant to both fields to explore the interplay between collaborative development relationships and the agendas for development to derive some knowledge about the impact of that interplay on the implementation and expected outcomes of modernisation programmes. I will expand on this matter under section 1.5, where I formally introduce my research aims, objectives and questions. In the meantime, it is pertinent to narrow down, justify and substantiate the aim concerning collaborative relationships.

Consequently, in the following sub-section (1.4.1), I will introduce the key ideas within PR scholarship that guided my thinking while I designed this aim (b). Also, below, I touch upon relevant gaps in PR's body of work, particularly those concerning the concept of relationships. These gaps encouraged me to look for alternative – non-mainstream – ways of making sense of the types and purposes of relationships and their publics. Next, I introduce the alternative views I found within PR's research. Lastly, this review informed the discussion of my findings in Chapter 7.

1.4.1 The PR paradigmatic assumptions

Starting with the key ideas that informed the design of my second aim (b), Edwards (2012) identified two of them as 'paradigmatic assumptions'. The first of those assumptions is that 'the organisational context is the most important one for the study of PR' (2012, p. 14). Edwards also identified a divergent assumption, that is, 'PR is not solely defined by the formal organisational context; standpoints for understanding PR are many and varied' (2012, p. 16). Edwards explains that these two distinctive paradigmatic assumptions are underpinned by what she categorised as 'functional and non-functional' research, the former supporting the first assumption and the latter backing up the second

assumption[22]. Edwards' classification and accompanying assumptions informed the formulation of my second aim (b) and my choice regarding the ontological location of my study vis-à-vis the paradigmatic views within the field. Consequently, I deemed it necessary to briefly describe the basis of Edward's typification of PR scholarship.

Edwards described 'functional research' as the enquiry underpinned by systems theory and conceptualisation based on the excellence theory (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2006). According to systems theory, organisations take the form of either open or closed systems in relation to their external environments to attain goals, adapt, integrate with other systems and subsequently evolve. The latter are also the features of organismic organisations, which are supposed to resemble living organisms in their interactions with their surrounding environments when these organisms are seeking to identify the best way to survive and multiply. This is in contrast to mechanistic organisations, which are characterised by inflexibility – not adaptative –, preoccupied with order and therefore adopting hierarchical structures, in which information must not flow readily to enable control (Morgan, 2006).

The excellence theory prescribes open systems, symmetrical information flow, and organismic rather than mechanistic structures to achieve effectiveness; that is why all the research within the field embracing the excellence prescription has been deemed functional (Pieczka, 2006). Based on the above, functional-excellence scholars conceive PR as an organisational function whose primary purpose is to achieve organisational goals through different means, including relaying information that eases the interaction between different organisational sub-systems (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2006).

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[22] Edwards (2012) identified six paradigmatic assumptions, but here I am referring to only two of them. In Edwards (2012), the assumptions I mentioned above are number 1 and 4, which I numbered 1 and 2.

Consequently, by extension, 'non-functional scholarship' refers to PR research 'that explicitly departs from this [functional] perspective' (Edwards, 2012, p. 23). However, Edwards established that some scholars have an ontological position that places them at different points between two poles of a continuum, which she conceived by placing functional research on one end and non-functional scholarship on the opposite. Hence, some PR academics are not entirely adopting or rejecting the excellence-functional paradigm but simply taking a more adaptive approach. 'For example, Holtzhausen's work (2002, 2011) adheres to the normative [functional] position but is nonetheless challenging in her insistence that PR is best understood from a postmodern perspective, recognising the multiple voices among organisational publics that challenge the primacy of organisational interests' (Edwards, 2012, p. 16). But before I elaborate on how this continuum informs my paradigmatic stance, it is necessary to touch upon the implications of this ontological positioning by PR academics to advance the discipline's research agenda.

Some critical scholars believe that the excellence-functional scholarship is not just a key strand of PR inquiry; it is the dominant one, amounting to be the paradigm of the discipline, a state of affairs that has not necessarily encouraged diverse and innovative thinking (L'Etang, 2008; Curtin, 2012; L'Etang et al., 2016). In line with the latter, Edwards argued that definitions of PR that see it as an organisational function have had a marginalising effect on 'perspectives that do not wish to privilege the status of organisations, thereby limiting the ability of the field to both foster variety and develop radical new ways of understanding PR as it develops' (2012, p.11). To mitigate the negative impact of the dominance of functionalism within the discipline, Edwards proposed a new way of understanding PR that somehow decouples it 'from the organisational context, but without sacrificing the possibility of analyses that do want to

privilege that perspective', the organisational one, 'and without precluding analyses that are not located in that space' (p. 21).

So, on how the above informed the design of my investigation, my work embraced the call made by the second paradigmatic assumption: 'PR is not solely defined by the formal organisational context'. That is why my research concerns collaborative development relationships (CDRs). Consequently, in addition to how I preliminarily defined CDRs above, these are treated here as informal or non-organisational domains in the sense that they are not controlled or structured solely by one entity of the third sector; they do not exist within organisations but in the social space between them. Gray's work informed this idea of inter-organisational collaboration (Gray 1985; 1989a; 1989b; Wood and Gray, 1991), so before the reader presumes any contradiction, it is critical to note the following: Gray's research concerns problem domains, which are defined in her work as social systems that occupy a position in the social space between society as a whole and organisations (Trist, 1983, in Gray, 1985, p.912). 'More simply, domains can be thought of as the set of actors (individuals, groups, and/or organisations) that become joined by a common problem or interest' (Gray, 1985, p.912). Therefore, here, the words 'domain' and 'relationship' are used interchangeably, both terms expressing the need to join or be in a sustained interaction to undertake a collaborative activity (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Heide, 2018).

Therefore, collaborative domains or development problem domains have been called in this thesis collaborative development relationships (CDRs), a term used to refer to recurrent collaborative interaction and organising between third-sector actors, amounting to a relationship that exists in the space between third-sector organisations. That space is a social space or, simply put, a space that is part of society, where aid recipients or the

subjects of modernisation programmes coexist with their social conditions. CDRs are designed to mitigate or end development problems, the social conditions that have been problematised, which cannot be resolved by one actor or institution alone. At the beginning of the investigation, this was my hypothetical definition, formulated to be appraised in light of the findings concerning the problem domains under examination, as described in the methodology chapter. Also, and crucially, this hypothetical CDR informed the formulation of the second aim and the research questions, which will be introduced in the next section.

The need to draw from public administration theorisation to be able to formulate the concept of CDRs is rooted in the dominance of the functional paradigm within PR as follows: PR's scholarship on the third sector is unhelpful, as this work does not engage sufficiently and meaningfully with non-organisational phenomena. For instance, its nascent body of work has had a narrow focus on not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) and a tendency to treat them like social enterprises[23] (SEs) (e.g., Pang, Mak, and Mui-Hean Lee, 2011) (Lugo-Ocando and Hernández-Toro, 2016). In other words, this same work promotes the adoption of business logics (e.g., marketisation) and how to create the conditions for extracting resources from donors, hence the following assertion:

'The obsession with the organisational domain is partially rooted in concerns about the financial sustainability of NPOs (Wiggill, 2014, p. 278) – for example, in terms of "who will pay the bills?". Not surprisingly, a great deal of attention by scholars and practitioners is placed on those stakeholders "who matter financially" (the donors) and upon designing

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[23] 'Broadly defined as using nongovernmental, market-based approaches to address social issues, social enterprise often provides a ''business'' source of revenue for many types of socially oriented organisations and activities. In many cases, this revenue contributes to the self-sufficiency and long-term sustainability of organisations involved in charitable activities' (Kerlin, 2010, p. 164).

more efficient fundraising campaigns (e.g., Kang and Norton, 2004; Ingenhoff and Koelling, 2009; Swanger and Rodgers, 2013)' (Lugo-Ocando and Hernández-Toro, 2016, p. 230).

Paradoxically and against the normative views espoused by critical development scholars, some aspects of the above assertion were mirrored by the cases under study. Nevertheless, because of PR's lack of interest in non-organisational phenomena, I reviewed relational theory to find ideas that could inform my interest in collaborative organising undertaken beyond organisational domains. Hence, in the following sub-section, I introduce the relational ideas that contributed to formulating my second aim and the gaps that encouraged me to keep searching for work within PR scholarship that concerns non-organisational domains.

1.4.2 PR's relational notions, ideas and gaps

According to Ledingham (2003, p.193), '(e) organisations, and (f) publics' are vital components of the relationship management theory. These are also the units of analysis that relational scholars deem critical to the field (Ferguson, 1984), which led to the formulation of the concept of 'organisation-public relationships' (OPRs). Regarding the notion of relationships, a couple of questions came to mind; for example, what types of relationships have been identified by PR scholars? And are these relationships formed to mitigate problems collaboratively? So, are these relationships relevant to the third sector? What other factors, apart from the need to resolve a problem collaboratively, could encourage forming relationships and subsequently influence them?

In the early relational theorisation, Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997; 2000) drew from different specialisms – interpersonal relations, family relations, group dynamics, labour-management relations, counsellor-client psychotherapy relations, inter-organisational studies, and international relations – to come up with 'tentative conclusions and suggestions' that they believe could inform the formulation of the OPRs concept. Below, I have introduced some of these tentative ideas (1997, p. 95), those that could help to answer the questions I posed above:

a) 'Relationships consist of patterns of linkages through which the parties in relationships pursue and service their interdependent needs'.

b) The formation of relationships occurs (...) when one or both parties need resources from the other. When one or both parties perceive mutual threats from an uncertain environment and when there is a legal or voluntary necessity to associate.

c) 'Relationships may lead to increased dependency, loss of autonomy, goal achievement, and structured interdependence in the form of routine and institutionalised behaviour.'

Contrary to the mainstream views on relational theory, Broom et al. emphasise interdependence, dependence, resources, and autonomy as factors that lead to forming relationships and as drivers that shape already constituted relationships. Also, these are the only scholars interested in defining relationships before any attempt to elaborate on the notion of OPRs, as the above made evident. I found these ideas relevant to my second aim because whether or not one is interested in how collaborative development

interventions are funded, CDRs will have limited agency without resources (material or not). Broom et al.'s work indicates that resources, like other factors, such as communication, constitute relationships, but they do not elaborate much on the implications of managing these resources.

On the latter, the work of Grunig and Hon (1999) somehow covers the management of relational resources under the term 'benefits'. So, these scholars formulated maintenance and conflict avoidance strategies based on giving and receiving benefits. These strategies could be classified as symmetrical and asymmetrical[24], the latter being the ones that benefit one party at the expense of the other. Grunig and Huang expanded on these strategies later (i.e., 2000). While considering the relevance of these strategies to relationships in general, not just to OPRs, one thing became apparent: these scholars' work is heavily informed by conflict resolution views rather than exchange or resource dependency theory (RDT). The authors confirmed their assumption, explaining that exchange and RDT theories have limited applicability in managing pressures originating in the environment, like activism (2000, p. 35). Leaving aside the accuracy of these authors' assumption, their focus on contention and conflict resolution limited their understanding of collaboration.

So, the narrow view of collaboration in Grunig and Huang's work is informed by the mistaken conflation of cooperation and collaboration – e.g., 'cooperation/collaboration' (2000, p. 34), which treats both terms as synonyms. Furthermore, the dominant meaning of the word 'cooperation' arising from their work is to compromise, to accommodate, to

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[24] The maintenance strategies leading to symmetrical relationships are access, positivity, openness, assurances, networking and sharing tasks (Grunig and Hon, 1999, pp. 14-15). The conflict resolution strategies deemed asymmetrical by these scholars are contending, avoiding, accommodating, and compromising, while the symmetrical ones are cooperating, being unconditionally constructive, and saying win-win or no deal (1999, pp. 16-17).

consent as a pre-requisite that would pave the way for entering into a relationship with someone or maintaining a functioning relationship, while co-labouring is not that meaningful or important. So, I am making the point that I found PR's approach to collaboration unsuitable for the phenomenon I wanted to investigate: collaborative development relationships (CDRs).

It is worth noticing that critical scholars have argued that excellence-functional academics, like Grunig, overestimate the resources at the disposal of the public and also the publics' negotiation ability and their understanding of power. Excellence-functional scholars also tend to see symmetry as what is in the organisation's best interest but not necessarily publics (Edwards, 2006, pp. 148-149)' This is palpable in Grunig, Hon and Huang's work (1999, 2000). For instance, when appraising the consequences of applying these scholars' asymmetrical and symmetrical strategies, one would struggle to find a strategy that could disadvantage an organisation in an OPR. The latter begs the question, who could be disadvantaged if these strategies do not disadvantage organisations? So, reflecting on the potential issues of parity or equality arising from relationships, I wondered, what relational asymmetries are relevant to CDRs? And what are the implications of those asymmetries for development? Hence, as explained later in this chapter, my investigation examined development asymmetries.

Continuing with the matter of resources, the work of relational scholars shows some interest in this factor and attendant ones, too, such as interdependence and dependence. However, they are not widely studied in this body of work. For instance, from the 17 'dimensions' initially identified by PR scholars as factors shaping OPRs – one of them being 'interdependence/power imbalance' – only five (i.e., trust, openness, involvement, commitment and investment) continued to be systematically studied by subsequent

research (J. Kim and Chan-Olmsted, 2005, pp. 146-147). This gap led me to the only relational scholar who has consistently pursued a better understanding of the role of resources and interdependence in relationships, Hung (2005; 2009). In line with the above, Hung proposed the following definition of OPRs:

'OPRs arise when organisations and their strategic publics are interdependent, and this interdependence results in consequences to each other that organisations need to manage constantly' (2005, p. 396).

The central assumption underpinning the above definition is that 'when an organisation realises the interdependence with its publics, it either competes or collaborates with its publics in acquiring the resources for its survival. As a result, this kind of realisation will influence the type of interactions the organisation intends to have with its publics, whether it is to reach a win-win or win-lose outcome' (p. 396). Hung's work is informed by systems and RDT theories (2005, p. 395) but intends to contribute to the conceptualisation of OPRs. Although my second aim does not specifically concern OPRs, I wondered how those involved in CDRs are interdependent. What resources create that interdependence? How do they manage that interdependence? But also, and crucially, what are the outcomes of the attempts to do so? These queries informed my definitive research questions – posed in the next section – and prompted me to review development's work for answers regarding resource dependence shaping collaborative relational domains.

Regarding the types of relationships identified by PR scholars, my review of this literature[25] did not find sophisticated thinking on CDRs or similar relationships. Hence, I

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[25] This review is available upon request.

moved on and searched for potentially insightful conceptualisation within PR's publics theory, intending to consider whether CDRs could be treated as publics, too.

Relational scholars have struggled to reach a consensus on how to define publics. However, that should not be surprising because relatively recent reviews on the field's conceptualisation of publics, such as the one carried out by Pieczka (2019), have pointed out that PR scholars have adopted very different views on this notion. Still, within relational theory, it is possible to identify one dominant definition of publics shaping thinking on OPRs. The definition of publics with the most traction within the field is the one advanced by Ledingham (2003). This scholar treats publics as groups, aggregations of individuals, which are vital to an organisation due to their potential impact on its mission and viability. Paradoxically, this is not stated outright, though; it is mainly implied through assertions such as 'critical publics', 'strategic publics', 'key publics', and last but not least, 'active publics', in allusion to those 'publics affected by the organisation'. I must point out that the previous two descriptions reveal the source influencing Ledingham's views on this notion, the situational theory of publics (STOPs).

The foundations of the STOPs were laid down by Grunig in several journal publications in the late 1970s (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p. 161), and its main proposition is contained in the following explanation: 'publics consist of individuals who detect the same problems and plan similar behaviours to deal with those problems' (1984, p. 144). This foundational principle would guide the continuous development of this method of identifying publics until it was proposed as a theory (Grunig, 1989; Major, 1998; Aldoory, Kim and Tindall, 2010; Kim, 2011; Kim and Grunig, 2011; McKeever et al., 2016). While this theory relies on five variables, three independent (problem recognition, constraint recognition and level of involvement) and two dependent (information seeking and

information processing), the most relevant to my study and the most influential in defining publics is problem recognition. In the absence of a problem, or more specifically, if individuals do not perceive a situation or condition as problematic, no aggregating factor creates the circumstances for publics to arise. Only those individuals who are concerned about something might consider getting together to act as a group.

Other PR academics have suggested what seemed to be an alternative way of understanding this process of aggregation, but after closer inspection, they relied heavily on problem recognition, too. For example, Hallahan (2001) proposed the 'issues process model' to identify four types of publics (active, aroused, aware and inactive); that identification is based on issues. However, this is what Hallahan said regarding a critical step of his issues process model:

'Issue activation begins with problem recognition. *Problem recognition* occurs when individuals compare their everyday personal experiences with their expectations and find an inconsistency related to the fairness or risks inherent in a situation (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Heath, 1994, 1997)' Hallahan (2001, p. 36).

Leaving aside the apparent contradiction in Hallahan's model – conflating issues and problems – the process of transforming a social condition into an issue first and then into a problem is a relevant phenomenon to my investigation. And that is the case because development is an endeavour based and justified on the existence of a condition that has been problematised. This has been preliminarily explained in the previous section (1.3). This explanation has been expanded and re-appraised in light of two different bodies of work: critical thinking within development (in section 1.3 of this chapter) and the

sociology of social problems in Chapter 2. The discussion of the findings concerning the problematisation undertaken by CDRs in Cali can be found in chapters 5 and 7.

So, in light of all the above, I tried to find an encompassing way of conceptualising publics that considers resource dependency and the interplay of structure and discourse. On the latter, as I said in the previous section, development is discourse and logic. Consequently, I found the work of Chay-Nemeth insightful (2001). She argues that the dominant way of defining publics – based on STOPs – encourages us to focus on their responses to a problematic situation rather than studying the situation itself (2001, p. 129). 'We should begin to think of the historical conditions that may be manipulated to generate certain types of publics conducive to vested interest', Chay-Nemeth argued (p. 130). So, she proposed that publics arise from the combination of three historical conditions, those being resource dependency, discursive connectivity and legitimacy; these could be understood as follows: 1) Resource dependency is the extent to which a public depends on others for resources, such as funds, information, training, education, the media and publicity. 2) Discursive connectivity is the extent to which a public shares in the discourse, ideas, concepts, language and assumptions of others, and hence the potential for negotiation and competition with these others. 3) Legitimacy is the extent to which a public has the right to speak and act within its given role in a community (Choo, 2006, p. 246). Based on these historical conditions, Chay-Nemeth identified four publics: circumscribed, co-opted, critical and circumventing. The table below encapsulates the main characteristics of these publics.

Type of public	Characterisation
Circumscribed publics	Highly dependent on others for resources. Their role – which is established by others – limits their ability to speak and, therefore, to create a link with others that enables them to shape ideas.

Co-opted publics	They act within the limits prescribed by powerful social actors-organisations. This compliance gives them access to resources. Also, because they are compliant, they can share their ideas, but that is the case because they are just reproducing the dominant discourses. Chay-Nemeth established that third-sector actors are likely to be co-opted publics (p. 143).
Critical publics	These publics face constraints due to their stance against the status quo. So, they have limited access to resources, such as funding. However, due to that stance, they have legitimacy and, hence, the possibility to shape discourse. Organisations within social movements, such as NPOs, could be considered critical publics too, according to Chay-Nemeth (p. 146).
Circumventing publics	'In one sense, a circumventing public resembles a critical public in its practice of resistance to governmentality' (p. 152). Governmentality is the practice of disciplining people through everyday discourses and practices, which those being disciplined take for granted and perform voluntarily (Foucault, 1991, in Choo, 2006, p. 246).

The following questions arose from reviewing Chay-Nemeth's work: What types of publics interact through CDRs? In other words, are organisations and actors in a CDR publics? Or are CDRs themselves publics, for instance, of development discourse? Also, how do conditions – i.e., resource dependence, structure, legitimacy, patterns of communication, and discourses – shape CDRs and, by extension, their outcomes? The following section (1.5) embeds these queries into my investigation's definitive aims and research questions.

Before we move into the next section, I must clarify that the first aim of this investigation, introduced in section 1.1, arose from the inductive analysis of the data collected, which is why its genesis was not mentioned here. Still, the methodology chapter details its origin.

1.5 Research aims, objectives and questions

Defining social problems, transforming these into goals and building relationships that would make it possible to achieve those goals are relevant tasks for all types of not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) regardless of their size or activity level (macro, meso or micro). Hence, it would be reasonable to assume that there could be a causal link between the tasks above. For instance, the dynamics of development partnerships could influence how problems are defined, goals are formulated, and development aims are achieved. In other words, partnership dynamics could shape the setting of an agenda and the organising required to implement it. So, the initial conjecture that I formed was that the dynamics of third-sector relationships (e.g., patterns of communication, collaboration) and how development relationships are managed (e.g., top-down) shape problem definition, goal formation and, by extension, the design of programmes and implementation of its interventions.

As the literature review chapter of this thesis further explains, problem definition and goal formulation are critical components of agenda setting. At the same time, communication, relationships, and collaboration, which have been conceptualised concurrently as processes, states, and domains (Gray, 1989; Ledingham, 2003; Hall, 2007), have been defined in light of the distinctive paradigmatic views influencing each field.

For instance, within the PR field, communication is predominantly treated as a tool used to manage relationships for organisations (PRSA, 2023), a conception of communication that reflects the significant influence of the functionalist-post-positivist paradigm within this field (Curtin, 2012, pp. 36-37). Consequently, the increasing level of specificity of these notions within the extant bodies of work, which have been developed in reference

to distinct paradigmatic views and approaches, creates the opportunity to generate insight by attempting to examine findings in light of these particular and yet sometimes unconnected ideas, concepts, and topics. My work has taken ideas from different bodies of work, and they have been linked throughout my analysis of the findings (e.g., Chapter 7).

Considering the above, I decided to analyse the interplay of agenda-setting and organising in the context of modernising activity and within collaborative development relationships (CDRs). This was done to identify the tensions and paradoxes that might result from collaborative partners' structuring-organising and rhetorical choices when attempting to achieve their objectives. It is essential to clarify, though, that this reformulated version of the initial conjecture does not presume a particular direction of causation; it simply assumes that agenda-setting and organising, at least at the micro level, influence each other to a certain degree. Also, establishing whether or not one of the components of this causal relationship is the dominant one, principally causing the other one, was not something this investigation sought to establish.

In addition to the aim mentioned above, this study also sought to establish the forms of interaction between the different agendas (macro, meso, and micro level) and the drivers influencing the management of the CDRs under examination. With this in mind, and the other focal points and aims introduced in the previous sections, I attempted a multi-disciplinary investigation that sought to answer the following questions:

1) What are the relevant agendas for development shaping third-sector activity in Cali, Colombia?

2) How are these agendas formulated, and what factors influence their construction?

3) What is the direction of influence between the agendas proposed at different levels of development (macro, meso, and micro), particularly those relevant to Cali and Colombia?

4) Are problem and goal definition key agenda-setting components for Cali's third sector?

5) How are conditions defined and transformed into social problems by collaborative partners (NPOs, foundations, local authorities) operating in Cali?

6) How do Cali's collaborative partners formulate the goals guiding their development programmes?

7) What are the structuring and rhetorical actions/choices shaping problem definition and goal formulation?

8) Are these choices shaped by leveraging collaborative partners' resources, and what are the outcomes of managing resources (e.g., interdependence)?

9) Do any of these actions/choices engender tensions, and if so, why and how?

10) How do collaborative partners deal with their tensions, and what structuring and rhetorical actions do they implement to deal with them?

11) Is power a pivotal resource to deal with tensions, and how is it used if that is the case?

12) Are sense-making, sense-giving, sense-breaking and framing used to deal with tensions, and how?

13) Do these tensions influence the setting of agendas (e.g., definition of problems and goals)?

14) What are the outcomes of attempts to deal with tensions?

15) Are any paradoxes emerging from collaborative development action, its domains (CDRs), and concomitant tensions?

Consequently, in an attempt to answer these questions, I: a) examined the components of agenda setting – i.e., problem definition and goal formulation – at meso and micro levels, b) identified the contemporary tensions that shaped these tasks (i.e., autonomy-financial viability and autonomy-legitimacy), c) established how these tensions were addressed by the choices made by third-sector organisations working together through CDRs, and d) determined how the decisions taken to manage the tensions above led to the emergence of paradoxes (i.e., dislocation, and disneyfication).

Also, all the above was done by paying close attention to the interplay between structure and communication at different levels, particularly the micro levels. That was the case because one of the main assumptions that guided this investigation is that structuring choices – for example, those deemed suitable to address tensions – can only be implemented if there is a minimal degree of agreement and/or compromise by the stakeholders in a collaborative development relationship. However, agreement and/or compromise rarely materialise unless they have been promoted by the purposeful use of resources, such as power and persuasive communication; in the case of the former by exploiting asymmetries and the latter by sense-breaking, sense-giving and the deployment of different types of frames. Consequently, research questions 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 were formulated to test the strength of the views above.

The objectives and questions introduced above contributed to achieving my investigation's overarching aim: to shed light on how the interplay structure-

communication shapes development problem-solving at micro-level. From this general aim arise other more specific ones, these are as follows:

a) To establish the contemporary meaning of agenda setting, its components, and their impact on modernising problem-solving pursued through collaboration.

b) To elaborate on the contemporary form that organising takes at micro-level (e.g., CDRs) by examining the role played by factors such as resource dependence, legitimacy and autonomy.

c) To establish whether the management of resources by organisations in CDRs exploits asymmetries that lead to tensions and paradoxes and elaborate on the latter's impact on the effectiveness of development.

d) To identify potential avenues for future investigation that concern the fields of PR and development.

Apart from the aims listed above, the overlooked topics within public relations mentioned in the previous section, the gaps in the sociology of development and other fields uncovered by the literature review chapter, what else justifies the aims and objectives introduced above? I attempted to identify, discuss and explain how development asymmetries, tensions and paradoxes result from the interplay structure-communication, not just to uncover and discuss gaps (Dunleavy, 2003)[26]. The following section offers a brief explanation of the modernising paradoxes and tensions that informed the

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[26] 'It is best to try and frame your thesis around an intellectual problem or a paradox, not around a gap' (p. 23).

formulation of this investigation's aims, particularly my concern for the nature of problem-solving within development; that nature is what ultimately justifies or does not the existence of the institutional project for global modernisation.

1.6 The development paradoxes and tensions: an overview and critique

According to critics of the modernising development project, North-Western nations have failed to lift the rest of the world from the state it was allegedly found: widespread deprivation, limited scientific knowledge, and little regard for democratic forms of organisation (Dos Santos, 1970; Wallerstein, 2004; Frank, 2006; Furtado, 2021). Similarly, an alternative strand of this critique has denounced the North-Western modernisation project as the leading cause behind the Global South's problems. Scholars advancing this view have persistently described the cause-consequence relationship between European colonising enterprises and the asymmetries, as well as the disadvantages and obstacles that have impacted the history of the Global South (e.g., Quijano and Ennis, 2000; Galeano, 2010; Rist, 2014; Ghosh, 2021). This incommensurable impact becomes apparent when all the terraforming, displacement, slavery, genocide, and ecocide executed as part of the European empire-making and modernising project is detailed and contrasted by the critical scholarship against the backdrop of denialism underpinning the history, the official accounts, of the success story that is the development of the Western World.

Apart from denunciating the Eurocentric agenda for development as the principal cause of the problems of the Global South, critics have also argued that the North-Western modernising project has prevailed because its designers have effectively positioned the concept of 'underdevelopment'. The term was coined by US President Harry Truman

(1945-1953). Still, its formal definition and implications were advanced by other influential modernists such as Lipset (1959), Apter (1965) and Rostow (1962); the latter, as stated above, prescribed a development path (1959), a prescription that laid the foundations of the contemporary modernisation project (Rist 2021).

The characterisation of 'underdeveloped', a sanitised version of 'primitive[27]', offers a distorting picture of the Global South and, in doing so, has justified the moulding of its nations in the image of the North-Western world, not only economically but also culturally (Garcia Canclini, 1997; Quijano, 2007). In other words, in its different postmodern forms – for instance, the Alliance for Progress and later globalisation – the agenda for development is a long-lasting values change programme, which is still guided by the principles of colonialism (Aníbal Quijano and Ennis, 2000; Aníbal Quijano, Clímaco and Quijano, 2014; Galeano, 2010; Fraser and Jaeggi, 2018; Gandarilla Salgado, García-Bravo and Benzi, 2021). On this charge, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) insists that the current North-Western developers have embraced participatory and collaborative forms of modernisation that consider the views of developing nations, including their minorities[28] (UNDG, 2013).

Turning back to the mainstream critique about the failure to develop the Global South, it insists little progress has been made on specific objectives of its agenda (e.g., Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Conditions

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[27] There is Tonto, the Native American sidekick of its always Caucasian male rescuer Ke-mo sah-bee ('faithful friend'), The Lone Ranger. 'Tonto' in Spanish means stupid – showing little intelligence – in any case, unsurprisingly, Native Americans found the character insulting (e.g., Sherman Joseph Alexie Jr.). Depopulated, displaced and concealed from the world for decades, the Native Americans were integrated into the North American modernisation project through the sanitization and simplification of their current condition, not any more enemies of the Caucasian man, but just as innocuous, inferior and potentially trustworthy friends (Ghosh, 2021).

[28] The report 'A Million Voices: the World We Want' by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) synthesises the results of a global consultation of more than 1 million people from all ethnic backgrounds. 'A special effort was made to reach out to the poor, the marginalised and others whose voices are not usually heard' (UNDG, 2013, p. 3).

such as poverty and inequality have not been eradicated, while relatively new ones, such as pollution in all forms, exacerbate the pre-existing problems. Furthermore, the latest financial crisis (2008) has reminded us of how poverty and inequality, amongst other conditions, are also prevalent in the so-called 'developed world' (Castells, Caraça, and Cardoso, 2012; Stiglitz, 2014). This paradox – underdevelopment within development – poses a series of difficult questions for the nations seeking to redefine or uphold the modernising agenda; for instance, what is the current meaning of developed? And by extension, what is the current meaning of underdevelopment? And critically, what is the point of the development project, bearing in mind that many of the problems seen as modernising challenges are also increasingly prevalent in North-Western economies? In other words, what is its justification? Is it that development is reparation, compensation, by other means? And/or is modernisation a ruse to keep in place the current asymmetries that created privileged groups within the North-Western nations of the world?

For critical experts and academics, the transformation of the current development agenda involves the defenestration of Eurocentric voices on modernisation, colonialism, race, and knowledge from the dominant position in which they have been for decades. Disquisitions on how to dislodge these sources of influence invariably consider the role of economic orientations on the past and future of development (e.g., Garcia Canclini, 1997; Quijano and Ennis, 2000; Hirschman, 2004; Kohn and Reddy, 2017). In other words, development is an economic endeavour as much as an ideological project; therefore, the successful positioning of capitalism in its different forms has been critical to the consolidation of the current world order, and indeed, it will play a role in its transformation or demise, too (Fraser and Jaeggi, 2018).

Consequently, it is not surprising to identify in the most contemporary critique of the agenda for development an overwhelming concern for the entrenchment of capitalists' logics; the first move in that direction involved giving businesses the central role of planners of postmodernity (Roy, 2010; OECD, 2011; Mawdsley, Savage and Kim, 2014; Mawdsley, 2015). In other words, the logic of humanitarianism, not just aid, which at some point had a meaningful degree of influence over how development was formulated and practised, has been displaced by the logic of neoliberalism. Therefore, contrary to what the UN said in the 1990s, economic growth is once more the central paradigm of development (Mawdsley, Savage and Kim, 2014; Scheyvens, Banks and Hughes, 2016; Mawdsley, 2017; Weber, 2017; Liverman, 2018; Mawdsley, 2018).

On the practical implications of this neoliberalising trend, there is a continuous debate as to whether or not it has contributed to the disruption of the existing hierarchy of agenda setters by underpinning the economic growth and hence increasing the power of the emerging groups of nations that are attempting to redraw the socio-economic global order (e.g., BRICS group). In other words, is it the likes of China and its persistent attempt to alter the long-standing institutional agenda for development through financing modernising projects positive news? (OECD, 2020; Reuters, 2022). Are nations like China, the by-products of neoliberal policies, the means through which development will finally evolve? Or did the institutions of development, intentionally or inadvertently, plant the seeds of their demise? There is a paradox in the latter question, but also potential tensions caused by the displacement of humanitarianism by neoliberalism (progress vs exploitation) and the choice between an allegedly promising emerging order and the modernising status quo (South to South post-development vs North-Western to Global South old order).

Some argue that there is the distinct possibility that some of these emerging development players, particularly the least powerful, have been simply subsumed into the pre-existing order by giving them a meagre share of power which does not threaten the current status quo (Schulz, 2010; Abdenur and Da Fonseca, 2013; Gray and Murphy, 2013; Vestergaard and Wade, 2015; Mawdsley, 2017; Horn and Grugel, 2018). Nevertheless, for nations of the Global South who cannot afford to abandon the current development structure and its institutions, it remains part of the task to negotiate a more beneficial development agenda, one more in tune with their priorities. And while these nations invest a significant amount of time doing so, there is still the chance that the logics, and values of the pre-existing institutional agenda for development, including its neoliberal attributes, continue shaping micro-level interventions. This underpinned and justified the choice of aims and objectives for this investigation.

Furthermore, most of the critique introduced above concerning development policies and their attendant discourses and logics is based on the analyses of international agenda-setting documents (e.g., Rist, 2014; Camacho, 2015; Boas, Biermann and Kanie, 2016; Weber, 2017; Bartram et al. 2018; Fuso Nerini et al. 2019; McGowan et al., 2019). However, this critique rarely includes evidence of how the local authorities and NPOs have made sense of the neoliberal development paradigm and its associated structuring meso and micro-level implications. In other words, most of the current critical body of work on development has provided little insight into how meso and micro-level planning and implementation have been shaped by 'neoliberal' logics within the field. This investigation's findings will offer information on the meso and micro-level agenda formulation, which could help contextualise the current critique. For instance, by examining how partners in a CDR define problems and formulate goals and paying close attention to what sources influenced that process, my investigation shed light on what

logics ultimately directed development activity and through which routes these logics travelled to the micro level.

Therefore, if the critique above is sound, and the UNDP's agenda is a neoliberal development programme to which the Colombian national authorities have pledged support, what are the implications for micro-level development activity and critically for its stakeholders, such as low-income communities? In my attempt to answer this question, which involved examining problem-solving at micro-level, I focused on identifying the tensions and paradoxes emerging from the analysis of the data and their link to the existing tensions and paradoxes mentioned before.

Last but not least, I must mention that the paradox that has given the most impetus to this investigation due to its encompassing nature arises from Rist's analysis of the history of development (2021). For Rist, 'the hegemony' of development has been established by promoting a two-fold illusion (p. 270). The first rests on the successful positioning of the concept of underdevelopment, which, by extension, reinforces the hope that, at some point, all nations will achieve the status of material prosperity, which everyone might share. The second illusion is that economic growth will create the conditions for material prosperity, overlooking and neglecting that the resources used to sustain the current growth are limited. Under the current rate of exploitation, they will be scarce first and exhausted later.

What is implicit in Rist's analysis, and never explicitly argued, is that in the above train of thought, the creation of asymmetries is fundamental to the current capitalist, neoliberal model of development. Asymmetries underpinned the building and success of colonising and, subsequently, empire enterprises, and henceforth, the current political-economic

orders (democratic or not) that made possible the categories of 'underdeveloped' or 'least developed' and so forth. Furthermore, asymmetries inform the design of new exploitation models, aiming at exploiting all kinds of resources available on this planet (e.g., under the sea) or beyond (e.g., on the moon, planets, and exo-planets).

So, the paradox, the contradiction, that arises is that the agenda for development and the resources transferred to achieve its goals are formulated and managed in a manner that exploits asymmetries at the micro-level (e.g., NPOs and communities lacking financial resources) and in doing so empowering the institutions of modernisation and its partners (e.g., corporations) creating little encouragement for the change that is needed to resolve the problems hindering the development of the Global South. Simply put, the resources given to the Global South are for removing the constraints and the challenges to the enduring dominance of the North-Western economies, but not for dismantling the asymmetries holding back the non-Western world. In other words, development investment is not disbursed for reasons concerning the improvement of detrimental social conditions – that would be a side-effect – but to keep the current world order in place (i.e., asymmetrical trade relations). This is only a contradiction if the reader believes that the goals of equality, health, and freedom for all indeed underpin the definitions of progress promoted by development institutions.

To ascertain the materialisation of the above paradox, this investigation has sought to establish if and how those asymmetries are created and managed through agenda setting and the vehicles to implement development at micro-level, the collaborative development relationships (CDRs).

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In a strict operational sense – leaving aside its whole meaning and critique – development is conceived by the institutions of modernisation as a task that primarily concerns eradicating conditions that have been defined as social problems (e.g., Olwig, 2021; Schnable et al. 2021). This attempt to problematise the persistent and emerging conditions is palpable in the UN's annual reporting (e.g., United Nations 2015; UN 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020; 2021; 2022), in assertions like 'dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty' (United Nations, 2015, p. 3) and 'typically, informality has a negative impact on earnings, working time, occupational safety and health, and working conditions generally'[29] (UN, 2020, p. 41).

So, the causal linking of conditions and social problems, for instance, the assumption that casual work is the condition which leads to 'informality' – the social problem – (International Labour Organization, 2018; OECD and Internationales Arbeitsamt, 2019) that view and association are natural to organisations of development. Therefore, that linking is persistently implied in institutional reporting and expected to inform the design of modernising action. In other words, this same causal linking and its underlying problematisation of conditions inform the formulation and positioning of modernising aims, ultimately shaping what is done about it, the mitigation or resolution of the

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[29] The problem of informality, as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2018), concerns the "informal economy" and its economic activities by workers and economic units that are in law or in practice not covered or insufficiently covered by formal and legal arrangements.

perceived problem. This is the case even if that problematisation is flawed, partial, and challenges other goals.

Let us consider Rai et al.'s (2019) analysis of sustainable development goal number 8 (SDG 8), 'Decent work and economic growth', to substantiate and illustrate the above. According to these scholars, SDG8 discriminates against women because it excludes reproductive labour as a meaningful type of work. The latter is based on the assumption that in the Global South, many women undertake reproductive work, meaning that their condition is one of being reproductive workers. Reproductive work is defined by Rai et al. (2019, p. 370) as work that concerns biological reproduction, the production of goods and services from home, and voluntary work. However, because the SDG8's designers proposed using GDP and per capita growth as parameters for this goal's targets, any work these economic indications cannot appraise does not count as 'decent work'[30], which is the case for reproductive work.

The implications of the formulation of the SDG8 in such terms are as follows: reproductive work could be deemed by some as unproductive work since the typical indicators and benchmarks, such as GDP, are not designed to assess labour that is not being remunerated or work whose wages are not paid through traceable means. Traceable means are forms of payment that are used by mainstream financial services. Consequently, reproductive work could be annexed to the category of casual work and subsequently seen as a dimension of informality, which would not only neglect its value and costs but place reproductive work in an ambiguous category of not being a social problem but also not being productive work. Also, paradoxically, this implied typification

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[30] In section 1.3, I provided a brief review of the critique of the use of GDP and similar parameters to estimate development. This practice is associated with what is commonly referred to as trickle-down economics.

of reproductive work clashes with the call for recognising the value of unpaid care and domestic work, which is at the heart of SDG5, 'to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' (UN DESA, 2023).

So, I am foregrounding here the potential implications of that causal linking of conditions-problems-goals, which are components of the agenda-setting function, a function through which that causal linking is managed, promoted, and legitimised to shape development action (Reich, 1987; 1995). As for the nature of this causal linking itself – the view that conditions, problems and goals are interrelated – this idea is a structuring logic for the development field (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, 2012). How my investigation has substantiated or challenged the above train of thought is covered in chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this thesis. The academic scholarship that discusses aspects of the aforementioned logic will be introduced below.

While for development organisations, the causal relationship conditions-problems-goals is part of the natural order, conversely, within the field of sociology, there has been a persistent change of thinking regarding the nature of conditions and problems and, by extension, dithering on the need to focus or study the interplay between the same phenomena (Brekhus, Brekhus, and Galliher 2001; Best 2002; Weinberg 2014; Dello Buono 2015; Best 2018; Spector 2019; Woolgar 2022). In the early writings of sociologists, such as Case (1924), Frank (1925), Waller (1936) and Fuller (1938), it is possible to identify some foundational ideas on the origin of social problems. However, those early views have been persistently challenged by distinctive strands of thinking within the same field. This chapter will introduce these strands and other key conceptual developments on the causal relationship conditions-problems, which informed the discussion of my findings.

One of the prominent debates within the sociology of social problems reviewed in this chapter concerns who should define social conditions and how. That is a key topic relevant to the aims of this investigation. It is worth reminding the reader that the sociology of problems is a body of work that belongs to the subdiscipline of the sociology of development (Kiely, 1995; Schrank, 2011; Viterna and Robertson, 2015). That is why it was chosen for this review, assuming it might illuminate thinking on development action at all levels.

Beyond the sociology of development, and still on the topic of problems, scholars within political sciences, management, public policy, and public administration studies have produced a voluminous work on identifying, formulating, and resolving problems (e.g., Duncker, 1945; Schattschneider, 1975; Lloyd, 1978; Dery, 1984; Kingdon, 1984; Wood and Gray, 1991; Gray and Wood, 1991; Agranoff and McGuire, 1999). The fields above have linked problems and problematisation to other concepts, functions and outcomes that I also deemed relevant to this investigation.

For instance, in political sciences, academics under the subfields of comparative politics and political communication have elaborated on the interaction between agenda-setting and framing. Both functions, operating as interrelated processes as well, concern first the definition of a condition and its subsequent elevation to the category of a social problem, which by extension facilitates the inclusion of a problem into a policy agenda; the latter put forward for institutional and public consideration and legitimation (Knaggård 2015; Klüser and Radojevic 2019).

Hence, it is not surprising to find a significant amount of discussion within the academic field of development on the engagement between modernising institutions (e.g., the UN)

and national governments of the global south. That engagement concerns primarily the nature of social problems, formulation of concomitant goals, and mitigation strategies. Some of the aforementioned academic analyses on that engagement have become discourse within the field. This discourse is invoked by referring to the 'North' and the 'South' when examining patterns of resource dependence, collaboration and discussing challenges to the current development order (e.g., Mawdsley and Rigg, 2002; 2003; Saith, 2006; Fukuda-Parr, Yamin, and Greenstein, 2014; Trætteberg, 2015; Weber, 2017; Horn and Grugel, 2018; Biggeri et al. 2019; Chimhowu, Hulme, and Munro, 2019; Siegel and Bastos Lima, 2020). However, the last section of this chapter will discuss whether or not and how the development field has elaborated on the specific function of agenda-setting.

In management, scholars have treated problems as constraints and targets, dictating what organisational structuring choices should be on the table to improve performance and increase profitability (Felin and Zenger, 2016). According to development literature, these problem-related choices (e.g., reducing resource dependence), barring the profitability ones, are also faced by not-for-profit organisations and their partners (e.g., Froelich, 1999; Batley, 2011; Verschuere and De Corte, 2014; O'Brien and Evans, 2017; Maya-Jariego et al., 2020). So, the business views on problems, concomitant goals and how to manage the challenges and the tensions that arise when organisations attempt to resolve problems and pursue the pertinent objectives have also informed the practice and scholarship of development (Simpson and Cheney, 2007; Jäger and Schröer, 2014; Skelcher and Smith, 2015; Sanders, 2015; McMullin and Skelcher, 2018; Jönsson, 2019; Reissner, 2019; Mikołajczak, 2019; 2020).

The insights, implications, and critical analysis of how the logics of business management have shaped the practice and conceptualisation of development is relevant to this

investigation. Why? As I posed earlier in the introductory chapter of this thesis, it is through the management of the problem-goal causal interaction, understood as setting the agenda, that the institutions of modernisation shape the micro-level development activity, the social problem-solving action and, by extension, determine the viability of NPOs. In other words, how NPOs remain financially viable and how these same organisations pursue development goals are interrelated and seen as outcomes of setting the institutional agenda.

As for public administration academics, specifically those embracing the paradigmatic view of collaborative management theory (CMT), complex problems are the source, the trigger, and the reason why collaboration should take place through collaborative domains-relationships (Bryson, Crosby, and Stone, 2006; Bingham and O'Leary, 2006; Blomgren Bingham and O'Leary, 2008; Weber and Khademian, 2008; Bryson, Crosby, and Stone, 2015; Vangen, 2017). These domains are structures created for tackling, amongst other things, social problems (Gray, 1989, p. 8-9). One organisation cannot tackle complex problems alone due to, for instance, the need to secure significant resources to achieve some degree of sufficient mitigation and effectiveness (Gray, 1989). Therefore, collaboration and its domains are a quintessential feature of the third sector through approaches such as capacity building and development (Fukuda-Parr, Lopes, and Malik, 2002; Vallejo and When, 2016; Jos, Lemire, and Befani, 2020; Gugerty, Mitchell, and Santamarina, 2021).

All of the above foregrounds and substantiates the conceptual and practical connection between social conditions, problems, collaboration, agenda-setting, and, by extension, framing and goal design. However, before I examine the scholarship covering these matters, it is vital to indicate the scope of this review, as a vast amount of work has been

published on the concepts and functions mentioned above. So, under the following sections of this chapter, I will cover a) sociology's body of work on conditions and problems, b) policy and political science's scholarship on agenda setting, and c) research on problem and goal definition by public policy academics and management studies. Also, in the last section of this chapter (2.5), I will elaborate on whether or not any dilemmas and gaps identified by my literature review are common or shared by development scholarship. Hence, the approach to discussing the key concepts to my investigation (e.g., social conditions-problems) and the related processes or functions (e.g., agenda-setting, problematisation and goal formation) is to examine the work of the fields that initially conceptualised these phenomena and subsequently use that appraisal to establish any gaps in development's academic literature.

2.2 The sociology of development on social conditions and problems

Two distinctive features of sociology's research on social conditions and problems concern this review: the causal association of conditions and problems and the periodicity of the body of work covering this phenomenon. Regarding the first feature, the interrelatedness of conditions and problems can shape critical aspects of development, such as the conception of the agenda for modernisation. Hence, those potential impacts will be foregrounded in the following sub-section in the form of questions. These questions are posed to encourage reflection on the possible impact of social problematisation on agenda setting, but it is beyond the scope of this section to answer these queries.

As for the other feature of sociology's research on conditions and problems, this body of work grew significantly during three distinctive periods. So, under the next sub-section,

I will cover the essential conceptual developments that took place during each period, and in doing so, I will introduce those ideas that relate to the aims of this investigation, these aims being establishing the contemporary nature of the agenda for modernisation and also the nature of collaborative action at micro-level. About the first aim of this investigation, in the following sub-sections, I have examined what sociology has said regarding the problem-definition process, focusing specifically on the examination of ideas that concern the following two dimensions of problematisation, who should be problematising and how those problematising communicate about it. On the latter, it is important to note that problematising is essentially a definitional activity that would be severely constrained by the absence of proper communication and the opportunity to promote a definition of a problem (Becker, 1966; Gusfield, 1975; Schneider, 1985a; Maynard, 1988; Conrad, 1997).

So, the appraisal of ideas concerning the two dimensions mentioned above was conducted with the expectation that the sociological scholarship on these two topics could help us to understand the nature of agenda-setting processes at the macro-level – i.e., the design of the institutional agenda – and also allows us to make sense of other micro-level activity too, the activity linked to the second aim of this investigation – i.e., how NPOs in collaborative relationships adopt or propose their agendas. Nevertheless, should there be any gaps concerning these dimensions, these will be identified, and the implications will be discussed in the last section of this chapter, in which I will also elaborate on whether or not those gaps are also present in development's scholarship.

2.2.1 The different periods of conceptual development on conditions and problems

Some sociology scholars, such as Horton and Leslie (1955), have argued that there are three approaches or 'three frames of reference' for analysing social problems. These are

social disorganisation, personal deviation (deviancy) and conflict of values. However, there is no agreement within the field as to how these approaches relate or not to the work I have reviewed in the following sub-sections. For instance, some would be right to believe that Robert Merton's work relates to all of the above approaches or just simply to the conflict of values' frame (e.g., Manis, 1974). Others, like Fontaine and Pooley (2020, pp. 11-12), have analysed the scholarship on social problems by placing the critical ideas under two distinctive ontological camps: the objectivist views, postulating that social problems exist even if people do not recognise them as such, and the subjectivist views, positing that a social problem is 'partly a state of the social mind and hence not purely a matter of unfavourable objective conditions' (e.g., Case, 1924).

Here, I have focused on the work and perspectives that several contemporary reviews (e.g., Best, 2002; Schneider, 1985; Weinberg, 2014; Best, 2015; 2018; Schneider, 2018; Spector, 2019; Woolgar, 2022) have identified as persistently impactful, sufficiently covering the ideas and approaches mentioned above.

Starting with the description of the critical periods I identified in the aforementioned body of work, the first one (1920s-1940s) concerns the elaboration of initial definitions of social conditions and problems and the proposition of future lines of enquiry (e.g., Hart, 1923; Case, 1924; Frank, 1925; Waller, 1936; Fuller, 1937; Fuller, 1938). The way of thinking at the time is illustrated by Frank's (1925, p. 463) preliminary definition of social problems and his interrogation of the causal link conditions-problems, both described as follows:

'A social problem, then, appears to be any difficulty or misbehaviour of a fairly large number of persons which we wish to remove or correct, and the solution of a social

problem is evidently the discovery of a method for this removal or correction. (...) And one of the first questions raised by the subject of social problems is, what are the conditions which generate these difficulties? (...) This is merely to suggest that a social problem is related to the particular social conditions from which it arises, which is more or less a commonplace'.

Apart from the inclination to link conditions and problems, there is another common trait to the early theorisation of this period: the absence of a proper definition of social conditions. Hence, conditions are regularly described in early sociological work as mainly positive or negative and objective, possibly meaning that conditions are unbiased and external realities to humans, from which we are to derive problems by appraising them. However, the latter is mainly my interpretation of what was implied in most of the work I reviewed from this period, as that early conceptualisation lacks detail on the nature of conditions.

These preliminary definitions and concomitant ideas – including the above association conditions-problems – informed the formulation of a perspective on 'social problems' called the 'value-conflict view' (Kitsuse and Spector, 1973). The value-conflict view is rooted in the work of Fuller and Myers (1941a; 1941b), and it advances the idea that individuals use values as a guide to formulate social problems out of conditions. Paradoxically, while values are a vital component of this approach, they were not formally defined but only illustrated. As for how these scholars conceptualised social problems, here is their definition:

'A social problem is a condition which is defined by a considerable number of persons as a deviation from some social norm which they cherish. Every social problem thus consists

of an objective condition and a subjective definition. The objective condition is a verifiable situation which can be checked as to existence and magnitude (proportions) by impartial and trained observers, e.g., the state of our national defence, trends in the birth rate, unemployment, etc. The subjective definition is the awareness of certain individuals that the condition is a threat to certain cherished values' (Fuller and Myers 1941a, p. 320). In line with the early thinkers, the above definition sees problems and conditions as inextricable, the latter making possible the former, but only when 'values'- 'social norms' dictate that there is a deviation, a challenge to a person's or group's world view. So, this definition and some of the subsequent ones, too (e.g., Horton and Leslie, 1955; Theodorson and Theodorson, 1969), are based on the assumption that problems arise in the minds of individuals because what they see as worth maintaining unchanged has been threatened. Hence, the 'conflict', a clash between values, is expected. Under different sections of this chapter (e.g., 2.2.2), I will elaborate further on this matter in the light of the discussion of who should identify and define social problems.

But dwelling further on the 'subjective definition', part of the problematisation process, makes you wonder if all social problems are damaging or detrimental states or situations. Or, to put it in different terms, is it reasonable to assume that some of these problems are mainly the result of more than 'subjective' but essentially purposefully misleading interpretations of conditions (Manis, 1974)? Later, I will expand on the sociological views on this matter vis-a-vis the discussion of who should define social problems. In the meantime, it is vital to reflect on the implications of the subjective nature of problematisation for development by considering the following questions: bearing in mind the possibility of very subjective problems occurring, who should make the judgement call on the nature of problems? And how? Also, and more specifically, whose values should be used to determine whether or not a condition, like income poverty, is

deemed a social problem? Likewise, hypothetically speaking, if the values of the developers – e.g., the UN – were different from the values of those receiving support – such as an urban community in Colombia – whose values should be used to identify and define a development challenge at hand (e.g., inequality or bullying at school)?

In the early days of the second theorisation period (1970s-1980s), Robert Merton and Robert Nisbet (1971) proposed another way of making sense of social conditions and problems. For these scholars, social problems are 'a substantial discrepancy between widely shared social standards and actual conditions of social life' (Merton and Nisbet, 1971, p. 799). On what causes the aforementioned 'discrepancy', that is, 'social disorganisation' and 'deviant behaviour' (p. 819), this is in line with a strand of thought within the field that sees these two, together with the conflicting values, as the typical sources of problems (Horton and Leslie, 1955).

In probably one of the most cited publications by Merton and Nisbet (1971;1976), the authors elaborate on social conditions and problems, and in doing so, they rely on some of the same ideas advanced by the value-conflict view. For instance, Merton and Nisbet agreed that social problems are the result of combining or appraising the objective and subjective aspects of a condition, hence implying that conditions are external phenomena to individuals which are the basis for problem formulation (1976, p. 9); the latter also called here problematisation. In this sense, these scholars saw fit to classify problems based on their origin as 'social and non-social', the former caused by the structure of society (e.g., crime, poverty, gender discrimination) and the latter by nature (e.g., natural disasters and epidemics). But Merton and Nisbet warn 'that whatever their origins, social problems are defined by their social consequences' (1976, p. 9).

Similar observations – like the one above – have led to different interpretations about the actual ontological stance adopted by Merton and Nisbet vis-à-vis the causal relationship conditions-problems. For instance, based on the above observation, one could argue that 'consequences', not 'origins' or 'conditions', are the essential parameters for problematisation. This contradicts Merton and Nisbet's definition of social problems and any previous definition that treated conditions as the basis for human definitions of problems. Still, some scholars (e.g., Kitsuse and Spector) have argued that Merton and Nisbet's work foregrounds the role played by social conditions in establishing problems more than anything else, and this is visible in their discussion of who should define social problems and how (Kitsuse and Spector, 1973, pp. 410-412). The latter are topics that concern the following sub-section. In the meantime, it is important to consider what Kitsuse and Spector said about this matter: 'Merton's sociology of social problems is a sociology of social conditions, within the general framework of functional analysis, although stressing dysfunctions rather than functions' (1973, p. 412).

The above assertion creates the opportunity to clarify what Merton and Nisbet meant by 'social standards', as within the field, there is the widely and unsurprisingly held view that Merton and Spector's work was based on functionalist ideas (Weinberg, 2014). Hence, these scholars' work on social problems was named a 'functionalist' perspective or 'formulation' (Kitsuse and Spector, 1973, p. 407). The label 'functionalist' was used by some scholars in a pejorative sense (e.g., Tumin, 1965) as a form of denunciation of a perspective that promotes the definition and categorisation of conditions and problems based on their contribution or not to an established social order, an order expected to be functional.

What the critics of Merton and Nisbet's formulation understood by 'functional' (e.g., Hempel, 1952; Nagel, 1956) differs from some sympathetic interpretations of Merton's work, which deemed functional the phenomena that contribute to social cohesion, while dysfunctional is a phenomenon that challenges or threatens social cohesion (Giddens, 1997, p. 562). Within the sociology of problems, though, critics pointed to the functional expectation of society's 'proper' development, which is based on arbitrary ideas on what contributes to the maintenance or the continuation of society (Manis, 1974a; Kitsuse and Spector, 1975). This suggests that there could be two types of 'social standards': those advanced by functionalist sociologists and those adopted by cultures, societies, groups and so forth, which do not necessarily reflect the functionalist's standards. This is probably why Merton and Nisbet saw it fitting to embrace the value-conflict view, as they anticipated a persistent clash between functional and non-functional social standards when sociologists attempt to advance the former.

So, in line with the above, critics are afraid that, by extension, the non-fitting phenomena, such as perceived forms of deviant behaviour, would be unfairly placed in the undesirable category of dysfunctional (Schneider, 1985b; Schneider, 2018). Consequently, the questions arising from this brief description of the tenets of the functionalist perspective are: who should determine whether or not a development condition is functional or dysfunctional? And how? While thinking about these questions, it would be helpful to remember the ideas introduced above regarding casual, informal and reproductive work. Your thinking would probably beg the question, why should reproductive work be categorised as dysfunctional?

Also, another set of questions relevant to development arises from thinking about the potential implications of treating consequences as the primary referent or component of

problematisation instead of conditions. So, for example, are development challenges – such as poverty – treated as problems, consequences or conditions by the institutions of modernisation and their partner organisations? And by extension, what would be the right way of categorising poverty? What could be the implications of failing to establish the real nature of poverty? But if the reader believes that the institutional players of development must have already found a way to define the nature of their challenges properly, why do these challenges persist?[31]

Moving on, during this same theorisation period (1970s-1980s), there is a good amount of critique of the early ideas, such as the value-conflict view and the functionalist perspective, leading to the proposition of the following two constructionist approaches to the study of social problems, the collective-behaviour perspective (Blumer, 1971) and the sociology of problems (Kitsuse and Spector, 1973; Spector and Kitsuse, 1973; Kitsuse and Spector, 1975). It is important to note that there is no significant distinction between these two perspectives, apart from the former failing to gather enough interest within the field and hence remaining a thesis. Consequently, in this sub-section, I introduce the main views regarding the sociology of problems, and later, I will turn my attention to Blumer's (1971) collective-behaviour perspective, as some aspects of Blumer's thesis touch upon the matters that concern this review.

John Kitsuse and Malcolm Spector proposed an alternative approach to making sense of conditions and problems called 'a sociology of problems' (1973). There is a paradigmatic

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[31] Also, we keep seeing reports of inapt problematisation by the development institutions. At the time of writing, NGOs have complained that the UN has excluded some third-sector organisations from the upcoming Paris Summit on plastic pollution. The Guardian's reporting of this situation offers a glimpse of the complexities of problematising, including the specific observations of the NGOs' specialists arguing that either the UN has failed to make sense of the nature of the challenge or it is pushing for ineffective solutions because does not want to alienate and disadvantage the industry of plastic production (McVeigh, 2023).

shift advanced by the sociology of problems worth reflecting on, the idea of ignoring social conditions and exclusively studying 'claims', the claims made by individuals that society is facing a problem; a problem that requires mitigation or solution (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977, p. 75). Simply put, Kitsuse and Spector wanted their peers to study how and why people define a social problem instead of pondering about the nature of social conditions and their interrelation with problems. Some of the reasons underpinning the proposed paradigmatic shift are introduced in the following definition of social problems:

'Thus, we define social problems as the activities of groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions. The emergence of a social problem, then, is contingent on the organisation of group activities with reference to defining some putative condition as a problem, and asserting the need for eradicating, ameliorating, or otherwise changing that condition. The central problem for a theory of social problems, so defined, is to account for the emergence and maintenance of claim-making and responding activities. Such a theory should comprehend the activities of any group making claims on others for ameliorative action, alleviation of social, political, legal, economic disadvantage or other consideration' (Kitsuse and Spector, 1973, p. 415).

Notice that these scholars do not define social problems. Their definition does not explain what a social problem is, or to put it in benign terms, Kitsuse and Spector see social problems as processes, so they issued a call for studying how problems arise. On the other hand, conditions are conceived as 'putative', leading to different interpretations as to what Kitsuse and Spector meant by it (e.g., presumed, not necessarily real or actual). I will come back to this in a moment; in the meantime, it is important to note that the sociology of problems advanced a paradigmatic shift because the two previous approaches – the value-conflict view and the functionalist perspective – saw foundational to their

propositions an inextricable causal relationship between conditions and problems (Kitsuse and Spector, 1973, p. 413).

But Kitsuse and Spector proposed to study only one dimension of the process of problematisation, the one exclusively concerning the formulation of claims on problems – their 'subjective definition' in Fuller and Myers' terms – an idea that for development could have implications, which I have implied here through some questions. For example, what is required for a claim to be established or acknowledged? What should matter the most, the number of people agreeing that there is a problem or the nature of the people agreeing? (E.g., How many people should declare inequality's negative impact so it can be recognised as a claim? And who should these people be – e.g., disabled or destitute–?) (*) And if no one claims that inequality is a problem, does it mean that inequality does not exist and that no such detrimental phenomenon is affecting society?[32]

Turning to the third period of conceptualisation on problems and conditions (1980s-2010s), it was during this time that those scholars supporting Kitsuse and Spector's sociology of problems sought to consolidate this paradigmatic view through case-based research (Schneider, 1985)[33]. But, contrary to the expectations, a sharp critique of this perspective followed, and most of the castigation against the sociology of problems criticised the choice of ignoring the role played by conditions in the study of social problematisation (Schneider, 1985; J. Schneider, 2018). From all this critique, the one that got more traction within the field came from Woolgar and Pawluch (1985), who identified in Kitsuse and Spector's work particular contradictions (e.g., 1977, p. 43), such

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[32] If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound? The Chautauquan (June 1883, Volume 3, Issue, 9, p. 543).

[33] Schneider provides a comprehensive list of the work that inspired and was inspired by Kitsuse and Spector's constructionist perspective.

as acknowledging and referring to conditions as external phenomena, serving as parameters to assessing the nature of social problematisation. This is in contravention to the foundational premise of the sociology of problems, which is to disregard conditions in the study of social problems.

Zooming out and away from the specific criticism, some scholars have tried to find something more meaningful in Kitsuse and Spector's sociology, signalling the emergence of an alternative ontological stance worthy of debate and having significant implications for the field. For instance, academics like Hazelrigg (1986) have argued that the rise of constructionism created a split within the discipline between those who believe in the importance of studying the empirical world, the external reality, and, therefore, social conditions and those who don't. The latter place more weight on the role of subjective interpretations or problematising claims, especially those collectively constructed. The former scholars are in the camp of 'objectivism' and the latter on the side of subjectivism or constructionism (Pooley and Pooley, 2020). After reviewing Blumer's thesis, I will explain how this split and debate informed my investigation.

In the meantime, it is important to note that the critique of Kitsuse and Spector's perspective continued growing, and while their key exponents attempted to address the flaws (e.g., Ibarra and Kitsuse, 1993), these efforts have been perceived as minor adjustments, but nothing substantial that would address either the criticism against the ontological dissociation of conditions-problems or deal with the specific observation that it is not possible to study social problematisation while disregarding the role played by conditions in that process (Weinberg, 2014). Dello Buono (2004; 2015) has been a persistent critic of the sociology of problems, calling for radical revisionism or its total abandonment. In contrast, others like Best (2002; 2018) have proposed ways to fill the

gaps in this approach. In the meantime, the scholarship on conditions-problems has remained steadfastly focused on the study of the claims-making process, therefore raising doubts about its ability to provide suitable answers to the questions posed throughout this sub-section, that much in line with the state of stagnation and declining influence that has besieged the sociology of development (Booth 1985; Corbridge 1990; Kiely 1995).

At this point, it is pertinent to preface the start of the next sub-section by posing the following question, assuming that sociologists agree to a certain extent that there is an external reality – that being a social condition – what aspects of that condition should remain relevant to the formulation of problems? Or, putting it in different terms, hypothetically, if the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and NPOs in Colombia have differing definitions of poverty, each of these definitions being informed by studies of local conditions, which of these definitions should be used to inform the formulation of development interventions? And why?

2.2.2 Who should define social problems and how?

When looking closely at all the questions I posed in the preceding sub-section, the reader will find in them a persistent implied choice, that is, who should define social problems or, more precisely, who is better placed to do so. Bear in mind, though, that this is not a matter that concerns who can define social problems, as we all can problematise, but about who is better equipped to do so. In the sociological work I have reviewed, there is no consistency or agreed stance on who should define social problems. Similarly, the same inconsistency applies to elaborating on who should define social problems in the light of key considerations, such as authority – underpinned by knowledge – and/or legitimacy – underpinned by democratic principles and/or laws (Jones and Baumgartner,

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2005). In other words, within sociological scholarship, there is a tendency to be descriptive, to identify who defined a problem in such and such case, but not to elaborate on the merits, the virtues, the knowledge of those defining a problem and the implications of having or not such qualities, which could be argued are essential to claim the right-authority to define a problem, especially in the circumstances alluded to in the questions I posed above.

One could be pragmatic and assume – in line with much of the development scholarship based on resource dependence theory (e.g., Hudock, 1995; Froelich, 1999; Mitchell, 2014; Berrett and Holliday, 2018) – that pursuing this line of inquiry is non-sensical because the right to set up the agenda for development is based on the resource asymmetry leveraged by the donor countries and private organisations. However, here, we purposefully overlooked that pragmatic consideration to establish if there is anything else justifying the current agenda-setting order – North-South – apart from having the money to impose a modernising plan on the global south.

So, in line with the above, the following sub-sections of this review discuss only those ideas that offer insight into the process of formulating problems to establish if the scholars examining social problematisation also generated any knowledge regarding the role of problems' definers in that process. The perspectives introduced in the previous sub-section also elaborated on the problematisation process by examining one or several stages; hence, that work became the focal point of my review[34].

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[34] Here, I have reviewed the most salient stages' analyses, particularly those claiming to offer insight into the construction of social problems; this aligns with what other scholars have established as influential studies (e.g., Lopata, 1984, p. 250).

According to the perspectives under examination, problematisation entails the identification of a condition or behaviour that threatens a value and subsequently transforming the appraisal of a condition or threat to a value into a claim, a claim that a social problem is being faced (Fuller and Myers, 1941b; Merton and Nisbet, 1971; Kitsuse and Spector, 1973). Consequently, problematisation is an inherently human activity undertaken by definers – the individuals who have the authority-right to problematise – and who do so, presumably, in the specific terms put forward by each of the perspectives introduced above. So, in line with the aims of this investigation, it is important to appraise how the aforementioned sociological approaches conceived the process of problematisation, in particular two dimensions or aspects of it: who is seen as having the right-authority to problematise and how definers define, focusing on how they communicate about it. All these matters will be covered below, in the same chronological order, followed by the description of the periods in the previous sub-section.

2.2.3 Ideally, everyone should be a problem definer

Fuller and Myers, the scholars behind the value conflict perspective, touched upon who should define social problems and how when they typified the problematisation process in a paper entitled 'The natural history of a social problem' (1941a). To underpin their view of how problematisation unfolds, Fuller and Myers offered the following complementary definition of social problems: 'A social problem thus conceived as always being in a dynamic state of "becoming" passes through the natural history stages of awareness, policy determination, and reform' (1941a, p. 321). This definition supports what Fuller and Myers saw as a common evolutionary process to all social problems, which consists of three sequential stages in which different individuals, groups, governmental agencies, and charities are involved at some point as problem definers.

But before the pertinent aspects of these stages are introduced below, it is important to note that the analysis of a case underpinned Fuller and Myers' argument. As it will become evident later, the case above was used here to appraise Fuller and Myers' consistency of thinking regarding the who and how of problematising. Therefore, the essential details of the case are as follows: it concerns the expansion of a provisional camp made by 8 to 10 families living in trailers who later chose to settle permanently in the outskirts of Detroit, USA, in the 1920s. By the 1930s, the number of families in the settlement grew significantly, and the neighbours living near the camp began to formally complain about what they perceived as the negative consequences of the expansion of the settlement. The 'complaints of neighbours were articulated on the grounds of the unsightliness of the camps, noises, odours, immorality, crime, and property depreciation in the surrounding districts. The response of neighbourhood groups to the condition was measured not only by formal complaints to police, health officials and newspapers, but also by the participant observations of students living in local areas near trailer camps', Fuller and Myers (1941a, p. 323) explained. Keeping this context in mind, I introduce the stages of problematisation, which Fuller and Myers saw as relevant to this case but also generalisable.

The first stage, awareness, concerns the 'awakening of people' to the realisation that a condition threatens some of their cherished values, the former being an objective external reality. As for those who remain unaware, 'be they scientists, administrators, or likeminded neighbours, no identifiable problem can be said to exist' (...) 'These people have not crystallised their definition sufficiently to suggest or debate exact measures for amelioration or eradication of the undesirable condition' (1941a, p. 322). The exact nature of 'these people' is revealed by the following classification provided by these scholars: level 1 – neighbours and unorganised groups –, level 2 – pressure groups – and level 3 –

specialists and administrators in government and quasi-governmental units (1941a, p. 324).

The second stage, the policy determination stage, 'differs significantly from the stage of awareness in that interest groups are now concerned primarily with "what ought to be done", and people are proposing that "this and that should be done". Specific programs occupy the focus of attention' (p. 324). In this second stage, means and ends are discussed. Hence, conflict could arise due to diverging views regarding what to do about the problem and how to do it. 'People who propose solutions soon find that these solutions are not acceptable to others. Even when they can get others to agree on solutions, they find agreement as means to a further difficulty' (p. 324). Drawing from the case study above, Fuller and Myers saw as a vital aspect of this stage the 'interinfluence' and 'cross-fertilisation' between the three levels of 'participating discussants', indicated above (p. 324). As for the last stage, this being 'reform', the administrative units focus on implementing the agreed policy at that point. This stage is characterised by the actions of public and private agencies and organisations, such as special officers, private clubs, charities, and benevolent associations, including the church (p. 326).

So, in line with what I said in sub-section 2.2.2, the Fuller and Myers stages' model does not tell us why individuals, groups, agents and other organisations have the right-authority to problematise. This is an uncanny gap for a value-conflict perspective. Fuller and Myers could have provided a values-based explanation of why these archetypical participants are expected to be the customary problem definers in all circumstances or cases, should there be problematising. Critics of the value-conflict perspective have attributed this gap to the belief espoused by some sociology scholars in the canons of impartiality and objectivity (Manis, 1974). In some quarters of the discipline, the

interpretation of the latter is that sociologists should not be seen as disqualifying the subjects they are expected to care about, only to objectively study them to help them improve their lives (1974, p. 305). This does not mean that this scholarship is devoid of opinion, only that it is implied. So, when sociological literature is subjected to closer scrutiny, it reveals clues about who is treated by scholars as an unsuitable contributor to problematisation; I will substantiate this observation before the end of this subsection.

Also, in the same paper, alongside the analysis of the stages above, Fuller and Myers described the nature of the complaints made by neighbours, health inspectors and other agents regarding the perceived impact of the growing dwelling located on the outskirts of Detroit. So, in line with these scholars' focus on values, they established that in this case, the complaints made by the different groups and individuals were aligned since all of them perceived the dwelling as a threat to their values of 'health, education, private property and morals' (1941a, p. 324). However, the scholars did not provide further details beyond describing the complaints or identifying their alignment; therefore, no insight is provided into how problem definers communicated about the process.

Searching for clues on who should define social problems and how, in other papers authored by Fuller and Myers, they seemed committed to reflecting on this matter more straightforwardly, as the following explanation suggests:

'A social problem is a condition which is an actual or imagined deviation from some social norm cherished by a considerable number of persons. But who is to say whether a condition is such deviation? The sociologist may say so, but that does not make the condition a social problem from the point of view of the layman. Sociologists,

nonetheless, have been content to take deviations for granted, without bothering to consult the definitions of conditions which laymen make' (1941b, p. 25).

The above is not a call to disqualify sociologists as problem definers but a warning of the implications of ignoring peoples' problematisation, particularly the values underpinning that process. Overlooking the publics' definition of problems was a common practice at the time, according to Fuller and Myers, so what follows is that 'conditions do not assume a prominent place in a social problem until a given people define them as hostile to their welfare' (Fuller and Myers, 1941b, p. 25), meaning that sociological or scientific explanations alone do not have the power to persuade publics that a condition is or is not a social problem. However, values – or, to be accurate, the perception that a condition challenges a personal value –have that significant influence power.

The most important implication from the above train of thought is that by neglecting peoples' problems and their value-judgements, sociologists were not only overlooking what could have caused the problem itself but also failing to consider what could be obstructing the alleviation or eradication of the condition (1941b, p. 26). Fuller and Myers substantiate this view by explaining that interventions, for example, against the spread of venereal disease based exclusively on scientific information, will not eradicate this disease unless it is realised that values-based practices have prohibited the frank discussion of sex at home and school. In other words, 'taboos' that contribute to causing the condition also frustrate the attempts to eliminate it (p. 26).

Now, assessing Fuller and Myers' thought across all the reviewed scholarship, it is clear that contrary to the expectation of finding a straightforward answer in their work, these scholars implied that everyone who believes their values are threatened should have the

opportunity to co-construct a definition and solution to a social problem. This is not outrightly stated but advanced by subsuming 'sociologists' and other influential actors under the term 'people'. So any disagreement between these 'people' on whether or not a condition is a social problem ideally should be resolved by seeking 'inter-influence' and 'cross-fertilisation', also by encouraging those who believe their values are being challenged to compromise and reconcile to formulate one consensual definition of the problem (1941a). On this matter, though, there is no indication from Fuller and Myers on how to compromise or negotiate values, only a classification of problems and a values-based typology of social problems, the latter being 'physical, ameliorate and moral'. This classification was used to pinpoint the root of typical social problems but not to elaborate on who is better equipped to decide whether a perceived social problem merits being treated as such. So, by implication, one has to presume that under no circumstances did Fuller and Myers think the view of a particular group of people should be privileged above others, based on the assumption that to do so would mean advancing some values at the expense of others. Such is the strength but also the weakness of the value-conflict view.

As for the consistency of Fuller and Myers' thought across all the reviewed scholarship, it is worth noticing that against their view that all definitions of problems matter, Fuller and Myers' analysis of the dwellers' case contradicts their principle of valuing all publics' problematisation. For instance, while these scholars classified all the typical 'discussants' of problems by level (from 1 to 3) based on the circumstances of the case, the dwellers were not included in that classification. Furthermore, the dwellers' views about their condition were not registered in Fuller and Myers' paper. Assuming this oversight was the fault of those sociologists working on this case, Fuller and Myers omitted to point out that the dwellers should have been consulted. Also, the scholars should have argued that

the dwellers could be part of the solution, not just simply treated as the source of the so-called problem.

In other words, Fuller and Myers overlooked the dwellers as potential definers of social problems, as the dwellers are only mentioned concerning the 'problem' they caused. This means that by neglecting the values of the dwellers, all those involved – the practitioners, neighbours, authorities and charities – are making it more difficult to find a suitable solution to the problem they formulated based on Fuller and Myers' terms. Also worrying is the absence of comments by Fuller and Myers on how the level 1 participants – neighbours and unorganised groups – naturally disappeared from the last stage of the problematisation process, making way for the crafting and implementation of policy by the government's agents and officials only. Once again, there was no attempt by Fuller and Myers to elaborate on how the natural process of problematisation followed by the actual participants in the case challenged the normative views these very same scholars advanced in their work.

It seems that the learning imparted by Fuller and Myers' work is that if an individual or group are actively promoting a social problem, their views should be considered by sociologists and public policy developers. However, if members of the public are not actively seeking to make representations about their perceived condition because they do not see it as a problem – like probably was the case for the dwellers – then these individuals are at the mercy of how public opinion defines them. The link between public opinion and values-based problematisation will be further examined in the following subsection. As for how problem definers communicated amongst themselves and beyond, there is little if anything about it in the work I reviewed by these scholars (i.e., Fuller 1937; 1938; Fuller and Myers, 1941a; 1941b), as their scholarship neither touched on

manoeuvres designed to make social problems more salient (e.g., framing) nor covered the tactics to promote and position them. The sociology of problems (Kitsuse and Spector, 1973) apparently covers that gap; hence, that body of work will be reviewed in another subsection.

2.2.4 The fallible public opinion and the limitations of values-based problematisation

One of Fuller and Myers' ideas that became a contentious point within the field is that sociologists, public policymakers and legislators should rely on public views to acknowledge the occurrence of a social problem or, in simpler terms, to rely on what is deemed socially unacceptable or undesirable at a particular time and place to recognise the existence of a problem (Lipset and Ladd, 1972). So, some sociology scholars cast doubt on the usefulness of public values-based problematisation by drawing from pre-existing studies of public opinion, in particular, the conceptualisation that exposed or warned about the ability of individuals to contribute to the enhancement of Western democratic political systems (Price, 1992). In those studies and the attendant conceptualisation, it is argued that the public cannot be deemed a reliable contributor to policy and law formulation because it lacks competence (Lippmann, 1922), lacks the resources to provide an informed opinion (Dewey, 1927/1991), could be subjugated by the tyranny of a majority of fellow citizens (White, 1961; Allen, 1975), it is susceptible to irrational appeals (Laswell, 1927, book on propaganda) and be the victim of its potential passivity which elites could exploit (Ginsberg, 1986) (Price, 1992, pp. 16-22).

So, in line with the above, for some sociology scholars (Perrucci and Pilisuk, 1968; Sykes, 1971; Manis, 1974), being guided by the public's value-informed problematisation is not

a good idea because this practice is indistinguishable from establishing the presence of a social problem based on public opinion. However, these critical scholars did not elaborate on the meaning of public opinion, nor did they touch on the nature of publics (Lauer, 1976, p. 123), as it should have been the case, bearing in mind that what is often implied in their work is that the former and the latter are the same phenomenon. In other words, according to the critics of Fuller and Myers' premise, the public and public opinion are more than different sides of the same coin; they are an inextricable aggregation. I will elaborate on the implications of this later; in the meantime, it is vital to introduce the specifics of the critics' arguments first.

As it was stated before, most of the critics of values-based problematisation invariable relied on examples of the fallibility of popular knowledge to underpin their critique, only that in this particular context, that fallibility also takes a specific value-centric form; in simpler terms, it takes the form of anti-value; hence, the reader might find it difficult to accept that those anti-values were informed or linked in any way to, for example, lack of competence, lack of resources, manipulation and so forth. Also, for a few other critics, like Manis, it was important to complement the customary critique with a forensic examination of the train of thought underpinning the value-conflict perspective and other similar ideas (e.g., Merton and Nisbet's work). For the comprehensiveness of his argument, this subsection draws mainly from Manis' critique (1974) to continue appraising the sociological debate on who should define social problems and how.

Introducing the first of the aforementioned customary arguments, Manis (1974a, pp. 306-308) examines a series of cases in which the anti-values of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and ethnocentrism were used to justify the presence of a problem. Substantiating his point, Manis reminds the reader that:

'During the late 1830s and early 1840s, the Cherokee and Seminole Indians (Native Americans) were disposed from their lands and driven westward on their tragic "trail of tears". Some Americans, such as Emerson, were opposed to this policy; the majority appeared to favour it. From the standpoint of American public opinion, the Indian was the social problem. Their expulsion and near-extermination was an attempt at a "final solution" of the Indian problem' (p. 306).

Also, assuming that some of its readers might think that events of the past did not reflect the current state of affairs at the time of publication, Manis referred to more contemporary circumstances that illustrate the shortcomings of still relying on the public's problematisation, such as an increasingly a tolerant attitude towards the consumption of alcohol and smoking, 'though the former has produced millions of problem drinkers and the latter is empirically and officially "dangerous to your health"' (p. 306). And crucially, reflecting on the dynamics of public-opinion formation, Manis concludes that 'accepting the public's view of social problems assumes that the public knows best what society's problems really are. While social problems textbooks appear to make this assumption, they often note that public opinion is influenced by political leaders, pressure groups, advertising, and the mass media of communication' (p. 307). The latter means that what often is believed to be vox populi is just 'the echo of society's opinion makers' (p. 307).

So, to summarise and foreground the implications of relying on public-opinion-based problematisation, Manis posed the following questions:

'If the public is strongly opposed to bathtubs, Indians (Native Americans), marihuana, busing, subversives, or witches, must the sociologist choose these topics as the substantive appropriate domain of social problems? Is the sociologist who joins the search

for witches, their causes, and consequences a neutral observer or a participant in witch-hunting? The key question is, are some "social problems" no more than popular myths and prejudices?' (1974a, p. 309).

Manis did not provide direct 'no' or 'yes' answers to these questions, not that the reader needed that for questions 1 and 3, especially after digesting Manis' views on his selected cases. For instance, 'we need to concede that the latter (public knowledge) may be based, at times, upon erroneous information and emotional fears. We need only contend that, at such times, perceived social problems may be illusions or insignificant' (p. 309). As for question number 2, concerning the position in which the sociologist is placed by values-based problematisation, Manis' answer lies in the territory of the implicit, as it is palpable in the following assertion:

'The reliance by sociologists on the "voice of the people" for their definition of social problems is a modern equivalent of an ancient aphorism. The Roman belief that "the voice of the people is the voice of God" is paralleled by the sociologists' acceptance of public opinion as the ultimate arbiter of social problems' (pp. 306-307).

In this observation, once again, Manis is hinting at the danger of political populism and its impact on naïve sociological analysis; as for how the above answers the second question, it does it by dissociating the sociologist from the general public, the opposite of what Fuller and Myers did by subsuming the former into the latter. Manis' dissociation tells or reminds the reader that the sociologist is an arbiter who mistakenly could be displaced according to the premises of the value-conflict perspective. The following questions further foreground this danger and the above dissociation, 'why should the norms and values of a popular majority be considered a more neutral basis of sociological

concepts and perspectives than the values or judgements of a professional sociologist?' And 'does a sociological education or the sociological imagination provide no basis for assessing traditional or transient value-judgements of popular majorities?' (1974a, p. 309). So, it would be safe to assume that Manis' answer to the question above (2) is that the sociologist should not automatically study the public's proposed problems; that should not be the approach, but on the contrary, the sociologists first should adjudicate on whether or not those proposed problems are worthy investigating and tackling. Paradoxically, the latter would require some study of the proposed problem by the sociologist anyway.

Subsequently, mindful of any individual's right to voice an opinion and hence to problematise, a right which is conferred to all citizens by democratic states (Boas, 1969), Manis explains that he did not prescribe to always rank sociological knowledge and judgement above the public's knowledge and judgement (1974a, p. 309). This is in line with the formal objective of his critique, which is to move sociological inquiry away 'from its uncritical acceptance of societal values in defining social problems' (p. 314). But the latter was stated as a way to appear sensible and respectful of the vox populi, although with reasonable grounds for his concerns about the role of the general public in the specific matters related to problematisation.

Nevertheless, Manis' cautionary aim is not impartial, particularly in light of his barrage against the public's ability to provide sound ideas on social problems, a stance that he maintained in subsequent publications (Manis 1974a)[35]. The same motivation led him to dissect Merton and Nisbet's work, concluding that 'if we accept Merton's distinction

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[35] 'The knowledge and values of science are less ethnocentric, less erratic, and less influenced by vested interest that those of a majority or significant numbers of a society' (Manis, 1974b, p.13).

between recognised and unrecognised social problems, we concede the fallibility of public opinion' (1974a, p. 310). But, before we move into the analysis of Merton and Nisbet's contribution to the discussion of who should be defining social problems, it is essential to identify any limitations in Manis and fellow critics' train of thought regarding the fallibility of public values-based problematisation.

As it was stated above, the critique of popular values-based problematisation is underpinned by the conflation of the notions of 'the general public' with 'public opinion', meaning that all problematic – e.g., racists, biased, ill-informed – opinions on a subject are essentially an analogue reflection of the nature of the general public. Hence, the general public cannot be trusted with the task of identifying and defining its problems, as it is its nature the very cause of all social difficulties. In simple terms, it is not just that the general public is ill-equipped or lacks what is needed to engage in well-informed problematisation, but that its essence – consisting of the amalgamation of the persistent anti-values indicated above – blinds the general public to its faults, the roots of social conditions. Manis and its fellow critics imply the latter. Oddly, it is a view that they share with Fuller and Myers, who, as I said above, might have thought of the dwellers as incapable of understanding the consequences of their thinking, beliefs and actions; hence, the dwellers should not be consulted about it. Thus, in some of the scholarship on social problematisation, there is a tendency to engage in indirect responsibilisation. In other words, this literature gently suggests that those affected by a condition also cause it (Ross and Staines, 1972; Ryan, 1976; Lopata, 1984). But, mindful of going on a tangent here, I will elaborate briefly on this matter later.

So, concerning the conceptual conflation mentioned above, unsurprisingly, there are many definitions of 'publics' and 'public opinion' and no agreement as to which is the

most apt or encompassing enough to reflect the priorities of each academic field (Price, 1992; Moy 2011; Price, 2012). Sociological views on these concepts have relied chiefly on ideas that originated within the same academic field (e.g., Blumer, 1946; 1948) and the discipline of public opinion. So, for sociology scholars, 'the public', as those within the discipline initially defined it, is a group of individuals who can think and do so collectively in response to a problem (Park, 1904/1972), or, in contrast, and rooted in public-opinion ideas, it is a supra-individual entity representing either the bulk of the general population or 'an abstraction of a specific interest (or set of interests) common to a certain number (of individuals) within a population' (Allport, 1937, p. 9). I have called the latter entity or abstraction 'the general public', although other scholars analysing this phenomenon in contemporary contexts have called it 'the public' (e.g., Warner, 2002; Pieczka, 2019). As for the phenomenon of 'public opinion', for sociology scholars, it could be either a simple aggregation of views in line with the concept of the general public/the public or the product of debate and discussion, hence, a discursive or deliberative phenomenon (Dewey, 1991; Childs, 1939; Blumer, 1948; Price, 1992; Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs, 2004; Olson, 2011; Perrin, 2011).

Consequently, I foreground that the critics of popular values-based problematisation have advanced their critique by implicitly adopting the concepts of 'the general public' and its concomitant derivative definition of public opinion as the result of aggregating populations and views. This rules out the possibility of 'a public' or 'publics' problematising. Consequently, in rhetorical terms but not in reality, those individuals within a public with familiarity and, therefore, with insight about a condition are removed from the critics' argument, giving the impression that it is the hopeless general public – ethnocentric, erratic, and influenced by vested interest, according to Manis (1974b, p. 13) – that the sociologist has to deal with by simply ignoring it.

In contrast to 'the general public', 'the public' is characterised by sociological views as a group of people who confront a problem, engage in discussion about it and are divided or mobilised by their ideas on how to resolve the problem (Blumer, 1946, p. 189). This 'public' – a more granular or specific unit of analysis – emerged from the conceptualisation of sociologists and psychologists (i.e., Le Bon (1895/1960), Gabriel Tarde (1898), Robert Park (1904/1972) and Blumer (1946-48) – whose work led to the creation of the subfield of collective behaviour. According to this subfield, the public was considered a new phenomenon at the time (late 19th century to 20th century), strengthened by the relay of popular problematisation by the mass media and distinctive from the concepts of 'the masses' and 'the crowd' (Shibutani, 1988, pp. 26-27; McPhail, 1989; Price 1992, pp. 22-29). There are other accounts of how the concept of 'the public' or 'a public' arose; however, those do not consider the contribution of the sociologists and psychologists I mentioned above (e.g., Pieczka, 2019). Nevertheless, this sociological conceptualisation of 'the public' aligns with similar ideas that informed my view of this phenomenon, which I introduced in section 1.4 of the first chapter of this thesis.

2.2.5 People and their values are the inexorable intractable factors of problematisation

As it was indicated above, Manis further underpinned his argument against public values-based problematisation by claiming that Merton's classification of 'recognised and unrecognised social problems' exposes 'the fallibility of public opinion' (1974a, p. 310) or, more accurately, the fallibility of the general public in identifying social problems. However, contrary to what Manis thought, the functionalist perspective on social problems does not give values a more dominant role vis-à-vis social conditions in problematisation. That presumption by Manis does not align with my assessment of either

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Merton's original work (e.g., 1967) or Merton and Nisbet's discussion of social problematisation (i.e.,1971; 1976). Also, as indicated in sub-section 2.2.1, Kitsuse and Spector's review of the same body of work disagrees with Manis' view (1973, p. 412). Consequently, in line with Merton and Nisbet's train of thought, the interpretation upheld here is that values and social objective conditions are equally important in formulating a problem. That becomes evident when we carefully follow what these scholars said regarding the nature of social problems and the complexity of identifying the latter, as it is demonstrated by the following concluding thoughts in these scholars' work (1976):

'Basically, a social problem exists when there is a sizeable discrepancy between **what is** and what people think ought to be' (p. 7) (...) 'In the end, it is the values held by people in society that provide **crude bases** for the relative importance assigned to social problems. As we shall see later (...), this circumstance leads to badly distorted impressions of the social consequences of various problems, even when they are being judged in light of widespread values' (p. 9).

As it is made palpable by the first part of the quote above, conditions ('what is') are required to establish the discrepancy, that being 'the social problem', and that is the case in equivalent importance to other factors, such as values. However, values provide 'crude bases' for establishing a social problem, its magnitude, and its consequences (1976, pp. 7-9). So, a couple of things arise from the above: a caveat on Manis' assessment of Merton's conceptualisation of social problems and, crucially, the following very pertinent questions: if values are not reliable, if they are not good criteria, then what is it? Or, more to the point of this review, whose values are unreliable? And consequently, who is the most reliable arbitrator? Leaving aside values, assuming that they are not necessary to identify a discrepancy, the last two questions would be equally relevant; for instance,

whose assessment of conditions is to be considered reliable? Or who is the most objective, impartial referee when establishing the nature of conditions (e.g., positive or negative)?

In an attempt to address these matters, Merton and Nisbet (1971, 1976) argued that problematisation invariably concerns two types of 'social problems', the objective conditions identified by all the relevant problem definers as at odds with social values – these are called 'manifest social problems' – and 'the latent social problems', that are also at odds with current values but are not generally recognised as being so. In the context in which these types of problems are introduced, there is no equivocation as to why they exist, who does not recognise the discrepancy with values or social standards and therefore, who should be arbiter and/or problem definer of last resort; all this is indicated by Merton and Nisbet as follows:

'It has sometimes been proposed that sociologists should confine their attention to the conditions generally regarded as undesirable. But this policy would lead them to exclude study of all manner of other conditions that are accepted by people even though those conditions are in fact at odds with their declared interests and values. It would result in sociologists adopting the subjective judgements of the groups and individuals under study – while believing that they maintained the objectivity of the scientific observer. The basic point is that people themselves do not always identify the conditions and processes of society that have consequences opposed to their self-defined interests and values. It is therefore a function of sociologists to study not only manifest social problems (...) but also latent social problems' (1976, p. 13).

Within sociology, there are different interpretations of the above; consequently, other uses have been given to Merton and Nisbet's typology and its substantiation. For instance,

for Manis, who focused on the 'unrecognised' rather than the 'recognised' social problems, the aforementioned typology enables him to argue that values and those holding them are inexorable intractable factors for social problematisation. Therefore, the general public and its values should not be considered reliable criteria for sociological practice. There is an evident problem with Manis' proposition since sociologists also have values, prompting Merton and Nisbet to point out that 'in undertaking to supply knowledge about latent social problems, sociologist do not impose their values upon others, although (...), their values do affect their choice of problems to investigate' (1976, p. 13). It is important to elaborate further on this matter because, ultimately, whoever is given legitimacy-authority to define problems for the rest of us does it informed by her/his/their values. I will touch upon this matter again below.

For their part, Kitsuse and Spector (1973), who underpinned their constructionist 'sociology of social problems' with a critique of Merton and Nisbet's work, identified specific gaps arising from these scholars' typology and its underpinning argument. I found it relevant to bring to the readers' attention one of these key gaps: who should define social problems and how. That gap arises from reflecting on the four hypothetical outcomes of a problematisation process – based on Merton and Nisbet's ideas – with those outcomes being as follows: manifested, latent, and spurious problems, and a normal social condition. These theoretical outcomes are introduced by the table below, created by Kitsuse and Spector (1973, p. 411).

TABLE 1

		Sociologist's Definition	
		Social Problem	No Social Problem
Members' Definition	Social Problem	(1) "Manifest" Social Problem	(2) "Spurious" Social Problem
	No Social Problem	(3) "Latent" Social Problem	(4) "Normal" Social Condition

In talking about the table per se, Kitsuse and Spector made clear that it reflects Merton and Nisbet's view of who should be defining social problems; that person is the sociologist. Otherwise, the position of 'sociologist' and 'members' of the public should be switched. On the implications arising from the definitions above, specifically numbers (2) and (3), which reflect a conflict between the problematisations advanced by each part, Kitsuse and Spector bring to our attention the following: 'But surely the sociologist is on much weaker grounds when he disagrees with the members of a society about what their values or socially shared standards are, or on which particular value or standard is to be applied to a given condition. (...) If the sociologist disagrees with the members of a group or society about what their values are, on what basis may he do this?' (1973, p. 411).

Kitsuse and Spector elaborate on the above by pointing out that asking sociologists not to impose their values does not address the matter at the heart of the question, which is to establish what the desirable or acceptable social values are and, therefore use that method or criteria to arrive to all the definitions indicated in the table above. In the absence of that method or criteria to assess the quality of values, hence the gap, by default, and as Merton and Nisbet implied, the way forward should be to grant all sociological problematisation the status of dominant or overriding above public problematisation. Scattered across Merton and Nisbet's argument, the reader will find the following

different reasons justifying their implied solution: 'apathy', lack of consensus, the limitations of distributive justice (e.g., scarcity of opportunity), 'ignorance', 'irrationality', 'tradition', 'sentiment', 'mental illness', 'mediated perception' (e.g., due to news media provision of distorting information) (pp. 9-15, 21-23). So, in Manis' same style, through cases and generalisations, Merton and Nisbet also provide their paternalistic conclusion:

'Now, it is one thing to maintain, with Max Weber, Thomas, and the other giants of sociology, that to understand human action, we must take note of its subjective components: what people perceive, feel, believe, and want. Were sociologists to ignore the personal and public definitions of social problems, they could not begin to understand them. But it is quite another thing to exaggerate this sound idea by holding that human action generally and social problems specifically are nothing but matters of subjective definition. Total subjectivism – "social problems are only what people think they are" – leads us astray by neglecting social, demographic, economic, technological, ecological, and other objective constraints upon human beings. To ignore those constraints is to imply, mistakenly, that they do not significantly affect both the choices people make and the personal and social consequences of those choices. It is to pave the road to Utopianism with bad assumptions' (1976, pp. 21-22).

Again, in the same style of the sociologists who preceded them, Merton and Nisbet have justified the overriding authority of sociological problematisation by associating 'human beings' to subjective-irrational behaviour while at the same time dissociating sociologists from the general public, their anti-values and other negative human phenomena affecting peoples' choices. However, these rhetorical manoeuvres of dissociation and association have limited persuasiveness due to the obvious realisation that sociologists have values,

too, which are potentially anti-values. The train of thought put forward by Merton, Nisbet and Manis, which attempts to diminish the importance of this realisation, is very similar. First, they explain that the scientific landscape has changed; hence, science is not just about observing and recording but also creating. Second, the scientific and sociological creation process is informed by values, not just the values of the public but also the values of the scientists-sociologist. Third, it is argued that values-based inquiry and creation should be accepted because other well-regarded scholars, such as Max Weber, explained that sociologists are influenced by their values. These key figures did not object to it. Fourth, it is concluded that there is no 'value-free sociology or value-free sociologists'; hence, instead of pretending that the opposite is the case, the field should embrace the scientific-sociological values of scepticism, objectivity, accuracy, freedom of inquiry and impartiality. Some of these values were proposed before by scholars like Merton or were new (e.g., Manis, 1974, p. 313). Finally, it is argued that the aforementioned scientific-sociological values would ensure sociologists problematise ethically. If not, the rest of the field would hold them accountable, implying that public values-based problematisation has an important but secondary role in defining problems. The idea of according a secondary role to public values-based problematisation is exploited as an opportunity to propose new social problems; some of these problems are labelled 'spurious', 'perceived' and 'latent'. The latter are the terms used to reflect that these are instances in which the public has mistakenly claimed it is facing a problem or, the opposite, it has failed to do so (Manis, 1974a, p. 314).

All the above evidence that from the early 1940s up to the 1970s, there was an influential strand theorising on social conditions and problems that advocated a sociological paternalistic approach to the definition of social problems. This paternalistic view advances the idea that sociologists, not the general public, should manage how people

problematise. This idea is underpinned by treating the general public as an all-encompassing abstraction, consisting of those publics directly affected by a social condition and those groups with just an opinion about it; this results in diluting the former. In other words, through the amalgamation of individuals, the voices and thoughts of a well-informed public are drowned out by the potentially ill-informed contribution of some quarters of the public opinion. But for those readers who think that public opinion could enhance or support a public's problematisation, a possibility I am not denying, it is also essential to consider the nullifying effect that polarisation or polarised groups could have on attempts to advance a reasonable problematisation claim.

Also, when I said above that generalisations partly advanced the sociological paternalistic stance on social problematisation, I meant that there is one prevalent gap across the work reviewed: the absence of a definition or conceptualisation of the phenomenon of values. Based on the significance accorded to values by the reviewed scholarship, this gap is a significant oversight. This omission can only be justified because most of the work I came across is hypothetical; it was published to encourage discussion and probably the testing of its propositions, although the latter did not happen. So, in this sociological scholarship, there is no attempt to define and subsequently operationalise values. I presume the latter became an obstacle to advancing and refining sociological views on public values. Hence, in the absence of knowledge on public values, paternalistic scholars supported their views against public values-based problematisation by drawing from the traditional or old-fashioned fears about the irrationality of the masses and the crowds – e.g., Le Bon (1895/1960), Gabriel Tarde (1898) – together with similar anxieties identified by public opinion scholars, which I also introduced above and in subsequent sections.

It is worth noticing that when the paternalistic body of work was written (1940-1970), the foundational theorisation on values was already available (e.g., Kluckhohn, 1951; England, 1967; Rokeach, 1968; Williams, 1968). Yet, the emerging conceptualisation of social problems within the sociological field, like the functionalist perspective, missed the opportunity to draw from the literature on values or contribute knowledge. Furthermore, concerning knowledge, it seems odd to assume, as sociology scholars did, that values shape behaviour when how that happens remains an understudied phenomenon (Connor and Becker, 1994; Roccas and Sagiv, 2010; Sagiv and Roccas, 2021).

With all this critique and gaps in mind, it is relevant to point out that the succeeding perspective, that being 'the sociology of social problems' proposed by Kitsuse and Spector (1973- onwards), neither sought to cover the pre-existing gaps nor it cared much for the attendant critique; it simply adopted a specific research agenda – to focus on the process of collective definition of problems exclusively –; a targeted agenda originally proposed by Blumer (1971). This does not mean that previous perspectives did not consider studying how the different groups and individuals affected by a condition problematise (e.g. Fuller and Myers' natural history of social problems).

So, as mentioned earlier, what makes the sociology of social problems distinctive is the view that it is unproductive to study how problem definers – in particular sociologists – make sense of social conditions (Becker, 1966). This view goes against the ontological stance adopted by all the earlier perspectives, which treated social problems as a phenomenon derived from social conditions. Nevertheless, at that time (1970s), scholars within the field of sociology gave significant weight to the reasons justifying a strict focus on the public process of problematisation, calling this alternative area of interest a

'constructionist' approach (J. W. Schneider, 1985; Best, 2002; Weinberg, 2014; Best, 2018). The following sub-section of this review covers the constructionist's thoughts on who should define social problems and how.

2.2.6 Problematisation starts with a public, but others give form to the public's claims

It is not incongruous to see Blumer as the original proposer of the ontological constructionist shift within the field; after all, his theorisation on 'the public' aligns with his subsequent 'thesis', 'that social problems are fundamentally products of a process of collective definition instead of existing independently as a set of objective social arrangements with an intrinsic makeup' (1971, p. 298). As it was mentioned earlier, in Blumer's view, the public is a group of people who arise as a result of discussion and disagreement about a problem (1946, pp. 189-192), hence, in line with his aim of furthering the study of collective behaviour, Blumer proposes a specific focus on the social dynamics of problematisation.

The latter is supported by arguing that 'the objective makeup of a given social condition', that being its independent observable characteristics (e.g., duration, scope, impact), is insignificant in how the public determines social problems (1971, p. 300). 'The societal definition' gives 'the social problem its nature, lays out how it is to be approached, and shapes what is done about it' (p. 300). In light of this view, Blumer subsequently describes what he believes are the primary stages in the evolution of problems, including those concerning the planning and implementation of solutions (pp. 301-305). But before I elaborate further on the relevant aspects of Blumer's five-stage model, it is important to

briefly outline this scholar's train of thought, which supports his lack of interest in conditions and, hence, his thesis on collective social problematisation.

Blumer structured this part of his argument as points concerning the 'deficiencies' of the sociological approach to tackling social problems at the time. Those deficiencies or mistaken presuppositions are as follows: A) wrongly assuming that the existing knowledge produced by the field enables the identification of social problems. Blumer explains that the Mertonian concepts of deviancy, dysfunction and structural strain are not accompanied by criteria that could be used to identify such problems in the empirical world (pp. 299-300). B) Two interconnected phenomena might have masked the latter deficiency. The first one is the recurrent reliance by sociologists on people's recognition of a social problem; simply put, more than often, people tell sociologists what the problems are, not the other way around. Blumer underpinned this claim with some cases but argued that 'illustrations are legion' (p. 299). The second phenomenon is the discrepancy between the moment the public recognises a problem and that of sociological investigations. Or worse, when the discrepancy is permanent and hence deviancy, dysfunction and structural strain are never recognised by the public. These two potential scenarios led Blumer to believe that deviancy, dysfunction and structural strain are not equivalent to social problems (p. 300). That might be the case because Merton's problems either do not exist or no one, including sociologists, can reliably recognise them. In any case, the two phenomena above are deficiencies to Blumer because sociology has failed to realise their occurrence. C) the last deficiency is the assumption that for problems to be resolved or mitigated, society must follow the treatment recommended by sociologists, a treatment based on the presumption that some negative objective characteristics of a condition were affecting society. 'This assumption ignores or misrepresents how a society acts in the case of its social problems. A social problem is always a focal point for the

operation of divergent and conflicting interests, intentions, and objectives', Blumer concluded (p. 301). Hence, it is reasonable to assume that the definition of a condition is the result of a co-constructed interpretation of it, which does not necessarily mirror its objective features. In other words, negotiating conflicting social interests could foster a severely misleading outcome, a distorted representation of a condition.

All the above convinced Blumer that the study of a social condition and its objective characteristics are somewhat irrelevant – 'inconsequential' – to problematisation (p. 301), as the determination of a problem and its solutions is the result of the interplay of specific social interests, which may or may not be shaped by any sociological investigation of conditions. Concerning the matter of the interplay of potentially diverging interests, this relates to the negotiation and agreement on the distinctive objectives that motivate individuals to problematise, from simply seeking the solution to a problem to rather self-centred intentions (e.g., enhancing an individual's reputation or protecting the interests of a business). So, the potential outcomes of this interplay have already been implied above (plausible representation of a condition or a distorted one). Hence, we should direct our attention to what could cause these outcomes, for instance, publics and other groups' engagement in problematisation or lack thereof. I will elaborate on this throughout this sub-section.

In the meantime, it is also important to note that contrary to what his usage of adjectives suggests (e.g., 'inconsequential' conditions, 'very secondary indeed'), Blumer found it difficult to ignore the objective characteristics of problems. This is palpable in the persistent contradictions in his work; for instance, he asserts several times and in slightly different ways that 'social problems are not the result of an intrinsic malfunctioning of a

society, but are the result of a process of definition in which a given condition is picked out and identified as a social problem' (p. 301).

So, Blumer not only struggled to elaborate on collective problematisation without acknowledging conditions as a factor, but also, critically, he still considered conditions to be in a causal relationship with social problems, in which the latter arises from the former. That is certainly the case because while Blumer argued that conditions are inconsequential and difficult to identify, at close inspection, his argument fails to prove how objective reality – e.g., the objective features of a condition – is not a key component of problematisation. Thus, when Blumer's work on this specific matter is contrasted against the preceding theorisation, it is difficult to see how his ideas do not align with those postulated by earlier perspectives, specifically those arguing that social problems have objective and subjective dimensions (e.g., Fuller and Myers, 1941a; 1941b; Merton, 1967). At this point, we should remember that this critique is not different from the one that besieged the sociology of problems, which is the influential perspective advanced by Kitsuse and Spector.

How Blumer and any other sociology scholars conceptualise the nature of problems remains relevant to this review because, as indicated in previous sub-sections, this not only shapes our understanding of how publics define conditions but also how we come to see definers, how they position themselves and are positioned by others as capable or incapable of contributing to the definitional process and therefore having or not the legitimacy to define. For clarity, reflect on your views regarding the ability of someone facing poverty to understand their condition and what causes it; subsequently, see how your views align or not with the archetypical frames used to underpin the narratives against people experiencing poverty (Nisbet, 2010). So, this observation does not relate

to the definers' construction of their identities but to how sociological thinking becomes a discourse that enables or hinders publics. The emergence of that discourse is what the previous sub-section foregrounded when I analysed Merton and Manis' views regarding public values and how these were framed as obstacles but not the values of sociology. Later, after reviewing the five stages Model[36], I will return to the matter of publics vis-à-vis Blumer's overall thinking.

Blumer's five stages are briefly described and appraised here as follows: 1) 'The emergence of social problems'. Blumer just re-states his train of thought and identifies a series of gaps in the sociological body of work, such as the absence of studies on the impact of variables like violence, interest groups, political figures, influential organisations and the mass media on problem recognition. Blumer does not add anything about the emergence of social problems apart from repeating that it is a mistake to assume that harmful social conditions automatically become social problems. 2) 'Legitimation of social problems'. Blumer points out that sociologists 'know very little' about legitimising social problems (p. 303). In any case, he believes a problem must acquire a necessary respectability, which 'entitles it to consideration in the recognised arenas of public discussion' (p. 303). Those arenas are the press, the church, the schools, civic organisations, and legislative chambers. Suppose a social problem does not have 'respectability' to enter these arenas. In that case, it is 'doomed', meaning that after gaining some initial recognition, in the absence of legitimacy, a problem would not progress further to the other stages. The terms 'respectability' and 'legitimacy' are interchangeable for Blumer, but the scholar does not explain how a social problem must earn this legitimacy. So, contrary to what he said before about social problems being the

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[36] I have called Blumer's description of the five stages of problematisation (1971) a 'model' because he did not make clear if his conceptualisation of these stages is the result of analysing some findings or just hypothetical, requiring validation through testing.

product of collective human definition, how he described this stage reifies social problems. Simply put, he has contradicted himself by giving agency to problems. Also, is it not conceivable that after a public recognises a problem, the same public introduces the problem in the aforementioned arenas so it could gain legitimacy? The latter would be the thinking consistent with Blumer's thesis's key principle, not reifying problems.

3) 'Mobilisation of action'. 'The problem now becomes the object of discussion, of controversy, of differing depictions, and of diverse claims' (p. 303). Blumer briefly describes how, at this stage, different groups advance a definition of the problem that could benefit them, which happens in various settings (e.g., the mass media and/or legislative chambers). Blumer points out that sociological knowledge about this stage comes from public opinion studies, 'yet their contribution is fragmentary and woefully inadequate' because it lacks empirical testing of the process. That would also be the case for Blumer's thesis unless he argued that his thesis was based on Fuller and Myers' findings, which he didn't.

4) 'Formation of an official plan of action'. This stage concerns the negotiation process, resulting in a plan to mitigate or eradicate a social problem. However, not much is said by Blumer about how to negotiate or agree on a particular definition of a problem, just that at this stage, problem definers might be willing to make 'concessions' and 'trade-offs' and show 'deference to power'. 'The official plan that is enacted constitutes, in itself, the official definition of the problem; it represents how society through its official apparatus perceives the problem and intends to act toward the problem' (p. 304). Blumer warns that what emerges from the problematisation process at this stage 'may be a far cry from how the problem was viewed in the early stage of its career' (p. 304).

5) 'Implementation of the official plan'. 'To assume that an official plan and its implementation in practice are the same flies in the face of facts', Blumer claims, explaining that 'the implementation of the plan ushers in a new process of collective definition' (p. 304). This is the case because the people 'touched by the plan' and those crafting it are expected to renegotiate the official design of the planned intervention. 'The kind of accommodations, blockages, unanticipated accretions, and unintended transformations of which I am speaking can be seen abundantly in the case of many past attempts to put official plans into actual practice', Blumer argues (p. 305), leaving us with the impression that there is an entrenched asymmetry in this overall problematisation process because from the three points at which the problem is defined throughout the stages, it is only at the first stage that the public has the opportunity to say what the problem is about. This asymmetry informed my approach to micro-level problematisation and the analysis of Blumer's contribution, which I offer in the following subsection.

2.2.7 The emergence of the absentee-definer public, the one that has been dislocated

With all the components of Blumer's thesis in place, it is time to reflect on this scholar's contribution to answering the questions concerning this review: who should define social problems and how? Regarding the former, while Blumer did not explicitly mention the *absentee definers,* this scholar persistently alluded to them. The *absentee definers* are the individuals or groups who are not meaningfully involved in problematisation due to how a plan or agenda was designed or is being implemented. Fontaine and Pooley concluded the same in their analysis of sociology's work on social problems (2020). According to these scholars, there is a significant and yet implied phenomenon in Blumer's thesis, and that is:

'Social scientists and their work are side-shows in the political process. What matters, in the end, are the prevailing political winds; politicians and policymakers will, perhaps, raid the academic storehouse, but for their own justificatory ends. The policy shelf is well-stocked with academic literature fit for any particular political platform to, in effect, check out. All the agency, on this view, lies with the politicians and their house intellectuals and functionaries. If governments are constrained, by organised interests and more diffuse publics, then something gauzier – like the prevailing social imaginary – furnishes those limits. On this account, social science is an inert and ineffectual bystander – a supplier of raw materials, at best' (Pooley and Pooley, 2020, p. 45).

While the above observation refers specifically to the sociologist as the absentee definer, the public in Blumer's work (1971) is also at risk of being a bystander due to how policy and law formulation take place. This is much in agreement with my earlier critique of Fuller and Myer's natural history of social problems (1941a), a model that made publics absentees (e.g., dwellers and those who complain about them too). Hence, in line with the paternalistic stance in sociological theorisation (e.g., Fuller, Myers, Merton, Spector and Manis), Blumer's ideas strengthen my view that there is a tendency in the reviewed sociological scholarship to naturalise *the absentee-definer public*.

So, how does Blumer's thesis reinforce the latter? He implies with his pragmatic depiction of how problematisation might occur that the overwhelming amount of intervention undertaken by political actors, influential individuals and policy agents is inevitable and, hence, bound to dislocate, to make absent the public and its suggested problems. This pragmatic tone is palpable in Blumer's description of stage four of the problematisation process, the 'formation of an official plan of action' (see quotes above). Furthermore, the dislocation of the public is also implied in Blumer's depiction of the stage of legitimation

of problems since most of the arenas in which this legitimation happens (i.e., the press, other mass media, the church, legislative chambers and 'places of officialdom') are not that accessible or amenable to the influence of the public (p. 303).

So, the above view – on how legitimation is a process beyond the influence of any public – is strengthened by Blumer's following assertion:

'Do not think because a giving social condition or arrangement is recognised as grave by some people in society – by people who indeed attract attention to it by their agitation – that this means that the problem will break through into the arena of public consideration. To the contrary, the asserted problem may be regarded as insignificant, as not worthy of consideration, as in the accepted order of things and thus not to be tampered with (...)' (p. 303). This is followed by a warning from Blumer, who argues that 'the shouting' by 'subversive elements in society', those agitating because they see themselves dislocated and hence powerless, would have no positive effect on the legitimation of a problem; quite the opposite, such actions could hinder its progression to the next stages of problematisation (p. 303).

The phenomenon of *the absentee-definer public* is also identifiable in development scholarship – reviewed in the first chapter of this thesis (e.g., section 1.5) – in which, without using the term I coined, there is indication that two key publics are persistently side-lined by the modernising agenda-setting process; those absent-definers publics are, the local NPOs – set up by third-sector actors in the Global South – and communities, specifically those affected by a condition and hence with knowledge about it. Similarly, Chay-Nemeth's case study established the presence of a 'circumscribed public', 'a group of individuals who are highly dependent on other publics for resources' (2001, p. 138-

143); this finding serves as an example, though a rare one, of how a PR scholar has identified an absentee-definer public.

Informed by the above train of thought, my study attempted to establish the presence of not just the participant publics in collaborative development relationships (CDRs) – those publics enabled by the agenda-setting process to meaningfully engage in problem definition at the micro-level – but also the absent and dislocated publics – those side-lined by the same process and therefore unable to offer or promote a definition of the problem. In Chapter 5, I substantiated the occurrence of a contradiction in development intervention called *the dislocation paradox*, a paradox emerging from deficient problem definition that ultimately fosters absent-dislocated publics.

As for how problematising happens, particularly what those problematising say, there is nothing meaningful about it in Blumer's thesis (1971). This is a gap that Blumer's work has in common with the paternalistic stance on social problematisation, too. That is the case because the paternalistic scholars' work (1940s to early 1970s) has been informed by the foundational view that publics should not be trusted as definers. However, considering that Blumer's thesis is based on the idea that collective problematisation should be the focal point for sociological investigation, it is odd of him to have overlooked the communication dimension of problematisation. Others might argue that failing to examine how people communicate about a problem is a significant oversight; after all, problematisation is, by nature, a definitional activity or process, meaningless or non-existent without communication.

However, it could be argued that Blumer put forward a thesis, and subsequent discussion and testing of it should have covered the above gap. But there was no significant

discussion, acknowledgement, or testing within the field as far as this review could ascertain, just one paper, by Ross and Staines (1972), based on Blumer's ideas, which expanded on the different stages of problematisation, adding insight about the political intervening factors in problematisation and how political actors use 'symbolic strategies'. This work did challenge Blumer's pragmatism, but in it, the authorities and the news media craft the symbolic strategies (pp. 22; 33), not the publics, who are called 'the underdog partisans', and who tend 'to make trouble and agitate' (p. 34).

As for how Kitsuse and Spector's constructionist sociology of problems covered the same gap in Blumer's work, initially, it did not. The foundational papers by these scholars (Spector and Kitsuse, 1973; Kitsuse and Spector, 1973; 1975; Spector and Kitsuse, 1977) do not offer sufficient insight into how publics communicate about problematisation. Similarly to Ross and Staines' work (1972), the early constructionist body of work just offers observations about governmental authorities' use of communication tactics or 'public relations solutions' (1973, pp. 153-154). That is not to say that later on, other constructionist scholars did not examine problematisation as a definitional activity (e.g., Capek, 1993; Jenness, 1995; Conrad, 1997; Berbrier, 1998; Neuman, 1998; Schrock, Holden, and Reid, 2004; Fujiwara, 2005). The latter constructivist research has two units of analysis in common: a) participant-publics or problematising-publics and b) framing as a definitional activity. Also, similar to my work, these problematisation analyses have been informed by sociological and social movements' scholarship (e.g., Gamson, 1975; Goffman, 1986; Snow et al., 1986; Snow and Benford, 1988; Benford and Snow, 2000; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989).

2.2.8 Preliminary implications of the review of sociology's body of work

As said throughout the different subsections of this chapter, scholars expected definitions or problematisations of a particular condition to clash, hence the following questions: Which of the available definitions should prevail or be seen as legitimate? And why? Also, and crucially, is this clash a feature of modernity? So, below, I introduce some of the development thinking linked to these questions. But before that introduction is provided, it is important to note that these questions arise from the failure of sociological scholarship to consistently indicate what sociologists and public policy analysts should be studying, either the representations of social conditions or the objective characteristics of these conditions.

Development multilateral institutions have overlooked or resolved this lack of clarity by identifying and analysing the objective features of conditions. There are other reasons for this choice, which will be provided below. Nevertheless, that institutional choice goes in contravention to what the academic field of sociology, which subjectivist and constructionist views have heavily influenced, has recommended since the 1970s, that the analysis of public representations of conditions – that is, social problems – is the most reliable way of informing decision-making regarding problematisation.

Several reasons underpinning the latter view have been provided throughout this review (e.g., problematic values are the cause and obstacle to solving problems). However, the same body of work overlooked the potentially most impactful constructionist claim: objective conditions cannot be accurately identified by anyone (Hazelrigg, 1986). This renders most analyses of conditions flawed, as they examine something else, probably

representations, and not the objective characteristics of a condition. This – if true – reduces all analyses into representations, too.

Take, for example, the condition of poverty – assuming this is a detrimental state despite some religious and philosophical views claiming the contrary (Schweiger, 2019). It is reasonable to assume that hunger is an objective feature of poverty since it could fall under the category of lacking material and economic resources to procure food, as defined by some expert sources (e.g., PSE UK research project, 2021). That is why aid initiatives see the provision of food as an essential and foundational aspect of their interventions (e.g., UN World Food Programme, 2023). However, development programmes, which aim to create capacity in individuals, regions and countries to feed themselves without assistance, are designed based on a series of interpretations of conditions and their features – e.g., the basic needs approach versus the basic income approach (UN, 2015). For instance, there are public policy analysts who assume that a sum of money and not the actual provision of the necessary amount of food is the best solution to hunger; this has led to the discussion of how much of any of the pertinent resources is enough while individuals continue to suffer from hunger (PSE UK research project, 2023). At this level of analysis, what seemed to be a study of objective conditions turns out to be an exercise of negotiating interpretations, the interpretations of policy and development-makers. This is why some scholars have argued that to resolve hunger, we need to listen to people starving, not the so-called objectivist views of experts (e.g., consensual budget standards) (Mack, 2023).

Nevertheless, the above discussion and substantiation were absent in the examined sociological literature. This lacuna probably explains the disconnection between academic sociological research and development practice. Another explanation for that

disconnection is provided by the following explanation by Fontaine and Pooley: 'Economists overtook other social scientists in studying society's problems and advising policymakers, while psychologists registered their social-problems influence at the level of everyday language and the spread of a popular therapeutic ethos. (...) Social problems became economic problems, personal problems, or both. Economists, and to a lesser extent psychologists, displaced sociologists at the public centre of the social science of society's problems' (2020, p. 40).

While Fontaine and Pooley confirm that sociology has been displaced by other fields, in their explanation, I also identified the implication that economists and psychologists have adopted objectivism, too, strengthening the point advanced above concerning the prevalence of a flawed objectivist approach to social problematisation. This, together with the need to legitimise political decision-making regarding social problems, relates to the following topics that guide the discussion in this subsection: which problematisations should prevail and why. Keeping these topics in mind, I now seek to address those matters with the help of development ideas.

2.2.9 Development thinking on problematisation – who and why?

Within development scholarship, the clash of opposing definitions, which is a persistent feature of modernising problematisation, should be a foundational phenomenon for scholars studying the following two subjects: a) participation, and the lack of it, by NPOs and communities (Lister, 2000; 2001; Ulvila and Hossain, 2002; Cornwall, 2003; Simpson and Cheney, 2007; Ihm and Lee, 2021; Liu and Nah, 2022), and b) Indigenous knowledge (IK), its use, misuse or displacement (Gladwin, 1989; Agrawal, 1995; 2002;

Fernando, 2003; Briggs, 2005; Akena, 2012; Enns, Bersaglio, and Kepe, 2014; Kolawole, 2018; Leonard and Ebhuoma, 2022).

Simply put, participation is shaped by the outcome of the clash between two opposing definitions of a condition. That is the case because those disagreeing with the prevailing definition of a condition could refuse to contribute to the formulation of a development intervention that has been conceived in light of the dominant definition or, in the future, once the intervention is in place, simply reject being aided by it. As for indigenous knowledge, it is an overarching definition for all positive and adverse conditions. In other words, IK is one of the most influential determinants of conditions for those choosing to be informed by it. However, when it opposes other definitions of a condition, it could end up being displaced, in other words, defeated by the outcome of the clash between two problematisations of a condition. These causal relationships – between participation, IK and prevailing definitions – will become evident after reading the following definitions of participation and IK.

Participation in development literature is understood in many ways. Still, ideally or normatively, it means the freedom to design, define and determine the nature of actions, plans and strategies by those publics facing a condition that hinders their development (Claridge, 2023). However, critics have argued that it is a buzzword, a concept rendered meaningless by the frameworks under which development takes place, frameworks that hinder proper participation by inviting publics to have a say in capacity building or capacity development initiatives that have been tightly structured around specific problematisations, affording only an insignificant opportunity to change, through structured programmes, to those willing to propose modifications (Cornwall, 2007).

Critical scholars have argued that those frameworks are in place to sustain the current neoliberal order (e.g., Kamat, 2004; Kapoor, 2017).

As for indigenous knowledge (IK), it 'is considered a body of knowledge associated with a fixed territorial space for a considerably long period of time. Such systems of knowledge are informal, experiential, and uncodified compared to the knowledge systems associated with the Western sciences. IK is unique to a community, culture, or society; is the basis for local-level decision-making in agriculture, health, natural resource management, and other activities; is embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships, and rituals; and, as such, is a powerful tool to create sustainable change, particularly in resource-poor rural communities' (Fernando, 2003, p. 56). In other words, IK is an ontological and epistemological directive, undistinguishable from culture, and hence a way of problematising and living.

With the above in mind, I believe it is becoming clear now – from a critical development point of view – which problem definitions do not prevail and why. Still, it is essential to touch on the causes that legitimise the winning definitions, identify their sources, and other attendant aspects of contemporary modernising problematisation. To start elaborating on this, I introduce the following assertion: KI stands in opposition to the scientified knowledge, the knowledge that has been codified (Fernando, 2003, p. 56), and consequently, it challenges the ultimate outcome of 'scientification' which is 'the knowledge society' (Weingart, 1997; Reichmann, 2011; Hoelscher, 2015). That is why IK is often displaced or disregarded. Consequently, that also happens to all the public's definitions based on it (IK) (Agrawal, 1995; 2002; Briggs, 2005). If the latter assumption holds water, it could be advanced as the preliminary answer to all the questions posed at the beginning of this sub-section.

Weingart (1997, p. 610) defines 'scientification' and 'the knowledge society' as follows: a process whereby the use of and claim to systematic and certified knowledge produced in the spirit of "truth-seeking" science becomes the chief legitimating source for activity in virtually all other functional subsystems. The 'knowledge society' is (...) not characterised by the dominance of traditional organisations of academic science over other organisations but by the centrality of systematic knowledge in reaching decisions, political, economic, legal, etc.

Other scholars, such as Reichmann (2011) and Hoelscher (2015), use the term 'the scientification of knowledge' to refer to the same process of scientification that has as an outcome, first scientified knowledge (SK), and second, the knowledge society (KS), both described above by Weingart. In any case, both process and outcomes are critical to legitimising modernising problematisation. Simply put, the scientification of global problem definition – characterised by the increasing use of logical, mathematical, clinical, medical, chemical, and psychological parameters to problematise a condition – and its legitimation by the knowledge society are all features of modernity, which tend to displace other forms of knowledge, like IK and its concomitant problematisations.

I relied on Weingart (1997) again to substantiate and illustrate the above conclusion. He argues that the following two concomitant phenomena have occurred, 'the scientification of politics' and 'the politicisation of science', both leading to the following outcomes, 'governments, as well as NGOs and other groups participating in the political process, use scientific knowledge to legitimate vested interests' (p. 606) and 'policy fields (have) either been constituted by science in the first place and/or are particularly sensitive to new developments of systematic knowledge' (p. 605). Illustrative of how both phenomena combined to create the current institutional order for development that concerns this

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discussion, Weingart explains that 'governments, environmental NGOs, and supranational organisations such as UNESCO, as well as supranational scientific associations, have formed international consortia and launched international research programs. An example of the former is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which regularly coordinates the state of knowledge of the climate research institutes and feeds it into international negotiations on the protection of the climate' (p. 598).

Driving his point home, Weingart argues that the IPCC is a 'transfer agency', translating knowledge (e.g., data formats, standards of measurement, methodologies and the conclusions created by using the former) into political recommendations after having achieved an internal consensus between scientists, politicians, NPOs and economic lobbying groups (p. 599). This is followed by this key implication: 'Here, crucial negotiations take place between scientists and policymakers in which program objectives and research priorities are at stake which are of interest to both sides: research funds in exchange for relevant knowledge and expertise' (pp. 598-599).

With all these ideas in place, it is reasonable to assume, I argue, that the current development order faces a challenge, or better a tension between, on one hand, the legitimising requirements of enabling participation and being inclusive of other forms of knowledge (e.g., IK) and on the other hand, the need to advance those forms of engagement and knowledge (SK) that are under its control, to avoid a state of dislocation or 'civil dislocation' (Jasanoff, 2010; Reichmann, 2011).

According to Jasanoff, 'civil dislocation' is a state in which trust in governmental entities has been lost due to the perception that these entities are not doing what is expected,

especially when tackling persistent problems. These circumstances require managing resources, in which scientific knowledge is a key resource. To control scientific knowledge (SK), politicians define what is and is not SK; for instance, indigenous knowledge might be conceptualised as non-scientific, hence delegitimised. Politicians also seek to dictate research agendas – signalling what phenomena are important or not (e.g., problems) – to remind and reaffirm that the political establishment is needed to provide security and ensure well-being (e.g., advisors advise and politicians decide); otherwise, the public will seek solutions in other institutions (Koch and Durodié, 2022)[37]. So, in a nutshell, what I am arguing here is that to avoid one dislocation, the civil one, the Western-dominated development institutions have created an order and mechanisms – i.e., agenda-setting and problematising procedures – that generate another type of dislocation, the dislocation of definer-publics[38], particularly those facing a condition in the Global South and who because of the North-Western problematisation become absentee definers. This has been substantiated by the findings analysed in chapters 5, 6 and 7. Before I appraise the agenda-setting literature, it is important to explain that all the above informed my ontological and methodological approach to the investigation, which is not unscientific but preoccupied with scientification's negative impact and mitigating such detrimental consequences. The particulars of my approach are explained in the methodology chapter (3).

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[37] A similar set of ideas and scenarios are hypothesised by Beck when describing the different stages of the risk society (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994, p. 5).

[38] I have referred to this case in a previous footnote, however, it is worth reminding the reader about it because it substantiates the point made here. At the time of writing, NGOs have complained that the UN has excluded some third-sector organisations from the upcoming Paris submit on plastic pollution. The Guardian's reporting of this situation offers a glimpse of the complexities of problematising, including the specific observations of the NGOs' specialists arguing that either the UN has failed to make sense of the nature of the challenge or it is pushing for ineffective solutions because does not want to alienate and disadvantage the industry of plastic production (McVeigh, 2023).

2.3 Agenda-setting literature

Sociologists have spent significant time discussing the benefits and drawbacks of public involvement in social problematisation. In line with some historical and influential voices participating in that sociological debate, this review has uncovered a paradox in the form of a *paternalistic approach* within sociology that has advocated minimal engagement with and contribution by publics to a process that is or should be eminently social. Pejorative views on the potential contribution of indigenous knowledge and other assumptions, such as the historical and persistent prevalence of anti-values in the public, underpin this approach. Hence, that same paternalistic approach advances the transferring of problematisation and mitigation responsibilities from the public to official entities and agencies, naturalising and normalising governmental control over the legitimation and formulation of plans to tackle social problems. Simply put, regarding social problematisation, publics should be demobilised and depoliticised, according to the paternalistic approach.

On a related subject, critical development scholarship has denounced the lack of access by Global South's publics to decision-making processes[39]. Access here means the opportunity to make a real impact on development planning. Consistent with this academic critique, and as it would be substantiated in the findings chapters (5, 6, 7), the analysis of the participants' views revealed a debate and conflict between development partners regarding the orientation of micro-level interventions. Further analysis of the same findings exposed several tensions, all linked to the choice between local versus global-institutional ideas, a choice faced by the participant organisations (e.g., local-

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[39] See chapter 1, for a comprehensive review of this critique.

indigenous knowledge-experience of conditions versus scientied North-Western problems and goals).

So, what all these views (i.e., paternalistic approach, lack of access critique, and local versus institutional ideas) have in common is a pending or actual contest: a contest for attention, definition and decision concerning social problems and their proposed solutions (e.g., goals). Scholars have formally studied the stages and outcomes of this contest for more than 60 years under the term 'agenda setting' (McCombs, 2005; Takeshita, 2006; Wolfe, Jones, and Baumgartner, 2013; McCombs, Shaw, and Weaver, 2014; Jones et al. 2016; Baumgartner, 2016; Birkland and Schwaeble, 2019; Klüser and Radojevic, 2019; Perloff, 2022; Schmierbach et al. 2022). Hence, the findings of this investigation, regarding the different aspects of this contest as it takes place within development activity, have been appraised in light of agenda-setting theorisation.

The phenomenon of agenda-setting concerns several academic fields (e.g., political science, public policy, public administration, political communication, communication and media studies[40], journalism and public relations), all of these contributing to a vast and growing scholarship that has its origins in ideas put forward in the early 1960s initially by politics scholars, with the ultimate aim of addressing challenges to classic ideas about democratic principles (e.g., public participation or representation) (Cobb and Elder, 1971). Hence, here I am going to review only the key approaches within the main strands of agenda-setting research (e.g., the Multiple Streams Framework and the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory), with the intention of a) identifying knowledge that could be useful to understand the agenda-setting process in the field of development and

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[40] My review of the communication-media studies body of work on agenda-setting is available upon request.

b) appraising their potential contribution to the main interest of this review, the publics' participation in setting the policy agenda.

2.3.1 Politics-policy strand of research on agenda-setting; key concepts

The politics-policy strand of agenda-setting research predominantly examines the setting of the policy agenda as an instrument to achieve political dominance and a stable government. Hence, the contemporary conceptualisation of the policy agenda is underpinned by distinctive views on the function of power, conflict, and influence held within the fields that contribute to this body of work (Baumgartner, 2016). Those views will become clear when this review covers the foundational ideas shaping the politics-policy strand of research.

It is important to note, though, that what led to the formal study of the policy agenda as an instrument of ascendancy and stability within governance systems is a broader debate between political sciences and sociology scholars concerned about citizens' representation and participation in a democracy (Cobb and Elder, 1971). This debate was framed by ideas on how these two rights – representation and participation – were conceived by pluralism, the elites' model, and the classical theory of democracy (Mills, 1956; Dahl, 1958; Lipset, 1960; Mills, 1961; Dahl, 1961; Key, 1961; Dahl, 1978; Lipset and Ladd, 1972). Consequently, some scholars within the politics-policy strand (e.g., Cobb, Ross, and Ross, 1976; Elder and Cobb, 1984; Rochefort and Cobb, 1992; 1993) saw it relevant to study the potential impact of the public on the formulation of policy, a phenomenon called 'agenda-building' by Cobb and Elder (1972).

However, the latter focal point is not a dominant one; the bulk of research by this strand has examined the opposite direction of causation (i.e., how the policy-governmental agenda shapes the public agenda), similar to what has been the central unit of analysis for the media-communication strand of agenda setting studies, the linear effect media-to-public agenda setting phenomenon (Zahariadis, 2016, p. 5-7). In any case, I have used the insights generated by the sociology-politics debate to inform the discussion of my findings (see chapter 7), which is in line with one of the key aims of my investigation, to establish the contemporary nature of agenda-setting, including its components (i.e., agenda-building). But before the reader reaches that chapter, it is crucial to introduce the main concepts that underpin this strand of agenda-setting studies.

For instance, there is agreement across the board that an agenda is an immaterial 'collection of problems; understanding of causes, symbols, solutions; and other elements of public problems that come to the attention of members of the public and their governmental officials' (Birkland and Schwaeble, 2019)[41]. However, distinctive agendas have been identified by politics-policy scholars; these are as follows: 'the systemic agenda' which consists of all the issues that members of the political community commonly perceive as meriting public attention and as involving matters within the legitimate jurisdiction of existing governmental authority (Cobb & Elder, 1983, p. 86). 'The institutional agenda' is 'that list of items explicitly up for the active and serious consideration of authoritative decision makers' (Cobb & Elder, 1983, p. 85-86). The latter agenda is also known as the 'decision agenda' or 'policy agenda', and between the institutional agenda and the decision agenda, there is another agenda, 'the government

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[41] The publisher of this text did not offer its pagination.

agenda', which consists of the list of issues that officials are paying attention to, but not necessarily acting upon (Kingdon, 2011, pp. 3-14).

These definitions of the policy agenda, and others not introduced here, make apparent the following aspects of this phenomenon: 1) The importance of 'attention' as an independent and dependent variable. 2) The centrality of process, the process of formulating an agenda, as it is shaped by attention and other factors. 3) The implicit ranking of agendas, from those characterised by limited attention and minimal action on problems to those in which the constitutive problems receive substantial attention and action, is imminent. 4) The progression of problems from a lower-attention agenda to a higher-attention agenda is also a phenomenon recurrently tested by politics-policy scholars. Hence, it has become a strong assumption, as Birkland and Schwaeble's assertion illustrates: 'Agenda setting, then, is the process by which groups compete to move issues from the systemic agenda to the institutional agenda' (2019). The opposite, problems moving into lower-attention agendas or the long permanence of a problem in one agenda, are phenomena implied in some studies (e.g., B. D. Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Baumgartner et al. 2009). Still, my review did not find up-to-date research interested in the above phenomena, with the bulk of investigations on these two topics taking place before and during the 1990s (e.g., Brosius and Kepplinger, 1995).

And lastly (5), there is some interest in the public agenda within this strand of research, with the bulk of work agreeing that: A) the public agenda is shaped by the severity of problems-events – e.g., 'focusing events' –, the salience and framing applied by the mass media to topics of public interest, and elite mobilisation, in other words, politicians acting as promoters of problems to the public (e.g., policymakers) (Bevan and Jennings, 2019; Birkland and Schwaeble, 2019; Cavari and Freedman, 2019). B) At the same time, there

is a strong assumption within this research tradition that the support of public opinion is a prerequisite for policy change or at least a contributor to the latter, hence the following assertion by Bevan et al., 'the public agenda refers more specifically to the issues that are atop the public's mind, or the concerns and anxieties prevalent in the wider social milieu. When an issue makes it onto the public agenda, it is more likely to be put on the formal political agenda' (2019, p. 219). C) In light of B), studies have sought to prove that the policy formulation priorities of governments align with the priorities signalled by the public agenda (Jones and Baumgartner, 2004; Jones, Larsen-Price, and Wilkerson, 2009; Bonafont and Palau, 2011; Lindeboom, 2012; Alexandrova, Rasmussen, and Toshkov, 2016). Influenced by earlier research on this subject, Bevan and Jennings studied the phenomenon of 'dynamic agenda representation', which refers to the process through which the publics' issue priorities are translated into government policy priorities (Bevan and Jennings, 2014). I will return to the matter of the nature of the public agenda later to elaborate on the limitations of the politics-policy conceptualisation on this notion and its inferred representation of people in the democratic sense.

Expanding on attention, the centrality of this concept is illustrated here by the following definition of agenda-setting as a process: 'Agenda setting is the organisational analogue to attention allocation at the individual level. Agenda setting is simply the process by which the organisation comes to pay attention to some issues rather than others' (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005, p. 38). In this context, 'the organisation' is any entity actively involved in shaping public-policy formulation, such as a corporation, a political party, a think-tank, and presumably and ideally, NPOs and organised groups or publics. Although, the last three are not explicitly stated by Jones and Baumgartner (2005).

Also, on attention specifically, most definitions of policy agenda within the politics-policy strand imply that attention, like any other resource, could be scarce or difficult to manage. So, attention-deficit is a dominant assumption in the theorisation of this strand, as scholars argue that humans have limited information-processing ability. This dominant assumption and its implications are explained by Jones and Baumgartner as follows: 'Many issues clamour for attention, but only one can be addressed at a time. People prioritise problems by devoting attention to them. Hebert Simon refers to attention as a "bottleneck" of conscious thought. Attention is a scarce good; directing attention at one problem means ignoring others' (2005, p. 34).

So, bearing in mind the relatively long history of this strand, which got real traction in the mid-1980s (Klüser and Radojevic, 2019), it seems reasonable to assume that any key operationalisation of the concept of attention has already been tested several times and, hence, streamlined. However, there are some gaps and limitations in the typical operationalisations of this concept within this strand, as a relatively recent paper has pointed out (i.e., Walgrave et al. 2018). Nevertheless, these typical operationalisations have presumed or extrapolated attention from the salience of a problem in speeches, bills and questions intended for political institutions (e.g., parliaments) and their concomitant venues (e.g., congressional hearings). So, simply put, the more a problem is mentioned in a parliament, for example, the higher the chances it would be perceived – receive attention – by political actors. Also, the higher the salience of a problem in legislative documents or speeches, the greater the possibility of the problem being introduced formally into an agenda or its progression into another agenda actioned (e.g., elevation to a higher-level agenda in which action is imminent) (Walgrave et al., 2018, p. 548).

As for the specific limitations and gaps identified by Walgrave et al., these are as follows: 1) the politics-policy strand only measures the attention given to problems by institutions, not individuals. However, attention is personal and particular to each individual. Therefore, institutional attention is an aggregation of possibly similar individual perceptions of what is important (i.e., the most pressing problem). However, this aggregation does not capture the granularity, the details, what shapes attention at the individual level, and what increases or diminishes individual attention. Consequently and crucially, there is no way to establish if the aggregated institutional attention is caused by an agenda or unrelated factors, such as structural drivers (e.g., norms), forcing or promoting attention to a problem. 2) Also, attention is a cognitive phenomenon, defined by psychologists as 'perceptual selectivity or focusing one's cognitive resources on one thing while ignoring other signals from the environment' (2018, p. 549). However, the bulk of this strand's work does not measure that cognitive phenomenon; instead, as a proxy, salience is what is being established. So, simply put, salience is not attention. Salience expresses the prominence of a matter, which is established by counting the number of times that matter (e.g., problem) is mentioned in a speech or referred to in a document (2018, p. 548). To sum up, salience might or might not lead to attention, and critically, neither salience nor attention ensures action on a problem. 3) Lastly, 'a vast literature on framing in psychology (e.g., Tversky and Kahneman, 1986) and communication science (e.g., Scheufele, 1999) has shown that how a matter is presented (or framed) affects how and whether people will address the issue. In other words: framing has an effect on attention. There has been some rare agenda work dealing with the framing of specific cases, see for example the book on the death penalty by Baumgartner and colleagues (2008). But systematic work on how the framing of issues impacts the political attention devoted to those issues is largely lacking' (2018, p. 548-549).

Regarding the implications of the above observations for my investigation, I took from them that, first, the micro-level agenda-setting phenomenon was critical but understudied within this field. Hence, it is worth examining if this gap is present in development scholarship, too. My research examined this phenomenon as it occurred between partners in collaborative development relationships (CDRs). Second, my investigation also identified the frames used to shape the micro-level problem definition process. As explained in Chapter 3, my operationalisation of this notion results from a combination of views from different fields.

As for the broader implications of Walgrave et al.'s observations, this focus on salience, or attention by proxy, and its critique is something that this strand of research shares with the media-communication body of work reviewed above. This is what Takeshita said regarding the problematic operationalisation of salience by media-communication scholars, which, according to Walgrave et al. (2018), might also apply to the politics-policy strand:

'Agenda-setting researchers often describe the process of agenda setting as the transfer of salience from the media to the public (e.g. McCombs & Shaw, 1977). The accessibility bias model redefines the concept of salience as equal to accessibility, at least as far as public salience is concerned. Following this redefinition, Scheufele (1999, 2000) criticises agenda-setting research as having used incorrect measures pertaining to public salience for a long time. Based on an experimental study by Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997), he maintains that salience (equated with accessibility) and perceived importance (a standard measure for the dependent variable in agenda-setting research, which most agenda-setting researchers equate with salience) are conceptually and operationally distinct' (Takeshita, 2006, p. 277).

So, different strands of research on agenda-setting rely on academic operationalisations of perceived importance and private polling allegedly attempting to establish the same phenomenon (i.e., what are the most important problems faced by the country?[42]) (Jennings and Wlezien, 2011). The data generated by these studies is taken as indicative of the public attaching some degree of importance to a problem, hence stretching that view to the limit by deriving from it the concepts of public opinion and the public agenda. But as Takeshita has pointed out, remembering (accessing your memory successfully when a surveyor asks you a question) is not evidence of importance, only a sign of recalling what the media or political agenda allegedly placed there, according to the strong-effect paradigm. This seems a subtle difference, but it amounts to a lot when it comes to claims of shaping behaviour, such as the intent to act to become a public (e.g., activism). So, the behavioural response is alleged to be triggered by the importance – a high degree of it – given by a person to a problem. However, the latter would be a reasonable assumption as long as importance is distinguished from recall in any of this strand's studies, which has not been the case, according to the aforementioned methodological critique (Jennings and Wlezien, 2011; 2015).

Before this review introduces another set of foundational ideas, it is worth considering for a brief moment another important and potentially confusing conceptual matter: the equation of issues and problems within this strand of research on agenda setting. In the literature reviewed[43], (e.g., Kingdon, 1984; 2011; Jones and Baumgartner, 2005; Baumgartner et al. 2009; Russell, Dwidar, and Jones, 2016; Klüser and Radojevic, 2019) scholars have referred to problems and issues as if they were the same phenomenon. This goes against the distinction made by Dearing and Rogers (1996, pp. 2-3, 40), in which

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[42] The use of the acronym MIPs often refers to these problems.

[43] Including all the quotes above, in which issues and problems are treated like synonyms.

social problems are unidentified conditions and issues are problems that the mass media has positioned as having a detrimental impact on society. Some influential politics-policy scholars, such as Kingdon (2011, pp. 19, 109), have adopted the sociological view that conditions and problems are distinctive phenomena and exist in a causal relationship[44]. However, these same scholars do not see any difference between issues and problems. This lack of consistency within and between strands of research, and potentially between fields, too, focusing on interconnected phenomena, makes it more difficult to advance the state of current theorisation cohesively.

2.3.2 Politics-policy strand; foundational ideas

Concerning the ideas that have informed the early and subsequent work of the politics-policy strand, there is agreement that these views originated in the work of Schattschneider (1961; 1975) and Bachrach & Baratz (1962) (Russell, Dwidar, and Jones, 2016; Klüser and Radojevic, 2019; Birkland and Schwaeble, 2019). Both scholars elaborated on the organising of politics, particularly on these specific activities: a) the formulation of choices, b) the design of a set of choices (i.e., inclusion and exclusion of items) and c) preventing others from undertaking or shaping the other two actions (a and b). However, they do so by approaching the debate on the locus of power in the US society in a distinctive manner.

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[44] The following quote substantiates the specific point made above, but there is no need to expand on this matter as I already discussed this congruency of views sufficiently in the previous sub-section of this chapter (2.3.1). 'People define conditions as problems by comparing current conditions with their values concerning more ideal states of affairs, by comparing their own performance with that of other countries, or by putting the subject into one category rather than another' (Kingdon, 2011, p. 19).

The aforementioned debate is between scholars who support the power elite theory and those who challenge it by arguing that the US democracy is a pluralist order. Mills (1956), who advanced the power elite theory, claims that power resides in a group of individuals linked to influential positions in the military establishment, corporations and government. The preeminent opposer of the elite theory is Dahl (1958; 1961; 1978), who formulated the notion of pluralism. According to pluralism, power is distributed between institutions, significant groups, and other vital societal organisations, meaning no powerful elite exists. I have tangentially mentioned this debate above by referring to a key aspect of it, the part that concerns the public's representation and participation in a democracy. But before I elaborate on the specifics of representation and participation in connection to agenda setting, I will briefly explain how the elite-pluralist debate shaped the foundational thinking of Schattschneider and Bachrach & Baratz. All these ideas informed the discussion of the findings (i.e., Chapter 7).

So, regarding Schattschneider's stance vis-à-vis the elite-pluralist debate, his thinking is in line with the elite theory, as the following assertion illustrates, 'the flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent' (Schattschneider, 1960, p. 34-35). Expanding on this matter, Schattschneider argues that businesswomen-man and politicians work together to create and maintain the conditions that benefit them (1960, p. 58). Consequently, elites manoeuvre to that aim, which entails eliminating the threats to any of the elite's beneficial conditions, for instance, by removing from the policy agenda any 'alternatives' (p. 66). In this context, alternatives are ideas or proposals that could challenge the status quo of an elite. This is done in conjunction with deploying actions that keep those alternatives that advance an elite's interests at the top of the political agenda.

Keeping the status quo in place or altering it to an emerging elite's advantage requires the management of conflict. Conflict is intrinsic to political activity because it arises from the clash of opinions. For Schattschneider, conflict creates the opportunity to direct attention to the helpful alternatives or to steal the necessary interest in what could keep the advantageous conditions in place. All the above considered, he asserts: 'Some issues are organised into politics while others are organised out' (1960, p. 69); this is about the manoeuvring that removes and positions alternatives. In other words, the activation and de-activation of conflicts and their related alternatives (e.g., solutions or goals) to benefit an elite is known as 'agenda setting'.

The above leads us to Schattschneider's most influential claim, 'the definition of the alternatives is the supreme instrument of power' (p. 66). Agenda-setting researchers have interpreted this as referring to the subtraction and addition of issues-problems from the policy agenda (e.g., Walker, 1977) or the specific characterisation of issues-problems, which within the two strands of agenda-setting research examined here is known as 'framing' (Studlar, 2016, p. 126).

It is essential to mention that in Schattschneider's work, the above tactics and manoeuvring are linked to more encompassing phenomena and repercussions, which is why he posited the following two well-known aphorisms: 'The substitution of conflicts is the most devastating kind of political strategy. Whoever decides what the game is about decides also who can get into the game' (p. 102), and 'Politics is the socialisation of conflict' (p. 38). Concerning the first aphorism, Schattschneider posited that conflict is an alternative. The winning conflicts that remain at the top of the agenda (e.g., cultural wars) replace or are intended to push potentially more important ones (e.g., climate change conflicts) out of sight. As for 'the socialisation of conflict' and access to the game,

these two ideas refer to political actions that seem mutually exclusive, yet both contribute to the overall strategy of an elite attempting to set the agenda.

The successful socialisation of conflict results in placing an issue on the agenda. For that to happen, political actors must problematise in a way that engages and mobilises the public. Simply put, publics are persuaded and mobilised in favour of an issue to legitimise political choices, ensuring that resources are invested in the problems that matter to an elite (Schattschneider, 1961, p. 38). But while this socialisation manoeuvre distracts politically active citizens from what is critical to them by giving the impression that the public is affecting change, the publics' participation in policy and law formulation activities is enabled up to a point; otherwise active citizens could form the idea that they should dictate what happens in a democracy. However, the game of agenda-setting is not for everyone; it is only for the few, the elite (Miller, 1961; Mair, 1997; Studlar, 2016).

Schattschneider provided enough detail to encourage politics-policy scholars to explore his ideas on agenda-setting further. Still, his overarching concern, the drastic drop in citizen participation in the key activities of democracy, which he considered crucial to offset the agenda-setting manoeuvering of the elites, that concern lost traction within the politics-policy strand after the 1970s. My analysis of the politics-policy literature indicates there has been an intense focus on consolidating this strand of research by substantiating effects (e.g., the impact of or on the policy agenda) and expanding the comparative dimension of the agenda-setting scholarship by contrasting the policy agendas of different political domains and countries. The latter has been a dominant project within this strand – e.g., the U.S. Policy Agendas Project and its expanded version, the Comparative Agendas Project (Baumgartner, 2016). These research aims have taken precedence over more overarching ones concerning the state of public representation and

participation in democracy. This claim will be substantiated further in the following subsection of this review.

As for Bachrach and Baratz's foundational contribution to the politics-policy strand of research is linked to the concept of 'nondecision making' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1975). These scholars described nondecision-making 'as a process for thwarting latent or manifest challenges to things-as-they-are' (p. 900). So, in practical terms, nondecision-making is an outcome, the result of using overt or covert methods to stop decision-making on a matter that could shape or trigger the formulation of policy; or, simply put, nondecision-making should lead to ignoring a potential agenda item (e.g., a problem or conflict).

As for what underpinned the formulation of the nondecision-making concept, it is a series of assumptions, summarised here as follows: a) Power is exercised by those who direct their energy 'to shaping or reinforcing dominant norms, precedents, myths, institutions, and procedures that undergird and characterise the political process' (1975, pp. 900-901). These norms, precedents, etc, are not given; in other words, there is no structure determining any of the choices available to a political actor, at least not as posited by the power elite theory (1962, p. 947). This leads to the following conclusion: 'What this means, among other things, is that the analysis of nondecisions is predicated on the assumptions that power is a crucial variable and that in studying power, the focus should be upon whether or how it is employed to sustain or modify the most fundamental aspects of political institutions and processes' (p. 901). And b) in a context in which power is the dominant variable impacting orders and choices, 'political consensus is commonly shaped by status-quo defenders, exercising their power resources' (e.g., nondecision-making), 'to prevent challenges to their values and interest' (p. 901). Summarising all the

above, there is no power structure, but groups of individuals – the elites – investing time in creating one to consolidate their dominance and status quo. This is how I can make sense of Bachrach and Baratz's train of thought without incurring a contradiction.

So, these encompassing presuppositions led to the following question and subsequent answer by Bachrach and Baratz: 'Cast in slightly different terms, can a sound concept of power be predicated on the assumption that power is totally embodied and fully reflected in "concrete decisions" or in activity bearing directly upon their making? We think not. Of course power is exercised when A participates in the making of decisions that affect B. But power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A. To the extent that A succeeds in doing this, B is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A's set of preferences' (1962, p. 948).

In sum, Bachrach and Baratz's work has been characterised as a contribution to the understanding of how power operates in political contexts (macro to micro) (Baumgartner, 2016; Russell, Dwidar, and Jones, 2016; Klüser and Radojevic, 2019), because, like Schattschneider, they drew attention to how the exclusion, substitution and replacement of agenda items limits the ability of other political actors – those proposing alternatives – to challenge the current circumstances. However, after carefully considering Bachrach and Baratz's work, including their different adjustments to their initial thesis (e.g., 1975, pp. 901-902), I believe their distinctive contribution is the notion of nondecision-making. This is new, and different from what Schattschneider said regarding agenda-setting manoeuvering.

Nevertheless, the concept of nondecision-making has been challenged (e.g., Merelman, 1968; Wolfinger, 1971; Debnam, 1975), specifically its operationalisation. Regarding the latter, scholars have argued that nondecision-making is an elusive phenomenon; hence, the idea of using interviews to establish what problematic conditions become 'non-issues' due to these conditions being excluded from an agenda (e.g., Crenson, 1971). However, some critics have argued that interviews are unreliable in identifying nondecision-making (e.g., Debnam, 1975, p. 894). So, whether or not one agrees with the specifics of this critique, it is reasonable to assume that the operationalisation of nondecision-making could be challenging. This might explain why there is a tendency in the extant reviews of this strand of agenda-setting literature to present Bachrach and Baratz's contribution linked to attention. In other words, contemporary reviews of these scholars' work presume that Bachrach and Baratz were foregrounding the importance of attention in their theorisation when that was not the case. A case in point is the following assertion: 'They (Bachrach and Baratz) point out that defining which issues receive **attention** and which receive none ("second face of power") may be just as important as direct influence in the decision-making process' (Klüser and Radojevic, 2019, p. 2). While nondecision-making could lead to changes in attention, this is one of the many outcomes that concerned the work of these scholars, who – as explained above – looked at and reflected on the bigger picture, the nature of power and its impact on macro-phenomena (e.g., the effects of nondecision-making on democracy).

Another distinctive aspect of Bachrach and Baratz's work is its ideological flexibility, simultaneously criticising and adopting ideas from both sides of the elite-pluralist debate to drive particular points home. For instance, this approach underpinned most of their seminal work on the 'Two faces of Power' (1962). Nevertheless, Cobb and Elder's review (1971) of Bachrach and Baratz's publications cut through this pragmatism, indicating that

these scholars are preoccupied with the under-representation of communities and the curtailment, by elites, of citizens' participation in the political process. These concerns relate to the focal point of this review and the aims of my investigation, which treated NPOs as representatives of the communities at the heart of development interventions.

Inversely, however, the dominant approaches to agenda-setting within the politics-policy strand have not championed Bachrach and Baratz's interest in the representation and participation of publics in agenda-setting matters. Only Cobb, Ross and Ross' model (1976) built upon Bachrach and Baratz's interests and, by extension, Schattschneider's. And, as substantiated below by a brief introduction and discussion of the main approaches within the politics-policy strand – the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) and the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET) – these perspectives have mainly studied the phenomenon of attention and its causal implications for the setting of the policy agenda, confining any interest in the phenomena of publics' participation and representation to whatever the abstraction of public opinion could tell us about publics' impact on policy formulation.

2.3.3 MSF, PET and publics

In his seminal work, 'Agendas, alternatives, and public policies', Kingdon (2011), the MSF's father, explains that clusters of factors – called streams – need to mature simultaneously for a problem to get into the policy agenda. Maturing or 'ripening' refers in this context to the realisation by policymakers that a potential problem is arising because the streams reinforce each other, resulting in a problem being revealed. Hence, interest in the problem is increased. The moment in which the streams are concurrently fully developed was called by Kingdon 'coupling'; other scholars have called that

phenomenon 'convergence'. Kingdon made clear that the processes of maturing and coupling are chaotic and unpredictable; consequently, they do not happen automatically, at least 'in American politics'. The latter implies that political actors attempt to facilitate the coupling of streams and organise their maturing so that all the factors create favourable conditions for the elevation of a problem to the policy agenda. The latter is Kingdon's central hypothesis and contribution (Thurber in Kingdon, 2011, p. viii).

But all the above does not mean much until the streams are fleshed out. So, Kingdom identified three of these constructs, which he described as follows: 'the problem stream' emerges from the interaction of indicators, events, and attention deficit, all contributing to the process of problematisation, that being the transformation of conditions into problems. If the conditions are right, if one or all these factors together mature a condition, a new problem will emerge. 'The political stream' arises from the interaction of 'the public mood, pressure groups' campaigns, election results, partisan or ideological distributions in Congress, and changes of administration' (2011, p. 145); all these factors are, according to Kingdon, taken into account by political actors when they consider whether or not a problem should be included in the policy formulation agenda. As for 'the policy stream', it concerns 'the policy primaeval soup', a mix of problem-related ideas and solutions, which have been put forward by policy specialists, academics, consultants, and analysts to be considered by interest groups, political parties, planning offices, etc. These ideas and solutions 'float' while they wait for consideration, and while waiting, they interact with other ideas and solutions, leading to changes in the original proposals. This floating could take days, months or years until key actors in the agenda-setting process (e.g., political parties) have been 'softened up'; hence, they are open to considering an idea or solution (2011, pp. 116-117). So, all the above explains why Kingdon argues that even if political actors aid the ripening and coupling of the streams,

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these interested parties should not expect success in placing a problem in the policy agenda (Thurber in Kingdon, 2011, p. viii; Jones et al., 2016, p. 14).

Concerning the MSF's critique, Klüser et al. (2019, p. 5) offer the following compilation of observations: A) the framework has been poorly adapted by subsequent studies, reducing the precision of Kingdon's concepts and distorting the causal mechanisms he posited. B) Kingdon's use of figurative language makes the operationalisation of its concepts difficult. C) There is no explicit hypothesis linked to the MSF. All the above gets in the way of falsifying any aspect of the MSF. Some of these observations, particularly A and B, have been addressed by the critics (e.g., Mucciaroni, 1992; 2012; Herweg, Huß, and Zohlnhöfer, 2015; Jones et al. 2016). Also, as was explained above, Kingdon postulated a hypothesis that setting an agenda is a chaotic and unpredictable process; hence, attempting to mature and couple all the streams is not always achievable (2011, pp. 177, 189, 195, 204, 224).

Nevertheless, all the above observations and counter-critique have failed to spot a lacuna, a gap shared by Kingdon and the media-communication strand of agenda-setting research. That gap is the absence of a consistent examination of the publics' role in setting the policy agenda; the latter was a relevant topic for Bachrach, Baratz and Schattschneider, the fathers of this strand of agenda-setting research. Now, I substantiate the inconsistency in Kingdon's treatment of publics.

In the chapter entitled 'Outside of Government, But Not Just Looking In' (2011, pp. 45-67), Kingdon discusses the political actors, entities and factors operating at the government's boundary, all of which, according to his study, somehow shape the agenda-setting process. Close to the end of the chapter in question, and in just two pages (65-66),

Kingdon offers the following view about 'the general public' and 'public opinion'; a view that sets the tone for the rest of the book concerning how this scholar sees these two variables shaping the formation of the policy agenda:

'Governmental officials may pay attention to a set of subjects partly because those subjects are on the minds of a fairly large number of ordinary people. But it would be difficult to claim that the general public defines, to the same extent, the alternatives that are considered in government. Public opinion may set limits on the possibilities and may affect an agenda of subjects in a general way, but the general public opinion is rarely well enough formed to directly affect an involved debate among policy specialists over which alternatives should be seriously considered' (p. 66).

In the above passage, similarly to other views reviewed in this chapter, 'public opinion' and 'the general public' are equated since both are implicitly considered abstractions derived from polling studies about MIPs (2011, p. 146)[45]. However, these abstractions are not publics, and treating them as virtualisations of collectives or 'large numbers of ordinary people' is counterproductive. The reasons for that are already indicated above. Regardless, Kingdon argues that these abstractions do 'set the limits on the possibilities' but not in a decisive manner; the latter, he believes, has to do with the nature of public opinion (i.e., not well-formed).

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[45] In chapter 7 of Kingdon's book (2011), in which the author discussed what he called the phenomenon of 'the national mood', he provides further evidence of his tendency to equate these and other apparently similar terms in the following way: 'People in and around government sense a national mood. They are comfortable discussing its content, and believe that they know when the mood shifts. The idea goes by different names – the national mood, the climate in the country, changes in public opinion' (...) (p. 146). The same interpretation of what Kingdon said is corroborated by Baumgartner and Jones (1993, p. 248) by asserting the following: 'The elites that Kingdon interviewed based their feelings of mood on a great variety of sources. Certainly public opinion polls are one of these'.

As for how Kingdon treated 'publics' throughout this publication, there is no deviation from the above (e.g., 2011, pp. 16, 38, 67, 128, 130, 143, 144, 149, 201, 205, 207) because according to Kingdon people has to be 'soften up' otherwise they are not ready to listen (p. 130), and this might be the case because according to some of his interviewees, people need to be 'educated' (p. 128), an idea that Kingdon did not question. To postulate the MSF, Kingdon digested the analysis of 247 interviews with individuals placed at different levels of the political structure in the US, and he also examined 23 cases concerning the policy areas of health and transportation (2011, pp. 250-260). Still, he did not collect the views of publics or similar groups operating closely with any community (e.g., NPOs). The above substantiates my assertion that he did not try to establish if and why publics are not equipped to engage in agenda-building, an idea put forward by Kingdon's interviewees, but as I said, never addressed, questioned or challenged by the scholar. As a result, I found the tenor of his work aligned with the paternalistic approach to publics, which I identified in sociology's body of work on social conditions and problems. This approach has advocated minimal engagement with and contribution by publics to problematisation due to their alleged ignorance and anti-values. In this case, Kingdon's work naturalises the dislocation of publics by implying that the paternalistic approach is an organic feature of the policy agenda-setting process.

Similarly to Kingdon, Jones and Baumgartner (1993; 2005) have been interested in understanding the implications of the apparent randomness of the agenda-setting process. However, instead of examining just the micro-level aspect of this phenomenon, Jones and Baumgartner have also studied its systemic nature at the macro level. Their multi-level analysis ultimately led to the formulation of the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET) (Klüser et al., 2019, p. 5). Concerning the initial main observation that motivated the undertaking of research by Jones and Baumgartner, the literature reviewed (e.g., Flink,

2017; Klüser and Radojevic, 2019; Yildirim, 2022) tends to agree that the following statement captures its essence: public policy in the US is often stable for long periods, during which policy is slightly adjusted through incremental changes, but these long periods of stability are punctuated by radical and dramatic reform undertaken by policymakers.

While the above captures the essence of these scholars' empirical starting point, it fails to convey its ideological underpinning and, ultimately, what they attempted to establish overall, the research aim that lies beyond the apparent neutrality of these scholars' initial observation. For that overall goal to become clear, a goal that is relevant to my investigation, we need to engage with Jones and Baumgartner's key publications (1993; 2005). For instance, in their seminal book – 'Agendas and Instability in American Politics' (1993) –, Baumgartner and Jones introduced their broader and more abstract concerns as follows:

'Does the American political system provide safe haven for privileged economic interests, or does it ensure competition among political ideas, constantly providing opportunities for those on the losing side of the political debate to reverse their fortunes? Is it conservative, resisting change through the complex institutions of separated powers and federalism, or does it provide numerous opportunities for policy entrepreneurs to try out new ideas? Do mass publics influence elite behaviour, or do elites govern with little democratic accountability?' (1993, p. 3)

In the background, still underpinning these questions, is the debate elite-pluralism in the US democracy. Concerning this discussion, Baumgartner and Jones implicitly positioned themselves as not having an initial stance on the actual substance of this debate, and they

did it by adopting the same realist-pragmatist approach that Bachrach and Baratz followed when discussing the same matters at the heart of the questions above. Baumgartner and Jones argue the above queries 'are among the great questions of democratic theory endlessly debated by political scientists' (p. 3), which suggests that the scholars would give enough attention to how publics shape the policy agenda and establish the factors that could get on the way of the latter. Leaving aside this expectation for a moment to turn to how Baumgartner and Jones attempted to answer these questions, their realist-pragmatist approach conceded that the opposing positions in the elite-pluralist debate have some degree of validity, to present themselves as balanced, fair, impartial observers of the phenomena under study (e.g., representation and participation of publics in shaping the policy agenda).

So, substantiating what I just said regarding the use of a realist-pragmatist tone, the train of thought that followed their opening questions refers to 'islands of functional power, systems of limited participation, (and) power elites', but any idea suggesting Baumgartner and Jones might be inclined to support the thesis of entrenched asymmetries created by these configurations is immediately mitigated by the following, 'each of these terms suggests a structural arrangement that benefits elites' (p. 3). Note the word 'suggests'. Baumgartner and Jones continue moderating their tone by noting that 'the longer-run fragility of these arrangements has often escaped students of the policy process' (p. 3). By this, they mean that any preconception – such as elites benefit and at the same time disadvantage the general population by sustaining policy arrangements that remain in place for a long time –this type of assumption and others need to be reviewed in light of additional evidence. Evidence that would be provided by studying the agenda-setting process.

Subsequently and crucially, Baumgartner and Jones posit their working hypothesis, which is that: 'the agenda-setting process implies that no single equilibrium could be possible in politics' because 'the generation of new ideas makes many policy monopolies unstable in the long run' (1993, p. 4). So, simply put, these scholars sought to disprove the central premise of the elite theory. To test this hypothesis, these scholars developed a new approach to the study of agenda setting, one that synthesised the best elements of longitudinal and cross-sectional approaches and analysed data collected by different sources (e.g., US Congress, indicators of federal activity, media coverage) from which the researchers thought could learn about the following phenomena: policy outputs, nature of problems, congressional attention, media attention and change of policymaking venue (1993, pp. 38-55).

By the end of Baumgartner and Jones' book, their hypothesis became a formal finding. This finding challenges the following views advanced by Schattschneider (1961): a) that agenda-setting is used to create elites, b) the exact mechanism is employed to keep at bay the alternatives that challenge the elites' status quo and c) that publics – though Baumgartner and Jones used the term 'classes' – are prevented from participating in agenda-building (1993, pp. 248-250). The following quote captures the essence of these scholars' contestation of Schattschneider's assumptions: 'While Schattschneider was clearly correct in his observation that "organisation is the mobilisation of bias," his aphorism underestimates the fragility of organisation in politics. Indeed, over the long run, the American system seems to provide little respect for those who are able to construct policy monopolies' (1993, p. 248-249).

So, moving away from their initial rhetorical pragmatism, how Baumgartner and Jones reflected on **a** and **b** was unambiguous. They believed that the elite theory got it wrong,

that the agenda-setting process carried out by the US political system is not conducive to creating policy elites. As for **c**, these scholars were less assertive, which is palpable in the following observation: 'We think the policy changes we have observed and documented throughout this book have had important consequences for all Americans. Nevertheless, we cannot help but note that the American political system seems more devoted to the processing of issues of interest to various factions of the middle class than those of benefit to the lower classes' (p. 249).

Before I elaborate on the implications of the last quote, it is vital to consider the following observation too: 'Political leaders may appeal to mass publics, and mass publics certainly have the capacity to respond. Our evidence suggests that mass mobilisations and public opinion reactions often occur late in the issue development process, after many of the most important issues have already been decided during elite-level debates and jurisdictional battles of which we have observed many examples in these pages' (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993, p. 248).

On the one hand, Baumgartner and Jones seem to be implying that we should take comfort from the finding that neither the elites nor the low-income communities are a priority for the agenda-setting process, hence disproving the elite theory. But on the other hand, the latter is somehow contradicted by the implication of the second observation, that even the 'middle classes' would have trouble influencing 'elite-level debates'. Nevertheless, to fully appreciate how the two quotes above challenge the internal consistency of Baumgartner and Jones' argument, it is vital first to introduce the scholars' concluding train of thought, published in their 1993 title (pp. 248-251).

So, Baumgartner and Jones explain that their findings – and preexisting work (e.g., Kingdon) – indicate that the US policy agenda-setting process: 1) cannot be controlled by any political actor; 'no single equilibrium could be possible', no policy monopoly could be stable (p. 248). The setting of the policy agenda in the US is shaped by multiple factors – clustered together into three streams – and contingent upon the latter's alignment; this makes setting the agenda erratic and unpredictable, hence not liable to persistent manoeuvring or control. 2) The somewhat paradoxical outcome of this random mode of operation of the agenda-setting process is evenness, a level playing field for every group, public and citizen. Although it does not ensure 'lower-class groups' have an 'equal say', the same applies to any attempts to control the process by 'small groups of elites'(p. 250).

So, after examining these ideas (1&2) in light of the two observations above – the limited attention 'the lower classes'' problems get and how elite-level debates precede any outside influence – one wonders if those ideas (1&2) remain sound. For instance, the admission that elite-level debates are an intrinsic aspect of pluralistic democracies reminds us of essential questions for the elite theory (e.g., Who is part of an elite? Political leaders. Who do these political leaders work for? The elites). So, what I am arguing here is that you cannot claim that the formulation of the policy agenda cannot be organised by an elite if, at the same time, your findings indicate that one essential part of that process is liable to be influenced almost exclusively by political elites; that because groups of citizens have, no or late, access to that part of the process. This finding about elite-level debates resurfaces in Baumgartner and Jones' subsequent work (2005), so I will expand on this matter once more before the end of this subsection.

It is important to note, though, that these scholars have not claimed that their conclusions are generalisable beyond the US, and this is why they have been leading the comparative stream of research contrasting different agendas across the world (Baumgartner, 2016). In the last pages of their 1993 publication (pp. 250-251), Baumgartner and Jones provided more detail on what makes the US agenda-setting process unpredictable, explaining how, at the micro-level, the administrative units of government process significant amounts of problem-related information. Still, the attention deficit of the decision-makers, coupled with other human cognitive limitations, encourages the simplification of complex matters to enable some degree of decision-making. The latter leads to randomness in the policy process. This, together with other factors, such as the amplification of issues by the news media, creates periods in 'which some problems gain disproportionated attention from many policy venues' and that 'attention seems to lurch quickly from issue to issue, with little regard to the seriousness of the emerging issues or to the effectiveness of the policies recently decided on'(p. 250).

Baumgartner and Jones's interest in attention and its related factors – such as the nature of information and how it is handled – increased, creating the impetus for the advancement of a refined version of their previous hypothesis, one that concerns the meso and micro levels of the agenda-setting process. That refined hypothesis could be summarised as follows: disproportionate information processing, a key concept for PET, attributes policy changes to the tendency of policymakers and policymaking institutions and organisations to react disproportionately to new information. This contrasts with proportionate information processing, which is forming policy decisions proportional to the information within the environment. However, political actors cannot adequately process all the relevant information since they are not able to give unlimited attention to

policy formation. As a result, policy subsystems commonly go through periods of under-responding or ignoring information to overreacting to it (Flink, 2017).

There are only two aspects of this renewed study of punctuated equilibrium – published in 'The Politics of Attention; how government prioritises problems' (2005) – that are relevant to my investigation; those two aspects are reviewed in this chapter. The first is the 'behavioural model of policy choice' (2005, Chapter 2), which concerns the processing stages of social conditions. This model covers the problematisation of conditions deemed material for the policy agenda. The second aspect of the PET extension that concerns this subsection is the representation of publics. In other words, how politicians digest the publics' preoccupations and then shape the policy agenda so it reflects those concerns (2005, Chapter 10). I discuss Jones and Baumgartner's findings on this matter right away.

According to Jones and Baumgartner, political scientists have devoted significant time to answering questions about representation, precisely the questions in which representation is conceived as a vital value to democracy (pp. 249; 281). In this value sense, representation concerns the translation of the publics' views into policy. However, for PET, representation is embedded in a framework of information processing, which 'shifts the focus away from representation as a core value to representation as an instrumental value' (2005, p. 281). The latter's meaning is that representation, according to Jones and Baumgartner, should be used as a 'problem-detection and prioritisation device' (p. 281). This way of conceiving representation opens up several lines of enquiry; however, Jones and Baumgartner admitted they only asked the most basic of questions, such as 'whether the policy priorities of the public – those issues that members of the public consider to be

the most important ones facing the country – are reflected in the activities of Congress' (pp. 249-250).

With the above and similar questions in mind, they sought to establish two types of congruence: agenda and policy. The former is defined as 'when Congress and the public attend to the same issue at the same time' (p. 258). The latter is defined as the correspondence between the priorities of the public and law-making activities by a government (p. 261). The results of Jones and Baumgartner's investigation (2005, p. 269) were that 'there is an impressive congruence between the priorities of the public and the priorities of Congress across time' and 'there is substantial evidence of congruence between the priorities of the public and lawmaking activities in the national government' (p. 269). Regarding the data Jones and Baumgartner analysed to find these results, the sources were: 'all the statutes passed in the United States between 1948 and 1998' (p. 261) and 'the answers to the Most Important Problem (MIP) question in hundreds of polls conducted by the George Gallup organisation into the policy content categories developed by the Policy Agendas Project' (p. 251).

From these two data sets, the most limiting is using the MIPs answers. First, because it encourages the construction of limiting abstractions such as public opinion, which, according to Jones and Baumgartner, 'tends to be vague when it comes to technical issues or complex solutions' and also fosters the conflation of 'salience and importance' which 'are not equivalent'(2005, p. 251). I have already explained the meaning of the latter above. Also, as I already mentioned before, public opinion offers a mixed bag of views, creating the impression that the informed views of publics – facing a condition – should be weighted equally to the impressions of individuals unfamiliar with the same problem. Second, the MIPs answers ignore 'policy positions and preferences for solutions' (p. 251).

Simply put, this instrument has rarely asked people if their policy views align with the government's and, crucially, what the publics' preferred solutions to the problems they face are. On this matter, Jones and Baumgartner add:

'Of course, the fact that a problem reaches both public and governmental consciousness implies little about the nature of the solution, or even whether Congress will enact one at all. Much of the struggle within government can be about solutions, as policy entrepreneurs race to take advantage of the "window of opportunity" that has presented itself when a problem has reached the public agenda' (2005, p. 260).

But once again, lessening the importance of their observations, Jones and Baumgartner argue that their findings confirmed that 'the notion that somehow sinister forces set governmental agendas in opposition to the public is incorrect. At least when it comes to what Congress considers, there is a close correspondence with the priorities of the public. The public may or may not be bamboozled and misled, but it seems to be a coconspirator in the agenda-setting process, not an omitted party' (p. 260). So, it seems that Jones and Baumgartner diminished the impact of their observations to avoid admitting that it could be possible that the elite theory might have a point. The latter could be the case because the definition of the solutions or goals is as critical to establishing a policy monopoly as the definition of problems (Schattschneider, 1975). These two agenda-setting functions should exist in a causal relationship, as relevant goals only arise from the proper definition of a condition (Dery, 1984, p. 6). But, if publics are prevented from having a say regarding these processes, that would be enough to limit the publics' impact on policy outcomes. The latter aligns with the following point by Jones and Baumgartner:

'Well-functioning democracies must involve not only representation as a valued end but also as a means to problem solving. This involves information processing, communication, and the ways in which public preferences are created and influenced by government policies and through collective attention dynamics associated with public agenda setting' (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005, pp. 281-282). These and other components of the agenda-setting process, 'are critical to allow one to learn about the opportunities for pursuing one's goals' (2005, p. 281).

Additionally, I reason that to adequately confirm the 'coconspirator' role of the general public or specific publics, it was crucial to find a way to determine if the US Congress legislated representative solutions; in other words, if the US Congress promulgated the solutions that the public had in mind, the solutions that the publics promoted alongside their MIPs. The latter is a missing piece in these scholars' work (including, Jones and Baumgartner, 2004). At this point, though, it is worth mentioning that although the key approaches within this strand of agenda-setting have an inconsistent take on the representation and participation of publics in policy formulation, an overlooked set of models on agenda-building[46], advanced by Cobb, Ross and Ross (1976), offer some potentially fruitful ideas on the matters at hand. I briefly introduce the relevant points of this work below.

Cobb, Ross and Ross (1976), hereafter, Cobb et al (1976), approached the agenda-setting process from the opposite angle to the MSF and PET. While the latter models see the setting of the policy agenda as a task and function predominantly for policymakers –

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[46] To put in context the term 'overlooked,' according to Scopus, since 1977 and up to 2023, Cobb et al's article 'Agenda Building as a Comparative Political Process' has received 372 citations. Kingdon's book (1984), 'Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies' has been cited 11,190 times, while Jones and Baumgartner's titles (1993; 2005) have received 4,794 and 1,362 citations each, respectively, up to 2023.

despite the alleged lack of control they could exert on the process – Cobb et al. treat the building of an agenda as an activity that requires the collaboration and management of conflict by different collectives of policymakers and citizens. Hence their use of the term 'agenda building', a phenomenon they argued should be examined in the following way, 'the study of agenda building requires an understanding of the ways in which different subgroups in a population become aware of and eventually participate, in political conflicts, whether the issues are initiated by groups in the general public or by political leaders' (p. 126).

Cobb et al. proposed different models (i.e., 'the outside initiative model, the mobilisation model and the inside access model') describing how groups (e.g., publics) and policymakers: 1) formulate an issue, 2) expand the interest in the issue and 3) create sufficient pressure on policymakers to promote the issue into the formal agenda (p. 132). These actions are formally encapsulated by the models' stages of issue development (i.e., initiation, specification, expansion and entrance), the latter being the goal stage, in which the issue is successfully promoted to the 'public agenda' or the 'formal agenda'(pp. 128-129). All the above models invariably assume that the engagement of groups, publics and policymakers is an essential requirement to achieving entrance and that issue promoters expect their issues will travel from the domain in which they were first articulated (e.g., a community or governmental policy unit) to either the formal agenda or the public agenda. 'The public agenda consists of issues which have achieved a high level of public interest and visibility; the formal agenda is the list of items which decision-makers have formally accepted for serious consideration' (p. 126).

Turning back to the models, these are based on three hypothetical distinctive situations. For instance, 'the outside initiative model' introduces the different actions (i.e., expansion

and containment) and factors (i.e., nature of issue, resources and commitment) shaping the process of placing an issue into the formal agenda when the issue has originated within a group outside of the governmental-policymaking sphere (p. 132). 'The mobilisation model' describes how the same actions and factors influence the goal of placing an issue into the public agenda when the issue has originated within a group of politicians and is already in the formal agenda. 'The inside access model' describes how the factors above and actions shape the goal of placing an issue in the formal agenda while at the same time preventing the issue from entering the public agenda when the issue has been promoted from inside government by an agency (p. 135).

Based on the above, it is possible to anticipate that the mobilisation model is the most relevant to the phenomena examined by my investigation, as it concerns the trickle-down of development problems and goals to the 'lower level agendas of local communities' (1976, p. 137) since these problems and goals are already placed in the higher level agenda; the institutional development agenda (e.g., the UN and agencies' agenda). Consequently, assuming – like critical development scholars have done – that this mobilisation is a persistent feature of development, one has to examine how this mobilisation takes place; in other words, one has to establish who the key mobilisers are (e.g., NPOs?) and how mobilisation is communicated and structured simultaneously (e.g., through framing, logics and agreed goals, such as the SDGs?). I have already introduced these ideas and questions in the first chapter of the thesis (1).

Another vital contribution of Cobb et al.'s model is the preliminary identification of the public and groups. According to their thesis, the latter should be expanded or contracted to achieve entrance to the relevant agendas. According to Cobb et al., these are the pertinent publics and groups to their models: 1) 'The identification group' consists of 'the

first individuals likely to become involved in an issue as it expands beyond the immediate initial participants'. These people 'feel strong ties to the originators of an issue' and 'see their own interest as tied to that of those raising the issue' (p. 128). 2) The '*Attention groups* are groups in the population that are likely to be aware of a conflict early on, and which can be mobilised relatively rapidly whenever an issue enters the group's sphere of concern. Whereas identification group involvement centres on the group affiliations of the combatants, attention group participation tends to be more dependent on the issues involved in a conflict' (p. 129). 3) 'The attentive public', 'usually comprises a small minority of the population and includes those people who are most informed about and interested in public issues. While they have strong views on many public issues, members of the attentive public may be far from united. Thus, as an issue expands and attracts more attention and as more members of the attentive public become involved, they are likely to be drawn into both sides of the controversy. Furthermore, because they have strong views on most public matters, they are likely to be among the least persuadable elements of the population once an issue gets defined in a particular manner, whatever the efforts of the early participants' (p. 129). 4) 'The general public is the last group to become involved in controversies. Its interest in most issues is likely to be short-lived; effective and sustained involvement of the general public in an issue is relatively rare. At the same time, when issues can be defined broadly enough, the involvement of the general public is often crucial in forcing decision makers to place an item on the formal agenda' (p. 129). The usefulness of introducing these definitions will become clear later; in the meantime, it is important to cover the expansion and containment tactics.

Concerning the actions that expand publics and groups, Cobb et al. (1976) identified the following tactics: a) linking the new issue to pre-existing ones (p. 128), b) defining an issue in terms of regional, ethnic, and/or religious interests (p. 128), c) engaging interest

groups (p. 130), d) associate an issue with emotionally laden symbols that have wide acceptance in society (p. 131) and e) involving the 'mass media' (p. 131). While Cobb et al. explained that there are actions that could be used to prevent the expansion of publics and groups, they only alluded to one of them as follows, 'highly placed bureaucrats (...) suggests that the [general] public does not (and cannot) understand the technical issues involved in development planning; development is then best left in the hands of those people who do know what is going on (themselves)' (p. 135).

Cobb et al. (1976) definition of policy collectives and their expansion and containment tactics substantiate my views regarding the management of publics by policy-makers, who include-expand and exclude-make absent-dislocate publics to achieve their objectives. For instance, under the mobilisation model, an issue is already on the formal agenda and possibly included in law. Still, for this statute to be implemented publics need to be mobilised, made aware of the decision and their support ensured. 'Mobilisation is necessary when a policy requires widespread, voluntary compliance. Mobilisation may be needed because in a given cultural context, coercion is inappropriate, impractical, or simply too expensive. The mobilisation process shows decision makers trying to expand an issue from a formal to a public agenda' (1976, p. 132).

Conversely, under the inside access model, the strategy is 'limited expansion', as 'the policy initiators might seek to involve an identification group and selected attention groups, both of which may help create the feeling of urgency and importance necessary to attain a quick and favourable response from decision-makers. This is done in a relatively private setting as the attentive public may be only dimly aware that the issue is being considered at all, and the mass public is totally unaware of its existence' (pp. 135-136).

So, if one seeks to understand how the organising of development could take place in non-organisational settings, such as collaborative development relationships (CDRs), it would be helpful to reflect on whether NPOs as publics of the different UN agencies are being managed and how this management dislocate not only the NPOs but their publics (i.e., the local communities). So, what Cobb et al. (1976) have said regarding the management of publics will be used to reflect on the findings of my investigation.

2.4 On problem definition and goal formulation

'Within policy-making arenas, policy relevance is at odds with fresh ideas. An organisation is itself a solution to a predefined problem. The scope of relevant inquiry is therefore severely restricted so as to accommodate available resources and policy instruments, interests, constraints, prevailing values, and other commitments – the previous definitions of problems' (Dery, 1984, p. xii).

Dery's foregrounding of the impact of problem definition on organising shaped the scope of the following subsections, which cover the literature on problem and goal definition generated by policy and management studies. My investigation studied the definition of problems and goals – the setting of development agendas – hence, it is pertinent to review the work of other disciplines, such as policy studies, which, like sociology, have shown sustained interest in the phenomena that concern my investigation. So, under the next sub-sections, I will briefly touch on the intersecting interests within the aforementioned fields and introduce the critique of key ideas and the conceptualisation that informed the analysis of my findings.

2.4.1 The meaning of problem definition

Within policy studies, the analysis of how problems are defined has covered the following topics: the nature of social problems, the activity of problem description or characterisation, the approaches to tackling problems, and the matter of who owns and/or is responsible for a problem (Rochefort and Cobb, 1993; Rochefort, 2016). Concerning the nature of problems, there is a certain degree of agreement among policy scholars about the following: problems and conditions are not the same, with some academics believing there is a relationship between these two constructs. For instance, Kingdon (2011), after drawing from Merton and Nisbet (1971;1976), argues that 'people define conditions as problems by comparing current conditions with their values concerning more ideal states of affairs'(2011, p. 19).

Kingdon does not have a particular view on what specific values could be appropriate, problematic or inconvenient for policymakers, only that, in general, values change, 'resulting in a new problem definition' (p. 114) and presumably new goals. So, what follows is that long-term interventions of any kind – run by governments or development organisations – might have to be reviewed if their stakeholders' values have changed. As for who defines what is a problem and how, based on the above dynamics, Kingdon gives us a clue in the following explanation: 'In general, not every condition is seen as a problem. For a condition to be a problem, people must become convinced that something should be done to change it. People in and around government make that translation by evaluating conditions in light of their values by comparisons between people or between the United States and other countries, and by classifying conditions into one category or another' (p. 114). I have sufficiently elaborated on the latter's implications in this chapter, particularly the dislocation of publics, so I will not expand on Kingdon's comment.

As for the nature of problems precisely, Kingdon adds, 'There is a difference between a condition and a problem (...) Problems are not simply the conditions or external events themselves; there is also a perceptual, interpretative element' (2011, p. 109-110). Kingdon did not elaborate much about generic-popular problematisation, the one undertaken by publics, as his explicit concern was how policymakers manage to set the agenda, a process made unpredictable and complex by the alleged self-governing nature of clusters of factors. So, for this leading policy scholar, who, like other of his colleagues[47], has been influenced by the sociological work of Merton and Nisbet, problems are definitions or characterisations of conditions. This view construes these notions as interdependent.

Dery (1984), a policy studies scholar, reflects on the implications of treating problems as characterisations, stating that 'If problems are defined (rather than identified or discovered), what sort of entities are they, and what sort of definition takes place when it is a problem that is being defined? The very notion of problem definition suggests a constructionist (rather than an objectivist) view; that is, problems do not exist out there; they are not objective entities in their own right' (p. xi). On the further ramifications of the above, Dery explains, 'if problems are not objective entities, then the definition of problems is not a matter of copying a certain reality, reproducing it or building a model to capture its essence. What would then be the ground rules for justifying or rejecting a certain definition?' (p. xii). Annoyingly, Dery does not answer his question directly; however, he proposed an approach to problematisation to address this matter, which I will briefly introduce later.

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[47] In line with this idea, Cobb and Elder (1983, p. 172), explain, 'Policy problems are not simply givens, nor are they matters of the facts of the situation, they are matters of interpretation and social definition'. Note that these scholars are not denying the existence of an empirical reality, they are simply emphasising the interpretation of it. This is made clear by Cobb (1993, pp. 57-58) when he asserts the following: 'In a complicated world, people are looking for categories or ways of making sense out of complex phenomena'.

Continuing with Dery's analysis of scholarship on problem definition, he argues (1984, p. 22) that for sociologists like Merton (1961, p. 701) and management scholars such as Kilmann and Mitroff (1979, p. 27), problems are discrepancies between what it is and what should be. So, according to Dery's interpretation of sociological and management thinking (p. 23), 'to define a problem is therefore to sketch the difference between where we are and where we would like to be (Rittel and Webber, 1973, p. 159). The rational decision maker, or problem solver, is expected to do just that. The common, normative (rational) model of decision-making advises one to formulate goals (i.e., sketch the gap), identify alternative means to achieve those goals, and select the best alternative (Dror, 1968; Allison, 1971)'. This idea of the discrepancy between states will aid the reader in making sense of other critical points below.

In summary, sociological, management and, to some extent, policy scholars (e.g., Kingdon) have agreed on conceptualising problems as gaps opened by perceived discrepancies between the present state and the view of an improved state or possible better state. In other words, problems are interpretations of objective conditions, meaning they could or could not resemble conditions, yet those interpretations inform the goal formulation process (Rochefort and Cobb, 1994, pp. 5-6). So, based on the assumption that goals are defined in light of speculation about conditions – the perceived problem – one potential product of that definitional process could be irrelevant goals, leading to detrimental outcomes or inefficient use of resources. A pertinent set of questions arising from this train of thought would be, is it possible to distinguish between the objective and the subjective features of a problem? And have any fields involved advanced a method or technique to make that distinction? And even if that distinction is possible, would it be useful-applicable to development's problematisation? Concerning these questions, Searle (1996, pp. 190-195) has put forward a way to distinguish between representation and

reality, which might be helpful to extricate-identify the objective features of a condition from a social problem. Regardless, I could not find evidence that Searle's work or similar ideas have influenced more contemporary views on this matter within policy studies. I elaborate on the implications of this for the methodological approach followed by my investigation (See Chapter 3).

Dery (1984) offers two additional observations about sociological and management conceptualisation on problems-goals that have influenced thinking within policy studies, which I found also relevant to development activity. The first observation arises from seeing problems linked to causes, and the second observation relates to attempts to close a gap, the discrepancy between the current and the ideal state. Regarding the former, Dery explains that: 'A definition of the situation is often a description of the causes for that situation. It is widely held that unless we know the causes of the problem – that is, its roots or what the real problem is – we cannot seriously hope to solve it (Rose, 1971, p. 9; Stringer and Richardson, 1980, p. 36; Edwards and Sharkansky, 1978, p. 87)' (1984, p. 22). Extrapolating from the above, for example, to resolve or mitigate poverty, one must first identify what is causing it, like the lack of access to resources (e.g., money), among other factors.

However, Dery adds, 'On practical grounds, causes are often uncontrollable, either in principle or by a certain intervention agent, or they are not worth manipulating' (1984, p. 22). In other words, tackling a cause to address a problem could be an inadequate action because there is no real prospect of eliminating or shaping the cause in a manner that would mitigate or resolve the problem. So, in relation to poverty, according to the above, it could not be resolved by assuming that we could control and manage the access to the resources needed to eradicate it. But even if the assumption is misguided, Dery adds:

'Nevertheless, causality alone does not provide a criterion for the locus of intervention. Note that when discussing contributions of social science to the solution of social problems, Becker (1966) and others (e.g., Lindblom, 1973; Meltsner, 1976) speak not of causes but of "crucial points of intervention," "the points where intervention will be most effective," or a "chain of relevant circumstances."'.

So, even if we could manage the resources that create poverty, providing them without proper consideration for the most appropriate mechanism to distribute them and the best moment to do so would render deploying those resources ineffectual. In the development context, this discussion has evolved into a much more sophisticated set of ideas concerning capacity building versus capacity development (Kaplan, 2000; Kuhl, 2009; Vallejo and Wehn, 2016). Therefore, there is no reason to further review Dery's ideas on this matter. In any case, his overall point is that, more often than not, management thinking (e.g., decision-making theorisation) prescribes focusing on causes as a way to identify and define a problem, and that approach is ineffective and inefficient.

Regarding Dery's second observation about closing a discrepancy gap between what it is and should be, he argues that: a) 'the desired state may not be attainable, either because we lack the technology or because of other constraints posed by conflicting social norms. In such a case, there may be no conceivable solution'. And b) 'the definition of a problem as a discrepancy between a given and a desired state implies that the latter is to be treated as constant' (1984, p. 17). On the latter, expectations about any desirable state evolve, presumably in line with changes in values. Therefore, policymakers and implementers might be working under the mistaken impression that they are close to reaching the agreed or promised desirable state. Still, their stakeholders have reimagined the desirable state. Dery refers to this phenomenon of the reimagined desirable state when he explains that

the desirable state is not a constant. As for the absence of a solution due to technical or other factors, such as the moral acceptability of options available, what Dery had in mind when alluding to the latter was the phenomenon of 'wicked problems' (e.g., pp. 7, 32), although he did not define these.

In their seminal publication, Rittel and Webber (1973) used the term 'wicked' to describe intractable and contested social problems. Expanding on this matter, these scholars distinguished between 'tame' and 'benign' problems '(typified by engineering, operations research, and computational sciences), which are amenable to being "solved" through technical expertise and, on the other hand, wicked social problems that cannot be controlled in the same way through technical expertise. The difference arises essentially from the social complexity and political pluralism of the stakeholders. 'In other words, both the nature of the problems and the acceptability of the policy responses are politically contested' (Head, 2017, p. 2). Rittel and Weber (1973, pp. 161–167) provided the following ten characteristics of wicked problems, which here are introduced fully to aid the understanding of other contemporary definitions of the same or similar phenomenon:

1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem.
2. Wicked problems have no 'stopping rule' (i.e., no definitive solution).
3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true or false; they are good or bad.
4. There is no immediate and ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem.
5. Every [attempted] solution to a wicked problem is a 'one-shot operation'; there is no opportunity to learn by trial and error.
6. Wicked problems do not have an enumerable set of potential [correct] solutions that may be incorporated into the plan.
7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique.

8. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem.

9. The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution.

10. The planner has no right to be wrong (i.e., there is no public tolerance for experiments that fail).

So wicked problems are 'persistent, multi-layered, with many interactive causal relationships, and with many conflicting perspectives about values, priorities, and methods for improvement' (Head, 2017, p. 3). Linking the systemic nature of wicked problems with similar phenomena (see characteristic number 8 above), it is reasonable to see the work of Ackoff (1974) as a contribution expanding on intractable problems. Ackoff argued that social and economic problems cannot be understood and addressed in isolation, a point that he made in relation to the concept of the 'mess', which he defined as follows:

'Every problem interacts with other problems and is therefore part of a set of interrelated problems, a system of problems. For example, the race problem[48], the poverty problem, the urban problem, and the crime problem, to mention but a few, are clearly interrelated. Furthermore, solutions to most problems produce other problems; for example, buying a car may solve a transportation problem but it may also create a need for a garage, a financial problem, a maintenance problem, and conflict among family members for its use. (...) English does not contain a suitable word for "system of problems". Therefore, I have had to coin one. I choose to call such a system a mess' (1974, p. 21).

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[48] For a more comprehensive view of what Ackoff (1974) meant by 'the race problem', read chapter 7 of his title, specifically page 133.

Concerning the potential solutions to wicked problems, Head (2017, pp. 2-4) argues that Rittel and Webber (1973) and other scholars such as Roberts (2000) are of the view that wicked problems could be tackled through different mechanisms of collaboration ('inclusive discussion, partnerships, alliances, networks'), which could allow the different stakeholders to effectively work together on a problem that separately, each of them, do not a realistic prospect of tackling successfully. This goes against the grain, the principles that have informed the formulation of the notions of wicked problems and messes. In any case, two questions arise: Is development a wicked problem? Also, is it a mess? My investigation did not attempt to answer these specific questions, but in Chapter 7, I elaborate on how my findings shed some light on this matter.

2.4.2 The meaning of problem description-characterisation

Rochefort and Cobb argue that it was during the 1990s that research on problem definition started to emerge within policy studies. Still, this work left significant gaps in the examination of characterisation (p. 57). For instance, not enough attention was paid to the different dimensions of problem description, such as problem responsibility and 'the connection between problem definition and the process of agenda setting' (1993, p. 59). So, in their 1993 paper, these authors outlined the key 'dimensions' that policymakers should consider when defining, characterising or describing what they consider a detrimental condition (p. 61). Rochefort and Cobbe listed these dimensions in a table ('1') under the name 'An Anatomy of Problem Description'; those are as follows: 'Problem Causation, Nature of Problem, Characteristics of the Problem Population, Ends-Means Orientation of Problem Definer and Nature of the Solution. Here, I will touch upon two of these dimensions: the characteristics of the problem population and the problem's nature. I will also cover the types of causalities that apply to characterisation, which were

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introduced by these scholars a year later in their title 'The politics of problem definition' (Rochefort and Cobb, 1994). This choice of what to cover in this subsection is based on the need to introduce new information – not similar notions that have already been discussed above – and how relevant the ideas are to the phenomenon studied by my investigation.

Concerning the characteristics of the problem population, Rochefort and Cobb explain that not only are problems defined, but 'so too are the afflicted groups or individuals'(p. 66). Consequently, policymaking 'is struck by how positive or negative these perceptions are'; by 'perceptions', these scholars meant 'definitions' of the potential recipients of 'welfare' (p. 66). Expanding on this matter, Rochefort and Cobb talk about 'attitudinal axes', capturing how policymakers make sense of public opinion to develop ways of defining-framing the recipients of state aid. Elaborating on these axes, Rochefort and Cobb posed some questions, for instance, 'Is the group worthy or unworthy (deserving or undeserving) of assistance? Underlying this question is the recurrent notion of culpability. Are members of the group seen as familiar or strange? Social deviants and other out-group members do not receive equivalent consideration to persons with whom the public readily identifies. Related to these issues is the distinction between sympathetic and threatening populations' (p. 66).

These scholars did not express a view on whether or not the above questions and axes (e.g., 'deserving or undeserving') are fair or unfair, and in failing to do so, they seem to be transferring the responsibility of such attributions to the public and their interpreters, the policymakers. In any case, I kept these attitudinal axes in mind when analysing my findings to establish whether or not my interviewees and the other sources examined have these sentiments about their problem populations, the recipients of aid. So, the questions

that arise are: How do NPOs characterise their problem populations? Are Rochefort and Cobb's axes applicable to development activity in Colombia? And what would the potential currency of any of these axes say about the actual meaning of development?

Regarding the types of causalities that inform the process of characterisation, Rochefort and Cobb outlined three models of directionality (1994, p. 10). Simply put, these models explain how conditions emerge based on the interaction of different variables. 'The point is not that one or another of these depictions offers a preferable outline of experience, but that the world works in all of these ways all the time. No observer is able to capture the full picture', Rochefort and Cobb (1994, p. 10) explain. The authors seem to assume the models depict the natural and heuristic manner in which policymakers make sense of conditions, a process of sense-making that leads to the formulation of social problems. Figure 1.1 – 'The Three Social Science Causal Models' (taken from Rochefort and Cobb, 1994, p. 11) captures the essence of causalities.

Figure 1.1. Three Social Science Causal Models
Source: Based on Watson and McGaw (1980), chapter 15.
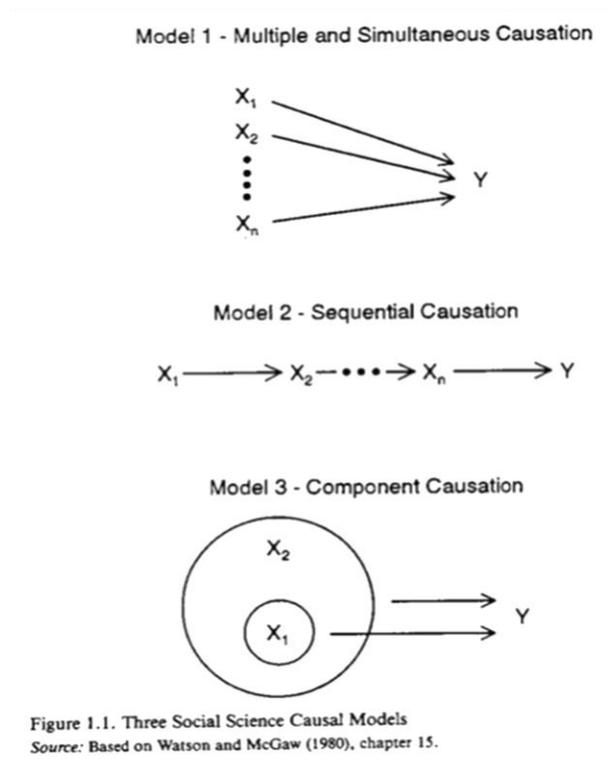
The first model represents a situation at a single point in time in which 'several independent variables exercise a shared impact on a given dependent' variable (p. 11). In this context, Y is a condition from an objectivist point of view, while from the constructionist perspective, it is a social problem. The Model 2 of sequential influence 'depicts a longitudinal chain in which several independent variables working forward in time determine the dependent variable' (Y) (p. 11). Model 3, 'component causation', shows a situation in which 'two or more independent variables are nested in their relationship to the dependent variable. Still, more complex causal pictures are possible through an infinite variety of combinations of these models' (p. 11).

Other influential policy scholars elaborated on the causation shaping the characterisation process. For instance, Jones and Baumgartner (2005, pp. 33-43) described and mapped the evolution of conditions into problems, a process comprising the following stages: recognition stage, characterisation stage, alternative stage, and choice stage. This same problematisation process concerns distinctive but similar activities and outcomes for the individual and systemic action levels.

Contrary to Rochefort and Cobb's models, Jones and Baumgartner conceptualise problematisation as a simplification process – see 'The Logic of Choice', figure 2.1 (2005, p. 37). A method of simplification that facilitates policymaking by reducing the complexity of conditions is done by focusing on one or two problems from a potentially wide range of interrelated ones and subsequently making another choice between a potentially wide range of features for each of the pre-chosen problems. The outcome of this stage, called 'problem definition' or 'problem characterisation', is a proposed social problem, described in terms of the chosen attributes-features; a problem used to generate

solutions and concomitant goals and finally a 'choice' between the latter 'alternatives' and goals.

Figure 2.1. The Logic of Choice

Individual Level | System Level

Attention Allocation — Which issue to attend to? — Agenda Setting

Issue A   Issue B   Issue C   ...   Issue K

Problem Characterization — Which attributes to incorporate? — Problem Definition

Attribute I   Attribute II   ...   Attribute G

Alternative Generation — Which solutions to examine? — Proposal and Debate

Alternative 1   Alternative 2   Alternative 3

Choice — Which alternative to select? — Collective (Policy) Choice

Choice

In line with a central principle of the PET introduced above, Jones and Baumgartner considered this simplifying approach followed by policymakers intuitive due to the overwhelming amount of information and limited cognitive capacity to deal with the overabundance of information reaching the policy systems in the US. Supporting the above, these scholars identified additional sources of information – in the form of attribution and issue intrusions, and indicators – all deemed responsible for the need to

reduce complexity in the characterisation stage of the problematisation process (2006, pp. 43-89).

Presumably, at this point, readers are anticipating the implications of simplification instead of seeking to map and deal with as many interrelated problems and their attributes as possible. From the waste of resources to worsening conditions, these and others are potential outcomes of simplifying; the latter might be why conditions remain in place, resurfacing under a different form at later stages in a political or institutional cycle.

While describing the different types of problems managers could encounter, Mitroff and Silvers (2010, p. 5) identified the Type Four Error as follows: 'The Type Three Error is the unintentional error of solving the wrong problems precisely. In sharp contrast, the Type Four Error is the intentional error of solving the wrong problems (...) The Type Three Error is primarily the result of ignorance, a narrow or faulty education, and unreflective practice. In contrast, the Type Four Error is the result of deliberate malice, narrow ideology, overzealousness, a sense of self-righteousness, and wrongdoing (...) Every Type Four Error is invariably political or has strong political elements'.

I am not introducing Type Four Error to explain why policymakers simplify; however, critical development scholars have argued that development looks like a Type Four Error (e.g., Rist, 2019), not necessarily by using the same term but by referring to the motivations underpinning this type of mistake. I will reflect on this matter in Chapter 7 of this thesis. In the meantime, it is important to mention that I considered both models, Rochefort & Cobb and Jones & Baumgartner when I analysed my findings. For the time being, I will continue reviewing the work of the former, as Rochefort & Cobb offer some ideas on how the simplification of social conditions is communicated.

Rochefort and Cobb (1994) sought 'to map out the rhetoric most frequently employed by problem definers' (p. 4). Specifically, Rochefort and Cobb elaborated on the means and rhetorical tactics used by policymakers and other political actors to position particular interpretations of problems. This topic relates to one of the specific aims of this review, which is to introduce the academic work on how those at the micro-level communicate problems. Starting with the means, Rochefort and Cobb explain that:

'The uses of language are crucial to the political analysis of public policymaking and problem definition. Language is essential to understanding, argument, and individual and group expression, which all figure into the definition of social problems for public attention. Language can be the vehicle for employing symbols that lend legitimacy to one definition and undermine the legitimacy of another – as when professional groups try to gain control over the way a problem is perceived by introducing symbols of their expertise and authority (Elder and Cobb, 1983). Stone (1988) points out four prominent forms of language and symbolic representation in political discourse: (1) stories, which provide explanations; (2) synecdoches, in which parts of things are said to depict the whole; (3) metaphors, which claim likenesses between things; and (4) ambiguity, in which multiple meanings are evoked simultaneously' (1994, p. 9).

My research identified the most suitable language form (i.e., explanations of how staff working for NPOs broke pre-existing understandings and how they attempted to create new ones to convey the legitimacy of the problem at the heart of a development intervention). This will be further explained in Chapter 3. In addition to the above means, Rochefort and Cobb (1994, pp. 15-22) discussed how the severity, incidence, novelty and proximity of social problems – all to be established by the definitional process – allow rhetors-policymakers to position a chosen problem in the mind of the public. So,

according to Rochefort and Cobb, these features – such as severity – could be used to foreground or decrease the attention a social problem could get.

In the table below, I have provided quotes by Rochefort and Cobb (1994) explaining how each feature facilitates policymakers' positioning and characterisation of a problem. In the same table, I have provided clarification – an interpretation of the original quote – when I believe it was needed.

Feature	Quote	Interpretation
Causality	'The way a problem is defined invariably entails some statement about its origins. As already suggested, the question of culpability is the most prominent of all aspects of problem definition. One important distinction is whether attribution is made to individual versus impersonal causes. Much of the traditional debate between liberalism and conservatism can in fact be explained by the stress given these two competing perspectives. Consider, for example, the poverty problem. Those on the left highlight failures of the economic and cultural system, while those on the right commonly cite the lack of individual or group effort (Patterson, 1981)' (p. 15).	This concerns the positioning of problems based on the alleged causes of it. A way in which this could happen is by arguing that social problems are caused by poor personal choice (the responsibilisation of individuals) or attributing the cause of a problem to systemic-structural arrangements.
Severity	'A social problem may be represented along many dimensions beyond that of causality. One of these facets is severity, that is, how serious a problem and its consequences are taken to be. Is this an issue meriting space on a crowded public policy agenda? How strongly the severity label gets applied is a contentious matter, since this element of problem definition is pivotal to capturing the attention of public officials and the media' (p. 17).	Severity could be heightened by using terms like labels, intending to convey the gravity of the condition/situation (e.g., crisis, emergency, recession, etc.).
Incidence	'According to survey researchers, perceptions of the frequency and prevalence of a hazardous or unjust situation are a potent trigger to it being considered a social problem (Stafford and Warr 1985)' (p. 18).	Statistics or other sources of alleged factual information could be used to make spurious associations between gender, class, age and the prevalence and frequency of some conditions.
Novelty	'When an issue is described as novel, unprecedented, or trailblazing, it can have a couple of effects. One, of course, is to win attention. Then as time passes and the novelty wanes, the public and media become bored with an issue and are distracted from it (Downs 1973; Bosso 1989). But issues that have not been seen before are difficult to conceptualize and they lack familiar solutions.	

| | Thus a tension arises as the issue is publicized and onlookers expect resolution, yet no consensus exists within the political system on how to tackle the problem' (p. 21). | |
| Proximity | 'To characterise an issue as having proximity is to argue that it hits close to home or directly impinges on a person's interest. If the case can be made successfully, members of the audience will become concerned and may express their concern politically. For this reason, issue proponents constantly seek to expand their base by claims of personal relevancy' (p. 21). | |

In addition to what the table explains regarding how some aspects of social problems could be used to increase their salience or the opposite, Rochefort and Cobb (1994, p. 5) explain that: 'To restrict participation [in the definitional process], issues may be [pre] defined in procedural or narrow technical terms (Nelkin, 1975). To heighten participation, issues may be connected to sweeping social themes, such as justice, democracy, and liberty'. So, in line with the critique introduced in previous sections, publics could be purposefully dislocated using technical/scientified language. At the same time, they could be roped in to support the inclusion of items in the policy agenda by linking those items to the values that matter to them. Also, in light of these characterisation tactics, an important question arises: are these tactics applicable to contemporary development?

Before I discuss the other key aspect that concerns this section, it is important to note that problematisation is essentially a definitional activity involving negotiation and agreement on meanings; the latter cannot be accomplished without persuasion. However, similar to other work reviewed in this chapter, policy research on agenda-setting has neglected the rhetorical aspect of problematisation, such as the function of framing. This is a contradiction if we bear in mind that framing is often used to shape the salience of an issue or problem, and the agenda-setting function concerns precisely the visibility of conditions. In this sense, visibility is a slider that moves between two poles, one of those poles being the exclusion of issues-problems and the other one, the inclusion of issues-

problems. So, when the slider is moved away from the exclusion pole, what is being done by a policy or political actor is to manage its visibility according to her/his/their agenda strategy.

Three observations support the above claim of paucity of research on framing problems. The first one is that the most influential perspectives on agenda-setting within the policy field (i.e., the MSF and the PET) have failed since their inception to offer a systematic view, a framework or a model on how problems are rhetorically framed. Second, the latter finding is reinforced by the omission in the MSF and the PET of seminal publications on framing by policy scholars, such as the work of Schön and Rein (1994). Third and lastly, 'systematic work on how the framing of issues impacts the political attention devoted to those issues is largely lacking' (Walgrave et al. 2018, p. 549). Walgrave et al. (2018), like other policy scholars (Knaggård, 2015; Birkland and Schwaeble, 2019), have realised the aforementioned paucity; hence, they have been trying to raise awareness of the importance of studying the framing undertaken by policymakers in their micro-level activities, which has received scant attention in contrast to the research on how the news media frames potential agenda items.

I have identified the frames used by the participants in my study to elaborate on the implications of their problem-definition practices. Critical work on this function informed the analysis of the participants' framing practices (e.g., Goffman 1986; Entman 1993; Schön and Rein 1994; Reese 2007; S. Kaplan 2008). However, reviewing the vast literature on framing generated by sociology, media-communication studies, psychology, public relations, journalism studies, and political communication is beyond the scope of this chapter. In Chapter 3, I will explain how some of the main ideas on frames informed the operationalisation of this concept for my research.

2.4.3 On Goal setting or goal formulation-formation

According to Jones and Baumgartner (2005, p. 35), 'how we characterise a problem implies goal setting'. The latter indicates that social problems and goals exist in a causal relationship and implies that framing a problem or a goal would entail an adjustment of the other component in the relationship, either the pre-existing goal or the problem. Another implication of the above assertion by Jones and Baumgartner is the signalling that goal formation is a crucial component of the agenda-setting process, hence meriting the attention of policy scholars. However, within policy studies, there is little on goal formulation apart from unconnected and very narrow recommendations; in other words, the field has not proposed a framework or theory on goal formation.

For instance, Kingdon's work (2011) devotes scant attention to goal formulation, a subject that this scholar addressed in a few pages (e.g., pp. 183-184) and covered to the extent indicated in the following quote:

'Periodically, observe(r)s cry out for more structure in government decision making. Structures are not tidy, government inefficiency is rampant, and people do not precisely define their goals and then adopt the most efficient solution. It could be, in contrast to such reasoning, that messy processes have their virtues. In a system like the one described here, entrepreneurs must take whatever opportunities present themselves, so they bend the problems to the solutions they are pushing. If goals are defined too precisely, many interesting and creative ideas are left in the lurch. It is certainly better for these entrepreneurs, and possibly even better for the system, if goals are left sufficiently vague and political events continue to be sufficiently imprecise and messy, that new and innovative ideas have a chance' (2011, p. 183).

There is no additional comment or insight by Kingdon (2011) on the implications of forming vague goals for those trying to achieve them or relying on their outcomes (e.g., recipients of medical health programmes). Searching within the earlier work by other critical policy scholars, I found something about goal formation only in 'Participation in American Politics' by Cobb and Elder (1983). However, these scholars' comments on the subject were tightly circumscribed to issue expansion by active publics in the context of mass mobilisation and protest (i.e., pp. 114-115). Cobb and Elder mentioned a couple of ideas concerning goal definition that could be used to gather support for including a social problem in the policy agenda. While Cobb and Elder relied on a different source – *The Strategy of Protest* (Wilson, 1961) – the goal formation ideas they discussed are not dissimilar to what Kingdon said later, and oddly, Cobb and Elder deemed those same ideas not 'that relevant to the study of agenda setting' (1983, p. 114).

While protest and mobilisation could have affected the development programmes under study, they did not, rendering the policy studies' ideas above irrelevant to my investigation. So, instead, I relied on the goal theory developed by management scholars. Within the latter body of work, I searched for views on micro-level goal formulation and ideas on pursuing multiple goals that could help me enhance the analysis of my findings.

Below, I have introduced the ideas that informed my analysis. But before I start introducing those ideas, it is worth mentioning that 'many aspects of organisational goals', such as 'the processes through which they are formed' (...) 'have received very fragmented attention' within management studies (Kotlar et al. 2018, p. S3) and that 'currently, there is no theory predicting firm reactions to multiple goals if these goals do not have a predetermined order of importance. This is problematic because organisational

goals rarely have a clear hierarchy but rather are interdependent, with some compatible and some conflicting' (Gaba and Greve, 2019, p. 647).

So, considering that my investigation concerns micro-level goal formation and the management of multiple goals within the context of development domains (e.g., CDRs), my findings can contribute to policy and organisational studies. This is in addition to one of the main aims of this thesis, which is to contribute to the field of development studies. I will touch upon this matter in the next section (2.5).

Discussing the nature of goals, Linder and Foss (2018, p. S39) argue, based on seminal scholarship (i.e., Simon, 1964; Cyert and March, 1992), that 'only individuals can truly have goals', and yet Linder and Foss recognise that some types of organisations (e.g., corporations) have been formally reified; in other words, the agency of these entities has been acknowledged by different bodies of law, and consequently these entities are believed to have goals too, like any human being. This state of affairs has various implications, but defining goals in light of the above is the most pressing.

So, in line with seminal views on goal theory, discussed by Linder and Foss (2018), including Locke and Latham (2013), 'goals are core motivational constructs that influence behaviour' (Unsworth, Yeo, and Beck, 2014). Shinkle (2012, p. 416) defines goals as an 'aspiration level on a specified organisational outcome'. Hence, 'organisational goals are the result of continued bargaining and stabilisation processes among relevant parties within the firm, leading to multiple dimensions along which organisational goals are set, including production, inventory, sales, market share and profitability'(Kotlar et al. 2018, p. S4). The latter means that goals are not given and spontaneously shared across an organisation; goals emerge from the interaction of

organisational (i.e., structure) and individual aspirations. Also, in light of the last definition, one wonders which of the dimensions above apply to the third sector and development activity. Surprisingly, the persistent adoption of for-profit logics by NPOs has made possible the consideration of many dimensions apart from profitability (Simpson and Cheney, 2007; Skelcher and Smith, 2015; McMullin and Skelcher, 2018; Mikołajczak, 2020).

Regarding goal formation, within management's work, goals arise due to multiple intervening forces. These forces, factors or causes are regularly called 'antecedents' to differentiate them from the 'consequences' of goal formation (Wofford, Goodwin, and Premack, 1992; Kotlar et al., 2018; Linder and Foss, 2018). Linder and Foss provide a comprehensive list of antecedents (2018, pp. S44-S46), but if they are encapsulated, most of them indicate that goals emerge from the aspirations of influential individuals operating within or from outside an organisation; other goals arise from the aspirations that are formally encoded in law or aspirations that become a social expectation (e.g., CSR expectations).

According to Kotlar et al. (2018, p. S7), the study of goal formation within this body of work lacks refinement, meaning that the bulk of existing theorisation on this subject mainly concerns the identification of the factors that shape the process of goal formation in isolation, independently of other drivers. Also, there is little in this body of work about how goals emerge at the micro level and little about the interaction between factors, including those operating at different levels (Linder and Foss, 2018, p. S57). This creates the opportunity to contribute to the field's understanding of goal formation. My investigation examined the goal formation practices of an NPO implementing a

development programme in Colombia on behalf of different international grant-making foundations. This process required the negotiation of micro, meso and macro-level goals.

About the implications of the interaction of different antecedents-aspirations, for instance, within an organisation, multiple groups of stakeholders (e.g., units or departments) push for the adoption of distinctive goals, hence the emergence of additional goals (Ethiraj and Levinthal, 2009). 'Goal congruence' or 'goal consensus' are the terms used by scholars to refer to the expected agreement between stakeholders on the goals an organisation should achieve (Chusmir, 1988; Vancouver, Millsap, and Peters, 1994). However, Ethiraj and Levinthal (2009, pp. 5-7) argue that multiple goals would be needed even if goal congruence is achieved. That is the case because, in circumstances where most stakeholders formally adopt one or two goals, there are 'multiple objective functions' and 'constraints' arising from one goal alone. About the former, all the actions required to achieve one goal cannot be anticipated, so these become goals themselves, especially when these actions are very demanding. Constraints in this context refer to the conditions that must be satisfied to achieve a goal (e.g., going to the moon is the goal, and overcoming gravity is the constraint). So, it is argued that one organisational goal entails dealing with various constraints, which become goals themselves, too. This is why even in the ideal scenario in which an organisation manages to agree on a sensible number of goals, these will eventually multiply, creating a situation in which conflicting goals would likely arise.

To understand how conflicting goals arise, we must examine how goals interact – i.e., 'Figure 3' below, taken from Hu and Bettis (2018, p. 883).

Figure 3. (Color online) Feedback Distortion Between Two Goals
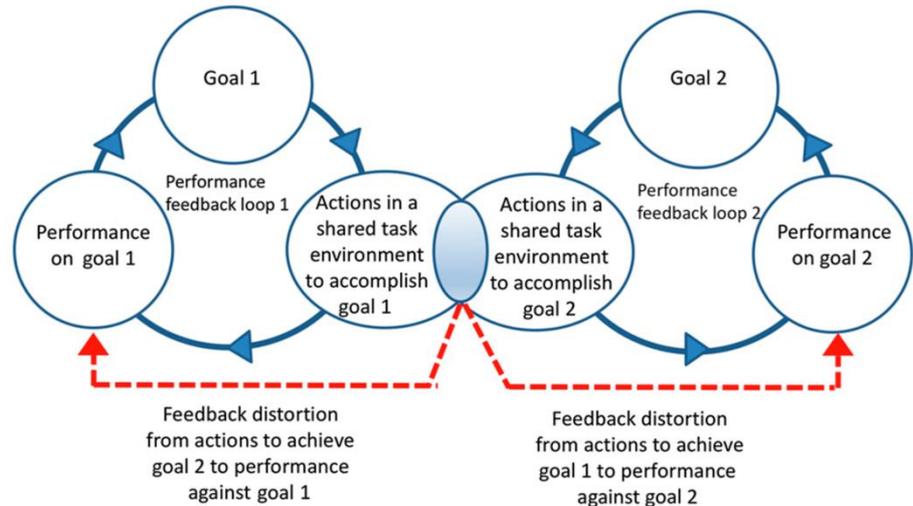
Hu and Bettis (2018, p. 874) explain that goals interact in what they call a 'shared task environment'. A shared task environment 'describes an objective reality which can be characterised with respect to an agent in terms of a set of possible actions {A, A,...A } which map into performance outcomes {Π1, Π2,....Πm} for the agent' (Puranam et al. 2015). Based on the possibility of goals sharing the task environment, Hu and Bettis believe the actions undertaken to achieve, for example, 'Goal 1' could have a detrimental effect on the achievement of 'Goal 2' and vice versa. The opposite is also possible. Goals could improve the performance of other goals in the same shared task environment (2018, p. 874). 'By distorting feedback, we mean that actions in the task environment intended to improve performance against one goal may also produce feedback on another goal that improves or degrades performance on this second goal. In other words, certain actions in a shared task environment impact performance feedback on both goals' (p. 882). 'Such distorting (unintentional) feedback on the performance of other goals from the actions to improve the performance of one goal is feedback interdependency due to shared task environments' (2018, p. 874). Hu and Bettis introduce other outcomes of this interdependency when a third goal shares the same task environment, as shown in 'Figure 4' (taken from 2018, p. 883) below.

About the concepts introduced in 'Figure 4', it is the phenomenon of congruent interdependency the only one that should not be associated with the rise of conflicting goals because 'congruent interdependency means that the distorting feedback increases performance in both directions, on both goals. This means that an action in a task environment that generates increased performance feedback on the target goal (goal 1) also generates increased performance feedback on another goal (goal 2), and vice versa' (p. 883). The other two phenomena lead to conflicting goals. These are: divergent interdependency, the situation in which the distorted feedback has a negative impact in both directions (see Goal 1 and 3 distorted feedback) and asymmetric interdependence, in which the distorted feedback causes a positive effect in one direction and a negative impact in the other direction (see Goals 3 and 2 distorted feedback). So the question that follows is, how are conflicting goals avoided?

In their review of early theorisation on goals, Gaba and Greve (2019) explain that management's body of work assumed that 'decision makers jointly consider multiple goals and make decisions as a sum of their respective influence' (pp. 648-649) or that 'organisations pursue multiple goals sequentially so that secondary goals become activated only once the primary goals are fulfilled' (p. 649). According to Gaba and

Figure 4. (Color online) Types of Bilateral Feedback Interdependency
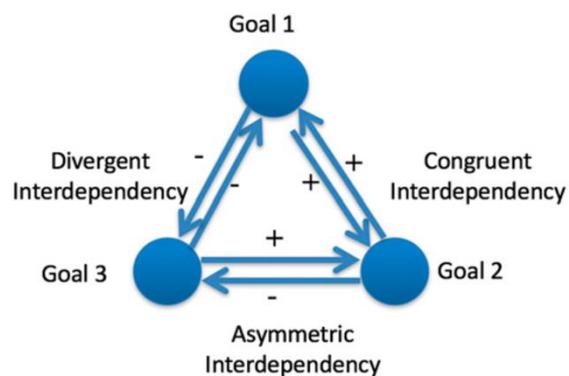
Grieve, none of the studies adopting these two approaches to multiple goals considered the interactions between goals and their implications, particularly what happens when there is conflict between goals (p. 649). However, the early work of Ethiraj and Levinthal (2009) did. The work of these scholars anticipated and established the potential weak and negative correlations between multiple goals, which hurt their achievement when they shared the same task environment. They also identified three 'strategies for coping with multiple performance goals' (p. 12), which I will briefly introduce below.

The first of these strategies is called 'myopic'. It involves a firm pursuing 'subunit' or 'intermediary' goals. This somehow entails being aware of the relevant overarching goals and pursuing the objectives that, if met, contribute to achieving the macro goals. Under this strategy, there is no formal or coordinated attempt to accomplish the macro goal. The second strategy, known as 'spatial separation ', involves an organisation pursuing overall goals by giving each of its units or departments the task of pursuing one of the macro goals. The third strategy, 'temporal separation', entails agreeing to pursue one of the overarching goals at a time. Subsequently, this goal is replaced by another (2009, p. 12).

Reflecting on the potential usefulness of these strategies to the analysis of my findings, it is important to note that each development goal (e.g., SDGs) has a string of attendant objectives. For instance, SDG 5, to 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', has at least seven key objectives and other sub-objectives linked to the former, as suggested by the SDG indicators paper (The UN, 2023). This goal and its objectives were interpreted and negotiated, and finally, some were adopted by one of the cases I examined. The result of that goal formation process, involving multiple objectives, was analysed in light of these and other strategies introduced below.

According to Unsworth, Yeo, and Beck (2014), goal alignment is a 'strategy for resolving goal conflict' (p. 1067). These scholars defined goal alignment 'as the act of cognitively reframing the representation of goals to highlight their commonalities and reduce their differences' (p. 1067). The latter definition is relevant to my investigation because it conceptualises goals as representations, which are formed-framed by the action of highlighting or making salient their commonalities and differences with other goals. This foregrounds the rhetorical dimension of goal formulation, linking goal formulation to persuasive communication and, therefore, the fields of communication and PR.

The alignment strategies advanced by Unsworth, Yeo, and Beck are as follows: the merging of goals, the nesting of goals and the selection of a lower-order goal. Merging involves the integration of conflicting goals, which results in a new overarching or more complex goal. Nesting does not involve the creation of a new goal but embedding one of the conflicting goals, which by extension would become a lower-order goal, a secondary goal. The third strategy involves finding a lower-order goal 'that satisfies all the activated higher-order goals' (p. 1068). This requires identifying 'the commonalities in the tasks connected to the conflicting goals' (p. 1068), meaning that as long as the chosen lower-order goal covers all these tasks required to accomplish the higher-order goals, it could be deemed a suitable new supra higher-order goal.

According to Unsworth, Yeo, and Beck (2014, p. 1068), 'When multiple conflicting goals are not aligned, one goal must be prioritised to resolve conflict around the allocation of resources. Most of the multiple-goal literature in the I/O, OB, and experimental social psychology disciplines focuses on goal prioritisation, which refers to the act of directing resources to one of the activated goals and not to the others'. In other words, the strategies introduced above inevitably involve goal prioritisation, as a new goal would come out of

the alignment or a conflicting goal, which has been merged or nested, becomes secondary or ceases to exist. So, in the context of development, which goals should be prioritised at the expense of others?

In the previous sections, I have offered a critique and introduced the relevant concepts and ideas that informed my ontological and methodological approach to the investigation and/or shaped the analysis of the findings. With this in mind, in the next section of this chapter, I have briefly examined a sample of the development literature, looking for similarities (e.g., same gaps) and promising ideas that my findings could help to expand.

2.5 Gaps and opportunities in development scholarship

I have reviewed academic work on social problems and conditions, agenda setting, problematisation and goal formation generated by sociology, political science, media and communication, policy, and management studies. There are intersections between these fields and development, as the latter requires policy formulation, the management of interventions and the negotiation and communication with stakeholders about all the previous activities, ideally through development communication.

Bearing in mind these intersections, I assumed development academics have drawn from the fields that created the concept of agenda-setting and its components. Therefore, by extension, development scholarship might share the same unresolved dilemmas and gaps. Aiming to contribute to the development field, I saw it relevant to establish if the latter was the case and if there is a way to make my findings useful to those interested in development. The shared unsettled debates and gaps across the literature I reviewed are as follows: a) inconsistency in the approach to publics' involvement in problematisation

and goal formation – with some scholars advocating the dislocation of publics and others denouncing the elites' control of these tasks, b) paucity in the study of agenda-setting at micro-level, c) lack of refinement in the study of goal formation and d) paucity in the study of the framing of social problems in most of the scholarship reviewed, except sociology and its constructivist school of problematisation.

So, the task that concerns this section is to establish how development touched upon agenda-setting and, more specifically, problematisation and goal formation. This task is very complex due to the considerable range of development-related material available. For instance, according to Scopus (2021), the total number of publications covering the subject is 1,301. From this total, 1,204 are journal publications. This high volume is due to the number of sub-fields linked to development (e.g., geography, international relations, environmental sustainability studies, economics, planning, and management studies, amongst many others). To narrow the scope of my search for relevant material, I concentrated on the literature associated with the subject area of social sciences, some of which I already discussed in previous sections. Still, it was impossible to cover the vast amount of work on this topic; therefore, this is a moderating factor against my observations below.

To ascertain how the field of development studied agenda-setting, I generated a sample of papers published by academic journals, which were placed in the first quartile of publications, based on Scopus' impact ranking (CiteScore, 2021) – i.e., World Development (9.4), Development and Change (5.4), Journal of Development Studies (4.1), The European Journal of Development Research (3.9), Third World Quarterly (3.4), Progress in Development Studies (2.4), and Journal of International Development (2.4). I also searched for papers within other journal publications (e.g., Nonprofit and Voluntary

Sector Quarterly, Development in Practice, World Development Sustainability, Forum for Development Studies). The parameter for selecting this second cluster of publications was that influential and prolific scholars in the field regularly referenced them.

The terms used to identify relevant literature were: 'agenda', 'setting', 'agenda-setting', 'agenda setting', 'punctuated equilibrium', 'PET', 'multiple streams', 'policy' and 'MSF'. The total number of articles found using these terms was, on average, above 1,000 papers per publication, so to ensure I had a relevant sample of material touching on this specific subject, additional rounds of searches were carried out for papers using only the terms 'agenda', 'setting', 'agenda-setting', 'agenda setting' in their titles and/or keywords. This reduced the number of papers per publication, although in some cases, the number of papers found was still above 50 (e.g., World Development). In contrast, for other publications, the number of papers listed was too low (6 to 10) (e.g., The Journal of Development Studies).

The total number of papers reviewed was 80. However, many of these papers used the term 'agenda' once, for instance, in the title (e.g., Kajese, 1987), or more than once, but do not discuss the subject of agenda-setting in a meaningful way (e.g., Andrews, 2008). In other words, the term 'agenda' in these papers is employed to promote the importance of the matter at hand – to say the agenda-makers should consider this idea or issue – but those papers do not discuss or contribute to our understanding of how an agenda is set within development. Of the 80 papers reviewed, only 13 referred to agenda-setting concepts, ideas and processes in more or less the same way as the literature by the fields of politics and policy studies reviewed in this chapter. The following table lists the 13 articles in question and provides other basic details.

	Year of publication	Authors	Title-Topic	Agenda-setting theory
1	(1987)	Michael Reich	'Essential drugs: economics and politics in international health'.	Unclear
2	(1995)	Michael Reich	'THE POLITICS OF AGENDA SETTING IN INTERNATIONAL HEALTH: CHILD HEALTH VERSUS ADULT HEALTH IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES'.	Kingdon's MSF
3	(2004)	Ira Silver	'Negotiating the Antipoverty Agenda: Foundations, Community Organizations, and Comprehensive Community Initiatives'.	Kingdon's MSF
4	(2006)	Max Stephenson Elisabeth Chaves	'The Nature Conservancy, the Press, and Accountability'.	Kingdon and Birkland ideas on focusing events
5	(2006)	Vanessa Neumann	'The Incoherence of US Counternarcotics Policy in Colombia: Exploring the Breaches in the Policy Cycle'.	Kingdon's MSF
6	(2009)	Sarah Praelle	'Agenda-setting and climate change'.	Kingdon's MSF
7	(2009)	Ian Mac Auslan	'Hunger, Discourse and the Policy Process: How do Conceptualizations of the Problem of 'Hunger' Affect its Measurement and Solution?'.	Unclear
8	(2010)	David Mosse	'A Relational Approach to Durable Poverty, Inequality and Power'.	Unclear
9	(2015)	Jaap Voeten, Job de Haan, Gerard de Groot and Nigel Roome	'Understanding Responsible Innovation in Small Producers' Clusters in Vietnam through Actor-Network Theory'.	Unclear
10	(2017)	Emily Luxon & Wendy Wong	'Agenda-Setting in Greenpeace and Amnesty: The Limits of Centralisation in International NGOs'.	Unclear
11	(2018)	Jonathan Makuwira	'Power and development in practice: NGOs and the development agenda setting'.	Unclear
12	(2020)	Lester Salamon and Vladimir Benevolenski	'Putting Nonprofits on the Policy Agenda of Post- Soviet Russia: A Story of Convergence'.	Kingdon's MSF
13	(2021)	Ileana Serban and Ani Harutyunyan	'The European Union as an International Donor: Perceptions from Latin America and the Caribbean'.	Kingdon's MSF

The category 'unclear' concerns those articles that discuss the phenomenon of the setting

of an agenda and related dynamics. Most of this work refers to a specific agenda rather

than 'the agenda for development', the latter being associated with the Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs) or Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However,

'unclear' means that these publications do not refer to any agenda-setting approaches

discussed in this chapter (e.g., the MSF or the PET) or any academic or expert framework, for instance, one developed by a UN agency. In other words, these papers rely on readers sharing a presumed idea or view in circulation within the field about what an agenda and its setting means. This shared idea or definition is not consistent, though; at times, it seems to refer to the setting of an agenda as agreeing on and signalling the most significant challenges for development. However, the term also refers to an unfair determination of what is essential for development, which aligns with the critical school of thinking within the field.

It is worth mentioning that a significant amount of articles, at least 100, which I have consulted to underpin other areas of this investigation and which were not found through this specific search, could have been classified as 'unclear' (e.g., Saharan and Schulpen, 2022). So, concerning this section of the sample, 'unclear' does not mean meaningless; it signals the opportunity to enhance the findings of these papers by examining them in light of politics-policy ideas on agenda setting. The analysis of my findings embraced that approach, including specific views on problematisation and goal formation from other fields (e.g., management).

The 'Kingdon's MSF' category concerns articles underpinned by politics-policy agenda-setting approaches. However, because other politics-policy approaches did not inform the work reviewed (e.g., the PET), this category was named 'Kingdon's MSF'. This sample of articles shared the concern for the political dimension of agenda setting; in simple terms, how a particular ideological position informed the determination of what deserves attention and what does not, potentially shaping policymaking within the field. Another commonality this section of the sample shares is the focus on the meso and macro levels of analysis (e.g., institutional agendas, national agendas, agency agendas). Consequently,

this work has overlooked the micro-level, similar to other research reviewed above. Wong's work was a helpful exception (i.e., 2014; Luxon and Wong, 2017), as it attempts to link different levels; however, it was not consistently informed by any of the frameworks or approaches reviewed here. So, this suggests that the development field could benefit from more cross-fertilisation, more analysis informed by ideas on agenda-setting developed by other fields and more research on the micro-level agenda. My investigation covered both recommendations.

Notably, the field's interest in agenda-setting is manifested mainly through the vast amount of attention paid to goal formation and problem definition. A cursory search using the terms 'development goals' and 'framing' would certainly retrieve a significant number of articles on these topics – above 1,000 per publication – according to my latest search (2022). The same observation applies to the dislocation of publics – covered mainly by literature using the term 'community participation' or 'community empowerment' (Cornwall, 2007; Claridge, 2023). This suggests that there is little opportunity to add something new about these particular dimensions of the process of agenda setting.

However, my non-systematic review of goal research within this field revealed a strong and steady focus on the macro-level analysis of goal formation and compliance (e.g., Hulme 2010; Schuftan 2013; Boas, Biermann, and Kanie 2016; Bartram et al. 2018; Bhardwaj et al. 2019; Sachs et al. 2019; Garfias Royo et al. 2022), with some scholars becoming specialists on the subject (Fukuda-Parr, 2010; Fukuda-Parr, Yamin and Greenstein, 2014; Fukuda-Parr, 2016; Fukuda-Parr and McNeill, 2019; Weber, 2014; 2015; 2017; Weber and Weber, 2020; Waage et al., 2010; 2015). A significant amount of this work points out that the interaction between the different items in the multilateral

institutional agenda is problematic; in other words, the agenda for modernisation is unachievable (e.g.,Vandemoortele, 2006; 2009; Fukuda-Parr, 2010; Waage et al., 2010; Fukuda-Parr, Yamin, and Greenstein, 2014; Weber, 2014; Fukuda-Parr and McNeill, 2015; Sexsmith and McMichael, 2015; Weber, 2015; 2017; Fukuda-Parr and McNeill, 2019; Satterthwaite and Dhital, 2019; McGowan et al., 2019; Rai, Brown, and Ruwanpura, 2019; Biggeri et al., 2019; Fuso Nerini et al., 2019; Weber and Weber, 2020). As mentioned before, the bulk of this research examines the macro-level interplay of goals, so, essentially this work offers a critique of the process of formation of institutional goals.

As for the research on micro-level goal formation and compliance (e.g., Mathews, 2021; Mbzibain and Tchoudjen, 2021), its volume and prominence are less significant than macro-level studies. I identified papers within this body of work that examine the interplay of goal formation and resource dependence (i.e., Seo 2016; 2020), which I used to analyse my findings.

Lastly and briefly, recent multidisciplinary work covering the intersection development-PR supported the approach taken by my investigation and also informed the analysis of findings. For instance, regarding the former, after conducting a systematic analysis of literature concerning NPOs' management of relationships with stakeholders, Mato-Santiso et al. (2021) argue that it would be worthwhile 'to examine the non-profit-stakeholder relationship through multiple channels' using resources dependence theory (RDT) (p. 11). Concerning development communication, Joshi (2022, p. 6) explains that PR and development frequently refer to the following dimensions when attempting to link the two subjects: context, participation, power, agency and profession. As explained in the introduction to the thesis, my examination of the organising within collaborative

domains took into account the shaping effect of most of these dimensions, including legitimacy. This focal point, the micro-level one, has also been deemed worthwhile by Joshi (2022, p.5). So, this suggests that the identification and discussion of the role played by different frames in the context of problematisation, goal formation and organising choices might contribute to the existing body of work on development communication. Regarding what I have identified here as the paternalistic approach and its advancement of the dislocation of publics, Joshi also argues that:

'One must recognise that managerial approaches in both fields [development and PR] have been criticised for distancing vulnerable groups or publics from communication interventions in the past (...) Professionals work in an environment where communication can be influenced by both agentic and structural forces. In a development situation, both communities and organisations enacting programs (Government or NGOs) impact development and communication outcomes, even though communities face bigger challenges due to adverse power dynamics. The approach to communication should demonstrate an ability to recognise these influences and make communication relevant for both, particularly the beneficiaries of a programme' (p. 5).

As stated in the introduction of this thesis, my investigation looked at the interplay structure-communication within collaborative relationships, so its focus is essentially on NPOs' organisational dynamics. Nevertheless, I sought to establish how those dynamics impact publics (i.e., the intervened communities). My findings substantiate a paradox owed to these dynamics that dislocate publics. I argued that dislocation impacts the effectiveness and efficiency of development programmes, which aligns with the idea that governments and NPOs do not benefit from the communities' feedback (Yudarwati and Gregory, 2022).

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The main aim of my investigation is to enhance our understanding of the interplay of agenda setting and organising as it happens in the context of development activity. This aim concerns two units of analysis, agenda-setting and organising, both processes leading to two distinctive but interdependent outcomes: an agenda for development and a collaborative development relationship (CDR); the latter enables the implementation of the former. On the nature of these units of analysis, the problematising of conditions and the formation of attendant goals constitute an agenda for development (Elder and Cobb, 1984; Bonafont and Palau, 2011; Liu, Robinson, and Vedlitz, 2020), while organising concerns the choices made to implement an agenda and those determinations that form and sustain the structure through which NPOs operate on the ground (e.g., a CDR) (Gray, 1985; 1989; Morris and Miller-Stevens, 2016).

Also, in the context of development, the interplay agenda setting-organisation is a multi-level phenomenon shaped at each level by different factors, such as communication, legitimacy, resource dependence and autonomy (Lister, 2003; Jung and Moon, 2007; Batley, 2011; Elbers and Arts, 2011; Meyer, Buber, and Aghamanoukjan, 2013; Ketola, 2016; O'Brien and Evans, 2017). For instance, the degree of resource dependence of meso and micro-level entities, like NPOs and governmental agencies, is greatly enhanced or diminished by macro-level funding arrangements agreed upon by grant-making foundations, UN agencies and country donors (Mitchell, 2014; Verschuere and De Corte, 2014; Mawdsley, Savage, and Kim, 2014; Mawdsley, 2017; Saharan and Schulpen, 2022).

Consequently, studying the interplay of agenda-setting and organising at one of the three levels mentioned above alone would offer a limited understanding of this phenomenon. Hence, I also sought to establish if meso-level entities, such as municipal authorities, adopted the institutional agenda for modernisation. Adoption in this context means agreeing to pursue institutional goals (i.e., the MDGs or the SDGs) and, by extension, formally accepting the relevancy-legitimacy of the social problems linked to these goals.

Some development scholars have assumed a critical stance against this adoption of the institutional agenda at all levels (e.g., Wright, 2012; Weber, 2014; 2015; 2017). They have argued multiple reasons – which I have introduced in the first chapter of this thesis (see sections 1.2 and 1.5) – but essentially, these critical scholars' main point is that development has caused underdevelopment because it created and has sustained the asymmetries that hold back the Global South (Rist, 2019). Whether or not we agree with this critique, it informed the formulation of some broad propositions for my investigation, for instance, to identify and critically examine the current mechanisms through which the institutional agenda reaches the meso and micro levels. This was investigated to develop a view of the consequences of this agenda-setting process (e.g., asymmetries, tensions and paradoxes impacting the effectiveness of development action).

The above overarching research proposition and other more specific ones (see section 1.4) were pursued considering that agenda-setting is conceptualised as a structuring and definitional activity (Elder and Cobb, 1984; Rochefort and Cobb, 1995; Rochefort, 2016; Pawluch, 2019). In other words, the agenda-setting process has structuring-organising and rhetorical dimensions. So, by extension, adopting an agenda is expected to shape how meso and micro-level actors communicate about and organise their development plans and actions (e.g., agenda-setting and intervention activities). In light of the latter,

following a multi-level approach to the study of the interplay agenda setting-organisation, I also examined how NPOs in CDRs problematise, form goals and organise to achieve their aims. This required the identification and analysis of the outcomes of these two processes. I also searched for evidence of the origin and source of the NPOs' problems and goals (e.g., institutional and meso-level agendas).

Decision-making, organising and communication constitute each other (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, 2012; Staber, 2013). So, in line with this premise, I examine the rhetorical dimension of the interplay agenda setting-organising by looking for the presence of distinctive frames, frames linking specific situations at micro-level to the field's logics. Ascertaining the use of frames by development actors would aid in evidencing if and how institutional thinking – its reasons and arguments – shapes micro-level activity. In the following sections, I introduce additional details on how the above research propositions or objectives were pursued through a specific research design and methods for gathering information and its analysis. However, before the latter is covered, it is essential first to introduce the ontological and epistemological views that informed my approach to the investigation.

3.2 My ontological and epistemological assumptions

Constructionism guided my investigation (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). By constructionism, I mean the ontological stance that foregrounds the social processes that construct sociality, the latter being the organised forms of human interaction and its attendant activities. Key to this view is the distinction between constitution and construction. The former notion informs constructivism, which is a psychological and cognitive orientation, while the latter concept informs constructionism. 'Constitution

refers to those processes in which phenomena are processed by consciousness and analysed by phenomenology' (Knoblauch and Wilke, 2016, p. 64). Constructionism does not overlook the role of consciousness in the construction of sociality; however, it emphasises the social dimension of construction, which refers to the production of social structures using interactive collective action. So, in line with the constructionist stance, I have sought to understand how the co-labour of individuals or the disruption of collaboration impacted the processes that concern my investigation (i.e., agenda-setting and organising). Also, in line with constructionism, individuals are constituted by communication, and hence their actions (Shotter, 1993; Velody and Williams, 1998; Knoblauch, 2013; Knoblauch and Wilke, 2016), meaning that grasping a complete understanding of how my study participants set agendas and organise interventions requires examining how they communicate about these processes. Below, I have explained how the communication phenomenon is essential to my investigation.

It is also important to note that my ontological stance does not negate the existence of an external reality to individuals and their social constructions, often called objective reality (Bryman, 2004, p. 16). So, what definition of objective reality informed my investigation? Apart from reified forms, anything independent from human-made representations, like nature, belongs to the realm of objective reality (Searle, 1996, pp. 192-193). Objective reality sits alongside social constructions, interacting with and shaping them (Hazelrigg, 1986). Some scholars include in their definitions of objective reality the social constructions that have been reified, such as organisations (e.g., Bryman, 2004, p.16). This is the case because individuals grant those reifications the power to shape-structure them, making the study of this interaction – reification-humans – critical to understanding social processes (Scott, 1995, pp. 201-218).

The practical implications of this dual way of thinking are that agendas are treated in my investigation as social constructs and structuring agents; the same applies to CDRs. Regarding the causal relationship between social conditions and problems, the former are treated in this thesis as external-objective realities while the latter are seen as social constructions-representations; this aligns with the influential views reviewed in Chapter 2. This hybrid posture, constructionist-objectivist, which is also adopted by some scholars (e.g., Hazelrigg, 1986; Knoblauch and Wilke, 2016; Merleau-Ponty, 2018), circumvents the unresolved and long-lasting debates within different fields regarding the primacy of representation-social construction over objective-empirical reality and vice-versa (Searle, 1996).

The epistemological stance of interpretivism also informed my investigation. So, in line with the interpretivist aim of understanding the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2004, p.14), one phenomenon became vital to my study: meaning creation – through the 'moments' of sense-giving, sense-breaking and sense-making (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1995; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Gilstrap et al. 2016; Giuliani, 2016). Sense-giving and sense-breaking are treated here as moments of communication. In section 3.5, I explain how these moments were operationalised.

Consistent with the ontological and epistemological assumptions introduced above, my investigation first adopted an inductive approach underpinned by a qualitative research strategy that used unstructured interviews to establish what was relevant to the subjects planning development interventions (Bryman, 2004, p. 20). However, hypotheses or strong assumptions did not guide my initial contact with the participants but sensitising concepts (Blumer, 1954; Bowen, 2006). Those sensitising concepts were collaboration, publics, relationships, problem domains, resource dependency, structure, discourse and

organising. Accordingly, the initial aim of my investigation was to examine the organising that takes within collaborative domains formed by development partners. This research arose from a review of PR's paradigmatic assumptions, relational theory and some ideas on collaborative relationships from public administration and development scholarship (see section 1.3). In a nutshell, the knowledge mentioned above and the aim were the tools I took to the field to identify the organising and collaborative relationships relevant to my investigation.

However, because I undertook my fieldwork informed by sensitising concepts and following an inductive approach, I was able to establish that agenda-setting is a structuring factor shaping organising and its outcomes (i.e., CDRs). Based on that realisation and with a better idea of the vital role of agenda-setting and its interplay with the organising of development, I formulated specific lines of enquiry. Simply put, I sometimes took a deductive approach to confirm specific agenda-setting assumptions, and I only hypothesised after the analysis was concluded. I allowed existing theorisation to open my eyes to agenda-setting aspects worth re-examining. In the following sections, I explain what research methods were used to establish the interplay agenda setting-organisation. However, before I cover the latter, it is vital to elaborate on how the combination of inductive and deductive approaches shaped the course of my investigation. In other words, in the following subsection, I explain what happened and when it happened from the moment I started to formulate my research design. This account is complemented by a diagram concerning the information collection and coding phases introduced in section 3.6.

3.2.1 On how my investigation unfolded

Securing access to cases in Cali, Colombia, started in earnest in April 2017. At that point, my sensitising concepts were organisation, collaboration, publics, resource dependence, structure, discourse and relationships, as the main aim of the investigation was to study the organising carried out by collaborative development relationships (CDRs). Of all the local NPOs in CDRs with longstanding programmes that could be studied using the research design I had in mind – around 10 – only four agreed to consider my request for access to participants and documentation. In May 2018, after receiving a favourable ethical opinion from the faculty's ethics committee, I sought confirmation from these four NPOs that the necessary access would be granted, including their partners' participation (e.g., funding organisations) in my investigation. One of these local NPOs withdrew its preliminary approval of access due to workload issues that limited its staff's time to liaise with me. The NPO explained that its programmes were in rural areas outside Cali, and coordinating my access to those communities would be time-consuming. Another NPO granted access to only two senior members of its team. These individuals could not meet for an interview during my first trip to Cali in July-August 2018. Later, in 2019, I interviewed them face to face to confirm the generalisability of my findings (e.g., logics and frames across Cali's third sector).

During my first visit to the field in the summer of 2018, I interviewed participants and collected documents concerning two CDRs running programmes on gender equality, income generation and violence against children. Access to these two CDRs' information was formally granted and consistently given until 2020; hence, these CDRs became cases 2 and 3. The information provided by these cases in 2018 enabled the formulation of my initial codes. Further details on the nature of the cases are provided in section 3.3.

Also, the inductive nature of my fieldwork in 2018 revealed that problematisation and goal formation shaped the CDRs under study and their development activities. This finding, confirmed by a second round of unstructured interviews, led to refining the initial codes and adjusting my research design. It also revealed the need to review problematisation and goal-formation literature. Consequently, before the initial fieldwork (July-August 2018), the only aim of my investigation was to study organising within CDRs and the presumed variables interacting with these domains (i.e., collaboration, publics, relationships, problem domains, resource dependency, structure, discourse and organising). That ceased to be the case in December 2018, when the reviews of different bodies of work (e.g., public policy, sociology, politics, management and development) enabled me to link the phenomena of problematisation and goal formation to agenda-setting. Subsequently, the study of the interaction agenda-setting and organising within CDRs became the overarching aim of my investigation.

From December 2018 onwards, I started gathering information regarding micro and meso-level agenda-setting in Colombia. For instance, I collected national and municipal development plans online. I also secured the gatekeeping support of a former university peer, a public policy scholar based in Bogotá. He introduced me to policy scholars based in Cali and development experts working for the city's planning authority, who became formal participants in my study. By the time I arrived in Cali in July 2019, I was ready to collect information from the participants in a more focused way through semi-structured interviews (see Appendixes 2 and 3). So, from January 2019, my investigation adopted a more deductive approach to collecting information. For instance, the triangulation of information from semi-structured interviews and documents led to key meso-level findings, such as municipal hybrid agendas for development. Also, the continuous refinement of conceptual coding and the triangulation of the same sources covering the

micro-level revealed the tensions, asymmetries, frames and logics shaping the interplay agenda setting-organising within CDRs.

After this second visit to the field (July to August 2019), I continued triangulating the different sources of information and reexamining the coding to identify gaps and potential additional findings (e.g., rhetorical space and formal components of paradoxes). In 2020, I carried on interviewing the participants and expanding my understanding of organising development interventions and agenda-setting by reading more specific literature and documents created by the Colombian Department for National Planning. However, the COVID-19 pandemic – officially declared by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in March 2020 – reduced my contact with the participants and hence the opportunity to request more documents, as the organisations involved faced an uncertain future due to staff shortages, deaths, reduced activity in the communities and therefore limited disbursement of funding. The pandemic also affected me personally, impacting my ability to continue the investigation. In any case, I worked on the investigation until its submission in December 2023.

3.3 The research design

Before selecting a research design, I established the availability, quantity and quality of potentially relevant information to my study. For example, the Colombian national and municipal planning authorities' websites provide a fair amount of information vital to analysing the interaction macro-meso agendas. Also, in preliminary conversations with some local NPOs, I was given assurances of access to potential interviewees for as long as it was necessary and provided with documentary evidence in the form of printed

reports, which gave me enough confidence that my aim of studying the interplay micro-level agenda setting and organising was feasible.

So, based on my initial assessment of the sources of information, I adopted a loose longitudinal design that does not require collecting information at scheduled points in time. My study incorporates elements of a longitudinal design (Bryman, 2004, p. 48), as I consistently gathered information in the years 2018 and 2019 to form a view on the evolution of agendas and concomitant organising activities concerning the implementation and focal points of development programmes during a particular period (i.e., 2012-2019).

Also, considering the need to conduct a multi-level analysis, I identified three potential cases: two micro-level cases and one meso-level case. Following Yin's typology (2018, chapter 2)[49], a multiple-case design was adopted (i.e., 'type 4') (see diagram below). The research site of my investigation is Colombia, specifically the city of Cali. Within these two socio-economic contexts, the following five units of analysis were studied: the municipal agenda for development (Case 1), the problem definition and concomitant organising concerning one specific development programme (i.e., Opportunities – OP) (Case 2), and the goal formation and its organising for another development programme (i.e., Champions of peace and co-existence – CPC) (Case 3).

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[49] This e-book does not have discernible pagination.

Context-Colombia
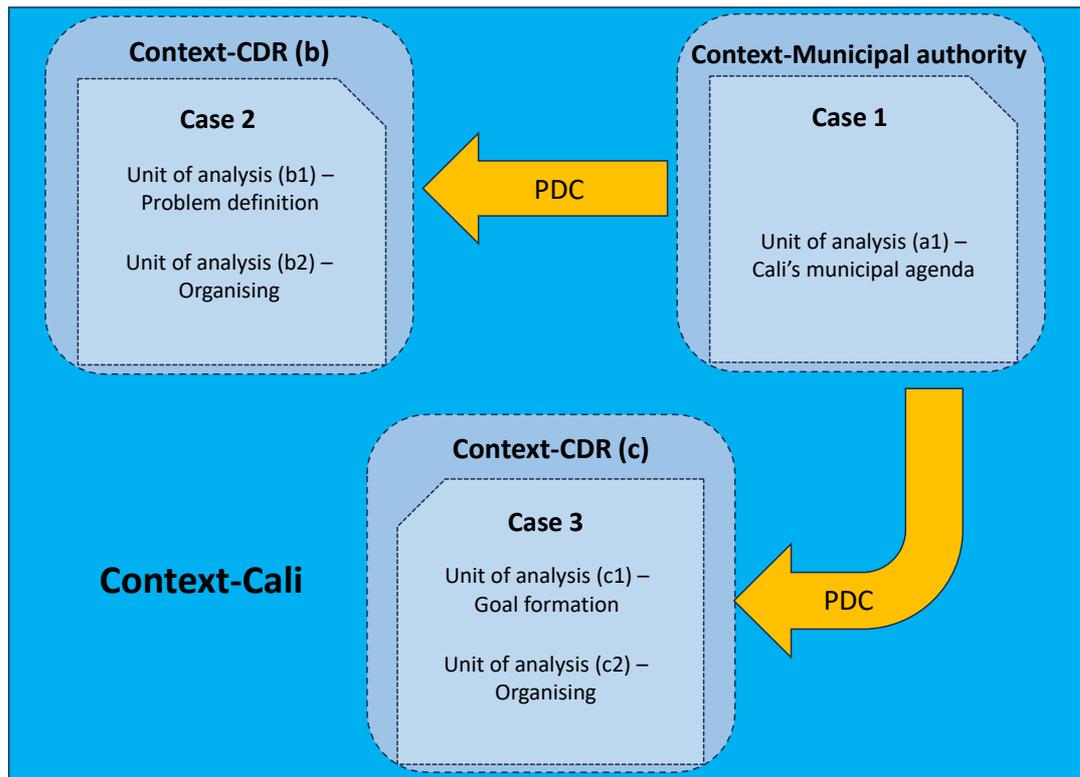
The case concerning the adoption of the institutional agenda at meso-level, Case 1, has one primary outcome: Cali's Municipal Development Plan (MDP). A MDP is a development strategy for a city proposed by an elected mayor in conjunction with the national planning authority of the country – i.e., Colombia's National Department for Planning (DNP) (WHO 2020; UK Government 2022). My investigation examined two distinctive MDPs (2012-2015 and 2016-2019) because they were implemented during the same period that concerns the analysis of cases 2 and 3 (2012 to 2019). In other words, all the cases share the same temporal boundary. This enabled the examination of two potential directions of causation illustrated in the diagram above (i.e., PDC). Also, the alignment of the policies advanced by the two mayors who proposed the MDPs under study led to one common outcome: a hybrid agenda for development. In Chapter 4 (section 4.4), I explain this phenomenon's roots and implications. It is important to note

that while I have acknowledged the municipal authority's organisational context, my investigation did not examine it formally. Studying the agenda-setting practices of the municipal authority was also beyond the scope of my inquiry.

The two micro-level cases (2 and 3) have three identifiable features in common: a collaborative development relationship (CDR), an agenda for development or intervention, and a programme (i.e., OP and CPC). Regarding the first feature, the presence of a CDR was considered a prerequisite to this study due to my interest in understanding the types of organising that take place beyond organisational boundaries. The latter concerns the organising shared or collaboratively undertaken by different third-sector partner organisations. About the nature of the CDRs examined, they were unstable because their partners changed throughout the period they were studied (2012-2019). These changes in the CDRs' membership altered their dynamics – e.g., the balance of power – leading to impasses concerning the focal point of the agendas for intervention and the ways of pursuing them. As explained in section 3.5, identifying impasses or instances of conflict served a particular methodological purpose, critical to collecting information from the participants.

Also, one of the relevant research propositions concerning CDRs, based on existing studies (see section 1.3), was the expectation that CDRs, particularly their organising, might be shaped by structuring and rhetorical factors (i.e., legitimacy, resource dependence, autonomy and frames). How this manifested in the cases I examined will be described in Chapters 5 and 6. Furthermore, the interaction of these factors and their impact on the CDRs' organising led to identifiable tensions. These tensions reflect the choices the partners in the CDRs faced (e.g., to gain autonomy or be financially stable).

In turn, the attempts to address these tensions impacted the quality of the development interventions (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

As for the micro-level agendas examined, they were composites, the unstable amalgamation of different agendas. This is the case because each participant NPO, like other third-sector organisations I came across in Cali, has an overarching agenda reflecting the social problems and goals of interest to that NPO. So, an NPO's agenda, which I have called 'organisational agenda', dictates what problems and goals the NPO sees as relevant to tackle and pursue through a development programme. The sources that informed the construction of these organisational agendas are described in Chapters 5 and 6. So, what happens to these organisational agendas when NPOs form a CDR? Are they relevant to the programme that concerns the CDR? According to the analysis of my findings, the partners in the CDR push for the adoption of their organisational agendas, so the intervention reflects their social problems and goals. The negotiation of this integration-adoption invariably led to impasses between the partners and problematic agreements or solutions, whose implications for development took the form of paradoxes. These paradoxes are also introduced in Chapters 5 and 6, and one of them is further discussed in Chapter 7 (i.e., the dislocation paradox).

Regarding the third common feature of my cases, a development programme or intervention, each tackled a distinctive social problem but not consistently throughout the period under examination (2012-2019). For instance, CPC started as a series of educational-informative lectures about child abuse; however, throughout the years and due to the changing expectations of different partners, it mutated into a multiyear programme tackling bullying in schools. Indeed, the focus on children remained, but the problem (breach of their rights or their safety) and the means to tackle the problem

changed. These specifics do not seem meaningful, but once the implications of these seemingly slight changes are scrutinised, it becomes clear that details matter regarding problem definition and goal formation.

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I provide more information about the cases. For instance, I trace the origins of the changes in focal points and goals of the micro-level programmes to reveal the causal links between these changes and macro and meso-level agenda setting. At the same time, I illustrate how resource dependence, autonomy, legitimacy, and framing interact to shape each case. This is critical because, as explained above, these factors are multi-level too.

3.4 Socio-economic context, the research site or problem space

Policymakers should identify a problem's constraints and simulate its space; simply put, policymakers should identify the causes of the problem and establish how a problem looks in the present, how it should look while it is being resolved and how things should be once the problem has been eradicated or mitigated (Taylor 1975; Newell 1979; Smith 1988; 1989; Dunn 2012; Toader 2018). Considering these aspects of problematisation and goal formation, I provide socioeconomic information about Colombia in this section, which concerns the different states of the problem space, constraints and goals relevant to my investigation.

In 2005, Colombia formalised its commitment to pursuing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The country's choice to use the eight MDGs as parameters for achieving development happened five years after these goals were agreed by all the United Nations member states, including Colombia (UN, General Assembly, 2000). The nation's

roadmap to attain the MDGs was formulated by *The National Council for Economic and Social Policy* (in Spanish, Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social – CONPES) with the aid of the National Department for Planning (DNP). The CONPES is Colombia's highest national development committee, and its development approach and strategies are made public through 'CONPES documents' (DNP 2023).

In the introduction of the CONPES document 91, there is a description of the initial state of development of the country, which informed the formulation of the nation's aims and strategies to achieve the MDGs by the year 2015 (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2005). That description explains that the CONPES took stock of the country's situation since the 1990s based on three parameters set by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): GDP, life expectancy and education (2005, p. 1-8). In sum, the country was not where it should be because the financial crisis of the late 1990s impacted the national GDP and, hence, the investment in education. As for life expectancy, it improved, but not for men due to the internal armed conflict, whose origins could be traced to violent clashes between the nascent political parties vying for power in the late 1940s (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2005, p. 1). After and since the 1960s, these clashes changed into a persistent internal war kept alive by the Cold War ideologies and the drivers that concern drug trafficking and its profits. The actors of that conflict have morphed too, on one side, the government of the time and on the other, leftist guerrillas and/or the far-right paramilitary groups, fighting each other for control of the national territory.

To put in perspective the combined negative impact of the financial crisis and armed conflict on the nation's plans for development, according to the UNDP's Human Development Report, in the 1990s, Colombia was a High Human Development Country

(HDI 0.801) (United Nations, 1990, p. 185), classed as middle-income (GNP per capita $ 500 to $ 6000) (p. 187) and between the top 15 countries with 'democratic human development' (p. 16). By 2005, Colombia had lost all its previous lustre, struggling as a 'Medium Human Development' nation (HDI 0.785) (UNDP, 2005, p. 220).

The Colombian governments of the 21st century have engaged consistently with the institutional agendas advanced by the UN and its different agencies. At the time of writing, according to the latest Human Development Report, Colombia is a High Human Development country (HDI 0.752), ranked 88 out of 191 nations, but still not a 'Very high human development' nation, with a HDI of 0.800 or above (e.g., Chile is a Very high human development country with a HDI of 0.855). However, for those unfamiliar with the specifics of the HDI and its historical adjustments or those who understand that indexes and ranks fail to capture the granularity and complexity of the situation of the ground, what is the meaning of all the above?

The following table details how Colombia agreed to follow the MDGs – marking the initial state that concerns this investigation – and how it decided to pursue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Some might see the latter as a new initial state. The table also shows how the country reached the intermediary states of 2011 and 2015, the points at which the nation reported its progress, and the commitments it made on its way to the goal state, the alleged state of resolution (2030). There is no attempt to cover all the MDGs and SDGs on the table, only those tackled at the micro-level by cases 2 and 3. Also, while the information in this table informed the analysis of the findings – particularly those about case 1 – I also used this information to reflect on the methodological implications of attempting to study Colombia's problem space.

Social Problem	MDGs (1990)(§)	Initial state (1990)(+)	CONPES 91(2005)	Intermediary state (2011) (*)	Intermediary state (2015) (¢)	SDGs (2015) (•)	CONPES 3918 (2018)
Poverty	Target. A: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than $1.25 daily. Target 1. C: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.	2.8% of the total population has a daily income of less than $1.25. 53.8% of the total population is classed as poor. 20.4% of the total population suffers from extreme poverty. 10% of all children under five years old suffer malnutrition. 17% of the population consumes less than the minimum caloric/energy intake required.	Decrease from 2.8% to 1.5% of the total population with a daily income of less than $1. Decrease from 10% to 3% all children under five years old suffering malnutrition. Decrease from 17% to 7.5% of the total population the people who consume less than the minimum caloric/energy intake required.	6.5% of the total population has a daily income of less than $1.25. In 1990, 2.8% of the total population had a daily income of less than $1.25. 45.50% of the total population is classed as poor. In 1990, 53.8% were classed as poor. 16.4% of the total population suffers from extreme poverty. In 1990, 20.4% were classed as extremely poor. These new figures correspond to 2009, not 2011, the year of publication of the CONPES 140.	4.20% of the total population has a daily income of less than $1.25. In 2009, 6.5% of the total population had a daily income of less than $1.25. 27.80% of the total population is classed as poor. In 2009, 45.50% were classed as poor. 7.9% of the total population suffers from extreme poverty. In 2009, 16.4% were classed as extremely poor. 3.7% of all children under five years old suffer from malnutrition – a drop from a new estimated rate for 1990 of 8.60%, not the original 10%. 7.68% of the population consumes less than the minimum caloric/energy intake required – a drop from a new estimated rate for 1990 of 8.8%, not the original 17%.	Target 1.1. By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for everyone everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 daily. Target 1.2. By 2030, reduce at least half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.	End of poverty (SDG 1). Baseline (2015) 20.2%. Goal for 2018: 17.8%. Goal for 2030: 8.4%. Zero Hunger (SDG 2). Baseline (2015) 6.8%. Goal for 2018: 6.5%. Goal for 2030: 5.0%.
Gender inequality	Target 3. A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.	The CONPES, in its report, did not offer information about this problem. However, it admits that 'the way the country has been monitoring and appraising this problem remains deficient' (2005, p. 15).	The CONPES argues that 'in Colombia, there is no significant gender disparity concerning attendance to school' (2005, p. 15). The country proposes instead to improve the quality of the methods to monitor and assess gender equality.	The unemployment rate of women in 1996 was 6.8%, and in 2010, it was 6.6%. The salary gap between genders in 1996 was 23.50%, and in 2010 was 20%.	The unemployment rate of women in 2015 was 5.1%, a drop from 6.6% in 2010. The salary gap between genders in 2015 was 20.4%, while in 2010, it was 20%. In 2015, of the total number of people working for the state as a director, 43.5% were women.	Target 5.5. Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.	National benchmark, percentage of women in directorship positions within the state. Baseline (2015) 43.5%. Goal for 2018: 44.5%. Goal for 2030: 50%.

Unemployment							
			Concerning violence against women, the country proposes to establish through studies the magnitude and characteristics of this problem at least every five years. Also, the health system will be used to monitor this problem. Concerning participation in decision-making. Women's involvement should increase above 30% in all areas of public administration.	Concerning participation in decision-making, the number of women elected to the National Congress increased from around 8% in the 1990s to around 15% between the years 2010 to 2014. The proportion of women hired by the government and judiciary increase from 35% in the year 2006 to 39% in 2009.			
Unemployment	Target 1.B: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people.	The annual average unemployment rate has dropped from 15.7% in 2002 to 13.6% in 2004, according to the CONPES 91 (2005, p. 4). According to the Economic Council of Latin America (ECLAC), Colombia's unemployment rate for the year 1990 was 9.7% (Ros, 2005). According to the Colombia central bank during the years 1990 and 1997, the unemployment rate fluctuated between 6% and 11.5% (Arango and Posada, 2001).	Concerning the job market. To monitor the quality of work and payment conditions for women. The CONPES did not set up a specific goal for men.	In 2010, the percentage of unemployed people was 11.8%; a drop from 16.7% in 2002 but an increase from 1990s, when the average unemployment rate for the decade fluctuated between 11% ad 6%.	In 2015, the percentage of unemployed people was 8.9%, a drop from 11.8%; in 2010 but still between the boundaries of the 1990s, when the average unemployment rate for the decade fluctuated between 11% ad 6%.	Target 8.5. By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.	National benchmark, percentage of the population in employment. Baseline (2015) 50.8%. Goal for 2018: 52%. Goal for 2030: 60%.

| Child abuse | There was no specific MDG covering child abuse. This does not mean that the UN did not have aims and objectives regarding this problem at the time. Child abuse in the context of the MDGs is covered by focusing on other dimensions of the problem, such as reducing child mortality (Goal number 4). Also, 'The Convention on the Rights of the Child', adopted (UN 1989), has framed the work of the UNICEF since its inception. | The CONPES 91 did not offer a diagnosis of child abuse in the country.

According to UNICEF, in the year 2000, 68,585 cases of intrafamily violence were reported, from this number 10,900 were against children (2002, p. 35). The UNICEF report is comprehensive and covers over forms of violence against children which are not linked to this study. | To formulate strategies to protect women and children from intrafamily violence. | The CONPES 140 did not elaborate on child abuse specifically, only on intrafamily violence against women. | The CONPES 3918 did not offer a record of the attainment of the MDG related to child abuse.

According to the Colombian Institute for Family Wellbeing (ICBF), in the year 2012, 77,780 claims of violence against children were reported, however, only 56,216 became formal cases, from which 11,865 triggered an administrative process of restitution of the victims' rights. (ICBF 2013).

The law 1098 of 2006, establishes the responsibilities of the state regarding the protection of children, however its specific aims at meso and micro level are determined by ICBF working in conjunction with different administrative, judicial and policing entities, each of which has monitoring, and implementation aims. In other words, and according to Chapter 2, articles 208 to 214, the goals on the matter of children protection might come from the ICBF but establishing attainment seems an unfeasible task (Colombian Congress, 2006). | Target 16.2. End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children | Annex D of the CONPES 3918, does not explain how the SDG 16.2 will be operationalised/appraised and reported on (see pages 110 to 113).

According to the ICBF, the total number of formal cases of violence against children dropped every year since 2012. From 56,216 to 39,840 in 2019. The total numbers of cases for the same period was 388,764. During the same period the total number of administrative processes that led to the restitution of the rights of the victims was 143,662. Meaning that 37% of all cases were resolved by introducing measures to ensure the protection of the minors being abused (ICBF 2020). |

(+) Source: Departamento Nacional de Planeación (2005). (*) Source: Departamento Nacional de Planeación (2011). (¢) Source: Departamento Nacional de Planeación (2018). (§) Source: the United Nations, page number

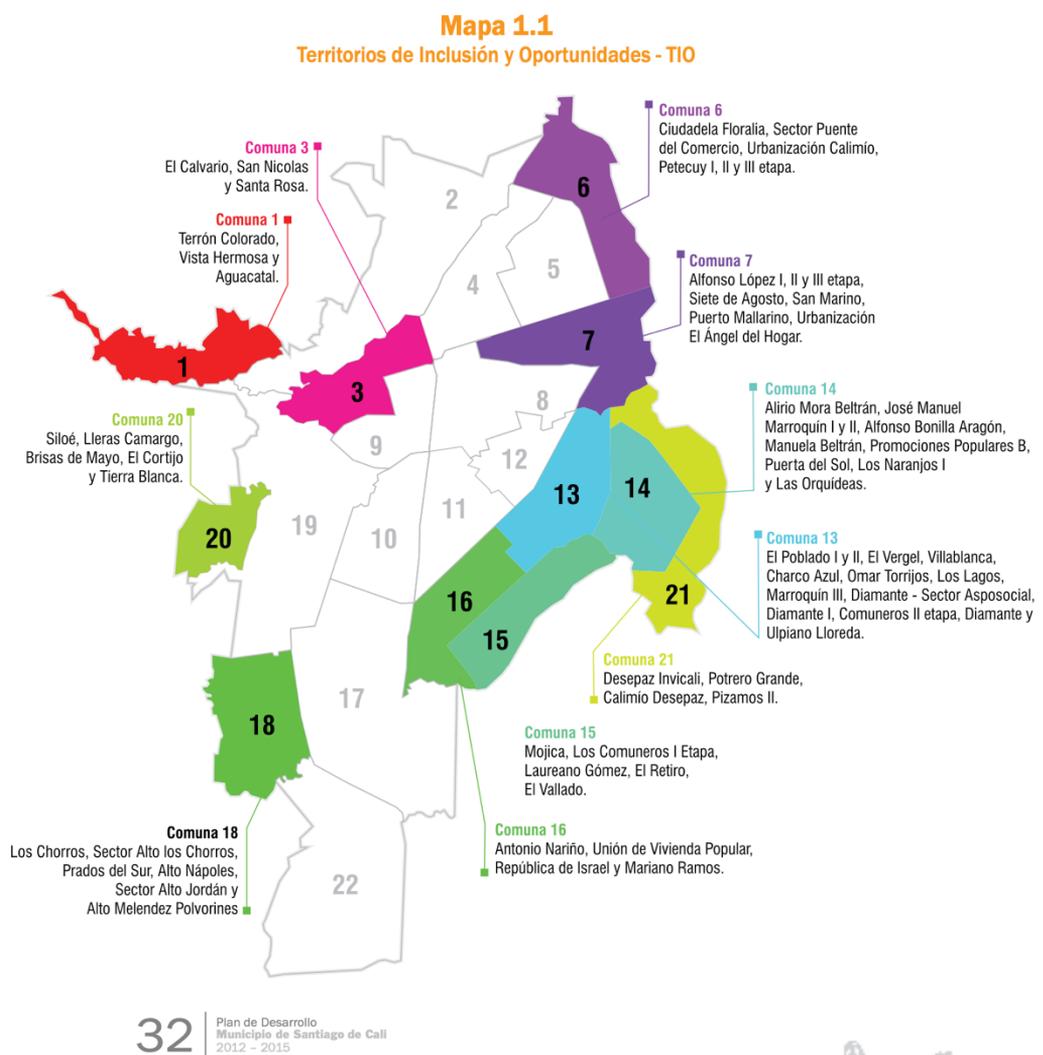(UN, 2023). (•) Source: the United Nations (UN, 2023b).

The table above substantiates the occurrence of the following: a) Different Colombian governments omitted some of the UN's targets for the MDGs and SDGs in the table, arguing these targets were not relevant to the nation's circumstances (e.g., school attendance by children of all genders is similar), b) Different Colombian governments diverted from the UN's recommended benchmarks, which are used to establish progress and attainment of the agreed targets (e.g., using the percentage of women in directorship positions to appraise the state of gender inequality), c) Different Colombian governments introduced alternative goals and targets in response to their exclusion or the secondary status given to them within the millennium and sustainable development agendas (e.g., The country liaise directly with the UNICEF to adopt the safe spaces approach to the protection of children, see Chapter 6), d) Different Colombian governments, failed to explain how some targets should be operationalised and appraised (e.g., SD target 16.2) and lastly, e) the CONPES acknowledged poor coordination and engagement by the different institutions and authorities to ensure the achievement of the goals – e.g., see child abuse and intermediary state (2015) (CONPES, 3918, pp. 25, 28).

Leaving aside the multidimensionality that characterises social problems and how problems are caused by specific-local conditions and factors (e.g., long-lasting internal conflict and its concomitant human displacement), the above list of choices makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to appraise Colombia's development efforts and attainment record and whether or not the nation meets the expectations of the different agendas involved. Consequently, my investigation adopted a light-touch approach concerning the assessment of progress and instead studied how the NPOs in CDRs define their problems and formulate goals. The latter micro-processes have been critically examined in light of existing conceptualisation.

Pursuing the above research objective involved asking the participants if and how they interpreted and used the official data concerning their chosen social problems. For instance, Cali's unemployment rate oscillated between 16.3% and 12.4% between 2012

and 2019 (Cali's Chamber of Commerce, 2023). For the same period, the cases of violence against children reached a peak of 2,624 in 2013, but they steadily decreased to 1,566 in 2019 (ICBF 2023). So, in line with the problematisation and goal formation parameters introduced above, this data should have informed the construction of the problem space of the programmes under study (OP and CPC). If that was not the case, then I asked why.

Another aspect of development intervention that shaped the construction of the problem space for the programmes under study was the novel concept of Territories of Inclusion and Opportunities (TIOs). The formulation of development interventions guided by TIOs was an approach created by the municipal administration of Rodrigo Guerrero Velasco, mayor of Cali, from 2012 to 2015. Simply put, TIOs are communities or communes[50] of the city of Cali, which are designated a priority in terms of intervention due to their severe underdevelopment. This designation (i.e., TIO)

Mapa 1.1
Territorios de Inclusión y Oportunidades - TIO

Comuna 3
El Calvario, San Nicolas y Santa Rosa.

Comuna 1
Terrón Colorado, Vista Hermosa y Aguacatal.

Comuna 6
Ciudadela Floralia, Sector Puente del Comercio, Urbanización Calimío, Petecuy I, II y III etapa.

Comuna 7
Alfonso López I, II y III etapa, Siete de Agosto, San Marino, Puerto Mallarino, Urbanización El Ángel del Hogar.

Comuna 14
Alirio Mora Beltrán, José Manuel Marroquín I y II, Alfonso Bonilla Aragón, Manuela Beltrán, Promociones Populares B, Puerta del Sol, Los Naranjos I y Las Orquídeas.

Comuna 20
Siloé, Lleras Camargo, Brisas de Mayo, El Cortijo y Tierra Blanca.

Comuna 13
El Poblado I y II, El Vergel, Villablanca, Charco Azul, Omar Torrijos, Los Lagos, Marroquín III, Diamante - Sector Asposocial, Diamante I, Comuneros II etapa, Diamante y Ulpiano Lloreda.

Comuna 21
Desepaz Invicali, Potrero Grande, Calimío Desepaz, Pizamos II.

Comuna 15
Mojica, Los Comuneros I Etapa, Laureano Gómez, El Retiro, El Vallado.

Comuna 18
Los Chorros, Sector Alto los Chorros, Prados del Sur, Alto Nápoles, Sector Alto Jordán y Alto Melendez Polvorines

Comuna 16
Antonio Nariño, Unión de Vivienda Popular, República de Israel y Mariano Ramos.

32 | Plan de Desarrollo Municipio de Santiago de Cali 2012 – 2015

[50] In Spanish, the term is 'comuna', as shown on the maps.

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arises from a combination of negative socio-economic indicators or parameters. Velasco's administration used the following parameters to identify TIOs: poor public services, overcrowding, poor housing, truancy and high intra-family economic dependence. The map above shows Cali's first 11 TIOs (Alcaldía de Cali, 2012, p.32).

Mapa 2
Territorios de Inclusión y Oportunidades TIO - Suelo Urbano
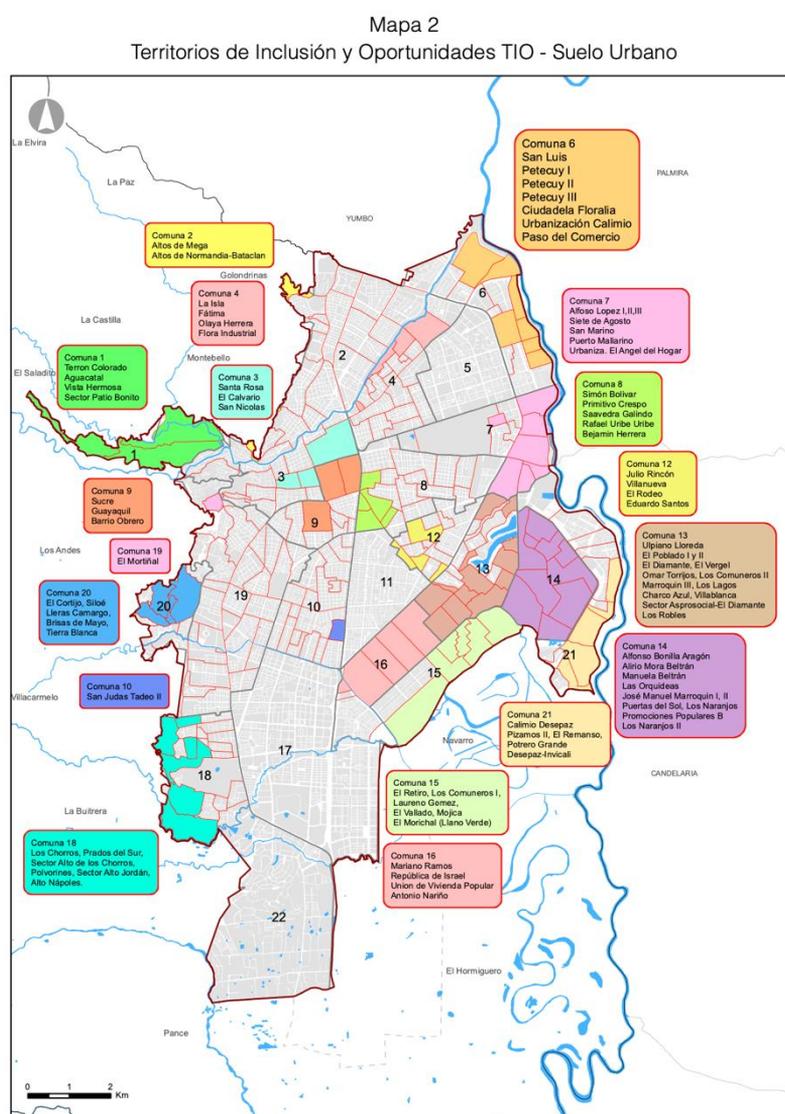
The following municipal administration (2016-2019), led by Maurice Armitage Cadavid, used the following parameters for the designation of TIOs: high rate of homicides, high rate of infant mortality, high rate of malnutrition, an increased number of cases of dengue, chikungunya and zika, high rate of truancy, a high number of welfare claimants, limited access to sports, cultural and environmental equipment, high rate of unemployment, an increased number of victims of the internal arm conflict and high number of former combatants integrating to civil life (Alcaldía de Cali, 2016, p. 26). The map above shows the expansion of the number of TIOs initially proposed by the previous municipal administration (Alcaldía de Cali, 2016, p. 29).

To summarise, TIOs are the specific socio-economic contexts within Cali that concern the three cases I examined. Also, the programmes under study (OP and CPD) were expected to intervene any of these TIOs to tackle the social problems identified by the municipal authorities in the MDPs. So, a deviation from that expectation could be attributed to the interaction of the programmes in question with non-local agendas. The specific details concerning the programmes under study and the nature of the interplay of agendas shaping micro-level interventions are introduced in Chapters 5 and 6. Also, the alignment of the CONPES' and SDGs' agendas with Cali's MDPs is discussed in Chapter 4.

3.5 The nature of information collected and operationalisation

The multiple-case design reflects my interest in studying the problematisation of social conditions, the formation of goals and the attendant organising action. However, it is vital to make clear that I did not examine these processes as they unfold, which would have required becoming an observer. Instead, I examined the pre-existing outcomes of problematisation, goal design and organising. This required establishing if and how the participant NPOs agreed that some social problems, goals and organising activities were relevant to all the partners in a CDR. The agreement and disagreement on these matters and the resulting implications were also examined in light of the assumptions and propositions introduced in this chapter and other sections of this thesis.

Problem definition and goal formation have a structuring and rhetorical dimension. I studied this rhetorical dimension by examining the meaning-making manoeuvres used by the participants (e.g., sense-breaking and framing). All the above, except Cali's municipal authorities' definitional and organising activities, were considered when studying the construction of meso and micro agendas.

Establishing how the researcher identifies and appraises the phenomena to be analysed is called operationalisation (Bryman, 2004, p. 66). For instance, for my investigation,

organising was identified in the corpus of information gathered as direct or indirect references to practices and decisions that enable collaborative action and the implementation of a development programme. Problem definition was identified in the corpus of information collected as direct and indirect references to practices and decisions that shape the process of problematising social conditions. The same applies to goal formation.

The operationalisation of sense-making, sense-giving, sense-breaking and framing requires a brief introduction of these concepts as they were not defined in the previous chapters. According to Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 'Sensemaking involves the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalise what people are doing. Viewed as a significant process of organising, sensemaking unfolds as a sequence in which people (..) engage ongoing circumstances from which they extract cues and make plausible sense retrospectively while enacting more or less order into those ongoing circumstances. Stated more compactly and more colourfully, "Sensemaking is a way station on the road to a consensually constructed, coordinated system of action" (Taylor and Van Every 2000, p. 275)' (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005, p. 409). This definition links sense-making with collaborative organising, which led to the operationalisation of sense-making as direct or indirect references to trying to understand organising practices and decisions – including problematisation and goal formation – by making assumptions and deriving implications about the choices made by partners in the CDR.

'According to Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), sensegiving is future-oriented, and it occurs when managers try to communicate what an organisational change means to other stakeholders, such as employees and investors. Weick himself also endorses this refinement of SP [the sensemaking perspective], insofar as sensegiving is seen as a way to influence sensemaking' (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2015, p. S23). In light of the latter, I identified sense-giving within the corpus of evidence gathered as direct or indirect references to the act of persuasion, characterised by attempts to convince

partners in a CDR to favour some choices and decisions over others (e.g., this problem or goal is more suitable than the current one). While the above definition of sense-giving refers to influencing, I used the term persuasion in my operationalisation to indicate that I sought to identify in the information collected those influencing acts that used reason instead of manipulative manoeuvres (Roloff and Miller, 1980; Dillard and Pfau, 2002; Dillard and Shen, 2013). The distinction between manipulation and persuasion is problematic, hence my focus on frames.

The view of sense-giving as a persuasive act, which aligns with existing theorisation on this phenomenon (e.g., Maitlis and Christianson, 2014), opened my eyes to the importance of studying the intersection sense-giving-framing (Fiss and Hirsch, 2005), which I pursued by focusing on the identification of frames. The approach I followed to identify frames within sense-making processes (i.e., sense-giving and sense-breaking) was influenced by the work of Kaplan (2008). The definitions of frames proposed by policy, communication and organisational studies scholars informed the operationalisation of the frames perceived as relevant to the cases under examination (i.e., Schön and Rein, 1994; Reese, 2007; Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, 2012; Cornelissen and Werner, 2014). Hence, the frames I identified in the corpus of evidence were as follows:

Situational frames are lines of reasoning or explanations that result from synthesising similar views of a new development in the organisational environment. Situational frames provide a convincing answer to the question: what is happening here? In doing so, they put forward a rhetorical attempt to persuade organisational actors to embrace a particular proposition, solution or understanding of the emerging situation (Goffman, 1986; Dewulf et al., 2009; Cornelissen and Werner, 2014). *Contextual frames* are interpretations of agreed organisational rules, norms, and values, which structure individuals' interactions beyond a particular situation or event (Kaplan, 2008; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). *Logics* transcend the organisational domains. They are discourses that structure by influencing any collaborative action or activity (e.g.,

problem definition). *Logics* are relayed by sector and industry narratives, which seek to uniform and standardise practices across the field (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, 2012; Ansari, Wijen, and Gray, 2013).

From the vast range of definitions of framing, the following by Entman was used to operationalise framing: 'To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. Typically, frames diagnose, evaluate, and prescribe' (Entman, 1993, p. 52). So, framing was identified in the corpus of evidence gathered as the direct or indirect references to attempts by participants to use salience, selection, causal interpretation and moral evaluation to position a particular social problem and its solution in the form of a goal. These manoeuvres also apply to the positioning of other organising choices.

Lastly, 'The concept of sensebreaking (or sense-unmaking) highlights the ways organisational members must break down sense in order to give sense (Almqvist et al., 2011). It involves the "destruction or breaking down of meaning" (Pratt, 2000, p. 464). Sensebreaking occurs when a person's process of sensemaking is disrupted by contradictory evidence (...). Sensebreaking actions take place in the form of questioning, reframing, and redirecting and it can lead to positive evolutionary or learning scenarios, or rather, to failures (Almqvist et al., 2011; Dervin, 1998; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Vlaar et al., 2008)' (Giuliani, 2016, p. 221). So, based on the latter, I operationalised sense-breaking as the direct or indirect references to attempts to challenge pre-existing arrangements – including the choice of a social problem and associated goal – through the re-framing and foregrounding of their limitations.

3.6 On the sources of information and methods to collect it

The two sources used to gather evidence for my investigation were written content (e.g., documents, reports, webpages) and participants. About the former, the following table introduces the key written content examined per case.

Document	Case	Source	Origin	Purpose
CONPES Documents (No 91, 140, 3918).	1	CONPES	Online	These official documents from Colombia's highest planning committee outline specific commitments and strategies to achieve the MDGs and SDGs.
Multiple studies and reports issued by Colombia's planning authority.	All	DNP	Online	These documents provide socio-economic context, figures, and specific information about the country's planning approach (e.g., National Plan for Development (2014-2018).
Legal documents.	All	Colombian Congress	Online	The legal documentation reviewed covers laws passed by the Colombian Congress, briefly introduced throughout the findings to explain the implications for decision-making concerning development initiatives or programmes.
Municipal Development Plans (2012-2015 and 2016-2019).	All	Cali's Mayoral Authority	Online	These documents were critical to establishing Cali's municipal authority approach to development and the nature of its agenda.
Multilateral development strategy documents.	All	The UN's agencies (e.g., UNDP, WHO, UNICEF)	Online	These documents provide specific information about each agency's approach, goals, and methods for various development areas (e.g., UNICEF's Safe and Healthy Environments).
Characterisation reports.	2	Cali's Mayoral Authority and local NPOs	Online	Characterisations are studies that gather information about the origin and nature of the problem faced by an intervention in a specific TIO. The information collected is presented as a report, providing a detailed description and analysis of the community's principal historical, cultural, and socio-economic developments.
Progress reports to funding partners.	2 & 3	The CCE and Kids Cali	Electronic documents	The CCE, the local NPO implementing the programme OP, provided four progress reports covering 2014-2019. The report for the first year of the programme was not made available. Kids Cali, the local NPO running the programme CPC, provided progress reports for 2015-2019. The reports for the period 2012-2014 were not made available.
NPOs' non-promotional publications, webpages, and other information in the public domain.	2 & 3	The CCE, Kids Cali, the DNF and the PSF	Hard copies and materials online	The CCE provided a book describing its intervention model. This model was studied to determine how it could have shaped the NPO's approach to its collaboration with other partners. Additionally, the web pages of the DNF, PSF, Kids Cali and CCE were reviewed to understand their operations better and verify the information provided by the participants.

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Other content not included in this table was referenced in the text and added to the references list.

As to how the relevant information was identified within the pool of written content, I used Inquiry-based reading (IBR) (Katan and Andreas Baarts, 2020). IBR entails cursory and in-depth reading to identify relevant information that contributes to answering research questions. Cursory reading is defined as scanning – an approach to analysing texts in which the eyes search for pertinent details – while researchers doing in-depth reading actively engage in a critical and creative dialogue that infers meaning based on the intent of content examined (2020, pp. 65-68). As postulated by Katan and Baarts (2020), I used IBR as a research method, which allowed me to derive meaningful evidence from all the texts provided by the NPOs and the official documents available online or published on webpages. I also used IBR to extract information from the interview transcripts. My IBR, as expected, was guided by my research questions, which enabled reflection on how pertinent these questions were.

Regarding the interviews (37) and participants (24), the table below provides additional details without breaching anonymity and confidentially protocols. All the names of people and organisations in this thesis are fictitious and do not resemble the real ones. For instance, the acronym 'CCE' or the name 'Kids Cali' do not resemble or are exact translations of the original appellations of these NPOs. Also, according to the Colombian taxing authority, in 2020, the number of NPOs in Cali created to support a particular cause or provide aid through programmes was 921 (DIAN, 2020). Therefore, references in the table to expertise or position in an organisation cannot aid in any meaningful way in identifying an individual.

Participant	Number of interviews	Years	Organisation or expertise	Contribution to case
1	2	2018 & 2019	The CCE, implementer, psychologist	2
2	1	2018	The DNF, representative for South America	2
3	1	2018	The CCE, implementer	2
4	3	2018 & 2019	The CCE, implementer, psychologist	2
5	3	2018 & 2019	The CCE, Director, management	2
6	1	2019	The CCE, team lead, quality management	2
7	1	2018	Kids Cali, team lead, communication	3
8	2	2018 & 2019	Kids Cali, Director, management	3
9	3	2018 & 2019	Kids Cali, team lead, psychology	3
10	2	2018 & 2019	Kids Cali, implementer, psychology	3
11	2	2018 & 2019	Kids Cali, implementer, psychology	3
12	3	2018 & 2019	Kids Cali, Gatekeeper	3
13	1	2019	AL (NPO), implementer	All cases
14	1	2019	AL (NPO), Director	All cases
15	1	2019	The PSF, Director, management	2
16	1	2019	The PSF, implementer, psychology	2
17	1	2019	The PSF, implementer, psychology	2
18	1	2019	Public policy expert/academic	1
19	1	2019	Public policy expert/academic	1
20	1	2019	Public policy expert/academic	1
21	1	2019	Public policy expert/academic	1
22	2	2019 & 2020	The DNP, Public policy planner	1
23	1	2019	ASH (NPO) Director, management	All cases
24	1	2019	WC (NPO) Director, Gatekeeper, management	3

I had conversations under 20 minutes long with individuals familiar with the cases I studied. These short conversations were not recorded. While these one-to-ones happened regularly, the individuals I talked to were unwilling to contribute formally to my investigation. These contributors were not listed above as participants but provided valuable information for my study.

Concerning my sampling approach, in sections 3.3 and 3.4, I indicated how I narrowed down the scope of my investigation from a larger population of cases and a sizeable pool of sources of information to manageable ones (e.g., the number of NPOs running interventions in Cali during the period of the investigation was 921) (DIAN, 2020). This reduction of the potential cases and sources of information is justified by the

sampling approach I followed, called 'relevance sampling' (Krippendorff, 2019, p. 122). Simply put, the main principle for selecting the sources of information and evidence I followed is their potential contribution to answering the research questions. Other scholars have called this approach 'purposive sampling' (Bryman, 2004, pp. 333-334; Flick, 2014, p. 175).

Two types of qualitative interviews – unstructured and semi-structured – were used to collect information. The unstructured interviews were carried out in the first stages of the investigation (2018). These interviews were used to establish if the initial assumptions – such as organising beyond the organisational context – and associated concepts (i.e., resource dependency, legitimacy, structure and discourse) were relevant to the processes and activities of the CDRs under study. I explained in subsection 1.4 why these ideas and concepts relate to my investigation.

A set of codes emerged from the first round of unstructured interviews. The accuracy of these initial codes was confirmed by a second round of unstructured interviews (see table of codes in section 3.7). This second round of unstructured interviews involved a reduced number of participants who, due to their extensive knowledge of the cases, were in a position to provide information that would enable the refinement of the initial set of codes[51]. This was the inductive phase of the investigation.

The deductive phase of the investigation started in earnest in 2019. So, when I returned to Cali in July of that year, I conducted semi-structured interviews to acquire more information on collaboration, publics, relationships, problem domains, resource dependency, structure, discourse and organising. Also, due to the refinement codes, I concluded that the phenomenon that mattered the most to the participants was agenda-setting, so through semi-structured interviews, I sought more specific information about problem definition, goal formulation, and the municipal agendas for

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[51] Participants number 4, 5, 9 and 12 of the table above.

development. For the round of semi-structured interviews concerning the micro-level agenda setting, I had 9 participants (subjects 1,4,5,6,8,9,10,11 and 12 in the table above). Six participants contributed through semi-structured interviews to raise information about meso-level agenda-setting (subjects 18 to 23 in the table above). The diagram below, in page 245, describes the different phases of information collection using unstructured and semi-structured interviews.

Regarding the protocols that guided the unstructured and semi-structured interviews, they were adopted to ensure theoretical sampling was possible[52]. The next steps were followed for all types of interviews: 1) I stated the purpose of my research, 2) I expressed gratitude to the interviewee for being a participant, 3) I asked them to sign the consent form, and indicated to the participant the right to refuse to answer a particular question, avoid a specific subject, or end the interview.

The unstructured interviews were guided by the following basic principles advanced by grounded theorists (Gubrium et al., 2012; Charmaz and Belgrave, 2012; Foley et al., 2021): 1) avoid many questions that could steer the interviewee in many directions, leading to superficial answers. 2) the purpose of the grounded theory unstructured interview is to create an opportunity for interaction that facilitates the opening up of the interviewee. So, this type of interview is not a fact-finding mission but a co-construction process. 3) If you have some sensitising concepts in mind, test through pilot interviews if you have translated them into familiar notions and ideas for the interviewees. 4) Remain open to unexpected answers or lines of enquiry, so ask for clarification without hindering the interview's flow. So, as I stated above, as a result of following these principles, I was able to establish the importance of problematisation and goal formation for the partners in CDRs. In section 3.9.1, I elaborate on how challenging it was to follow these and other guidelines for unstructured interviews (e.g., Bryman, 2004, pp. 318-337).

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[52] For more information on how my theoretical sampling unfolded, see section 3.7.

The protocol adopted for semi-structured interviews consists of three segments – the opening, middle and concluding segments – and specific types of questions for each of them (e.g., introducing, follow-up, probing, specifying, structuring and interpreting questions) (Bryman, 2004; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2005; Charmaz and Belgrave, 2012; Galletta, 2013). The opening segment aimed to create the conditions for the participant to not feel under the microscope – to be judged – by asking about the cases and the context under study rather than questions that require the participant to explain what they did. I already knew some of the information provided in this section of the interview. However, the answers were still relevant to check for consistency vis-a-vis the information provided during the unstructured interviews and documents made available in 2019. Also, this segment served to remind the interviewees about the specific concepts, ideas, and topics that were relevant to these interviews (i.e., communication, frames, collaboration, CDRs, participation, community involvement, organisational challenges and practices, problematisation, goal formation, and conceptions of development – approaches, logics, tactics and implications). These concepts and topics were touched upon in each interview segment (see Appendixes 2 and 3).
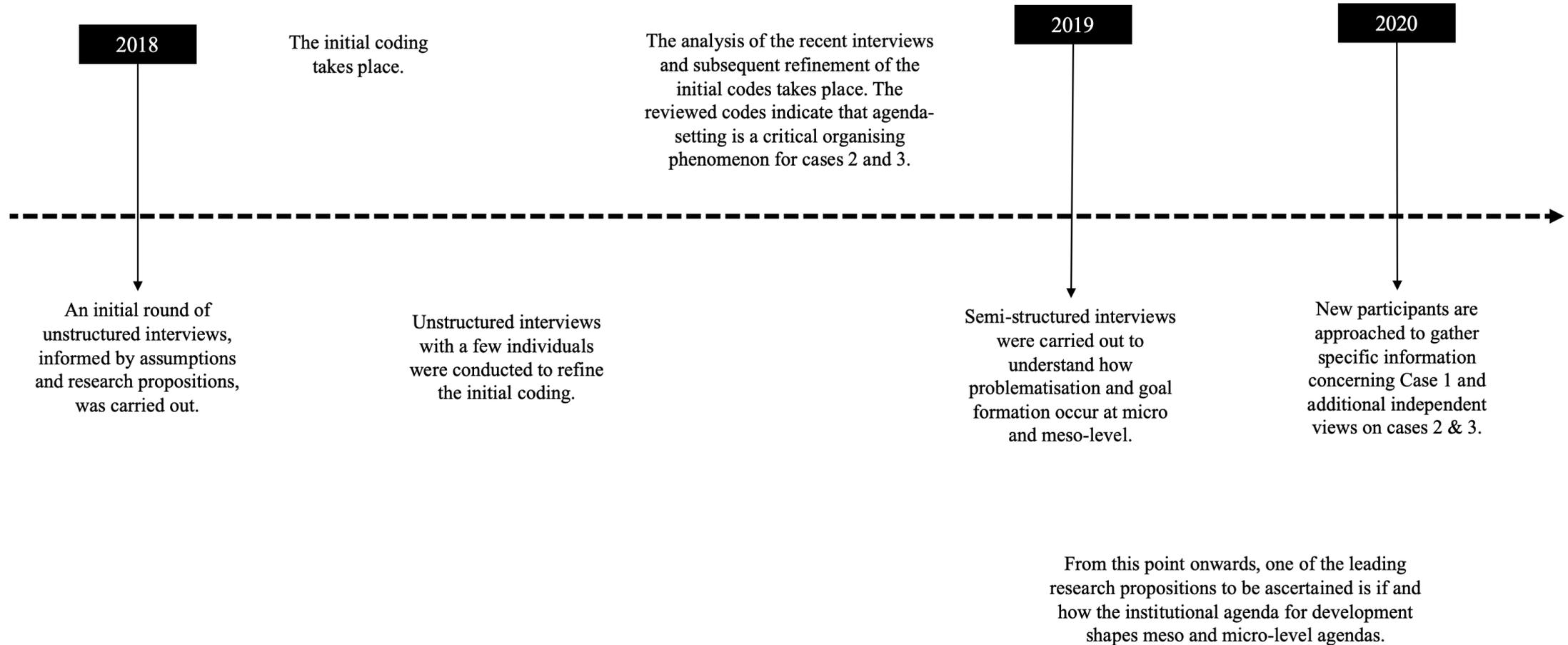
While the opening segment mainly concerned the what, where, and who, the middle segment was used to seek more details on the relevant agenda-setting and organisational processes by asking 'how?'. So, the initial questions were followed by specifying questions (e.g., How did they react?) and probing questions (e.g., You said earlier that..?). These questions were based on gaps or distinctive views detected in the first segment or unstructured interviews. For instance, some participants included the communities as partners because their involvement is a cornerstone of their official intervention models. However, other participants did not refer to them as partners in these interviews. This implied a classification of the communities that did not preclude their participation or consultation. However, it suggested that communities had less and no say on crucial aspects of the agenda-setting process (e.g., goal formation). This

inconsistency – confirmed by semi-structured interviews – led to the conclusion that communities were dislocated and ultimately disneyfied.

The concluding segment asked the participants for their opinions about the same processes, concepts, and topics. The answers collected in this segment were contrasted against similar comments or observations made during the previous segments to establish the presence of dissonance. Establishing any dissonance was valuable as it often led to new insights or cemented the codes concerning the paradoxes identified by this investigation. Any rapport I developed with the participants was crucial to encouraging them to express their views and interpretations on agenda-setting processes and other internal issues to the CDRs.

Lastly, I adopted the same interview protocol, the three segments approach, for the meso-level participants, the academics and experts on public policy (see Appendix 3). However, because before these interviews, I read about the technical aspects of planning and agenda-setting available in the national and municipal digital documents, my approach from the outset was to confirm if the laws, policies, and practices were followed and if and what were the pros and cons of following or circumventing them. For instance, the views of these participants on the legally granted autonomy of regional and municipal authorities were insightful. Nevertheless, these views were triangulated with the opinions of the directors of the NPOs studied and other similar participants familiar with Cali's third sector. This triangulation led to the conclusion that the municipal hybrid agendas for development were implicated in the institutional top-down approach to agenda-setting.

Phases of collection of information and coding

2018

The initial coding takes place.

The analysis of the recent interviews and subsequent refinement of the initial codes takes place. The reviewed codes indicate that agenda-setting is a critical organising phenomenon for cases 2 and 3.

2019

2020

An initial round of unstructured interviews, informed by assumptions and research propositions, was carried out.

Unstructured interviews with a few individuals were conducted to refine the initial coding.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out to understand how problematisation and goal formation occur at micro and meso-level.

New participants are approached to gather specific information concerning Case 1 and additional independent views on cases 2 & 3.

From this point onwards, one of the leading research propositions to be ascertained is if and how the institutional agenda for development shapes meso and micro-level agendas.

3.7 How the information collected was analysed

All the unstructured interviews were translated, transcribed and coded. My approach to coding was informed by Saldaña (2016) and Charmaz's (2006; 2018) qualitative methods, which recommend looking for phenomena worthy of coding in specific units of social organisation (i.e., episodes of change) and how these processes are catalysed by drivers such as rules and ideology. Because my initial aim was to examine organising within CDRs, I considered it pertinent to establish if resource dependence, structure, legitimacy and discourse were linked to episodes of change in a manner that could have encouraged sense-breaking, sense-giving and sense-making. This aligns with my aim of studying the intersection structure-organising-communication.

A preliminary examination of the transcripts of the unstructured interviews revealed the persistent conflict between partners in the CDRs. This conflict was caused by pressure to negotiate and review the programmes' focal point and goals, in simple terms, to tackle similar but not the same social problems. So, I coded the first round of unstructured interviews to establish whether or not that preliminary assumption was valid and to ascertain the nature of the emerging phenomenon (i.e., agenda setting), which I did not anticipate finding or sought to investigate initially.

A sample of the codes (mostly in-vivo) and the evolution of my thinking from the initial coding to concept coding are shown in the table below. The initial coding – the coding that allows you to be open to all possible theoretical implications (Saldaña, 2016, p. 115) – led to conceptual links between the deductive notions (e.g., resource dependence) and the emerging phenomenon – i.e., agenda-setting, and more specifically to problem definition and goal formation. These links are explained by the column 'Agenda-setting dimensions resulting from the refinement of the initial coding'.

Concept	Initial coding (2018)	Supporting quote	Case	Agenda-setting dimensions resulting from the refinement of the initial coding	Agenda-setting specific codes	Supporting quote
Resource dependence	**Code:** 'This weird triangle' of interdependency. – This code aggregates the instances in which partners in a CDR reflected on the perceived positive and negative implications of their mutual dependence.	'For us, it is like we each other. And I think no party would continue to agree to be part of this sort of weird triangle if there was no benefit for all of us. For example, the DNF provides the bulk of the funding that makes the programme (OP) viable. It is great that the PSF has deals with internship providers that could lead to job opportunities for youngsters. The CCE implements and manages the OP programme. So, we are aligned, and maybe parallel, but aligned' (Marcia).	2	Similar comments to the one on the left led to the assumption that the partners of OP were having a hard time reaching a consensus on the program's goals. The remark about being 'aligned' and using each other indicated that additional questions about forming goals could uncover relevant findings.	**Code:** Goals trump contract. – This code aggregates the instances in which partners in a CDR reflected on how goals were agreed upon and pursued. The chosen supporting quote, on the right column emphasises how funding partners linked the formation of goals to funding, making the latter conditional to the former.	'As long as the proposed goals are met, we could always explore increasing the grant. Also, we expect the money we give them will be spent on the aims we agreed '(Marcia, the DNF). 'This happened in a meeting to establish whether or not LM (a potential funding partner) would provide financial support for the project. LM stated that as long as we were open to reviewing our current objectives, they would gladly support us. We agreed to that condition because we believed their observations about our programme's goals were correct. However, we explained that their condition would entail changing everything (the whole project)'. (Andrea, Kids Cali).
Structure	**Code:** The methodology and the model are our unique selling proposition (USP). – This code aggregates the instances in which local NPOs explained the importance of having an intervention model to attract funding partners and guide their activities.	'So, our most important asset is the model. Yes, I mention our previous successful interventions when I talk to potential partners. Still, our most precious asset is the intervention model and the resulting method specific to each community. And I would rank second my legitimacy, experience or track record, and so forth' (Elena).	2	The two programmes under study (OP and CPC) resulted from local ways of perceiving what was problematic in low-income communities based on an intervention model and a linked method. This firmly held view by the local participants indicated the need for further questions to establish how the local problematisation might align or not with the perceptions of what was problematic for potential funding partners.	**Code:** We have agreed to disagree. – This is a key code because it aggregated all the instances in which the participants elaborated on how problematisation became a flexible process, not leading to one relevant problem to be tackled but multiple ones. The same applies to goals. A paradox in collaborative terms that leads to ineffectiveness and inefficiency.	'Yes, it is possible to pursue two different objectives; the project now has both objectives. We realised that the project would have a different priority [the teachers should become trainers], which means that our original goal is secondary [the students train other students]. But, in the end, the project itself would carry on, and that is what matters. We accepted the change of priority, but we argued that we must keep both objectives' (Elena, the CCE).

Legitimacy	**Code:** Our role is to mediate. – This code reflects all the instances in which participants assigned local NPOs the role of mediators. Mediators between the different stakeholders of a programme; a position granted to them due to their perceived legitimacy.	'I believe Kids Cali is the mediator between the other parts. For example, often, the schools agree with the initial intervention proposal, but later, they ask for more support. However, without our validation, that request for additional resources would not be approved. The funding partners consider us reasonable and trustworthy appraisers of what is needed' (Clara).	3	While this code reflects the importance of legitimacy for the successful organising of development action, I also understood the need for mediation as a signal of potential disagreements regarding the magnitude of a social problem and, therefore, the need to renegotiate the terms of intervention, due to the different views on what is problematic and hence the accompanying goals to be achieved.	**Code:** Listening to what the local communities have to say. – This code reflects another dimension of legitimacy and how it is used by all the partners of an intervention to advance their proposed problems and goals. Everyone argued that their motivation was the well-being of a community – ascribing legitimacy to what they had in mind – but no consulting of a community was claimed.	'We discuss our interventions with different committees whose priority is the well-being of children. However, my colleagues and I have chosen to give priority to what the kids themselves need; as psychologists, we are trained to establish children's needs' (Marcela, Kids Cali).
Discourse	**Code:** A familiar story of ignorance. – This code aggregates the instances in which participants have identified negative shared views held within the field, which they believe have the power to shape their activities.	'At the beginning of the relationship, the international founding partners hid their negative views about our ability to manage our organisation. But after a while, they found a way to tell us that we were not good enough at planning or forecasting. This is not unique to us (Kids Cali); other directors of local NPOs have told me they have been told the same. So it is like a common story across the sector and, for sure, a common view held by funding partners that we are good at A (implementing an intervention) but not at B (managing an NPO)' (Melisa).	3	The code 'a familiar story of ignorance' aggregated all the comments regarding the perceived ignorance of a particular stakeholder, that being a funding partner or even the recipients of aid, the local communities. Hence, each stakeholder is given a role based on that perceived ignorance of something. The local NPOs are good at implementing but not at managing. The funding partners are good at raising resources but do not know how to access the communities or understand the roots of their problems. And the aid recipients are incapable of seeing what they have done wrong, which is why they are destitute or face other conditions. These clichéic views led to the conclusion that more questions were needed to understand if and how these seemingly entrenched views aligned with the development mantra or goal that change for the better is possible. Simply put, those running the intervention believed their goals were feasible, but beliefs are not necessarily informed by evidence.	**Code:** There are other agendas in play, not just ours – This code is not linked to the one on the left. However, it is classed as a field logic or discourse that reflects the awareness of all the participants of other agendas and the need to minimise their influence on their organisational agendas, which the participants found taxing and time-consuming with significant implications for their aims.	'There are different agendas in play, and for that reason, we have lost our north. We must focus on what we are good at, teaching children to protect themselves against abusive behaviour. However, we have been bending backwards and forward to accommodate problems and objectives that are not aligned with the roots of our original programme' (Clara, Kids Cali)

Concept coding 'assigns meso or macro levels of meaning' to the content under examination (e.g., excerpts from interview transcripts). 'A concept is a word or short phrase that symbolically represents a suggested meaning broader than a single item or action (...) A concept suggests an idea rather than an object or observable behaviour' (Saldaña, 2016, p. 119). Hence, in the customary way of concept coding, my codes reflect the relevant concepts (e.g., 'interdependency', 'unique selling proposition', 'agendas'). Also, with my coding, I sought to establish and foreground the links between phenomena at different levels and the specific comments made by the participants. For instance, I show the link between discourse and allocating functional roles to development stakeholders in the table above.

Also, in my initial coding, I looked for specific patterns or stable regularities, for instance, recurrent phenomena signalling potential causal relationships (e.g., are all partners impacted by resource dependence and how?) (Saldaña, 2016, p. 7). However, ultimately, I aimed to identify paradoxes, contradictions, and tensions (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011, p.42). This is the reason why I focused on the analysis of codes instead of formulating categories and themes. The latter aids in elaborating theoretical assertions, which is also the case for concept coding (Saldaña, 2016, p. 120). Expanding on this matter, the progression from the initial to the concept coding mirrors grounded theory steps – i.e., 'initial collection of data' (1), 'initial coding' (2) and 'focused coding' (3). These are foundational steps in formulating theoretical statements or assertions (Saldaña, 2016, pp. 55-56; Charmaz, Thornberg, and Keane , 2018).

The refinement of my analysis continued during and after the year 2019. This refining process was informed by the semi-structured interviews I conducted to gather evidence about the meso-level case (municipal agenda) and the micro-level organising linked to agenda setting. This new evidence was used to reflect on the currency of the prior analysis, which was based on the coding done in 2018. The inquiry-based reading of content increased the amount and quality of the evidence gathered during 2019 (Katan and Andreas Baarts, 2020).

The approach described above mirrors step 4 of grounded theory, 'theoretical sampling'. According to grounded theory, all the steps (from 1 to 4) are repeated until *theoretical saturation occurs*, that is, until no new insights emerge from repeating the previous steps (Bryman, 2016, p. 697). Theoretical saturation is what I meant by 'refinement', so more coding tables were generated, leading to conceptualisation, specifically about the paradoxes; this conceptualisation is introduced in subsection 7.4. A step-by-step explanation of how constructivist grounded theory guided my formation of codes, concepts and, ultimately, my theorisation can be found in the table below.

Common steps for all versions of Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2017)	Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) steps (Charmaz, Thornberg, and Keane, 2018)	Implementation
Researchers attend to emergent actions and processes that they identify in the data rather than rely on preconceived general topics, themes, and theories. A major emphasis is on learning how processes develop and change.	(Step 1) The initial collection of information. Identifying and focusing on instances of meaning creation and relevant actions.	Concerning the first round of interviews carried out in 2018, neither hypotheses nor strong assumptions guided my initial contact with participants but sensitising concepts. Those sensitising concepts were collaboration, publics, relationships, problem domains, resource dependency, structure, discourse and organising. In this phase of the investigation, I paid attention to what the participants said in connection to these concepts and how they made sense of them. I also gave significant weight to what motivated the participants, the positive and negative developments, specifically the issues forcing or encouraging them to take action.
Coding means assigning an analytic term to a fragment of data, while memo-writing consists of writing about our codes.	(Step 2). Coding consists of two tasks: not only identifying in the data what the participants see as important, but also what they are taking for granted in relation to the phenomena studied. Once this has been established, then those segments of the data that reflect or signify these instances – participants' views and taken-for-granted phenomena – are labelled. These labels should be 'short, simple, precise and active'.	The initial coding confirmed that persistent disagreements on problematising and forming goals were a source of conflict and subsequent organisational activity. This led me to seek more information about these processes, their impact on implementation and their evolution. Also, some participants considered the agenda-setting implications linked to these processes important. So, the main finding arising from the initial coding was the phenomenon of agenda-setting. Some of the code supporting that finding can be found in the table above (same section, 3.7). The participants were taking for granted the implicit tensions and paradoxes arising from disagreements (e.g., to gain autonomy or be financially stable).

I did not write memos. Instead, I created several tables to link the codes to the quotes I extracted from the interviews. These codes and quotes were linked to the sensitising concepts shown in the preceding table. I also used NVivo to replicate this process of linking codes and quotes. I stopped using the software because the NVivo analyses did not add value-insight. All the above led me to conclude that asking questions about the instances of conflict between the partners will be the most straightforward way of focusing the participants' attention on past or recent circumstances concerning agenda-setting practices and processes. |

Grounded theory is an iterative process. Going back and forth between collecting and analysing data. Grounded theorists compare data with data, data with codes, codes with codes, and codes with categories. Categories are emergent conceptual terms to account for the data and codes. Researchers can either raise a code to a category when the code possesses analytic power or create an abstract term that captures and conceptualises descriptive codes.	Initial codes are provisional or open to modification. This is because during focused coding (Step 3), researchers re-examine the first codes – comparing them to the data and to each other – to establish which codes best capture what they see as of significance emerging from the initial coding. Then these selected codes are raised to tentative conceptual categories, which means generating an explanation that contains contingent concepts and the relationships between these newly developed concepts (p.426-428).	I conducted more unstructured interviews to confirm the validity of the initial coding. This second round of unstructured interviews corroborated the participant's interest in agenda-setting-related phenomena. The table above shows the agenda-setting-related codes that emerged at the time. At that time, I also established potential relationships between sensitising and emerging concepts, such as resource dependency and agenda-setting. So, I did not attempt to create categories. Instead, I focused on concept coding. This aligns with what Charmaz says regarding 'conceptual categories' and generating an explanation about them. The table above shows a sample of concept coding and the attendant explanations. However, I did not formally raise these to conceptual categories.
	Theoretical sampling (Step 4) is the process of identifying and collecting the data that enables further development of the newly formed categories. This step involves explaining the differentiation or variation among categories and describing how they relate to each other. These steps (from 1 to 4) are repeated until theoretical saturation occurs, in other words when no new insights are being generated from repeating the previous steps (Bryman, 2016, p. 697).	To enable theoretical sampling, I analysed documents. The nature of those documents is described in the table in section 3.6. These documents concerned the meso and micro-level phenomena because, at this stage of the investigation (2019), agenda-setting was firmly established as a key unit of analysis at all the levels that concerned my investigation. So, the semi-structured interviews that took place in 2019 and 2020 with municipal sources and academic experts, apart from those with NPOs' employees, were used to refine and cement the existing previous concept coding and also to confirm if my views regarding tensions, asymmetries and paradoxes could be enhanced by new information or not. The table above shows the emergence of new codes after the initial coding owed to theoretical sampling. Other tables – available upon request – show that process, too.
Constructing new theory rather than rely on applying existing theories. Stating the implications for professional practice and public policy.	The last step (5) leading to the formulation of provisional hypothesis and theory is theoretical coding (Charmaz et al., 2018, p.427). This step involves contrasting all the categories, codes and memos against the extant theoretical views developed by other scholars regarding the phenomena under examination.	In Chapter 7, I contrast the ideas emerging from the findings against the existing theorisation concerning collaborative relationships and the positioning of agendas. I introduce new concepts, such as rhetorical space, and elaborate on the broader implications of the paradoxes, tensions and asymmetries established by my investigation, which I conceptualised. I also explain their specific impacts on professional practice (e.g., inaccurate problematisation and goal formation leading to inefficient programmes) and public policy (e.g., municipal hybrid agendas diverting multilateral funding to objectives that do not necessarily align with the national agenda for development).

3.8 The rigour of the chosen methodological approach

This study's methodological operations followed academic expectations for achieving rigour in qualitative inquiry. Guba and Lincoln (1981; 1985) prescribed criteria and strategies for attaining and appraising quality in qualitative studies. The following table briefly explains how my study met Guba and Lincoln's quality principles.

Criteria	Strategy	Action
Credibility	a) Prolonged engagement b) Persistent observation c) Triangulation d) Peer debriefing e) Negative case analysis f) Referential adequacy g) Member checks	a) Four months of intense information gathering and a longitudinal approach to the investigation. b) Informal observation of activities in the local NPOs' offices. c) 'Data triangulation' (Yin, 2018). Different sources (documentation and interviewees) and methods (unstructured, semi-structured interviews) were used to collect information. The information gathered was crosschecked. d) Supervisors were briefed about my fieldwork and offered access to anonymised information and the different coding tables (18 in total). e) Not established. f) Thick description, reflexivity and triangulation were used to ensure referential adequacy. g) Contraindicated by some scholars (e.g. Morse, 2018). It was not used to confirm findings or transcripts of interviews.
Transferability If the findings hold in other contexts, or even if they hold in the same context at some other time. Other scholars equate transferability with external validity or generalizability (Bryman, 2016, p. 384).	Peer debriefing	Apart from peer debriefing which has already been covered above (see d), the hybrid agenda as a recurrent phenomenon, for two municipal administrations, was substantiated by the findings. The same applies to flexible problematisation which manifested across cases.
Dependability Although some scholars, such as Bryman (2016, p. 384), relate it to reliability-replicability, this criterion is about transparency on the part of the researcher and their methods so other people	The dependability of the audit (audit trail)	The coding results are available as Word tables or NVivo files. This facilitates the external scrutiny of the methodological procedures and re-testing.

can scrutinise the quality of the information collected.		
Confirmability Showing the researcher has acted in good faith, and they are not overtly allowing their personal values or theoretical inclinations to sway the methodological operations and findings (Bryman, 2016, p. 386).	The confirmability of the audit (audit trail)	I did not write any memos, however, as stated above, the coding is available. Supervision meetings were the space for the discussion of many aspects of my investigation including potentially controversial findings or my own interpretation of those findings.

Another approach to achieving rigour that influenced the methodological strategy of my study is the one proposed by Morse (2018). According to Morse, two types of information could be collected under the qualitative paradigm: 'hard and soft data'. The former is derived from concrete or stable phenomena – such as dates, places and numbers – and is used for description. This information could be acquired using instruments and later measured or appraised against itself or similar phenomena (2018, p. 807).

Soft data is derived from the account of someone who has experienced the phenomenon under study. Soft data comes from descriptions of something internal to the witness (e.g., fear) or something that could not be experienced by the researcher personally or first-hand, such as an event or situation that has passed. Soft data results from interpreting attitudes, opinions, beliefs, suppositions, observations, reflections and perceptions of past or present experiences (2018, p. 808). The following table briefly lists the strategies for verification and validation, based on Morse's approach, used to achieve rigour in my study[53].

Strategies	Hard data in	Soft data in
Validation Strategies	Content	Unstructured interviews Semi-structured interviews
Inter-rater reliability	Not carried out due to limited resources.	NA, it might invalidate the data.
Member checks	NA	According to Morse, it would invalidate the data (2018, p. 813).

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[53] To validate is to confirm the phenomenon itself. Hard data is validated to verify its accuracy through computer-assisted analysis or inter-rater reliability. Data that describes subjective phenomena – soft data – is verified by other participants or the same human sources who provided this data (Morse, 2018, p.797-798).

		To increase transparency and confirmability.
Audit trail	Yes	
Verification Strategies	**Hard data**	**Soft data**
Bracketing	NA	Yes
Saturation	By increasing the size of the sample (e.g. number of semi-structured interviews).	Through the refinement of codes.
Member checks	NA	NA
Audit trail	As explained above.	As explained above.

3.9 Ethical considerations and limitations

In line with the rationale submitted to the Faculty Ethics Committee (approval reference PVAR 17-108), all participants' information has been stored safely, and any potential identifiers were removed. Also, during my fieldwork, I approached individuals with different levels of knowledge and expertise, so all those considered potential contributors had the opportunity to inform my investigation. And political affiliations or ideologies were not relevant parameters for selecting participants. However, no amount of bracketing – carried out with the aid of my supervisors, colleagues at my institution or Colombian academics – could have eliminated the potential influence of preconceptions in interpreting the information collected (Tufford and Newman, 2012). My critical appraisal of the extant literature (e.g., Chapters 1 and 2) has given the reader an idea of my views on development and the other phenomena I investigated. Nevertheless, I remained open to inclusivity and strived for synthesis in my approach to this subject.

A challenge during my fieldwork was persuading well-informed people to become formal participants. For instance, some local NPO employees were concerned that participating could harm their relationships with colleagues and line managers. This did not change despite assurances of anonymity and non-disclosure of information. All the third-sector organisations involved explained that participating in my investigation was an option, not a requirement, and no pressure was put on anyone to be involved.

Apart from what I already said regarding the conditions of participation, I explained the aims of my investigation, asked for permission to inform all potential participants

that I was seeking their contribution and offered to carry out the interviews in alternative locations so the participants would feel safe expressing controversial views and sharing sensitive information. The organisations involved were not given access to the information provided by their employees. Also, I encouraged and allowed the participants to elaborate and clarify on any topic and to address potential contradictions or gaps in their comments or the documents they provided (e.g., municipal development plans, characterisations, and interventions' progress reports).

As for the limitations of my study, they arise from access, methodological and sourcing choices and conditions. Regarding access, my ideal design included four local NPOs, one or two national foundations, and two communities intervened by the participant NPOs. However, attempts to involve other local NPOs were unsuccessful. All attempts to involve other national foundations – including through their national body (Asociación de Fundaciones Empresariales, AFE) – were ignored. Other potential expert participants – like the Cali mayors behind the MDPs analysed – were also not interviewed because they were unavailable during my fieldwork. All of the above resulted in a missing-voices gap. To mitigate the above gap, I found a case that includes a local foundation and sought the opinion of public policy scholars and individuals working for the national planning authority in Cali. These individuals have significant knowledge concerning the political and technical aspects of meso-level agenda setting. So, the contribution of these participants, together with the analysis of documents, provided sufficient evidence of the phenomena under study.

Also, accessing local communities was not possible due to: a) the significant amount of time needed to arrange it, which I did not have, b) the conditions to get approval from the university were not met, and c) local gatekeepers advised against it because it would not be safe. It is vital to clarify that I intended to interview those members of TIOs participating in the programmes studied (i.e., trainees, teachers and parents), not random members of communities.

So, expanding on why access to the relevant TIOs was not possible, at the time of my fieldwork, the operation of illegal groups (e.g., drug gangs, paramilitary organisations and guerrillas) in these communities created the risk of being kidnapped. I was advised to: a) be escorted during fieldwork in TIOs and b) not to go because the escorting would not effectively lessen any risks. The latter was in line with the advice provided by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), which had Cali close to the zone of 'advise against all but essential travel'. According to the FCDO, travelling to Cali involves average risk; however, the programmes studied were implemented west of Cali, west of the Valley of Cauca Department, near the essential travel zone but not in this zone. My ethical approval was conditional on respecting the FCDO's advice.

So, three options were opened to me at the time: 1) arrange escorting in line with the least conservative advice, 2) interview TIOs participants somewhere else in Cali, and 3) review my research design in light of the limitations posed by the risks. My initial choice was to explore how feasible it was to visit low-income communities within the acceptable risk limits established by the FCDO's advice. One NPO agreed to take me to some schools participating in its programme to mitigate school violence (Case 3), where I could talk to parents and teachers. However, the agreed visits to these schools did not happen because they were in recess when I was in Cali (July-August 2018-19). Incidentally, should the visits have gone ahead, I would have been visiting with the staff, but no security escorting would have been in place. In the opinion of my gatekeepers, those conditions did not ensure my safety.

The other local NPO (Case 2) did not have the means to support my fieldwork in TIOs. They explained that when their grant-making partners visit Cali, their trip is arranged to coincide with the municipal authorities' fieldwork in the same intervened TIOs. This ensures the police force is involved. Alternatively, the visiting grant-making representatives meet with the trainees in Cali during training activities but not in the communities. The NPO recommended I consider any of the above options. Their first choice was not suitable because the purpose of my visit would not align with the local

authorities' agenda, as the latter would move across TIOs to open venues or quickly see progress on some project. Conversely, I would need to be in one place to interview people. The police escorting the mayor and his entourage will not stay with me.

Hence, the only option open to me was to meet the TIOs participants in a safer place in Cali. Regarding the parents and teachers involved in the programme against school violence (Case 3), it took a long time to find them because the schools were in recess. Of those approached (around 20), with the help of the NPO, none had time to contribute to my investigation due to family commitments. Case 2 potential participants, the young mechanic's apprentices, were also in recess, so they had to be contacted with some difficulty at home. None of the trainees approached – also with the help of the NPO – showed up for interviews, either in the NPOs' premises or elsewhere.

Because potential TIOs participants were unenthusiastic about being interviewed, it could be argued that I should have motivated them by offering a suitable incentive. However, this was not an option for me because I did not have the financial resources to satisfy local expectations regarding research participation incentives. I remember being told that the equivalent of 20 to 30 pounds per person would not offend anyone. However, I did not have the resources to meet those expectations as no organisation was sponsoring me. Also, I was not willing to bargain with potential participants, risking commercialising my relationship with them or coming across as exploitative and hence offending their dignity (University of Oxford, 2020). Furthermore, and crucially, I dismissed using incentives because this practice could have attracted the wrong type of participant, one that could have flagged me as an attractive target for kidnapping.

It is important to note that while I tried to find a way to secure access to TIOs, I was always mindful of the risks involved and the advice given. My personal experience as a journalist covering security affairs in Colombia during the 90s also informed my choices. I had to leave the country due to threats to my life. These threats were linked

to my coverage of operations against key members of drug organisations located in Cauca's Valley. Hence, my decision to consider safe options first and ultimately redesign the investigation. So, while it could be argued that international researchers might have visited TIOs, I did not underestimate the risks involved because Cali's conditions change quickly as illegal organisations operate within TIOs and beyond them. So, the volatility of circumstances across the city is particularly acute in places where the presence of national security forces is inconsistent or limited.

Elaborating on the process of adjusting my research design, it entailed considering what research aims remained feasible and what phenomena were worthwhile studying based on the pool of information I had access to. So, I focused on studying the micro-level asymmetries (e.g., lack of resources) and their attendant tensions (e.g., autonomy-financial viability) to establish what paradoxes affecting aid recipients could have arisen from these asymmetries and tensions.

So, asking TIOs participants what they thought about the dislocation and disneyfication paradoxes would have been ideal. However, my findings showed that these individuals are not the cause of dislocation or disneyfication; they are the unwilling recipients of their negative impact. My adjusted research design exposed the causal factors and human choices responsible for these paradoxes, which are rooted in macro, meso and micro-level agenda-setting choices. It is my view that despite the access limitations indicated above, my findings are valuable to any attempt to improve development or justify its eradication. Particularly when NPOs are the representatives of the communities they work with (Alexander, 1999; Rossi et al., 2015), which in the context under study reveals how paradoxical that relationship (NPOs-intervened communities) is because it enables the dislocation and disneyfication of the people it is purported to help. Also, in light of the participation and inclusion of communities principle promoted by the UN and adopted by the NPOs studied, my investigation tested the strength of the NPOs' commitment to that principle.

As for the methodological choices and conditions, my purposive sampling approach is non-representative or non-probabilistic. Simply put, the information gathered was not selected using a random method, and the entirety of the population of cases is not represented; it is just a microcosm of it. That is because access to more cases, documents and participants was not possible, so my selection of sources and information was guided predominantly by one parameter: access. In a nutshell, I had to infer from the information I managed to collect. This resulted in two potential limitations.

First, comparing cases (e.g., 2 and 3) is impossible, but that was never my intention. As indicated in this chapter and other parts of this thesis, I aimed to elaborate on several research propositions or assumptions about development, which directed my attention to particular phenomena. A guiding assumption for this investigation is to establish if and how the institutional agenda for development influences meso and micro-level development activity. So, in methodological terms, I did 'theory triangulation'; I collected the information with different perspectives and hypotheses in mind (Flick, 2014, p. 183; Yin, 2018, Chapter 4).

The second potential limitation arises from the unsettled debate about whether non-probabilistic research could be used to generate theory (Bryman, 2004; Flick, 2014; Krippendorff, 2019). Making informed assumptions and postulating hypotheses based on non-probabilistic analyses is possible, especially when access is a significant problem in developing knowledge. This is consistent with Flyvbjer's (2013) challenge to the five typical misunderstandings about case study research designs and the steps approach proposed by Eisenhardt, which my investigation followed (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 533). So, in line with the latter, I have put forward informed assumptions and conceptualised the phenomenon of the dislocation paradox.

Concerning my sourcing choices and conditions, most of the literature consulted deems the following to be typical challenges for those analysing documents: limited or no

access to texts not in the public domain and conscious or unconscious bias in the documentation available (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Becker et al., 2012; Denzin and Lincoln, 2013; Bryman, 2016). Regarding access to documents not in the public domain, I requested the progress reports for the development programmes OP and CPC. Most of them were made available, but some were not. I asked for the missing reports, but they were never provided. The same applies to the characterisation reports. The participant NPOs did not reject my request for access to any of these documents, but they never provided them either. I took this as stonewalling. I elaborated on the implications of this tactic in my findings.

Apart from access, the following considerations guided the selection of written content: authenticity – the content is of unquestionable origin – and accuracy – the content is free from error and distortion (Scott, 1990, p.6). To minimise issues of authenticity and accuracy, I sought clarification with the authors of the content when something was unclear or seemed unusual and only used statistical material made available through governmental web pages. Also, when the documents offered conflicting views, I crosschecked them against other texts or the participants' explanations (Forster, 1994, p.160). I also checked the consistency of assertions by asking participants in different interviews to elaborate. Finally, I gave more weight to the consensus explanation or view when resolving discrepancies between interviewees.

3.9.1 Reflexibility

Reflexivity has several meanings in the social sciences. My investigation was informed by Bryman's preferred definition: 'Social researchers should be reflective about the implications of their methods, values, biases, and decisions for the knowledge of the social world they generate. Relatedly, reflexivity entails a sensitivity to the researcher's cultural, political, and social context. As such, 'knowledge' from a reflexive position is always a reflection of a researcher's location in time and social space' (2012, p. 393).

Expanding on the concept of position or the researcher's positionality, Day (2012) explains that it arises from the answers to three questions: 1) Who am I? 2) What is my position within power relationships? and 3) What paradigmatical or theoretical views informed my research activities? So, below, I start by answering these questions; subsequently, I explain how reflexivity informed the different steps of my investigation.

The first question on positionality concerns how some aspects of my identity could have shaped my investigation (Day, 2012, p. 62). First, I have been an immigrant for most of my life. I was born in Colombia but left the country for Venezuela when I was seven years old. I became a Venezuelan national, completed a degree in journalism at a Venezuelan university and worked in the national media industry until 2004, when I left for the UK. I have lived in the UK since. As a result, my identity is the product of three national cultures.

Nevertheless, my knowledge of Colombia's cultural-social developments had lost currency by the time my investigation started because I had not visited the country for years before 2018. I have also lost my Colombian accent and, crucially, my 'Caribe' needed recalibration. 'Caribe' is a term that refers to a state of constant sensitivity and alertness to developing situations that demand being cognitively sharp because they involve risk or could benefit you if you know how to negotiate on the spot. Because I did not trust my Caribe, I gave more weight to local advice on where to go and when; such advice played a role in my decision not to visit TIOs without escorting. Also, because of my non-local accent, my interactions with anyone were shaped by local impressions of where I have lived. I did not experience discrimination, and I don't have evidence of people refusing to participate in my study because of my identity. However, concerning risks and how they impacted my research choices, having a non-local accent made me stand out when interacting with local people; this is one of the reasons gatekeepers advised against visiting TIOs.

Other aspects of my identity, such as my political, sexual orientation and gender identity (i.e., progressive, heterosexual and cisgender), may have had an impact on my investigation, for instance, facilitating access to places and people because those with the power to grant the latter presumed me being like them (i.e., progressive, heterosexual and cisgender) or not. However, I am unsure how the above orientations benefited or negatively impacted the investigation. Nevertheless, I did not discriminate against participants who did not share my political, sexual, and gender orientations. Simply put, I did not actively and consciously create mechanisms or conditions to exclude them from my investigation. For the above to be the case, I must be conscious of my biases. My most relevant bias was that I believed development to be a moral undertaking. In other words, while development might have some deficiencies, it is not a detrimental activity. That might have shaped my decision-making before entering the field. Subsequent literature reviews made me aware of development's limitations, so by the time I was approaching the investigation deductively, I had changed my view of development's morality and adopted a more post-development posture. Therefore, whatever uncritical approach I had at the beginning of the investigation was balanced by a more measured enthusiasm and awareness of the deficiencies of modernisation. This uncritical-critical stance did not justify disqualifying participants or removing evidence from the coding process. So, the information provided by the participants was part of the coding process, and all contributions were welcomed.

Regarding my position within power relationships, I was an outsider to the participants, as I was not considered one of them. For instance, it is my impression that I came across as an academic living in the UK for most of the participants I interviewed. This became clear to me due to the persistent use of the term 'usted' to address me. 'Usted' is used in Spanish to indicate deference and distance between the interactants. I estimate that no more than 20% of the participants used the term 'tú' to address me, even when I asked them to do so or when I did not use the term 'usted' to address them. The term 'tu' addresses close colleagues, friends and some family members. It signals that you consider them close to you or you are comfortable interacting with them informally.

The above reflects how the participants interpreted the position assigned to me by my gatekeepers. My gatekeepers have had a long-standing relationship with me. So, when they helped me secure access to local NPOs, third-sector workers, experts or academics, they always introduced me as a 'friend'. So, participants interpreted my position as a friend in different ways. For instance, directors and board members read it as follows: a close friend, the gatekeeper, is asking me to help one of its close friends (the researcher). Some of these directors declined (e.g., the NPO with no staff available), and those regularly in touch with my gatekeepers supported me. When I was introduced to the employees of the NPOs who agreed to contribute to the investigation, I was introduced as the gatekeeper's friend. So, those close to the gatekeepers were forthcoming, but the rest probably were not. Regardless, most of these participants were worried that whatever they said to me would end up in the ears of their bosses. So, I invested time in reassuring participants that no information would be shared with anyone locally and would be used for the purposes indicated in the consent forms. Similarly, anonymity and confidentiality were crucial for the municipal authority professionals and experts. While sharing the contents of the interviews was risk-free for the academics I interviewed.

Based on the above, my 'friend' status had significant power, securing my access to cases and participants. For instance, it could be argued that participants engaged in emotional labour because my status forced them to behave nicely to me and consent to participate when, if I were not a friend of a friend, they would not have agreed to be interviewed. However, it is important to note that some people refused to participate. Some explained that they did not have time, and others did not explain why. Others preferred to comment from the sidelines, declining to be formally interviewed without citing a reason. I did not harass any potential participants. When someone made an off-the-record comment relevant to my investigation, I politely asked for further information. But even in those circumstances, I did not insist. Also, nothing indicated that participants were forced to provide information by their line managers. So, while

I acknowledge the power of my position, I don't believe it was unethically used or exploited.

The paradigmatical and theoretical views that informed my research activities are constructionism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and post-developmentalism. How these paradigms and perspectives shaped my research is explained above (in section 3.2) and in other chapters (see section 1.2). However, it remains important to explain how my ontological and epistemological stance positioned me vis-a-vis the participants in this investigation.

I did not mention my political or academic views or talk about my identity in introductions to the participants or the documents I provided (e.g., consent forms), as it is not a social convention to do it in Colombia unless you are a politician. Nevertheless, I would not have refused to discuss them if asked directly. In any case, I allowed time to interact with participants for at least 10 minutes before the formal start of my interviews. In those circumstances, created to break the ice and appraise the possibility of developing rapport, I was asked about my views on national and local developments; this presumably enabled the participants to derive my ontological and epistemological position. As a result, participants could have been discouraged from opening up or the opposite. I have no evidence either way. It does not mean that I underestimated the influence of sharing my views. Still, I simply enabled transparency by openly talking about my views when prompted by potential participants or formal contributors.

Expanding on what it entails to be a reflexive researcher, irrespectively of the field or ontological and epistemological position, Bryman (2012, p.39) and others (Walsh, 2003; Robertson, 2000; Brown, 2022; Olmos-Vega et al., 2023; Jamieson, Govaart, and Pownall, 2023) have explained how reflexivity should be embedded throughout the whole research process, from the formulation of the research design and questions to generating conclusions. So, in the table below, in pages 267 and 268, I explain how

I attempted to be reflexive in each of the critical stages of my investigation in light of

the questions scholars have seen relevant to each of the research processes.

Stage of the research	Reflexivity questions	My reflexivity approach
Research questions and design	1. Why do I want to research this group? 2. To what extent am I "within" the participant group that I am researching? 3. Am I an "insider" or "outsider" researcher (or do I occupy both positions?) 4. What can I give to this group?	Regarding the first question, I had a research design in mind. However, its implementation was contingent upon accessing the relevant documents and individuals. Therefore, I had limited agency or power to choose my cases or total control over the definitive shape of my research design, as the latter had to be adjusted because access to TIOs was not feasible. Regarding questions 2 and 3, I was more of an outsider than an insider to the participants. A few of them talked openly about any topic I asked about, but most were coy and measured about what they said and how they said it. As I explained above, my friend status did not grant me trust; I had to earn it by developing rapport during fieldwork. I conducted myself in a manner that assured the participants I was not betraying that trust by sharing the comments they made through any other form of communication. Regarding question number 4, the directors of the organisations that granted me access were keen to talk about my investigation to colleagues and other NPOs, as they believed that having an outsider asking questions about their organisation shows commitment to transparency, which in turn aided their efforts to be perceived as accountable and honest.
Information collection	1. Am I intruding on this group? How can I make this as non-coercive as possible? 2. How can I make this research accessible to the population? 3. Do participants understand what their data will be used for? 4. Could my collection methods be problematic?	Concerning question number 1, people were invited, not coerced, to participate and did not seem to be confused about it because some refused to do so. It is also true that due to some participants' friendship with my gatekeepers, they might have felt obliged to do so. In any case, they participated on their terms, when and where it suited them; for instance, most participants I had interviewed twice showed no interest in keeping in touch after 2019. Unsurprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic shaped the priorities of these participants. Regarding questions 2 and 3, participants were informed via the consent forms and verbally that my thesis would be available online and published in different formats. Concerning question number 4, I did not unilaterally determine the size or nature of the sample; access issues influenced these decisions. Also, I did not establish parameters for excluding interviews or documents from the coding process. So, being inclusive was problematic

		because processing all the information available was taxing, particularly the translation of interviews. I invested significant time in ensuring the transcripts reflected the opinions of my participants. Still, no one can guarantee total accuracy as some colloquial or idiosyncratic expressions do not exist in English and, therefore, cannot be translated. Also, once the strength of all the codes was established, the codes that were not pertinent to the orientation of the investigation had less weight on my conceptualisation. It is vital to remember that the orientation of my inquiry was not predetermined before the information collection started; I followed an inductive approach, enabling the information to signal what was important to the participants and, therefore, should become a focal point of my investigation.
Information analysis and interpretation	1. Am I aware that people have given me this data and that they may not know me? 2. Who are these people behind the data?	Knowledge of the identity of my participants was limited. However, that did not get in the way of enabling their right to co-construct the investigation. I strive not to allow my knowledge of the participants, my biases, to hinder their right to say something or to have something relevant to them included in the coding process. If any evidence was not included in the analysis, it was not because I was biased against any participant but because I forgot about it or did not have the time to process it properly or reexamine it.
Conclusions and framing	1. How does my use of evidence reflect my biases (own life, wants, emotions, needs)? 2. What do I gain from this research? What does the population I have studied gain?	My findings support and reflect my recently adopted critical stance on development. As I said before, I grew up with my investigation; in other words, my critical stance was nurtured by the evidence, not the other way around, as my initial aim had nothing to do with the effects or outcomes of development and its agenda-setting practices but to examine organising beyond organisations. For that initial aim, development is a suitable context in which organising could be studied, but not the opportunity to prove that development needs to be dismantled. I have not gained anything, although I now have hypertension, suffered at times extreme anxiety in the form of panic attacks, and got in debt as a result of this investigation. Also, most of my family members believe in the morality of development with passion, so conversations regarding this subject are complex and not conducive to positive family relationships.

Chapter 4 – Findings

The meso-level agenda-setting

4.1 Introduction

Yes, of course, you cannot lay a brick in any low-income community without the approval of the community's committee, but it is much more complex than that. Those proposing a development intervention must also be in tune with national and local priorities, particularly with the latest Municipal Development Plan (MDP) objectives. This is a must because either the proposers need the mayoral office's financial support to get things running, or they want to avoid swimming against the tide, against the stream of policies in an MDP (Marta – Director of PSF).

Similar comments to the one above drew my attention to two distinctive aspects of agenda setting linking the macro and meso levels of development. Concerning the alleged expectation or requirement in Marta's comment that third-sector organisations should align or adopt Cali's municipal authority development goals or face difficulties, this directed my attention to the need to establish if steering or managing the third sector is the policy of Cali's municipal authorities. Simply put, I attempted to establish if Cali's municipal administrations have persistently tried to set the agenda of the third sector through tactics and strategies that would signal how to problematise and form development goals. If that was the case, it was vital to identify the critical municipal mechanisms or tactics.

Concerning the need to be in tune with national priorities, not just the local development policy, this foregrounded a second aspect of agenda-setting that became relevant to this investigation: the formulation of local development planning vis-a-vis national goals. In other words, to establish the nature of the interplay between governmental, municipal and micro-level agendas. To the latter, I added another line of enquiry to establish if there is an interaction between macro-level institutional agendas and meso-level ones, and if that is the case, establish the nature of that interplay and its implications (for instance, a consistent cascading effect which, on its way to the micro-level, the institutional agenda shapes other levels too).

Expanding on the last point above, it is essential to note that what prompted the expansion of my initial line of inquiry was coming across two distinctive views concerning how the institutional agenda for development is formulated and implemented. On the one hand, there is an entrenched view within development scholarship – a discourse – denouncing that the agenda for the modernisation of the Global South has been predominantly determined by rich North-Western nations and their funding organisations (Saith, 2006; Vandemoortele, 2009; Hulme, 2010; Schuftan, 2013). In other words, the agenda for modernisation has been and continues to be formulated by wealthy Western nations and subsequently imposed upon the least developed countries.

On the other hand, relatively recent developments in Latin America offer a contrasting perspective on the North-to-South, developed-to-developing, top-down view. That opposing view argues that the rise to power of left-leaning parties in Latin America since the beginning of the 21st century has been a driver underpinning the emergence of a new attempt to change the modernising project for the region. Why? The left in the continent has been the most critical and persistent denouncer of the damage caused by two

interrelated dynamos energising discontent and conflict for a long time in Latin America: neoliberalism and its accompanying formulas for development. These two dynamos have induced massive social and political turmoil across Latin nations (Gwynne, 1997; Walton, 2004; Perreault and Martin, 2005; Cameron, 2009). So, the left's ascendency to power has led to rejecting neoliberal structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) as the primary way of developing Latin American nations. In practical terms, this rejection has meant a sustained attempt to influence how international aid is invested in the centre and south of the continent. In other words, Latin American countries are just ensuring their national and local agendas are prioritised, and the available development funding is invested according to their modernising plans (Gwynne and Kay, 2004; Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2012; McEwan and Mawdsley, 2012; Scoones et al. 2016; Horn and Grugel, 2018; Rodríguez, 2021).

As a result of the above, it is crucial to understand if and how these historical and more recent dynamics have shaped Cali's development programmes. So, the following questions became relevant to this investigation: Is the top-down and developed-to-developing nations agenda-setting approach relevant to Cali's third sector? If not, who are the agenda-setters for the city? In the same vein, what is the role of national and municipal developing planning authorities? What are the potential outcomes of a likely attempt to incorporate the aims of different agendas (e.g., international and local)? And finally, are Municipal Development Plans (MDPs) one of these prospective outcomes?

Some of these questions concern micro-level development activity (e.g., if and how the institutional agenda for development shapes problematisation and goal formation of interventions). The micro-level relevant questions will be addressed in chapters 5 and 6. In this chapter, I have endeavoured to answer the macro and meso-level relevant

questions, which involves introducing the pertinent ideas emerging from the analysis of national and municipal planning documents and complementing and contrasting them with views of local experts in public policy and employees directly involved in the formulation of municipal development plans.

4.2 On the nature of Cali's municipal approach to development

This section describes Cali's municipal approach to development, its overt and less apparent agenda-setting mechanisms and their implications. So, from the outset, it is argued that Cali's municipal authorities, for the period that concerns this study, advanced agendas for development that proposed the active engagement of NPOs operating in the city. But before I elaborate on the tactics used by the municipal authorities to position their agendas and the ensuing consequences, it is vital to explain to the reader what the Colombian authorities and participants – like Marta – meant when they referred to 'Municipal Development Plans' (MDPs).

According to the National Department for Planning (DNP), Municipal Development Plans (MDPs) guide all the actions of a local elected administration during their term in office. For MDPs to be endorsed by the DNP, they must have the following three components: a diagnosis of local social conditions (which should be accompanied by a list of the outlets designed to enable the engagement of local communities), a strategy on how to mitigate or eradicate the existing social conditions (including benchmarks, goals, programmes, and a vision), and a finance section (with its diagnosis of local sources of funding, and an investment plan) (DNP, 2012).

In terms of the approach that should be taken to formulate an MDP, a closer look at different documents issued by the national planning authority (DNP, 2011; 2012; 2016a; 2016b) revealed that the DNP strongly recommended incorporating into the plan the expectations of the following three stakeholders: the elected local authority, the local communities, and the goals advanced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – i.e., the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Consequently, before we continue elaborating on MDPs, it is essential to remind the reader that, as it was made evident by the table introduced in section 3.4, the Colombian national planning authorities, in the 21st century, have consistently formalised the use of the MDGs and SDGs as valid parameters for development planning.

Continuing with the description of the meaning of MDPs, it is also vital to explain that the participants used the term 'municipal development plans' to refer to two things: a) a strategy and associated tactics formally stated in MDPs and b) tactics not included in MDPs but which have equal force, steering third-sector investment in the direction intended by the municipal authority. The latter is substantiated by the participants' use of metaphors, such as 'sailing against the win' (Erika, head of a local NPO running gender equality programmes) or 'swimming against the tide' (Marta, Director of PSF), to refer to shaping force of less-known policies. I will expand on the nature and implications of less-known municipal tactics later.

Closely reading the DNP's documents revealed two gaps in its approach to formulating MDPs. First, while the DNP stipulates the steps to incorporate the expectations of the elected local authority, the local communities, and the UNDP, the national planning authority did not refer to the potential challenges arising from the attempt to amalgamate the potentially contrasting expectations of these stakeholders. For instance, what should

local authorities do when their aims and the SDGs are mutually exclusive? Or is it reasonable to assume that the DNP did not refer to this matter because it was not expecting regional or municipal authorities to deviate from the institutional goals formulated by the UN? How municipal authorities in Cali dealt with these potential outcomes is discussed below in section 4.4.

As for the second gap, the DNP's documentation does not mention local third-sector organisations and their funding partners. This gap led to a specific search in Cali's MDPs (Alcaldía de Cali 2012; 2016) to establish if and how these instruments prescribe or suggest any role for local NPOs and their national or international donors. References to the third-sector organisations in these MDPs were minimal and contingent on making sense of the term 'intersectoral' as inclusive of not-for-profit entities, which might not be what the local authorities had in mind when they used that term. These findings contradicted the view of many local participants working for NPOs who attested to the influencing force of municipal authorities through their plans on the sector's activity. So, I asked local public policy experts and employees working for the Municipal Planning Department if the view of third-sector participants was ill-informed. Concerning this query, one of the local experts asserted:

No, they are right. Municipal authorities, via MDPs and other less visible mechanisms, have sought to influence the third sector's planning and implementation of development in the city. It would not make any sense to plan without proper consideration of the potential contribution of the third sector to the modernisation of Cali. The city's highest authority is expected to indicate the way forward and unite these other entities under one clear and unique vision (Miguel Araujo).

Other local public policy experts, like Carlos Torres, agreed with Araujo, explaining that there are 'overt and the less obvious ways' in which the municipal authority, through its agenda-setting, has sought to involve and direct the third sector. For instance, Torres explained that 'the last two municipal administrations (at the time of the interview, 2012-15 and 2016-2019) have an office for NPOs, a unit whose sole focus was to engage third-sector organisations', and yet there is little about the remit of this office in the published MDPs. Torres' point is that the office for NPOs, which has been funded by three different administrations (e.g., Alcaldía de Cali, 2020), is the 'overt' aspect of municipal planning. Yet, the approach and tactics of this office constitute the less apparent dimension of municipal planning since the approach and tactics of the office in question are not available to the public; only the outcomes of the office's actions, which are reported by the local press or through press releases issued by the municipal authority.

Torres, Araujo, and informants from the Municipal Planning Department agreed that on paper, within what has been formally presented through MDPs, it is possible to identify two structuring tactics or agenda-setting mechanisms that have been used to indicate, what the relevant social problems are, where they are prevalent, how they should be tackled and what the expected outcome of the intervention is. These agenda-setting mechanisms are the creation of Territories of Opportunities and Inclusion (TIOs in Spanish) and the inception of Municipal Development Councils. This is in addition to stating in clear-cut terms in the MDPs what the social problems are, which municipal department is responsible for coordinating their mitigation and the expected outcome of the interventions. I will elaborate and illustrate how these mechanisms operate in the following section (4.3).

As for the less apparent mechanisms of setting the agenda for the local third sector, these shape intervention activity through how the different departments – the 14 offices responsible for implementing the MDPs – develop inter-sectorial partnerships to jointly undertake extensive local development programmes[54] or outsource small interventions via contracts with very specific objectives. In the next section (3.3.), I will expand on how these agenda-setting mechanisms operate. On the nature of these less apparent mechanisms, Araujo explained:

Let's be clear, these policies, which I have called 'less visible', work through contracts and development agreements that are stated in legal documents. However, you can call them 'less visible' because they are not explicitly stated in the MDPs, which must be presented to the national planning authority (the DNP) for legal validation. These local contracting and partnership agreements fall under the jurisdiction of the municipal entities. Therefore, the local authority has the autonomy and right to determine which organisations it wants to be involved in its modernisation plans and how.

Torres agreed with Araujo's clarification and added that it was essential to bear in mind that the reason why municipal authorities are not expected to foreground the role played by the third sector is that:

The government and its regional or municipal offices are legally responsible for developing the country, so they should not transfer a significant part of that responsibility

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[54] The Tecnocentro Cultural Somos Pacifico is Cali's most extensive social development intervention. It is a multi-partner programme that has social inclusion and income-generation aims at its heart. The centre – which operates from a modern building with a range of facilities and services – is located in the low-income community of Potrero Grande, which has approximately 2,500 people. According to Alvaralice, a local foundation leading the Tecnocentro's income-generation programme, since its inception in 2010 and up to 2014, 2,000 youngsters have been trained by them (Fundación Alvaralice, 2016; 'Tecnocentro Cultural Somos Pacifico', 2020).

to any other sector. And whenever a reasonable amount of this responsibility is transferred, the national or local government should be seen as leading (Torres). Simply put, both experts emphasised that the 'less apparent or visible' mechanisms to direct the third sector are not illegal or somehow dishonest, only not widely made public, which is not a requirement for regional or local planning authorities.

Next, I illustrate how Cali's municipal authorities used the overt/visible and less apparent/ less visible structuring mechanisms (2012-15 and 2016-2019) to set the agenda for the field, the city's third sector. This will lay the foundations for a more in-depth analysis of how macro and meso agendas interact. An interplay that leads to a particular outcome shaping Cali's development interventions at micro level. That outcome will be described in detail in sub-section 4.4.

4.3 On how Cali's municipal authorities shaped the Third Sector

Two Municipal Development Plans came into force for the period that concerns this investigation (2012-2019)[55]. They were formulated by the administrations of the mayors Rodrigo Guerrero Velasco (2012-2015) and Maurice Armitage Cadavid (2016-2019). So, bearing in mind the distinction between 'overt' and 'less apparent' or 'visible' agenda-setting mechanisms, I asked public policy scholars and planning experts to explain how the two MDPs under examination indicated to third-sector organisations which communities should be intervened, what the relevant social problems and goals were and how to address and achieve them.

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[55] The two programmes under study were implemented from the year 2012 onwards. Champions of Peace and Coexistence ran from 2012 to 2019. *Opportunities* was first implemented in 2013 and at the time of writing, the Centre for Community Education (CCE) was planning to keep it in place.

Rodrigo Guerrero Velasco (2012-2015) introduced the concept of Territories of Opportunities and Inclusion (TIOs in Spanish) in his MDP. This was an experimental idea, an approach to identify underdeveloped communities and undertake social interventions. The low-income communities designated as TIOs were those who had high levels of poverty, violence and insecurity, according to official indicators (Torres, public policy and politics scholar).

According to Torres, there was sufficient detail in Guerrero's MDP that could have been used by NPOs to design and guide the implementation of local interventions. For instance, the development priority areas were identified and classified (i.e. rural and urban) (Alcaldía de Cali, 2012, p. 32) (see diagrams in section 3.4). Also, under the term 'programmes', Guerrero's MDP listed a series of objectives and their associated actions (Alcaldía de Cali, 2012, pp. 34-45). These were presented in a manner intended to facilitate the design of interventions that would be appropriately aligned with the municipal development agenda. Simply put, Guerrero's designation of TIOs indicated to the third sector which communities should be intervened.

The preferred development objectives (e.g., gender equality, 2012, p. 102) and types of intervention were also clearly indicated. For instance, the table below, from Guerrero's MDP (Alcaldía de Cali, 2012, p. 103), describes the name and form of intervention (see first column, from left to right, named 'Nombre'), the performance measurement to be used (e.g., a percentage or number of people expected to be involved or benefited) (see second column, named 'Unidad de medida'), the baseline employed to appraise the performance of the interventions (see third column, called 'Linea base 2011'), the goal stated in numbers (see fourth column, named 'Meta 2012-2015') and the municipal department or governmental entity responsible for the intervention (see, fifth column).

The departments or national entities would determine how NPOs could aid in pursuing the prescribed objectives (e.g., equality in Cali).

Indicadores de Producto

Nombre	Unidad de medida	Línea base 2011	Meta 2012-2015	Responsable
Organizaciones de mujeres fortalecidas y apoyadas en sus iniciativas comunitarias.	Número	100	250	Secretaría de Desarrollo Territorial y Bienestar Social
Estrategia permanente de Información Educación y Comunicación (IEC), en el reconocimiento y fomento de acciones afirmativas para la diversidad sexual.	Número	0	1	Secretarías de Desarrollo Territorial y Bienestar Social, Educación, Cultura y Turismo, Secretaría General - Asesoría de Género
Servidores Públicos de la Administración Municipal con capacidades y formación para el desempeño de la función pública con perspectiva de género.	Número	0	200	Secretaría de Desarrollo Territorial y Bienestar Social, Secretaría General - Asesoría de Género
Política Pública de Población con Diversidad Sexual y de Género formulada e implementada.	Número	0	1	Secretaría de Desarrollo Territorial y Bienestar Social
Mujeres que participan en procesos artísticos y culturales.	Número	300	600	Secretaría de Cultura y Turismo

Concerning Armitage's MDP, Torres believed that it continued what Guerrero started but under the name 'territorial intervention strategy'; however, Armitage's MDP provided much more detail and achieved better results[56].

Armitage's MDP (2016-2019) put forward his development aims linked to social conditions. Each of these was matched to several intervention programmes and their respective goals. A strong rationale and references to national policy goals and legal targets underpinned his development aims. Another thing that stands out is how this MDP enhanced the concept of TIOs and linked them to national and international agendas in a way Guerrero didn't. In Guerrero's MDP, there were just a couple of references to the

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[56] Torres added that Guerrero's MDP introduced some fresh thinking, but the execution of his plan was not the best one. For instance, his administration spent only 87% of the overall budget for the period and the bulk of the expenditure seemed to have been directed to covering the office's bureaucracy. This led to an insignificant increment in the index of quality of life for the city, with a fall in average income per household, during that period. This opinion aligns with the outcome of the appraisal of Guerrero's tenure, conducted by the office of local planning (Alcaldía de Cali, 2017). According to the parameters established by the National Department for Planning, Armitage's administration met a minimum of 60% of its targets, in all the areas of intervention specified in his MDP (Alcaldía de Cali, 2019b).

Millennium Development Goals and how these were relevant to the National Strategy for

Overcoming Extreme Poverty through the Red Unidos (Together Network[57]*).*

No.	Indicador de resultado	Unidad de medida	Línea base	Meta	Responsable	ODS	Cierre de Brechas
29.	Cobertura neta en educación inicial	Porcentaje	18,3	21,1	Secretaría de Educación		
30.	Analfabetismo para personas mayores de 15 años	Porcentaje	3,2	2,48	Secretaría de Educación		
31.	Pruebas Saber 11, en instituciones educativas oficiales, Matemática	Puntaje	49,8	51,3	Secretaría de Educación		
32.	Pruebas Saber 11, en instituciones educativas oficiales, Lenguaje (Lectura crítica)	Puntaje	50,7	52,2	Secretaría de Educación		
33.	Cumplimiento de las atenciones iniciales universales definidas en la Ruta Integral de Atenciones - RIA en niñas y niños de los nidos	Porcentaje	52	90	Secretaría de Educación		
34.	Homicidios	Defunciones por 100.000 hab.	57,9	45,3	Secretaría de Seguridad y Justicia		
35.	Homicidios en mujeres	Defunciones por 100.000 mujeres	7,6	5,9	Secretaría de Seguridad y Justicia		
36.	Hurto a personas por cada 100 mil habitantes	Por 100.000 hab.	518	415,4	Secretaría de Seguridad y Justicia		
37.	Bandas criminales desarticuladas	Número	160	260	Secretaría de Seguridad y Justicia		
38.	Mortalidad en menores de 5 años	Defunciones por 1.000 nacidos vivos	10,02	9,1	Secretaría de Salud Pública		
39.	Cobertura de vacunación en niños menores de un año con tercera dosis de pentavalente	Porcentaje	95	95	Secretaría de Salud Pública		

For instance, the table above, from Armitage's MDP (Alcaldía de Cali, 2016, p. 197),

describes the objective (see first column, from left to right, named 'Indicador de

resultado'), the performance measurement to be used (e.g., a percentage) (see second

column, called 'Unidad de medida'), the baseline employed to appraise the performance

of the interventions (see third column, named 'Linea base'), the goal stated (see fourth

column, called 'Meta'), the municipal department or governmental entity responsible for

the intervention (see, fifth column) and the relevant SDG (see, sixth column, named

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[57] The Colombian government has a National Agency for Overcoming Extreme Poverty, which works with all the local administrations based on the parameters established in the Red Unidos strategy. International cooperation is used to help families classed as facing extreme poverty to overcome this problem and acquire the minimum conditions in the following 'dimensions of human development': income, employment, housing, access to financial services, nutrition, health, access to the justice system, education, and family environment (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2006).

'ODS') and the socio-economic problems or 'gaps', stated in the national plan for development (see, seventh column, called 'Cierre de brechas').

Daniela Samper, who has worked over 30 years in municipal planning for the DNP's office in Cali, confirmed that Guerrero and Armitage's administrations used their MDPs to indicate to all third-sector organisations, including international grant-making foundations, how to design their interventions and where to intervene. About the other overt mechanism to shape the third-sector activity, the Municipal Development Councils, Samper elaborated on their origin and purpose:

The Colombia Congress passed a law – number 152 of 1994 – by which the Municipal Development Councils were formally created. These have been the outlets through which Guerrero and Armitage sought to engage the third sector and other social actors – like universities – in municipal planning. These councils were used to get developers together and, in doing so, encourage the creation of cross-sector partnerships and find how the different organisations could contribute to achieving the goals established in the MDPs.

So, in this particular context, the Municipal Development Councils are not only spaces to encourage organisations from different sectors to present development ideas but also to get these organisations to work directly with the municipal authority or set partnerships for development (e.g., CDRs). During the administrations examined by this investigation, the latter were encouraged because these partnerships would be persuaded to run programmes that contribute to attaining the MDPs' goals (2012-2019). In other words, those organisations who preferred to intervene through CDRs were also persuaded to swim with, not against, the municipal agenda.

So, in line with the above, and similarly to what Guerrero did, Armitage's MDP made clear that the mitigation of the social conditions in TIOs was happening through robust interventions implemented through cross-sector partnerships (Alcaldía de Cali, 2016, pp. 26, 27, 38, 40, 42, 56, 74, 80, 96). According to some local participants, the concept of cross-sector partnerships has been a 'big incentive' because it made clear that any NPO willing to enter into an association under the terms dictated by the local authority would receive financial support. Miriam Lizarralde – director of a local NPO offering nursing services – elaborated on this matter:

Guerrero and Armitage's administrations increased the number of pathways through which ESALs[58] could work with the local authority; that was a positive change. In the past, ESALs tended to rely on electoral campaign promises made by some political actors, who would come for a picture, for the positive association with us during a campaign and after they would disappear.

Summarising, municipal planning nudged Cali's third sector in a particular direction through different agenda-setting structuring manoeuvres, like placing cross-sector partnerships at the heart of the city's plans. Local public policy experts categorised the latter action as a 'less visible mechanism' for setting the third sector's agenda. However, the notion of 'less visible mechanisms' could be challenged if we consider that partnerships are deemed essential by the UN when it comes to the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs), as prescribed by the 2030 agenda for sustainable development (UN, 2021; Stibbe and Prescott, 2020). However, the latter was categorised as a less visible agenda-setting mechanism because it relies on exploiting tensions to

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[58] Entidades Sin Animo de Lucro (ESALs) is the legal term used in Colombia to designate NPOs.

become effective. Whether or not municipal authorities were fully aware of it is something I could not establish. I will expand on the tensions below.

So, concerning the proposed coordination of development action, unifying municipal and local third-sector efforts, it came with strings attached, categorised by participants as non-apparent strings. About the term 'strings', Erika Rojas – head of a local NPO running gender equality training courses – clarifies its meaning in this context:

On the one hand, having more ways to connect my training courses with what the local authority was doing at the time helped our finances – it helped diversify our income source. On the other hand, working with the municipal authority required a fair amount of reengineering of the original idea. It was not an easy compromise (Rojas).

Elaborating on the same topic but placing emphasis on why NPOs still considered partnering directly with the municipal authority despite strict requirements, Lizarralde explained:

Of course, under Guerrero and Armitage, we faced more scrutiny and red tape, and yet only a few people were complaining because they made the local third sector less dependable on private funding.

In allusion to the tension created and open to be exploited by the municipal authority, participants expressed being caught between two equally tricky options: changing their programmes to secure municipal funding or aligning their programmes to the agendas of private donors to increase their chances of securing a funding grant. According to the participants, private funding is more generous and paid regularly, which is not the case

for those contracted directly by the municipal authority. The same participants explained that private funding is inflexible; it cannot be used for purposes not established in the grant contract.

So, to deal with the tension above, some participants indicated that their NPOs created different initiatives tackling the same social condition. This enabled them to seek funding from the municipal authority for one of the programmes and simultaneously pursue private funding from national or international donors for similar projects or programmes. The funding from private donors would be used to secure the inception of the intervention. The money from the municipal authority would be used to expand or cross-subsidise aspects of the original intervention not included under the grant application or to support similar programmes.

An important programme for the municipal administration during 2016-19, 'Communities Banks' (Alcaldía de Cali, 2018), illustrates the above. The director of an NPO creating these banks – administered by and for local communities marginalised by the Colombian financial sector – explained that her organisation's involvement in this programme became a means to cross-subsidise similar interventions.

We have programmes that tackle unemployment through different mechanisms, such as providing training, internships and advice on how to set up a micro-venture. So, the funding used to set up a bank in a community helps us subsidise activities relevant to the other programmes. For instance, a workshop on how to manage money could be used to provide advice for those interested in becoming bank members and train those interested in creating their own micro-retailing business (Gabriela, NPO director).

In sum, the different testimonies of the participants substantiate and illustrate how the agenda-setting mechanisms of the municipal authority shape how micro-level interventions are run and potentially reformulated to ensure their viability. More specifically, the participants' views reveal a tension created by municipal agenda-setting between the choices of consistency and inflexibility of private funding and inconsistency but the flexibility of municipal development contracts.

This interaction of agendas at different levels is increasingly complex (e.g., meso and micro-level) because it encompasses other agendas – for instance, the agendas of the local NPOs' partners who might agree with or perceive cross-subsidising as a factor getting in the way of their organisational plans for an intervention. This is why, at the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned the cascading or compounding effect of agendas, which is expected to shape micro-level activity ultimately. The complete examination of micro-level tensions will be provided in chapters 5 and 6.

In the meantime, we focus on the interaction between macro and meso agendas. This interplay could reinforce or challenge a top-down order to mitigate the agenda-setting cascading effect. The intention of establishing the presence of any of these types of outcomes is to understand their implications for micro-level activity. Next, I touch upon this matter by focusing on one of the city's municipal authority's critical 'overt' planning policies, establishing and developing Territories of Opportunities and Inclusion (TIOs). In particular, I touch upon what influenced the concept and its implementation in Cali –, and I also elaborate on how social conditions in the city were identified as such and, therefore, elevated to the status of social problems, validating them as targets of development intervention.

4.4 The hybridisation of Cali's development agenda

The review of Armitage's MDP revealed that the national and international development agendas influenced two vital aspects of municipal planning: the definition of Cali's social conditions and the conceptualisation of TIOs. The specific sources consulted by the municipal authority to inform the formulation of its plans were the National Department for Planning (DNP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The DNP is one of Colombia's most influential governmental departments regarding investment in development[59]. It is involved in formulating the government's strategic vision, the national allocation of financial resources, and monitoring the implementation of all socio-economic public policies (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2021). The strategic vision of each Colombian government is made public through different agenda-setting documents generated by the DNP; one of them is the National Plan for Development. Armitage's MDP embraced the concept of 'brechas', which, in English, means 'gaps' and was introduced by the 2014-2018 National Plan for Development. In light of that notion, Armitage's administration formulated its development approach and defined the social problems relevant to Cali (Alcaldía de Cali, 2016, pp. 15, 24, 27, 40, 51, 53, 192 -200). Paradoxically, neither Armitage's MDP nor the National Plan for Development 2014-2018 explicitly defined what 'gaps' are. Nevertheless, it is implied that these gaps are socio-economic conditions hindering the achievement of 'peace, equality, and education'. The latter constitute 'the three pillars' or critical development

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[59] Colombia's highest national planning authority is *The National Council for Economic and Social Policy* (in Spanish, Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social – CONPES). It advises the government on the social and economic development of the nation. That advice is presented in a document called CONPES Document. There are two types of CONPES documents: Social CONPES and Economic CONPES. These documents contain all the approved socio-economic measures that should guide the different ministries and departments of the government. The DNP aids the CONPES in its formulation of the agenda of policies and their implementation, and it also relays many of the policies in the CONPES documents through other publications such as the *National Plan for Development* (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2021).

challenges for the country during 2014-2018 (Departamento Nacional de Planeación 2014, p. 5). The number of gaps or social problems introduced in the national plan is considerable; however, the most pressing ones could be inferred from how they were linked to the goals relevant to the three pillars of 'peace, equality, and education'. The following diagram (2014, p. 9) lists each pillar's key goals and problems.

At the top of the diagram in blue, orange and green – from right to left – are the three pillars 'peace, equality, and education'. Under each pillar are at least five goals and attendant social problems or gaps (in black letters) identified as relevant to all regions and municipalities in Colombia (e.g., multidimensional poverty, unemployment, crime, rural
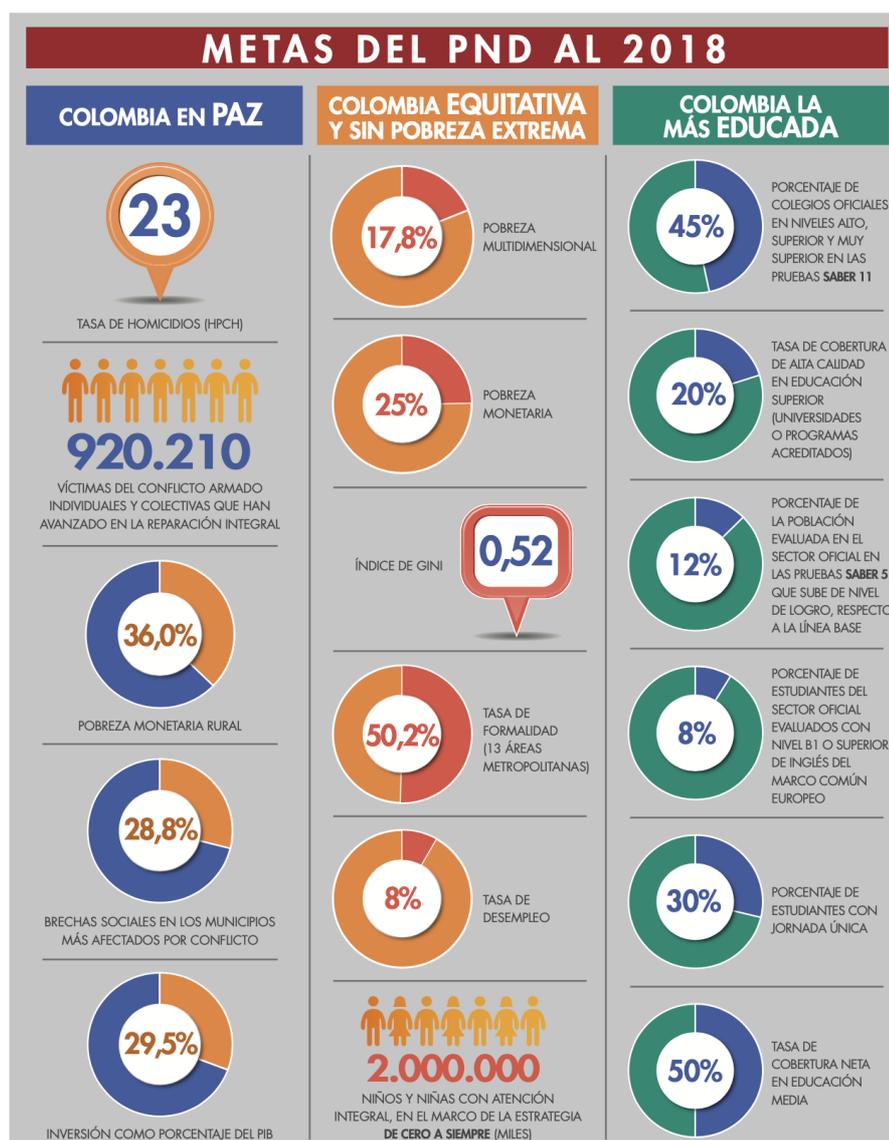
monetary poverty). In Armitage's MDP, the social problems identified by the national agenda which are specific to Cali's region (Cauca's Valley)[60] were linked to five areas in need of development (i.e., diversity, sustainability, peace, entrepreneurship, and governance), so the municipal investment went into enhancing the city's development in these areas for the period 2016-2019.

Armitage's administration's adoption of the national agenda for development is much more noticeable when looking at how 'peace' was articulated in his MDP. This was done through explicit references to the national strategy for this pillar (Alcaldía de Cali, 2016, pp. 130-152). This is expected, as peace has been Colombia's central and persistent challenge for the whole 20th century and beyond, linked in all the documentation examined to other social conditions, and therefore, no local or national authority could credibly presume to be capable of single-handedly achieving that goal or attempt to overlook it. The following comment in Armitage's MDP illustrates the latter:

'The National Government is advancing in the negotiation process with the armed groups that have expressed their intention to participate in the peace process. In light of the current peace agreements, it is essential to mention that the country — and in this case, the city of Cali — must prepare for new conflict situations. The impact on the city manifests in two ways: on the one hand, it hosts a population that is the victim of these dynamics and, on the other hand, the violence generated by the struggles for the control and regulation of illegal businesses causes a high number of homicides, threats, intra-urban displacements, forced recruitment of minors' (Departamento Nacional de Planeación 2014, pp. 131-152).

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[60] Cali is the capital of the geographical region called Valle del Cauca (in English, Cauca's Valley). The river Cauca is vital historical and socio-economic feature of the region.

The UNDP's contribution to the definition of social conditions in Cali under Armitage's administration came from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The review of Armitage's MDP indicated that the SDGs were given the same weight accorded to the national 'gaps' and crucially were also linked to all the progress performance indicators (e.g. Alcaldía de Cali, 2016, pp. 192-200) (see previous table in section 4.3). So, it is worth emphasising that in Armitage's MDP, both sources – the DNP and the UNDP – were treated as equally important in their contribution to the formulation of the municipal strategy, as substantiated by the following quote:

'The municipal authority has embraced two approaches – which together are needed to achieve significant progress in economic, social, political, environmental, administrative, and territorial areas of development. The first of these approaches promotes the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) established by the Sustainable Development Agenda 2015, which seeks inclusive development impacting the causes of poverty. The second approach proposes to close the gaps prescribed by the National Plan for Development 2014-2018. This plan seeks to expand individuals' capacity, options, and opportunities through providing education, health, and housing, among other services. By articulating both approaches and monitoring progress through indicators, we will be able to achieve the shared vision of the municipality' (Alcaldía de Cali, 2016, p.192).

Before we discuss the reasons behind this balanced influence of development approaches on the construction of a municipal agenda for intervention, it is crucial to examine if this was also the case for the formulation of the concept of TIOs, in particular, the reviewed version of this notion advanced by Armitage's administration.

Armitage's definition of TIOs was based on a notion called *healthy environments* (Alcaldía de Cali, 2016, pp. 9,14, 22, 27, 57), a concept that is central to the national Strategy for Healthy Environments (SHE) (Ministerio de Salud de Colombia, 2021). This strategy results from a combination of different ideas, which are part of national and continental agendas for improving health, sanitary and environmental conditions at home, work and school in low-income communities. The origin of the SHE can be traced to the European initiative for healthy cities, which informed policy formulation in Colombia during the early 1990s and led to a series of development interventions jointly undertaken by national and municipal authorities, together with the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO)[61]. These interventions sought to build capacity – improving the infrastructure and their relevant services – and develop capacity through enhancing the existing skills and knowledge of individuals (Ministerio de Protección Social de Colombia, 2006, p.18, 19, 47). As a result of this continuous joint effort, in 2006, the PAHO and the Colombian government formalised this collaborative relationship in the form of the *Inter-institutional Cooperation Agenda for the Development of Strategy for Healthy Environments* (PAHO/WHO, 2009, p.18). A key document outlining the history, scope and goals of the SHE, named *Healthy Environments and Territorial Development in Colombia* (2009), explains that the SHE is underpinned by the constitutional mandate of 1991 to start a decentralisation process[62].

Centralisation had limited the autonomy of municipal authorities – giving them minimal say on how financial resources would be allocated and how they should be spent in some areas, such as health. Concerning that issue, the same document explains that the aim of

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[61] PHO is the continental branch of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

[62] Colombia got a new constitution in 1991, replacing the old body of law of 1886. One of the key aspects of the new constitution was to push for the creation of 'a unitary and decentralised Republic, in which territorial entities have autonomy' (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2002).

the inter-institutional arrangement between the government and the PAHO is to help Colombia to achieve its development goals, and that would be done against the backdrop of 'a process of deepening decentralisation, which inspired the principle of strengthening territorial bodies. These bodies should establish social processes that minimise risks and promote health in different environments (...)' (PAHO/WHO 2009, p. 14). This territorial strategy sought to empower the municipal authorities and other local third-sector actors by making them the key implementers of the SHE and, in doing so, justifying the financial resources they needed (p. 25). As it is made clear by the following lines in Armitage's MDP, all these considerations informed municipal planning for Cali in the period 2016-2019:

'In light of the previous experience of the municipal authority concerning TIOs (2012-15), and also taking into account the guidelines stated in the Strategy for Healthy Environments, this Municipal Development Plan (2016-2019) proposes a plan for the implementation of inter-sectorial interventions in territories that have been deemed a priority based on the analysis of social vulnerability indicators'[63] (...) (Alcaldía de Cali, 2016, p.26).

Summarising, the review of the documentary evidence indicates that both the formulation of the concept of TIOs and the parameters to classify low-income communities as TIOs have been informed in equal measure by ideas and initiatives that belong to national and international agendas for development. The same observation applies to the definition of

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[63] In Armitage's MDP (2016), the social vulnerability indicators establish the prevalence of the following social problems: unemployment, homicides, child mortality, infant malnutrition, high cases of Dengue, Chikungunya and Zika, high levels of school dropout, increasing reliance on welfare support, minimal access to sport, cultural, educational and environmental activities and venues, high numbers of victims of conflict and integration after demobilisation. The last two concern those affected by the internal conflict and former fighters who abandoned the fight to become civilians.

Cali's social conditions. This combination of ideas from different agendas and the municipality's views on development led to a hybrid approach to planning, as described above in Armitage's MDP's own words. So, what motivated this hybridisation of local planning? What additional factors played a role in the municipal authority's agenda-setting process? And what does this hybridisation process tell us about the direction of influence between the different agendas involved?

4.5 On the factors contributing to hybridisation

Regarding the reasons that could have led to this hybrid approach, it is worth mentioning that the money to fund Cali's development plans comes from the central government and the city's revenue. According to the Law 175 of 2001, article 85, the DNP determines how much money will be sent to the territorial authorities – regional and municipal – to cover expenditure in the provision of services, such as education and health, and to fund any associated development programmes. Amongst the factors taken into consideration to determine the amount of money to be sent to each local authority are: the national macroeconomic growth forecast – which tells the DNP how much money will be available to spend nationally – and the municipal investment efficiency indicators, used to appraise how the allocated money has been spent by each authority (DNP, 2019, p.17-18). So, if money is not used efficiently, that would be considered when allocating resources.

The city's revenue mainly consists of the taxes each municipal authority can collect and retain for investment in the city's projects. When local taxes are not enough to fund the MDPs, municipal authorities seek additional resources from the relevant ministries or central dependencies by submitting investment proposals, which are assessed before and

during the execution of a development programme. Samper – a municipal planner working at the DNP's office in Cali – elaborated on the sourcing of financial resources for local development and its impact on municipal planning:

For Cali and any other city in the country, the money from the central government is vital; without it, any municipal development plan would become unviable. That is why all the planning put forward through the MDPs must be justified by linking it to the national objectives. We at the local level use online planning tools that allow us to match the MDPs' goals with the financial resources to be disbursed and the money that has been already disbursed so we can monitor the progress of the investment and subsequently make recommendations on the continuation of funding and future disbursements to the municipal authority.

Consequently, for all municipal authorities, it would be detrimental to ignore the development agenda of the central government, even if that was legally possible. According to the DNP's figures (February 2021), central funding amounted to 39% of the total financial resources available to Cali's municipal authority that year. The remaining funds, 43%, came from unspecified sources and 18% from the municipal authority's coffers. However, about this dependency on the central government, Samper noted that it could be lessened by seeking funding from other sources, for instance, international donors. Samper added that Cali's municipal authority has an office that raises resources from international development organisations. In September 2017, under Armitage's administration, the municipal authority created the 'Office for Relationships and Cooperation'. The office was set up to 'identify offerings of technical and financial resources, from public or private entities, national or international, that could be of interest to the municipality' (Alcaldía de Cali, 2017b).

The information provided by Samper led to the assumption that Cali's municipal authorities pursued the legitimation and financial viability of the city's development plans within the boundaries of a reasonable interpretation of 'autonomy'. Gustavo Valverde, a policy implementation and governance scholar, was asked to comment on this matter.

Municipal authorities should create development plans that are consistent with the national objectives. That is stated in the law 152 of 1994, article 32, which dictates how development plans are created, implemented and monitored. That partially explains the linking and sourcing from national plans; these actions are expected, according to the law. However, because regional and municipal authorities are autonomous, these actions are also motivated by convenience, as they facilitate the co-financing of investment in municipal development (Valverde).

Article 32 clearly states that 'territorial entities have autonomy on the subject of planning social, economic and environmental development' (...) 'according to the national constitution, and current law'; however, 'their plans, without limiting their autonomy, must take into account the policies and strategies of the national plan for development' (Article 32, Law 152 of 1994) (Colombian Congress, 1994). This has allowed the municipal authorities to develop an interpretation of autonomy, which in turn influenced decision-making on the degree of sourcing from the national and international development agendas.

Expanding on autonomy, according to the content analysis of planning documents (e.g., MDPs) issued between 2016 and 2019, the country's 32 regional and 31 municipal authorities have an inconsistent 'commitment' to the SDGs (Departamento Nacional de

Planeación, 2018, pp. 11-12). In this CONPES[64] document 3918, in which this analysis was published, 'commitment' was defined as something expressed by territorial authorities through the identification and inclusion of the SDGs, pledges to pursue the achievement of SDGs and the willingness to monitor the progress of interventions designed to achieve the SDGs, as stated in the regional or municipal plans. The content analysis results indicated that 24% of the regional and municipal development plans firmly committed to the SDGs. Armitage's MDP showed a 'high' degree of commitment. Regarding the rest of the documents, 38% of the regional and municipal plans showed a 'medium' commitment to the SDGs, and the other 38% showed a 'general' commitment to the same goals (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2018, p. 12).

In light of all the above, it is reasonable to assume that, on the one hand, Armitage's administration didn't want to be accused of ignoring national policies on development imparted by the DNP. It is worth mentioning that Articles 356 and 357 of the Colombian Constitution establish that the country's resources must be shared with the different regional and local authorities to finance the provision of public services, such as health, education, and local development plans. However, as explained above, the amount of money to cover local development is calculated by the DNP based on forecasts and estimations of national macroeconomic growth and other variables such as efficient use of resources (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2019, p. 4). So, making clear that coercion is neither policy nor practice, local planning experts also mentioned that local authorities regularly complain about how resources are distributed. Therefore, the legal requirement and the appeasement of national planners to avoid a delay or a reduction in

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[64] About the CONPES documents, the CONPES 91 (2005) registers the formal commitment of Colombia to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It describes the relevant context, such as figures and analysis that guided the national approach to achieving the MDGs. The CONPES 3918 (2018) covers the nation's commitment to the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs and the relevant strategy to accomplish these goals.

the provision of municipal funds could be considered crucial factors behind the inclusion of national development goals in Cali's MDP.

On the other hand, the abundant inclusion of SDGs in Armitage's development plan was done to signal that the city would welcome, facilitate and confer legitimacy to development interventions funded by private donors, grant-making foundations and other multilateral organisations committed to achieving the SDGs. Hence, Valverde and Samper agreed that adopting SDGs to attract investment in local development programmes is likely the key driver behind Cali's hybrid agenda. On this matter, Valverde explained – based on his experience working for the UN – that it would be easier for the UNDP to launch a programme in a municipality whose authority has made its commitment to the institutional development goals (e.g., the SDGs) official. For instance, the project 'Manos a la Paz' (in English, We Can Make Peace) was launched during the first year of Armitage's administration (2016), with a budget of 4 million dollars. It has been funded by Cali's municipality, the UNDP, the British Council, and the European Union[65]. According to the project's rationale:

'The coordination with national organisations – at all levels – is critical to achieving the objectives of Manos a la Paz. However, this coordination could be time-consuming and delay the relevant processes. Therefore, assertive communication with the local authorities will ensure the transfer of knowledge and sustainability of the project' (UNDP, 2016, p. 3).

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[65] This illustrates the meaning of 'co-financing', a term used by Valverde above.

This indicates that although the UNDP identified different urban areas across Colombia in which strengthening co-existence and peace was a priority, the degree of commitment to the SDGs and the local authority's openness to 'knowledge' about the UNDP's specific objectives were crucial conditions for the agency to decide where to invest their funds. No doubt Armitage's Office for Relationships and Cooperation was receptive enough to the UNDP's 'knowledge', specific goals and 'assertive communication'. It is worth mentioning that long-term programmes like Manos a la Paz supplement municipal employment initiatives since these interventions contract local NPOs and other services (e.g., transport). Hence, this is another incentive for municipal authorities to land these interventions, as they boost employment figures.

4.6 Assumptions

The evidence presented in this chapter sheds light on the interaction of international, national, and municipal agendas and other concomitant factors shaping development in Colombia. The outcome of this interaction, established by this investigation, is hybrid agendas for municipal development that secured governmental and international funding by adopting national and international institutional development goals (i.e., MDGs and SDGs). This finding strengthens the view that the macro-level agenda also dictates the meso and micro-level agendas.

In this case, the evidence indicates that the municipal administrations studied not only formally showed commitment to tackled problems and goals prescribed by the international institutional agenda but also that Cali's local authorities used overt and less visible agenda-setting mechanisms to shape the city's third-sector programmes. The analysis of evidence gathered from cases 2 and 3 will confirm if this route – meso-

municipal to micro-CDRs – also reflects the cascading effect argued by critical development scholarship (i.e., agenda-setting transmission from macro to micro level). The findings concerning the latter are introduced in chapters 5 and 6.

Nevertheless, discussing the variation in the commitment to meet the SDGs shown by the different regional and municipal Colombian authorities is still relevant. For instance, the significant adoption of the macro-institutional agenda by only 24% of the regional authorities, including Cali and other big municipalities like Medellín and Bogotá, suggests these authorities are outliers.

Regarding the characterisation of outliers, Valverde explained that the cities mentioned above, due to their comparatively larger job markets – attract better qualified public administration staff, so their municipal authorities are more capable of formulating a development strategy that relies on different sources of financing, not just the central government. Samper agreed and added that based on the experience of the DNP's staff working in other cities, the degree of qualification and know-how in planning is uneven across the country, with the three most prominent cities of the nation attracting better-equipped planers and authorities. In other words, the moderated alignment with the global institutional agenda exhibited by some regional and municipal authorities could be explained by the lack of qualification of their staff and limited know-how in sourcing alternatives to the national agenda, which means that their moderated adoption of the SDGs should not be understood as a steadfast commitment to the national agenda.

Equally important is that the national planning authority, the DNP, deemed it concerning that although all the regional and municipal authorities adopted the SDGs, 76% registered a moderate commitment to achieving them. This concern aligns with the pledges made

by successive Colombian governments since 2005 to adopt the international institutional agenda for development (Departamento Nacional de Planeación 2005; 2011; 2018).

Conversely, my analysis of Colombia's problem space shows that consecutive governments have been inconsistent in pursuing global institutional goals (for further details, see section 3.4). Also, the different national planning documents reviewed argue that the Colombian authorities and the UN determine the goals pertinent to the country and how the nation will pursue them. Simply put, Colombia is setting its agenda with the support of the UN, not adopting the global institutional agenda. The following assertion of national autonomy, made in the CONPES 91, illustrates the point:

'The country's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals does not limit its actions in terms of social policy to these objectives. On the contrary, our strategy is much broader; it includes fundamental objectives and goals pursued through high-impact social programs, which have shown very favourable results in the construction and conservation of human capital by directing investment to poor and vulnerable population groups' (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2005, p. 3).

So, what is the Colombian government trying to achieve through these apparent contradictory actions? And what are the potential unintended consequences? There are different assumptions arising from the seemingly conflicting agenda-setting manoeuvres mentioned above. For instance, the Colombian authorities are, on paper, committing to the international institutional agenda. The benefit of doing it is avoiding negative interpretations and the implications of being framed as a medium or low-development country due to a lack of commitment to tackling social problems according to institutional

parameters and standards. The latest Human Development Report indicates Colombia is a 'High human development' country (UNDP, 2022).

Even on paper, the negative consequence of a solid alignment with the UN agenda is the perception that its global institutional agenda has either primacy over Colombia's agenda or is somehow equally important. For example, the hybrid agenda outcome shows that, at least in all the documentation examined, the municipal planners incorporated all the agendas. Furthermore, it is unclear if Cali's municipal authorities were aware of or sought to establish if the Colombian government had already agreed to include some of the global agenda items (e.g., social problems and concomitant goals) as part of the national agenda to be relayed to all the regions and municipalities. So, the local authorities could have pursued the national agenda, which already incorporates the UN agenda. Instead, they adopted a strong alignment with the latter, arguing it has a similar weight to the national one. This led to a compounding effect, minimising the significance of the national agenda vis-a-vis the international institutional one. These potential outcomes – apparent parity or absolute primacy of the global institutional agenda – in a context of limited resources for development could lead to the displacement of national goals simply because there is no funding to pursue them.

Finally and equally crucial, the potential on-paper commitment to the international institutional agenda might be signalling, not just to municipal authorities but to the third-sector organisations operating in Colombia, that the nation's agenda should be treated in a manner that suits these organisations. In other words, in a ranking of potential sources of legitimacy, the Colombian agenda could come second or third depending on how the different organisational agendas of the NPOs in a CDR are negotiated and/or synthesised into one. This concerns the analysis of micro-level agenda setting in chapters 5 and 6.

Chapter 5 – Findings

On problem definition

5.1 Introduction

Who is responsible for defining a social problem and, hence, must promote and legitimise it? Governments, multilateral development organisations, NPOs, think tanks and educational institutions, among others, regularly highlight the severity and incidence of specific social conditions, aiming at turning these into legitimate grievances, and therefore worthy of being part of the dominant international, national and local agendas for development (Clark, 1995; T. G. Weiss, Gordenker, and Thomas J. Watson, Jr., 1996; Willetts, 1996; Joachim, 2003; Garrow and Hasenfeld, 2014).

Based on the above, it would be reasonable to assume that there are multiple definitions of a problem vying for legitimation at any point in time. While that legitimacy is granted, macro, meso and micro-level organisations continue tackling problems in a way that reflects their current understanding of a social condition. So, in the context of development, how does the interaction between the different definitions of a condition unfold? Which factors shape the competition between definitions of a social problem? Which definitions are expected to have the upper hand, and why? These questions informed my fieldwork and analysis of findings.

Also, developing countries actively campaign to place their social problems in the international development agendas to attract resources. However, according to development scholars, the social problems' agendas have been predominantly shaped by wealthy nations and their funding organisations (Saith, 2006; Vandemoortele, 2009;

Hulme, 2010; Schuftan, 2013). At the heart of this top-down approach to constructing agendas is the United Nations and its agencies (e.g., The UNDP) (Waage et al., 2010; Comim, 2015). Disenchanted with the top-down status quo, some developing countries have, in recent years, invested more resources in the analysis of their problems, their positioning, and the formulation of national and local agendas (Horn and Grugel, 2018). In the light of these two seemingly contrasting ways in which problems are owned and the agendas formulated, it became relevant to this investigation to understand how Colombian NPOs and their partners problematise. Are their problems formulated in light of local problem spaces? How does the problem definition process unfold? Or are the NPOs' problems chosen from multilateral, national or municipal agendas? And what are the internal dynamics shaping the selection of a problem to be tackled by NPOs in CDRs?

So, to cover the questions posed above, the following sections of this chapter offer an analysis of the moments of sense-breaking, sense-making and sense-giving experienced by the partners running *Opportunities* (OP), a development programme for youngsters living in Cali's TIOs. During these moments, the OP's partners attempted to establish, agree on, and negotiate which social problems are relevant to this programme. The structuring and rhetorical dimensions of OP's problematisation are foregrounded in this chapter by identifying the attendant asymmetries, tensions and frames that shape the programme's problem definition. Also, this chapter discusses the problem definition outcomes and their broader implications. One impactful implication emerges from my analysis, *the dislocation paradox*; this paradox will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

5.2 On the nature of *Opportunities* (2013-ongoing)

Since its inception in 2013, *Opportunities* (OP) has offered psychosocial support and vocational training to youngsters who live in Cali's TIOs. The psychosocial support offered by NPOs in Cali consists of counselling sessions and reflection activities designed to encourage those aided by a programme to reconsider their 'limiting', 'problematic' and 'negative' personal attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, according to some psychologists leading these sessions.

Youngsters living in TIOs have unsuitable behaviours for an office or workplace. In general, their views, for instance, about the role of women in society are different from what other socio-economic groups see women doing and achieving. There are reasons for these views, so we want the trainees to identify them and question how they contribute to their personal and professional development (Rosana – The CCE's psychosocial support unit).

As the quote above substantiates, OP's psychosocial support is informed by responsibilisation, the blaming of individuals exclusively or mainly for their circumstances, which takes precedence over attributing structural factors any role in causing the social problems suffered by individuals (Wakefield and Fleming, 2009; Pyysiäinen, Halpin, and Guilfoyle, 2017; McNulty Norton, 2021). In this case, responsibilisation manifests through the perception that those living in TIOs tend to have problematic attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that have contributed significantly to their situation (e.g., unemployment). This responsibilisation is reminiscent of sociological and public-policy work advocating the disenfranchisement of communities from social problematisation, in other words, their dislocation (see section 2.2.4). The latter is based

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on the premise that to resolve a problem, you should be able to see it first; however, the responsibilised individual is deemed incapable of seeing his/her/their problems because they are the problem. In Cali, psychosocial support is considered the remedy to that blindness, according to participants. This has other implications for problematisation that will become evident later as more evidence is added.

The vocational training component of OP has always been outsourced to small and legally recognised educational organisations known in Colombia as ITPs (Technical-Professional Institutions in English). ITPs are, in turn, overseen by the National Service for Learning (in Spanish SENA). Since its inception, the OP has offered vocational training in the following occupations: automotive mechanic of cars and motorcycles, bartender, and chef.

The vocational training and psychosocial support provided through OP are arranged by the Centre for Community Education (CCE), a local NPO, which is in charge of managing the different aspects of the programme, such as selecting the applicants, liaising with the vocational training partners, providing psychosocial support, finding placement opportunities, and monitoring the trainees during and after the programme's completion.

So, when I first asked the CCE's staff about the reasons for the changing nature of the training provided by OP, one-year bartending and the following motorcycles' servicing and repairing, it was explained that this was due to a combination of different factors. For instance, the programme should be responsive to the TIOs' needs. The number of businesses requiring people for other occupations was increasing. ITP partners could not cope with the unexpectedly high demand for training, leading to changes to the training offered. In a nutshell, participants explain that OP is an 'income generation' programme;

hence, regular changes to its training are an expected adjustment for this type of intervention.

The CCE has an eclectic portfolio of programmes, which are classed under the following areas of intervention: income generation, rural development and cultural projects. In its section called 'Intervention', the CCE's webpage lists OP as one of its 'income-generation' programmes (IGPs) (Centre for Community Education, 2020). So, I asked the CCE's staff what an IGP is and what social problems IGPs are meant to address or mitigate. According to the participants, there are two types of IGPs. One type provides micro-credits and training to set up a business; the other offers training and psychosocial support that equips individuals with the means to earn a living, like OP. These definitions of IGPs align with others within the third sector (e.g., The Project Counselling Service, 2000; USAID, 2020)[66].

As for the problem to be tackled by OP, I got contrasting answers; for instance, some participants replied 'unemployment', 'income poverty', 'gender inequality' and 'social exclusion'. I couldn't query directly about this difference of opinion since I could not share what the participants were commenting on. However, in subsequent interviews, the participants acknowledged that these terms refer to different problems. When asked if OP also tackled other problems apart from the one they had in mind, they rejected that possibility. Consequently, I looked for clarification in the content available.

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[66] According to USAID (2020), an IGP is 'an intervention which imparts vocational skills or provides capital or commodities that enhance the capacity of individuals or groups to generate income'.

5.3 What problem is *Opportunities* tackling?

According to the AFE's database, between 2012 and 2019, eight private foundations ran income-generation programmes (IGPs) in Cali[67]. Reviewing these foundations' web pages revealed that only four provide information regarding the social problems their IGPs tackle. The Public Spaces Foundation (PSF), *Opportunities*' local funding partner, does not offer information on the social problems linked to its IGPs. The same applies to the online content published by the CCE. Also contributing to this gap is the Developing Nations Foundation (DNF), the international grant-making foundation that provides most of the funding for OP, which does not refer to the programme on its web pages. What all this online content has in common, though, is its detail about objectives, which is much in line with the generous attention paid to goal formation in academic development work.

Substantiating the above, the CCE's webpage, in its section concerning income-generation programmes, describes *Opportunities* as a training programme that helps youngsters to gain vocational and personal skills. This description – 240 words long – includes a brief line on training young women to get access to 'non-traditional jobs'. While the references to vocational training and women's access to non-traditional jobs implied an interest in mitigating unemployment and gender inequality, these social problems were not explicitly mentioned in the online content reviewed.

A closer look at the same online content revealed a potential contradiction between what is said and what is shown by images, making it more difficult to ascertain the

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[67] The AFE (Asociación de Fundaciones Familiares y Empresariales), in English, the Family and Businesses Foundations Association, is the body that represents the private foundations in Colombia. Most of the AFE's members were set up by national corporations and are sponsored by them. Therefore, these corporative foundations are influential agenda-setting players only surpassed in influence by municipal authorities and international grant-making foundations.

intervention's focal point[68]. For example, the description of OP and additional content is accompanied on the CCE's website by several pictures of trainees who had undertaken the programme. One of the pictures shows a young man servicing a motorcycle, while an adjacent image depicts three young women preparing some pastries. So, while the pictures support what is meant by 'vocational training', they do not indicate the meaning of 'non-traditional jobs'.

However, this potential contradiction does not apply to the OP's progress reports. Progress reports are Word documents that are not available online. The images used in these reports to substantiate progress in different areas – such as training for 'non-traditional jobs' – show female trainees working as mechanics. These progress reports are one of the administrative tools used by the DNF to suggest improvements to the programme and the CCE's governance. So, turning back to the lack of consistency on how images are used by the two sources of content on OP, online and offline, when I first came across this difference, I could not figure out its cause and meaning immediately. They became clear later, and I will further elaborate on this matter in section 5.6.

Concerning the text alone, a closer look at the same progress reports (Centre for Community Education, 2013-2019) revealed that none of these documents mention a specific social problem the programme attempted to mitigate since its inception in 2013. The results of a text search query on the annual reports reinforced this assumption. Another query on the documents showed that the term 'income generation' was not used in any annual report. The word 'income' was used not more than three times in each

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[68] Henceforth, the term 'focal point' is used here to refer to the problem that a programme or intervention is expected or seen mitigating, resolving or tackling.

report between 2013 and 2019. Also, the few instances in which the term was used did not shed any light on what the programme is trying to achieve.

Instead, the reports refer to 'topics' or 'areas of interest', and although these are presented as complementing each other, none of them is classed or defined as the main problem to be tackled by *Opportunities*. For instance, one of the early annual reports (2014-2015) covers how the input and training provided by the different partners equipped the CCE's psychosocial team with new skills. The report describes this improvement and links it to 'areas of interest', as follows: 'We have increased our knowledge on gender, and the inclusion and participation of youngsters'. 'Gender equality is a promising matter to all the social processes.' In a different section of the same report, the programme's impact on its trainees is summarised in the following way: 'This programme has provided the opportunity to have a training certificate and access to the jobs market, and, because of it, also the potential of having professional progress' (CCE, 2015).

Consequently, the reports occasionally refer to 'gender equality' and 'inclusion' as 'topics' or 'areas of interest'. Still, these are never described as goals or objectives related to social problems, such as gender inequality, social exclusion, unemployment or income poverty. Furthermore, the reports do not define the ideal conditions (e.g., social inclusion) and their opposites (e.g., social exclusion) or discuss these meaningfully. It could be argued that social problems (e.g., gender inequality) were implied in the reports because the ideal conditions – the opposite of the problems – were mentioned (e.g., gender equality). Still, none of the documents indicates the main problem to be mitigated or which ideal condition *Opportunities* want youngsters to achieve (e.g., one ideal condition or all).

So, based on the review of the information gathered in 2018, I concluded the following: the documentation and the participants have consistently agreed that OP has a purpose: to provide psychosocial support and vocational training. However, the focal point of OP remained unclear. To what aim is this training and support provided? In other words, what social problem is this training and support helping to address? I developed two tentative answers to the question, why is OP's social problem unclear? Either problematisation was irrelevant to the NPOs running the programme, or the problem has changed regularly, as the vocational training did, due to similar or associated operational considerations. In any case, I considered this gap emerging from the information collected in 2018 worthy of study. To that aim, I interviewed local staff implementing the programme and the heads of each NPO involved.

5.4 The sense-breaking moment. Tensions and dualities

In 2019, CCE's implementation team explained that the selection of OP's social problem had been a 'hot potato' or a 'difficult topic' to agree upon between the programme's partners. According to these participants, the latter is why the online and offline content fails to provide clear-cut information on the social problem guiding the intervention. Elena – General Director of the CCE – elaborated on this matter as follows:

Since the very beginning, the CCE and the PSF were in two minds about narrowing the programme's focus. Unequivocally saying 'this is the problem' would have made it more difficult to attract another funding partner, and we needed that partner. Also, in the beginning, Marta (Director of the PSF) leaned towards income generation to tackle unemployment. Still, I was inclined to pursue social exclusion, as the CCE has been doing

through other programmes with the municipal authority, such as The Communal Banks[69].
On top of that, during the second year of Opportunities, the DNF pushed for tackling
inequality affecting women. Since that moment, the CCE has sought to find a way to
integrate the different focal points that matter to each partner.

Elena's comment indicates that funding considerations and the agendas of each partner encouraged the positioning of OP as amenable or open in terms of the selection and definition of the problem guiding the programme. Also, she alluded to the occurrence of a sense-breaking moment. It was a moment in which the preconceived choices of a problem – social exclusion, unemployment or both – were challenged by a proposition to adopt a new focal point: women's inequality. In other words, the DNF's 'push for inequality' was understood as a sense-breaking action. Sense-breaking involves questioning the underlying assumptions of organisational actors to force a reconsideration of the current course of action (Giuliani, 2016; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014).

The participants recalled that the local partners (the CCE and PSF) did not anticipate an early request to open a discussion about the problem at the heart of *Opportunities*. Marta, the director of PSF, elaborates on the subject:

In the programme's early days, I thought tackling social exclusion, unemployment, or
both would be easier. There were reasons to do so because, for example, Armitage[70] was
interested in investing in these problems. But I did not expect the DNF to press hard for
something else that early.

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[69] CCE has a portfolio of rural and urban development programmes, but only two are classified as IGPs: *The Communal Banks* and *Opportunities*.

[70] Cali's mayor (2016-2019).

Marta clarified that the DNF's proposal was not a positive development despite the ambiguous focal point of OP, which paradoxically remained undecided between lessening unemployment and creating inclusion opportunities for youngsters living in TIOs. In any case, some local staff were upset by a proposal that they considered diminished the value of their ideas and preconceptions. Equally important, in Elena and Marta's comments, there is a common perception that it would have been convenient to maintain the focal point of social exclusion-unemployment because it made OP attractive to the municipal authority. So, it was not change what they deemed inconvenient, but the type of social problem proposed by the DNF. Elena expanded on this matter by saying that:

Change and adaptation are part and parcel of the third sector. We would like to be independent or self-sufficient, but we do not have the financial resources, so we have to compromise and review our room for manoeuvring.

Elena and Marta commented on the compromises NPOs in Cali must make to keep the programmes running. So, these compromises, expressed by organisational leaders across the sector, reflect what I identified as tensions or choices between, for example, the financial viability of an intervention and the opportunity to implement an agenda for a programme without compromising or negotiating an NPO's views on the pertinent problem and goals.

Expanding on how the participants defined the established tensions, for example, *autonomy-financial viability*, interviewees described 'autonomy as being able to choose whichever social problem they deemed appropriate to mitigate at that time' (Carla). As for 'financial viability', 'it meant possessing the funds needed to implement the

programme for as long as it was considered pertinent' (Dora). Consequently, the tension *autonomy-financial viability* expresses the realisation by a collaborative actor that achieving *financial viability* (B) could entail losing *autonomy* (A).

These local views on the tension *autonomy-financial viability* also reflect a central discussion within the development field regarding the causal relationship between forms of dependence – organisational interdependence – and sustainability. For development scholars, 'sustainability' refers to the organisation's capacity to continue delivering its expected outputs over some time (Sanders, 2015; Crisan and Dan, 2018; Mikołajczak, 2019). 'Dependence' or 'interdependence' has been understood as the condition of an organisation that relies to a certain degree on other organisations to supply critical resources that enable the creation of outputs essential to the sustainability of both organisations engaged in exchanging the inputs-resources (O'Brien and Evans, 2017).

'Autonomy' has been understood as the opposite of dependence or having a reasonable degree of independence (Hudock, 1995; Froelich, 1999; Rauh, 2010; Reith, 2010; Berrett and Holliday, 2018). Research in the development field has operationalised autonomy based on Stainton's definition (1994): 'the organisation's freedom from both internal and external constraints to formulate and pursue self-determined plans and purposes' (e.g. Verschuere and De Corte, 2014).

Also, two specific dualities related to the causal relationship between dependence and sustainability will be the subject of further elaboration in this analysis of findings. These two dualities or conceptual pairs are *autonomy-flexibility* and *autonomy-effectiveness*. The first pair concerns the ability to be responsive and have the freedom to quickly focus on the perceived emerging needs of those in need. The second pair concerns the freedom

to enter or leave relationships, particularly entering into those deemed synergetic and driven by similar priorities. The pairs express the realisation by a collaborative actor that *autonomy* (A) is a prerequisite for achieving (B) either *flexibility* or *effectiveness*.

On how to address the tension *autonomy-financial viability*, the local partners developed a series of assumptions about their potential funding sources and their suitability or prospective alignment with OP's current focal point. For instance, Elena and Marta explained how critical it is to link third-sector initiatives, like *Opportunities*, with the objectives prescribed by the municipal plans (MDPs). In other words, an outcome of their initial sense-making process was that both local partners imagined having a funding associate who would like to tackle their preferred social problems, which they anticipated would be naturally aligned with the pertinent MDP at the time.

This initial analysis of the participants' comments indicated that what the local partners understood as a sense-breaking proposition triggered an intense sense-making period. Also, and crucially, the analysis revealed the presence and awareness of a tension (*autonomy–financial viability*) and views on how to lessen the programme's resource dependence, which made all organisations involved interdependent actors (Hudock, 1995; Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003). But to thoroughly examine this sense-breaking moment and its implications, it was vital to determine if the DNF developed a similar understanding of circumstances at the time.

When Marcia – the DNF's regional representative – was asked about experiencing a challenging period in the collaborative relationship, she also alluded to the moment the DNF expressed interest in a new focal point (i.e., women's inequality). She elaborated on this matter as follows:

Starting a programme in these terms, being very open about the intervention's aims and so forth is not uncommon. We respect our local partners, and about some processes, we'd rather wait for these to unfold organically. But around the second year, we thought it was time to kick-start a conversation by proposing a way forward focusing on tackling gender inequality. It triggered a complex set of conversations and painful misunderstandings, which led to what I believe was a botched test, an unsatisfactory third year of the programme. We wouldn't have walked away regardless. We are aware that there is always a difficult choice for funding partners between the high costs of DIY and inexpensive ways of validating your investment.

Marcia's comments provided more detail on when and what triggered the sense-breaking moment concerning the pre-conceived ideal future focal point for *Opportunities*. Also, and crucially, Marcia's comments uncovered another tension, a tension that in all the cases under study has played a role in discouraging a funding NPO from 'walking away' when the sense-breaking process does not unfold as expected, the tension between autonomy ('DIY' – Do It Yourself) and legitimacy ('validating'). Marcia was asked to elaborate on this tension to further our understanding of how the DNF perceived its impact:

We could launch our intervention programmes in a particular region or country by setting up offices there and hiring local people with the expertise. Some grant-making foundations do it. Or we could find a trustworthy local partner with an exciting portfolio of projects and encourage them to run interventions in our focus areas. The first choice is expensive, legally and technically. The second choice involves a different challenge, which relates to negotiating different aspects of the relationship with the local partner, including the focal point. We operate the way we do because we believe it is the most

efficient way of investing our resources. Therefore, our chosen local partners must be deemed legitimate and reliable by other local third-sector organisations and authorities, because these partner NGOs have expertise, access to communities, and legal status. And all that justifies our investment. That supports our case before our funding partners and other international players.

Marcia's explanation of the DNF's approach to the tension *autonomy-legitimacy* implied an understanding of autonomy similar to the one expressed by the local partners: the ability to choose, in this particular case, that meant being able to decide how to invest the funds at the disposal of the foundation. Research within the development field has operationalised legitimacy based on the following definition by Suchman (1995): 'the generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions' (e.g. Jung and Moon, 2007). This same body of work has identified multiple sources of legitimacy; however, only three have been consistently recognised in this corpus. These are accountability, performance, and representativeness (Lister, 2003).

Marcia's comments reflect current academic thinking on these sources of legitimacy. For instance, her understanding of the link between legitimacy and accountability is visible in her attention to offering funding partners an explanation that justifies using the financial resources entrusted to the DNF (Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Sogge, Biekart, and Saxby, 1996). Her views about what constitutes an efficient action or choice express her understanding of the link between legitimacy and performance (Eade 1997; Fowler 1997; Pearce 1997). As for the link between legitimacy and representativeness, Marcia's understanding is manifested by her concern for choosing a local partner that has access to the communities and is seen as reliable by the third sector and authorities.

Consequently, the tension *autonomy-legitimacy* expresses a collaborative actor's realisation that achieving *legitimacy* (B) could entail losing *autonomy* (A).

These findings substantiate tensions and dualities at the heart of the third-sector asymmetrical relationships. However, it is worth noting that while the DNF's official request to re-focus the programme triggered a period of reflection that led to identifying each partner's tensions, some participants recalled no discernible argument or persuasive statements challenging the local assumptions.

This gap concerning the rhetorical dimension of problem formulation at the micro-level led to more specific questions that could only be answered by thoroughly examining *Opportunities'* intense sense-making period. So, the relevant questions are: What sense-giving was put forward by the DNF? And more specifically, were any frames invoked to underpin the sense-giving moment? These questions concerned the identification and subsequent analysis of sense-giving moments, in which organisational actors try to shape an intense sense-making period with persuasive communication (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Pratt, 2000). Other questions concerning the structuring dimension of this exact moment of problem definition and selection came to mind at that time. These additional questions are: What were the sources of the competing social problems under consideration? How did the partners address the problem-formulation challenge? In other words, what was the overall outcome of this sense-making period?

The following sections of this analysis will answer these questions, leading to a better understanding of the interplay between communication (i.e., logics and frames) and structure (i.e. development agendas), the causal relationship between the agendas of the different collaborative partners, and how the partners addressed the above tensions.

5.5 Identifying the relevant agendas for problem formulation

As substantiated in Chapter 4, since 2005, the agendas of the National Council for Economic and Social Policy (CONPES), the UN's agencies, and Cali's Municipal Development Plans (MDPs) have shaped meso-level development thinking in Colombia. In light of the interaction of these agendas, favouring the adoption of global institutional problems and goals, it is relevant to establish if and how macro and meso-level agendas influence micro-level development intervention. The following sub-sections – primarily informed by the interviews with the leaders of the NPOs running OP and documentation – substantiate the degree of influence of the macro and meso agendas on *Opportunities*.

5.5.1 The CCE, one problem, two programmes

Talking about what her NPO deemed the ideal focal point for *Opportunities*, Elena – the CCE's Director – explained that the social exclusion faced by urban communities in Cali became the driving factor in formulating the CCE's interventions since the organisation's inception in 1982. This is also stated in the account of the origin of this organisation, which deemed social exclusion a historical concern for the CCE (Uribe de Bernal and Mejia Naranjo, 1997). Expanding on this matter, Elena said:

If you look closely at our portfolio of programmes and our history of interventions, you will see that there has been a persistent interest in mitigating social exclusion. We understand this (social exclusion) as not having access to services or goods and not

having the opportunity to fully benefit from everything the state could offer all its citizens[71].

To identify any potential link between the CCE's views and the relevant macro and meso agendas, Elena was asked to indicate what sources informed *Opportunities*' problem-formulation approach. She ruled out any direct influence from the municipal authority, explaining that while *Opportunities* aligns with the objectives of two MDPs (2012-2015 and 2016-2019) – something seen as desirable – there has been no direct input from the mayor's office at any point in the history of the programme. In direct reference to the direction of influence between the different agendas in play, Elena asserted that 'CCE tries to influence the thinking of the sector when it comes to social exclusion. The intention is to shape the municipal agenda when possible; the organisation has the expertise, track record and a model to do it, so why not?'.

Elena argued that the CCE's intervention model was the primary source of this NPO's problem formulation approach. This model is partially the result of digesting the lessons learned from a sizeable development intervention that took place during the 1980s in Cali, which led to the creation of CCE itself. I was given a copy of the model, published under the title *Models of Urban Communitarian Development*.

Another critical input to the model is the literature on communitarian development generated by a group of Latin American scholars led by Manfred Max-Neef. This group developed a strong link during the 1980s with the Swedish NPO Dag Hammarskjöld

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[71] The CCE's definition of social exclusion is similar to academic definitions of this condition (e.g. the Poverty and Social Exclusion in the United Kingdom research project, 2021).

Foundation[72], facilitating the spread of this collective's ideas. Max-Neef group's anti-neoliberal and anti-hierarchical stance and theorisation were underpinned by the following principles: participatory democracy, balanced interdependence of people with their environment and self-reliance. The group believed these principles were critical to community development (Max-Neef, Elizalde, and Hopenhayn, 1986). A closer look at the CCE's model also revealed the influence of Max-Neef et al.'s 'human scale of development' (Max-Neef, Elizalde, and Hopenhayn, 1991). This scale offers a distinctive approach to identifying human needs, an alternative method to the one proposed by Maslow through his hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943).

Max-Neef's group work and the lessons drawn from prior interventions were ultimately distilled by two local academics, one of them the first director of the CCE at that time. This led to the CCE's intervention model. Before I elaborate on some aspects of this model that are key to substantiating the origin of one of the paradoxes established by my investigation, it is relevant to note that Elena confirmed the alignment of OP with Cali's MDPs and that the interest of her NPO in social exclusion was instigated to some extent by ideas from development academics, including the former UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld.

As for the CCE's model, it proposes the interaction of three components: inter-institutional, inter-sectorial and communal participation[73] (Uribe de Bernal and Mejia Naranjo, 1997, p.37). The inter-sectorial component concerns problem definition. Hence,

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[72] The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation is a non-governmental organisation established in 1962 in memory of the second UN Secretary-General, which aims to advance dialogue and policy for sustainable development and peace ('Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation', 2021).

[73] The Inter-institutional component advocates coordinated and collaborative engagement of public and private organisations. The Communal participation component promotes the engagement of low-income individuals through their community organisations. Max-Neef's work encourages community development and sees community empowerment as a critical prerequisite for these groups to become the main actors in their development.

it is critical to expand on it to establish if and how it informed OP's focal point. According to this component, problem definition proceeds in the following manner: 'The analysis of social problems and their relevant solutions cannot be done from one single point of view, discipline, sector or area. This (analysis) requires an integral approach.' (p.41). Also, a diagram elaborates on problem design by describing the hypothetical problem space relevant to school-age children suffering from malnutrition (p.40). In this diagram, the 'sectors' are the variables that must be improved to mitigate a social problem (e.g., health) (p.42). A series of organisations or 'institutions' with a stake in the problem are listed in the diagram. This directly alludes to the need for an inter-institutional approach to problem formulation. Also, concerning the complexity of tackling social problems, the model proposes a multi-stakeholder strategy based on 'long-term solutions, rather than palliative, remedial short-term interventions, which have a minimal effect' (p.43).

Another aspect of the inter-sectorial component is 'the participation of communities' (p. 45). This participation is understood as individuals 'becoming acting subjects', which involves 'the motivation of people' through community-based organisations (p. 45). However, the model deems a requisite to ensure participation in 'the construction of a new social subject' (p.45). 'The new social subject evolves from being a passive object to becoming an active subject' (p. 46). These ideas, which are rooted in developing the capacities of individuals, have been paradoxically understood by the CCE's psychosocial support team as an endorsement to treat people in the community as underdeveloped in the terms explained at the start of this chapter, which aligns with the dislocating academic views within sociology and public policy.

To confirm if the model's proposed problem formulation approach shaped *Opportunities*, local staff was asked to comment on the different aspects of the inter-sectorial component.

The participants referred to a pre-requisite established by the model, called 'the characterisation of low-income communities', which takes place before an intervention starts. These characterisations are carried out to gather information about the nature of the programme's problem in each TIO. They are presented as a report describing and analysing a community's critical historical, cultural and socio-economic developments. Characterisations provide specific recommendations or generic pointers that should be considered for any type of intervention.

I requested access to the characterisations generated to inform *Opportunities'* problem definition, but they were not made available. I reviewed other characterisations carried out by the CCE, which were commissioned by the local authority and were available on the CCE's webpage (CCE, 2015). These reports studied the same TIOs in which OP has been implemented (i.e., communities number 2, 7, 14, 20 and 21); however, they are concerned with other interventions and different focal points. Also, these reports were concluded in 2015, two years after the inception of *Opportunities* (CCE, 2015)[74]. It is worth noticing that they provide information that could be used to identify and define a social problem. Having said all that, because the OP's characterisations were never provided, it is not possible to confirm if this type of study ever informed the programme's problem definition process.

Elena – the CCE's director – was asked to explain how the model informed *Opportunities* when there is little evidence of integrating some components (e.g. inter-sectorial) into the programme's problem formulation. For instance, I pointed out that the model prescribes an inter-institutional approach, but since its inception, *Opportunities* has had three

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[74] Searching for relevant characterisations, the analysis found a set of documents created by the local authority in 2019, which provide a more problem-focused approach to detailing all Cali's TIOs. There is no doubt that this set of characterisations could be used for problem formulation (Alcaldía de Cali, 2019).

partners – two of them private foundations –; therefore, there was no evident link between the programme and a meaningful network of stakeholders linked to its problem space.

Elena argued that the CCE's income-generation programmes (IGPs) should not be seen as disjointed and disconnected interventions. Therefore, through *The Community Banks* – another IGP run by the CCE – the NPO was bringing in other relevant stakeholders who the organisation believed could help mitigate social exclusion and unemployment. *The Communal Banks'* key stakeholders are the municipal authority, another NPO contributing expertise and money, and the leaders and members of low-income communities. From Elena's point of view, there were two networks of stakeholders – one for each programme – linked by a common node, the CCE, which integrates and manages webs of stakeholders.

Our Communal Banks are vehicles through which community members lend money to each other. These loans could be used for anything from home improvements to setting up a business. The banks also act like clubs, and through their membership, families in low-income communities get access to services and products that are generally not available where they live or accessible because they cannot afford them. So, the bank offers access to resources that improve communities' quality of life by widening participation and access.

Elena's comment sought to justify *The Community Banks'*[75] social inclusion credentials and, therefore, its mutually reinforcing relationship with *Opportunities*, which she

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[75] *The Communal Banks* were integrated into Armitage's municipal plans for development (2016-2019). This alleged close relationship between the CCE's IGPs and the link between the banks and the municipal agenda for development led to the conclusion that examining this micro-credit intervention could generate some insight into the meso-to-micro direction of influence of problem agendas and enhance the field's understanding on how collaborative partners

attempted to strengthen by observing that *Opportunities'* graduates could join a bank. Nevertheless, the documentary evidence did not explain this abstract inter-institutional link between these IGPs or their common goal and, by extension, presumed shared problem formulation or space. Consequently, this coupling choice looked more like an attempt to diversify the CCE's donative income and, therefore, be more mission-driven than donor-driven (Hudock, 1995; Mitchell, 2014; Berrett and Holliday, 2018). In other words, the CCE aims to administer two social exclusion interventions, each sponsored by different funding partners, so the NPO could cross-subsidise one of the programmes if needed or develop economies by using the same resources on both programmes.

Summarising, this sub-section identifies the source that informed the CCE's problem choice for *Opportunities* (i.e., social exclusion). That source is the NPO's model, which was influenced by progressive or left-leaning ideas, including views that, at some point, were important for the UN. In any case, this model prescribes characterisation studies, the formulation of a problem space and the participation of different inter-sectorial partners and communities in the design and implementation of a programme. The latter transforms aid recipients into subjects, not objects of intervention. Nevertheless, there is a blinding contradiction arising from the inconsistent way the CCE followed its model, as there is no evidence that the participation of different stakeholders from different sectors was sought or that proper problem definition was undertaken. This directed my attention to managing resources as the potential cause of this contradiction. My analysis will expand on this matter later; in the meantime, the following sub-section identifies the sources that have influenced the problem selection of the Opportunities' partners.

management resources. The analysis of the communal banks' programme was not formally included in the thesis; however, its input supported the formulation of the assumptions made at the end of this section of the analysis.

5.5.2 The PSF: this should be a win-win situation

The CCE and PSF directors formulated the programme *Opportunities* (2011-2012). This key input, coupled with its financial support[76] and the NPO's involvement in implementing the programme, has given the PSF a say on the definition of OP's focal point. Marta – Director of the PSF – elaborated on her organisation's preferred problem choice for *Opportunities* as follows:

When developing Opportunities, we looked at various successful programmes implemented in the city. For example, Partners of the Americas ran a programme called 'Let's Win', which provided vocational training to youngsters. I liked its approach, a job market-driven training intervention that included placements to enhance the learning process. All these features, common to other successful employment and income generation initiatives, were considered during the formulation phase of Opportunities. As you know, they are part of the current programme.

In Marta's view, there is no doubt that *Opportunities* 'has remained, and should remain, a programme that tackles unemployment'. For the PSF, 'it would be redundant' to turn *Opportunities* into a social inclusion intervention because this foundation already has programmes mitigating social exclusion. PSF's approach to development involves creating or transforming green spaces into community parks. These parks should be home to development projects and programmes. For instance, *Opportunities'* psychosocial training is delivered at the PSF's parks.

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[76] Since the programme's inception in 2013 and up to 2019, the Public Spaces Foundation (PSF) has covered 40% of the annual costs of the *Opportunities*.

Participants have seen a link between the PSF's source of funding and its problem choice, unemployment. According to these participants, the PSF gets most of its donative income from a manufacturer of mechanical parts for vehicles (the PNC), who also owns dealerships and garages. To the participants, this is why most of OP's vocational training has covered repairing and servicing vehicles. Only during the programme's third iteration (2015-2016) did the vocational training focus on different skills.

When this was put to Marta, she argued that the PSF's board has always made its social investment choices independently. However, the PNC's increasingly direct involvement in the programme through its human resources department was seen by other local staff as proof of the contrary. For instance, the PNC has paid for *Opportunities'* graduation events, expanded its placement offering, and increased its financial support to OP through the PSF. All this has been deemed by staff as good news, but also as evidence of an attempt to ensure the programme remained focused on tackling unemployment and hence providing training on a particular set of skills (i.e., servicing and repairing vehicles).

This situation illustrates how the tension autonomy-financial viability is relevant to funding organisations, too, since the PSF's autonomy – the ability to invest its resources as the foundation sees fit – is constrained by the conditions placed by private donors to release their funds to the PSF. In this case, that condition is to secure a problem choice for *Opportunities* that benefit its primary donor, the PNC. It is important to note that the PNC's funding sustains programmes run by the PSF itself. Hence, the PSF provides funding and runs its income-generation programmes.

Marta politely refused to elaborate on this tension; however, other participants familiar with the work of private foundations in Colombia believed that this tension is prevalent across the field. One of the interviewees elaborated on the matter as follows:

The politics or ideology of poverty and exclusion are easy to hide from the public. But, for example, for those of us who have dealt with wealthy faith-based foundations, some problems, such as discrimination based on sexual orientation, are clearly off the table. Foundations are happy to support any cause that does not challenge or is a controversial subject for their institutions and followers, so they have somehow set up the boundaries for you. This is often part of our conversations with our grant-making foundation, but it is common to other NPOs in Cali, too. (Melisa).

This again draws attention to the organisational choices faced by the *Opportunities'* partners, illustrating how tensions constrain and shape their ability to freely pursue a range of objectives, including those relevant to the programme. Additionally, identifying tensions has revealed the organisational objectives each partner would like to achieve through OP. The moment at which the partners negotiated all these objectives and the outcome of that negotiation will be introduced in the sections concerning the moments of sense-giving. The following subsection pinpoints the sources of problem definition that informed the DNF's agenda-setting choices and a description of the tensions afflicting this NPO.

5.5.3 The DNF, seeking legitimacy through the alignment of agendas

Some local staff believed that the Developing Nations Foundation (DNF) sought to shape the future orientation of *Opportunities* to suit its particular needs. These participants also

believe that the DNF considers that a viable objective because this NPO's funding covers up to 50% of the programme's annual cost with a 10-year grant (2013-2023). When Marcia, the DNF's regional representative, was asked if the foundation was running the programme, she explained that 'the DNF has a monitoring role only'. She justified the foundation's 'oversight' by arguing that as grantors, on behalf of their donors, it is their responsibility to establish if and how a local partner is achieving the agreed objectives.

We offer our grantees the necessary support through our 'organisational capacity strengthening training', so what we do is not just unconstructive meddling. This coaching covers governance and operational matters, for example, supporting the development of a suitable focus and identifying the right objective, which is feasible too (Marcia).

On the specific problem at the heart of *Opportunities,* Marcia explained that the programme's initial focus on social exclusion and, subsequently, on gender inequality justified the DNF's commitment to fund the intervention for the period established in the grant agreement. Marcia's reasoning aligned with the missional statements published on the DNF's webpage (i.e., 'keeping gender equity and inclusion at the heart of everything we do')[77].

Regarding the sources that informed the DNF's problem-selection for *Opportunities*, Marcia explained that 'like any other development organisation', her grant-making foundation was constantly looking for a better alignment between their funding choices and the global agendas for development. The DNF's webpage explains how its funding supports pursuing the SDGs: 'Our impact areas align with the 2030 Agenda for

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[77] As stated above the DNF's online content does refer to the social problems at the heart of their funding activity, instead, the content refers to the ideal social conditions (e.g., gender equity, economic well-being, inclusive learning and safe and healthy lives).

Sustainable Development, which sets forth goals for scalable progress, emphasising their universality and interconnected character. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which most specifically relate to the work the DNF supports are SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being; SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 5: Gender Equality; and SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth' (DNF, 2021).

The above confirms that the DNF has attempted to create and position an alignment between its funding agenda and the UN goals. Marcia explained that in the DNF's view, there is a relationship between legitimacy, donative income and the alignment above, as follows:

No one wants to be seen as stepping out of line regarding internationally agreed goals. Also, donors demand more details because no one wants to be accused of SDG washing, claiming that money is invested in meeting an SDG when it is not. So, all our development investment needs to be validated, and that is why problems, goals and objectives must be aligned with the SDGs.

Marcia's explanation reveals once again the occurrence of the tensions *autonomy-financial viability* and *autonomy-legitimacy*. These tensions shaped the DNF's decision-making concerning the formulation of an agenda for development and the attendant investment of resources. Regarding the tension *autonomy-financial viability,* Marcia explained that it would be tough for any grant-making foundation to remain viable if it chose to source money for development projects that were clearly beyond the scope of the SDGs. And while the scope of the SDGs is considerable, no one can rule out the existence of social conditions beyond that scope. Therefore, to demonstrate that funding is within the scope of SDGs, founding organisations chose to include in their agendas an

aim that is easy to associate with the SDGs, and its definition must be couched in well-known SDG terms[78]. Consequently, to be viable, the DNF has chosen to fund interventions within the prescribed range of the SDGs.

The tension *autonomy-legitimacy* manifested through the need 'to be seen' in compliance with the institutional logic of the sector, which dictates that all funding should be invested in achieving the SDGs (UNDP 2021). In other words, the DNF's autonomy – the leeway to invest in interventions granted by its donors – could be exercised once the foundation has demonstrated that a programme or project reasonably aligns with the SDGs. According to Marcia, this reasonable degree of alignment is a crucial source of legitimacy for the foundation. And while Marcia acknowledged that the UN's agenda is encompassing enough, the foundation is still somehow constrained by it. Marcia agreed that 'serendipity' has been removed from the funding selection process due to the logic of focusing on the SDGs. In other words, the dominant approach to funding curtails the opportunity to discover a new social problem and its links to the old-persistent ones. For Marcia, this is an imperceptible downside of an approach that prescribes directing the development investment to a pre-determined set of social problems.

Labouring under the assumption that Marcia's views are representative of how mainstream funding organisations operate, this sub-section sheds light on one of the routes through which the logics of modernisation are relayed, supporting the aim of the full adoption of the agendas of the multilateral organisations and private western donors. This has several implications; the most obvious one is that, as Marcia mentioned, there is

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[78] There are a wide range of organisations providing advice on how to identify and define social problems. This is done to make social conditions meaningful to the public and the private sources of funding that have embraced the SDGs. For instance, SDGfunders offer third-sector organisations 'the SDG Indicator Wizard', which 'helps you determine which Sustainable Development Goal(s) and targets relate to your work, and which indicators you can track in conjunction with your indicators to measure your work's impact' (SDGfunders, 2021).

a tendency to push third-sector organisations to adopt and run interventions based on a set of pre-selected and legitimised social problems. The analysis of this phenomenon will continue in the following sections.

Turning back to the matter of how the DNF managed its tensions, the grant-making foundation sought to make sure that *Opportunities* stayed within the boundaries of the UN agenda for development by persistently signalling to the local partners – from 2014 onwards – that the programme had the potential to become a gender equality intervention. Therefore, now the analysis turns its attention to the moments of sense-giving triggered by the DNF's attempt to consolidate the re-orientation of the programme. The analysis of these sense-giving moments provided valuable information on how macro and meso-level agendas and other factors, such as legitimacy and logics, shaped the micro-level processes of problem formulation and agenda-setting.

5.6 The sense-giving moments of problem definition

Each organisation involved in the programme had an agenda and, therefore, a preferred choice of social problem they wanted the programme to mitigate. The discussion of how these different agendas could coalesce stretched for two years (2014-2016), and during that time, two identifiable moments of sense-giving took place. Organisational scholars have defined sense-giving as an attempt to influence the meaning construction of others and their sense-making, so a newly proposed interpretation of organisational reality becomes mainstream (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Hill and Levenhagen, 1995). The DNF designed *Opportunities*' first identifiable moment of sense-giving to sell the structuring measures that would cement the re-orientation of the programme. The local

partners orchestrated the second moment to advance a counter-proposal to the DNF's refocusing plan.

5.6.1 The first moment of sense-giving

Concerning the first moment of sense-giving, one of the key measures put forward by the DNF involved using *Opportunities'* existing vocational course on servicing and repairing cars and motorcycles to mitigate gender inequality affecting young women living in Cali's TIOs. Using the ongoing course to tackle gender inequality was convenient because all the partners agreed that being a mechanic was considered locally a non-conventional job for women. This shared view was underpinned by the assumption that garages were not welcoming spaces for women and, therefore, the programme could mitigate this inequality through training. The local partners explained to the DNF that training would only address one small part of the problem. Therefore, they recommended a preliminary assessment of the problem space of gender inequality before any changes were implemented.

The second measure proposed by the DNF required the adjustment of the recruitment and admission processes to increase the number of female trainees. *Opportunities'* original target was to graduate and provide placements for 25 youngsters regardless of gender. The newly proposed target or quota instructed that half of the 25 graduates must be young women. According to Marcia, the DNF's regional representative, the proposed re-focusing measures would enhance *Opportunities'* legitimacy and attractiveness in the eyes of those private donors who, like other key members of the international development community, believe in advancing gender equality.

When asked how receptive the partners were to the measures, local staff explained that there was a degree of openness to tackling gender inequality through *Opportunities* but not to the complete transformation of the programme into a gender equality intervention. Therefore, the local partners challenged the quota and expressed their concerns about the suitability of the mechanics' course to show the programme's meaningful impact. The following comments by Camila – former head of the implementation team – and Elena – the CCE's director – encapsulate the objections of local participants against the DNF's proposed measures:

The DNF proposed extensive socialisation through the psychosocial support module, which had to be implemented months before the recruitment phase started. For example, a meaningful focus on women requires asking a community, 'Would you support your daughter to become a mechanic?'. So, a preliminary survey of communities was critical because we anticipated little interest in this type of intervention due to entrenched beliefs and practices of survival in these communities. We considered it essential to put in place a long-lasting psychosocial intervention to change not just personal but family views on the role of women in these communities. That takes time, a lot of time! The DNF did not consider this, which fuelled concerns about how they wanted us to implement their idea and, therefore, how feasible the whole re-orientation was (Camila).

What I remember the most was the quota. I remember our reaction. We were all pulling our hair out because we knew the quota would not go down well in the communities we had worked with for two years. These communities agreed to different recruitment conditions. So, we were expecting something from them (the DNF), but they did not say anything about how to mitigate the potential issues that could arise due to the new quota (Elena).

The comments above led to the conclusion that the DNF's proposed measures reversed the sense-breaking achieved by the funding NPO by turning the moment of reflection into a moment of opposition. The analysis of the interviews led to the identification of the frames that facilitated the construction of counterarguments challenging the DNF's measures. The following table describes and defines the rhetorical manoeuvres deployed by the local partners that were used to express disagreement with the DNF's measures:

Manoeuvre	Definition	Name	Explanation
Situational Frame	Situational frames are lines of reasoning or explanations that result from synthesising similar views on a new development in the organisational environment. Situational frames provide a convincing answer to the question: what is happening here? In doing so, they put forward a rhetorical attempt to persuade organisational actors to embrace a particular proposition, solution or understanding of the emerging situation (Goffman, 1986; Dewulf et al., 2009; Cornelissen and Werner, 2014).	The value of parity	The CCE and the PSF staff shared the same concerns about the quota and agreed that 'parity' is an ethical and effective way to address gender inequality. The participants defined parity as women having the same opportunities and access to social resources that men have. *Regarding opportunities, both men and women need training. Therefore, when it comes to our programmes or when the PSF gets involved in projects with other institutions, these have women and men, and there is parity. Our focus is not on a particular number or percentage; if anything, we aim to have both women and men involved* (Marta – the PSF's Director). In practical terms, 'parity' means actively promoting the course to young women and ensuring they have a placement and other support like male trainees.
Contextual Frame	Contextual frames are interpretations of agreed organisational rules, norms, and values, which structure individuals' interactions beyond a particular situation or event (Kaplan, 2008; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014).	Listening to what the local communities have to say Or the model is our Bible	The local partners consistently referred to how their intervention models mandate the consultation and active participation of the communities with whom they intervened. *Our model has a key component called communitarian participation. Therefore, we should find a way to enable that participation. Implementing the DNF's proposal without surveying the communities and not asking for the consent of their committees was against our protocol and, in practical terms, extremely risky* (Elena-CCE). While the local partners admitted that consultation and participation do not always take place for some aspects of the programme, they argued their organisations are committed to enabling a higher level of community input when it is deemed critical to the intervention and

			crucially when the communities demand it. In this particular case, consultation was considered vital to the successful implementation of the proposed change.
Logic	*Logics* transcend the organisational domains. They are discourses that structure by influencing any collaborative action or activity (e.g., problem definition). *Logics* are relayed by sector and industry narratives, which seek to uniform and standardise practices across the field (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, 2012; Ansari, Wijen, and Gray, 2013).	The power of translation	The CCE and PSF—like other NPOs consulted—believe that one of their key duties is to have a comprehensive grasp of the intervention space (e.g., TIO). This knowledge should inform decision-making, which, by extension, legitimises their actions and their existence as third-sector actors.

The DNF acknowledged that its local partners' expertise and understanding of the local context were critical to the successful implementation of the programme. Research by development scholars explains that international third-sector organisations consider local NPOs' grasp of their home countries' circumstances as a crucial criterion for choosing a local partner for a potential development intervention (Hudock, 1995; Fernando, 2003; Mitchell, 2015).

The CCE and PSF used this logic to underpin their opposition to the DNF's re-orientation plan because the measures were the result of a poor understanding of the dynamics of Cali's TIOs on the part of the DNF. In other words, the measures were poorly formulated because the DNF had no power of translation, no grasp of what was viable in the local settings, and, therefore, no idea of the impact of any measure or practice.

In the ideal world in which the DNF lives, many things are possible, like that quota. We understand their good intentions, but we also knew that they could end up creating resentment against the very same women that we are trying to help. So, to avoid those issues – like feelings of unfair competition for training places – we recommended a less stringent version of the original quota, which we knew we could sell on the ground (Camila).

The DNF is not familiar with the circumstances of low-income communities. We are granted access to these communities because the terms of the interventions are considered beneficial by the communal leaders and their committees. The whole plan, as was initially presented to us, would have involved rejecting male applicants, and we knew that could be deemed unfair by members of the communities we were already working with (Andrea, a member of the CCE's implementation team). |

The analysis of these arguments and frames revealed some of the partners' assumptions

concerning the influence of other development agendas and the tensions associated with

micro-level problematisation. For instance, two contrasting positions emerged from the first moment of sense-giving; these positions were underpinned by the following legitimacy concerns: legitimacy in the eyes of the TIOs' communities versus legitimacy in the eyes of the international development community.

Concerning the DNF's position on the above, it was articulated by Marcia in the following terms: 'the need to be accountable', to show to the donors that their contribution was used accordingly because it was invested in a programme that has a reasonable alignment to the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The DNF's stance mirrors once more development scholarship that sees accountability in this context as a source of legitimacy (e.g., Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Sogge, Biekart, and Saxby, 1996).

The local partners' position on the same matter was based on their understanding of how the TIOs communities have defined 'a good intervention', which benefits everyone or as many people as possible. Therefore, the DNF was warned about the potential realisation by the intervened communities that the new measures could lead to the rejection of male applicants. The latter would result in the view that the admission process was unfair. This particular warning by the local partners relates to academic views on two specific sources of legitimacy: the legitimacy that is granted to an organisation that delivers the expected positive outcomes – named consequential legitimacy – and the legitimacy that is granted to an organisation that employs appropriate means to achieve an outcome, called procedural legitimacy (Suchman, 1995; Scott, 2003). Therefore, the local partners argued that the DNF's re-orientation plan was risking the consequential and procedural legitimacy granted to O*pportunities* by the intervened communities up to that point. The table above captures these legitimacy concerns in the comments linked to the logic of *the power of translation* and the frame *listen to what the local communities have to say*.

A closer look at the local partners' arguments and frames revealed that their rhetorical potency rested on the likelihood of negative interpretations of the measures materialising and the prospect of the communities acting on these interpretations. Consequently, the local partners described to the DNF the punitive or retaliatory actions they could expect if the community disapproved of the new measures. For instance, the withdrawing of the community's support[79] rendering the intervention inviable. These sanctions could be imposed by the communal committees, which have the authority to act on behalf of their communities in negotiations with external parties, such as third-sector organisations.

Due to the consent of the represented, this right to represent legitimises the actions of the communal committees and the local partners (Pearce, 1997; Lister, 2003). The CCE and the PSF did not claim to represent Cali's TIOs. Still, these NPOs mentioned their long record of interventions, which they argued proved TIOs communities and their communal committees welcomed them. It is because of this record of working with the communities that the local partners gained the role of mediators, which in turn reinforced the assumption that not only can they accurately anticipate the communities' reactions or views on an intervention but also have some degree of influence on how these communities make sense of any programme.

All these assumptions and the attendant powers derived from them are captured by the logic of *the power of translation*, which, through its rhetoric, structures collaborative relationships by bolstering the view of local NPOs as interpreters, influencers, and gatekeepers. The acceptance of this logic by the DNF positioned the local partners as

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[79] The withdrawal of the community's support could have been expressed in different ways, such as stopping relaying critical information or refusing to promote the course across the community. In any case, it does not amount to preventing physical access or actively seeking to expulse the implementers from the site.

influential actors, shaping the interaction between the TIOs communities and the international donors represented by the DNF.

To sum up, this analysis of the first moment of sense-giving revealed a new tension created by the need to preserve the legitimacy of the programme and, by extension, the legitimacy of the organisations involved in the eyes of two different groups of stakeholders: the international donors and the low-income communities, whose interests and agendas did not seem to be aligned. So, the main outcome of the first moment of sense-giving was a difference of opinion, manifested by each partner taking the view that to maintain their legitimacy they needed to uphold the interests of one group of stakeholders.

Hence, for the local partners, it was critical to remain as legitimate mediators. The latter is contingent upon the communities' approval of the intervention. For the DNF, it is vital to be seen as trustworthy and accountable by its donors. Therefore, the first contribution of the analysis of the first moment of sense-giving is a detailed description of how different forms of legitimacy interact and how their interplay could lead to a tension. The formation of *legitimacy tensions* has been overlooked by development studies (O. E. Walton et al. 2016).

Claims of legitimacy concerns were articulated through frames used to advance or challenge development agendas. In this first moment of sense-giving, the frames developed by the local partners did not directly challenge the suitability of the proposed problem choice (gender inequality). Instead, the local partners found an indirect attack route by highlighting the flaws and negative implications of the means through which the social problem would be mitigated (e.g., quota). Therefore, the second contribution from

this section of the findings is evidence, which indicates that the agenda-setting and problem-definition processes are shaped by structuring choices (e.g., the DNF's proposed measures) and, in equal measure, by rhetorical actions underpinned by frames. Research within the development field has overlooked the symbolic dimension of the agenda-setting process and problem formulation.

5.6.2 The second moment of sense-giving. Selling flexible problematisation

As each partner claimed to represent a key stakeholder for the programme, how did the CCE, the DNF and the PSF attempt to mitigate the legitimacy tension? And did they manage to do so in a way that aligned all the partners' agendas? The answers to these questions were revealed by the analysis of the second moment of sense-giving, which examined the local partner's counterproposal to the DNF's measures. The local partners proposed three countermeasures to address the legitimacy tension caused by the DNF's agenda and problem choice. The first was investing in surveying the participant communities to generate insight that would inform the recruitment of female trainees. In the terms used by the local partners, they recommended investment in a 'soft-characterisation' of the communities involved. The information gathered through the soft characterisation would also inform the creation of additional psychosocial support activities designed to address any problematic views in the community concerning gender equality. The second countermeasure was the replacement of the quota with 'a commitment' to recruit as many female candidates as possible; this would prevent any misunderstanding of the recruitment and admissions processes by the participant communities. Simply put, the local partners asked for trust instead of an ambitious recruitment target.

According to the DNF's representative, Marcia, the risk of souring the relationship with the local communities led them to agree with the two countermeasures described above. While the new measures addressed some aspects of the legitimacy tension, they did not affect two critical interrelated assumptions hidden behind the rhetoric of the first moment of sense-giving. The first one is the entrenched view held by each partner that their preferred social problem was more critical to the development of TIOs' communities than the problems promoted by the other partners. The analysis of the interviews indicated that this assumption is rooted in each partner's understanding of development, as detailed above (see sub-sections 5.5.1 to 5.5.3). The second assumption is that to resolve their autonomy-financial viability tension, each partner saw it crucial to ensure their preferred social problem became central to the programme, above the other problems under consideration.

To address these assumptions, the local partners proposed a third countermeasure: investing in mitigating all three social conditions on the table – i.e., inequality, social exclusion, and unemployment – through the same programme. This was not an unprecedented solution to what was deemed a recurrent predicament by local participants, as other long-standing NPOs in Cali had run programmes seeking to mitigate two or three social conditions at once. I named this structuring solution or implementation design *flexible problematisation*. Local staff were asked to elaborate on how this idea emerged.

It was not a complex or sophisticated process. It happened organically; we were halfway there already. Our income generation programme (Opportunities) tackles unemployment and, to some extent, social exclusion. So, what was missing was a better way to accommodate the DNF's request to include young women. Training women was not

incompatible with Opportunities' original objectives (Andrea – a member of the CCE's psychosocial unit).

When the DNF accepted the changes to the quota and the soft characterisation, it made it easier for us to conceive the next step (flexible problematisation). For our organisations and the communities involved, tackling multiple problems was a win-win situation. However, it involved making the most of the same amount of money when we could have invested it all in tackling just one problem. But, we thought the programme could address that issue by acquiring another source of funding, as the DNF proposed (Elena – the CCE's director).

Marcia, the DNF's representative, agreed with Elena's points regarding the most efficient way of using the funding and the possibility of finding another source of donative income. Nevertheless, when Marcia was asked to explain why the DNF agreed to adopt the new approach despite the imminent financial digression involved, she argued that the local partners gave credible assurances of making a significant effort to get women involved in the training programme. She elaborated on this point as follows:

We did not want a repeat of the 2015 hospitality fiasco. We tried to avoid a superficial commitment and all the problems that come with it. We had experienced this issue with other programmes, too; cases in which the grantee (local partner) provided evidence of compliance with the agreed-upon objectives; however, that same evidence under further scrutiny showed that the funding was used to tackle mainly other causes (social problems).

The 'hospitality fiasco' concerns the programme's third iteration (2015-2016), in which the vocational training covered skills for cooking and bar tendering instead of servicing and repairing cars and motorcycles. This was the first iteration of *Opportunities* after the DNF proposed its re-orientation measures. These new measures included a direct request to continue imparting the course on servicing and repairing vehicles. Reflecting on the programme results that year, Marcia expressed the DNF's frustration with the decision to change the course, arguing that women's access to hospitality jobs has never been an issue anywhere; therefore, in the DNF's opinion, the grant was not used appropriately.

The DNF warned the local partners about a potential review of the following year's disbursement of funds due to what they deemed an unsuitable choice of vocational course that was out of step with the grant contract. On the specific point of changing the course, the local partners defended their actions by pointing out that the course on servicing and repairing vehicles was not attracting female applicants and that the institution providing the vocational training became suddenly unavailable two months before the planned start day of *Opportunities*. These issues forced the local partners' hand, hence the choice of a different course, a choice the local partners argued was supported by an increasing demand for young people with hospitality skills, according to the local partners' investigation of the job market. The analysis of all the partners' explanations of this incident led to the conclusion that the CCE and the PSF resented the lack of respect for their choices shown by the DNF, who in turn construed the unexpected change of the vocational course as an absence of commitment by the local partners. This incident paved the way for the second moment of sense-giving. Still, crucially, it made the DNF realise that the local partners might continue trying to shape the programme through the implementation process without consulting the grant-making foundation.

5.7 Assumptions, contributions, and paradoxes

The *Opportunities'* partners entered the second moment of sense-giving, convinced they needed a reworked agenda for the programme. They were ready for a negotiated solution after a series of unsuccessful attempts to outmanoeuvre each other for the control of the agenda-setting process. The failure of each organisation to decisively shape the orientation of the intervention can be attributed to the tactical use of resources (e.g., funding and access), which were managed and wielded by all the partners to regain or defend their right to determine the future direction of *Opportunities*. Simply put, when one partner attempted to control the agenda-setting process, the others promptly reminded them that failure to get their approval would lead to retaliation in the form of a denial of resources.

For instance, the local partners hinted at the possibility of pausing the intervention if the DNF insisted on implementing its proposed new measures without any changes. The local partners knew that their threat of pausing the intervention had potency because it was predicated on withholding essential resources that the DNF lacked, such as access to the TIOs' communities, mediation, mobilisation, and implementation capacity. Like the local partners, the DNF's representatives interspersed threats to withhold resources in their descriptions of tense moments with the local partners. For instance, 'the grant's disbursement could have been reviewed' or 'its continuation reconsidered' after the hospitality fiasco. These comments signal that the DNF was willing to wield the grant – a financial resource – to regain influence over the decision-making process concerning the programme's implementation. This interpretation of how the *Opportunities'* partners used the resources at their disposal to influence the programme's orientation led to some assumptions; some align with existing research, while others are open for further testing.

The first assumption is that controlling financial resources does not offer any partner a definitive or decisive influence/sway on the agenda-setting process. For instance, in this case, the local partners were fully aware of the exchange proposed by the DNF, the possibility of dictating the programme's orientation for access to funding. The local partners retorted with a counterproposal, a negotiated agenda in exchange for the legitimacy given by the association to an untroubled and successfully run intervention.

How third-sector organisations try to exert some degree of control over multi-partner programmes has received little attention (Wong, 2014; Marquez, 2016). However, the prevailing assumption underpinning the existing research on the management of third-sector relationships is that collaborative partnerships and their outcomes are mainly influenced or determined by the organisation(s) that has financial resources (e.g., Stone, Bigelow and Crittenden, 1999; Jung and Moon, 2007; Nikolic and Koontz, 2007; Verschuere and De Corte, 2014). The findings of this investigation don't challenge the entirety of this dominant assumption. However, this analysis shows that there is a way to lessen the influence of funding organisations through the tactical use of resources at the disposal of the implementers. However, for that to happen, the implementers must have and be willing to strategically use key resources such as mobilisation, mediation, and implementation capacity. In other words, to lessen the funders' or donors' influence, the implementers need to conceptualise resources as power.

In the case at hand, using resources as sources of power paved the way for accepting the countermeasures and, crucially, the solution, a new version of *Opportunities* that tackled all the social problems on the table. Therefore, when knowledge of the nature and management of resources is used to make sense of collaborative partnership processes (e.g., agenda-setting process), the nature of power in this context becomes self-evident;

power comes from the possession of resources, which are managed to maintain autonomy, influence processes, and therefore achieve a particular goal. It is worth mentioning that the resources typically leveraged by NPOs are legitimacy, local knowledge, and expertise (Mitchell, 2014). This investigation contributes to the existing body of work by identifying mediation, mobilisation, and implementation capacity as independent resources that NPOs could use to achieve a balance of power in collaborations.

On the same subject, analyses of the relationships between NPOs and funding organisations have sought to prove how asymmetries or imbalances of resources arise (Elbers and Schulpen, 2013; O'Brien and Evans, 2017). Within this subject, researchers have focused on the impact that resource asymmetries could have on NPOs and their interventions (Hudock, 1995; Lister, 2000; Jung and Moon, 2007; Verschuere and De Corte, 2014; Khieng and Dahles, 2015); among the negative impacts identified by scholars are, isomorphism, goal displacement and loss of legitimacy and autonomy.

However, despite the above findings, other scholars believe that resource imbalances – particularly funding dependence – are not necessarily detrimental to NPOs and are always negotiable. Therefore, NPOs should compromise when possible to achieve financial viability and growth instead of fixating on potential frictions and uncertain impacts (e.g., Sanyal, 1997; Hafsi and Thomas, 2005; Delfin and Tang, 2008). Hence, this investigation deemed it fruitful to establish if all the organisations involved found a way to manage their imbalances (e.g., tensions) and if how they did it affected the agenda-setting process. The analysis revealed two main tactics: seeking additional sources of donative income and *flexible problematisation*. Development scholars have named similar tactics 'revenue diversification' and 'compromise' (e.g., Batley, 2011; Mitchell, 2014; Khieng and Dahles, 2015). Consequently, identifying these two tactics supports the modest and relatively

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recent work claiming that NPOs could redress asymmetries by exploiting different types of resources (Elbers and Arts, 2011; Mitchell, 2014).

Another assumption that emerged from the analysis of the micro agenda-setting process of *Opportunities* is that the partners' persistent attempts to impose their agendas were primarily driven by organisational missions and expectations rather than by views of what was more beneficial to the TIOs' communities. This assumption was underpinned by the participants' acknowledgement of the benefits their organisations sought to gain from achieving total control over the programme's agenda. For instance, if the CCE had imposed an exclusive focus on social exclusion on the programme, the local NPO would have had two programmes tackling the same condition (*The Communal Banks* and *Opportunities*), each sponsored by two different funding organisations. This situation would have allowed the CCE to create economies (e.g., use the same implementation team) and, therefore, the chance to cross-subsidise one of the programmes. All this would have amounted to an expansion of the CCE's portfolio and, by extension, achieving one of the organisational objectives, 'to deliver interventions that are self-sustainable' (financially) (Elena – the CCE's director).

As for the DNF and the PSF, they faced the tensions autonomy-legitimacy and autonomy-financial viability, which encapsulated the need to prove to private donors that their donative income was being used accordingly. Proving they complied with their donors' requirements was critical to advancing these partners' mission and securing funding for other programmes and projects, not just for *Opportunities*. The pressure that the DNF and the PSF faced to meet the donors' and their organisational expectations led to a form of goal diversion characterised by the substitution of the original objectives (e.g., to mitigate

a social problem through the intervention) for alternative ones (e.g., to ensure the viability of the organisational missions) (Warner and Havens, 1968; Froelich, 1999).

Consequently, after failing to impose an agenda on *Opportunities*, it is unsurprising that the partners agreed to adopt the flexible problematisation approach and tackle all their preferred conditions through the same programme. It is worth keeping in mind that this solution was neither the most efficient way of using the financial resources available, according to the partners, nor was its creation guided primarily by what is critical to developing TIOs' communities. All the local NPOs identified by this investigation as being in similar CDRs embraced this approach. This finding could be helpful to those scholars interested in the business-mission tension experienced by third-sector organisations, in particular to those academics seeking to understand how processes at the micro-level are shaped by the contemporary institutional logics of the third sector, such as professionalisation, marketisation, and the pursuit of financial viability (e.g., Simpson and Cheney, 2007; Sanders, 2015; Skelcher and Smith, 2015; McMullin and Skelcher, 2018; Jönsson, 2019; Mikołajczak, 2020).

Also, and crucially, it is vital to point out that while the partners formulated arguments and frames to justify and promote some of their agenda-setting choices, this investigation did not find evidence of a meaningful attempt to engage in problem formulation. Problem formulation involves the analysis of the problem space, the identification of a social condition, and its definition as a social problem (Smith, 1988; 1989). The staff working for the local partners mentioned that the 'characterisations' of the intervened communities were carried out; however, they did not provide convincing evidence showing that full-fledged and soft characterisations for the programme were conducted.

Two findings, already discussed above, are linked by this investigation to the absence of problem formulation: the partners' persistent focus on their tensions (autonomy-financial viability and autonomy-legitimacy) and on achieving their organisational missions. The partners chose to address the tensions by creating a noticeable degree of alignment between their agendas and their donor's agendas. Also, each partner sought to exert control over *Opportunities* to extract an advantage from the programme (e.g., cross-subsidising another intervention) to advance the achievement of their organisational missions.

Almost three years had to pass for the partners to realise that the degree of control over the programme they sought was impossible. Therefore, they needed to devise another way to further their missions or align their key agendas. While they finally agreed to adopt the *flexible problematisation* approach (tackling all the social problems at once), during the preceding years of intensive negotiation and sense-making, they overlooked the identification of a social problem that could unite in common purpose all the donors with the TIOs' communities.

In conclusion, the partners deprioritised problem formulation. This could have been a deliberate choice based on their assumption that the findings of any problem-formulation analysis might have clashed with the partners' organisational missions and their donors' agendas. Or it could have been an omission, justified by the assumption that any kind of intervention would have been welcomed by the TIOs' communities and therefore regarded as legitimate. In any case, in the absence of proper problem formulation, the partners implemented *problem selection*. Problem selection is the act of adopting a social problem that has been defined and promoted as such by a third party and which may have been already legitimated by institutional actors within the development field.

The substitution of problem formulation with problem selection signalled the presence of a paradox, named here *the dislocation paradox*. This paradox is also shaped by some of the key findings, such as collaboration without a common problem (i.e., flexible problematisation) and the persistent encouragement to adopt international, national, and hybrid agendas. The means used by key institutional actors within the sector to encourage the adoption of mainstream agendas (e.g., structuring measures and logics), coupled with the tensions faced by NPOs, creates a dislocation between the different stakeholders involved in development interventions. The *dislocation paradox* and its causal relationship with the institutional agenda-setting process will be examined in Chapter 7.

Chapter 6 – Findings

On goal formation

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines evidence on goal formation concerning development implementation at the micro-level. Scholars studying collaborative action and organisational performance have defined goals as aspirational and motivational constructs that guide organisational action (e.g., Locke and Latham, 2013; Bryson, Ackermann and Eden, 2016). Research has identified increasing productivity and achieving sustainability or viability as common aspirations shaping goal formation (Oliver and Brief, 1983). These two aspirations have become key drivers for the third sector, particularly in developing economies where there is increasing competition for funding (Kerlin and Pollak, 2011; Crisan and Dan, 2018). In light of the above, two questions informed the analysis of my findings: What forces or factors shape the goal formation process of NPOs operating in Colombia? Are enhancing performance and achieving financial viability relevant to their goal-setting?

Also, research asserts that to use resources efficiently, an organisation must align all its goals (Locke et al., 1994, 2013). Alignment could be achieved in two distinctive ways: by framing and linking. Framing highlights commonalities and reduces differences between goals (Unsworth, Yeo, and Beck, 2014). Linking entails the formulation of mutually reinforcing goals, goals that aid in the achievement of other aims (Dawes, 2020). This seems critical to the third sector, a sector characterised by collaboration rather than competition when it comes to tackling social problems. This prompted the following

questions that informed the analysis of my findings: Do partner NPOs operating through CDRs in Colombia align goals? And what are the outcomes and broader implications of this alignment or failure to do so?

The study of the evolution of Champions of Peace and Coexistence (CPC), a programme tackling violence against children in Cali, Colombia, directed my attention to goal formation and the questions posed above. The analysis of reports and interviews revealed a series of rhetorical and structuring choices made by Kids Cali, a local NPO managing the CPC programme, which shed light on how goal formation takes place at the micro-level and its broader implications for the modernising plans of local, national and multilateral institutions.

The chapter opens with a brief account of CPC's origin and then offers an in-depth examination of Kids Cali's goal-formulation approach during the program's first three years. The closing sections critically discuss the findings, emphasising the interplay between goal formation, agenda-setting, and the field's logics.

6.2 The Origin of CPC; GSH (2012-2014)

Growing Safe and Happy (GSH) started in 2012 as a series of short educational and training sessions on the problem of violence against children. The GSH sessions were aimed at youngsters, parents and other minders and covered topics such as the identification and management of violent behaviours and the emotional journey experienced by children who are victims of violence. For the local non-profit Kids Cali, Growing Safe and Happy was its first direct intervention in the TIOs' communities of

Cali, Colombia. Before GSH, Kids Cali had focused exclusively on running a call centre offering psychological support to children who were victims of violence.

Concerning the origin of GSH, Melisa – the director of Kids Cali – explained that it was conceived as an offshoot of the call centre. The financial resources to run GSH came from the call centre's funding partners, who were keen on supporting any intervention that would extend the centre's scope. Also, the conception of the GSH sessions and their content was informed by the data generated by the call centre. That same data from the call centre revealed that schools in TIOs were 'hot spots' of violence against children. Claudia – a member of Kids Cali's board– explains:

Schools could be safe spaces for children, but violence could also surround schools. For example, children could be accosted by drug dealers on the way to school or be bullied at school by their peers. The information generated by the call centre was pointing at these issues, linking schools in low-income communities to these violent behaviours.

Claudia explained that there was no better place to run the sessions than schools because they regularly bring together the different actors linked to the problem, 'whether these are perpetrators or protectors'. Therefore, running the sessions elsewhere, such as in parks or community clubs, did not make sense. This setting also minimised the need to move around within neighbourhoods, reducing the staff's exposure to the risks prevalent in TIOs, such as theft and kidnapping[80]. Also critical to the choice of intervention setting was the matter of avoiding overlapping, as Kids Cali was not the only NPO tackling the

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[80] All the participants interviewed for this investigation moved across different settings within TIOs. However, most NPOs have a place in the community that serves as a classroom and also as a safeguarding space or hedging area. These places are easy to access, visited regularly by the police and located in the safest areas of the communities. The purpose of these places is to minimise the daily movement of staff across TIOs' neighbourhoods.

issue of violence against children in Cali's TIOs. According to Kids Cali's staff, schools were ideal because not many NPOs were running interventions from educational institutions at that time (2012). Regardless, I should point out that, as Claudia explained, violence against children also takes place beyond the confines of educational institutions. As will become clear later, the goal formulation strategy of Kids Cali changed throughout the programme's history, so it is incorrect to assume that the NPO's interventions were exclusively school-centric.

During its lifespan, GSH engaged almost 4,000 children and 2,263 minders (i.e. parents and teachers) from 12 different schools ('Projects - Children's phone line 800' 2020). In 2014, GSH was ended to give way to a more robust intervention – initially called Young Champions of Peace and Coexistence (YCPC-2015-16). It is this three-year period (2012-2015) – including the transition into YCPC– that was studied to understand the goal-formulation approach of Kids Cali, in particular the NPO's goal alignment practices, such as framing, linking, and reframing, and the impact of these practices on other operational aspects of the programme that concerned the agenda-setting process, like securing the financial viability of the intervention.

6.3 Framing GSH's goals. Adopting and adapting key goal concepts

Kids Cali's staff were asked to reflect on their goal formulation approach and if they considered any form of goal alignment. Melisa – the director of Kids Cali – explained that GSH's goal-design process was informed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) guidelines and the local third-sector agenda for tackling the problem of violence against children. Concerning the local third-sector agenda, Melisa described its origin and development in the following way:

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At that time – around 2010-11– there wasn't a formal network of organisations working on the problem of violence against children. Nevertheless, the different actors [third-sector organisations] discussed our ideas for tackling this problem in conferences and workshops. After several meetings, a consensus emerged to work together on 'creating safe spaces'. Each organisation has its unique or specific perspective, following its particular approach, which tackled one aspect of the problem [violence against children], but always making sure that our individual efforts would contribute to that goal.

According to Kids Cali's staff, the local understanding of 'safe spaces' was rooted in UNICEF's definition of this concept[81]. The fund defines 'safe spaces' as follows: 'Places designed and operated in a participatory manner, where children affected by natural disasters or armed conflict can be provided with a safe environment, where integrated programming including play, recreation, education, health, and psycho-social support can be delivered and/or information about services/supports provided' (UNICEF, 2009).

Therefore, creating safe spaces became the 'consensus goal' for all the local third-sector organisations tackling the problem of violence against children, according to Kids Cali's staff. In support of that view, the formal goal of GSH was worded as follows: 'to contribute to the construction of safe spaces for boys, girls, and adolescents against violence' ('Projects - Children's phone line 800'). Consequently, Kids Cali's goal formulation approach for GSH involved aligning two specific goals, the consensus goal and UNICEF's goal; a goal that, bearing in mind its focus on 'armed conflict', seems relevant to the circumstances faced daily by TIOs communities in Colombia. This goal

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[81] According to Olga Lucía Zuluaga – a UNICEF protection officer – the fund's approach to safe spaces was developed in 2008 and introduced to Colombia in 2010 (UNICEF Colombia, 2019).

selection provided evidence on how macro-level agendas (i.e., UNICEF's agenda) and meso-agendas (local third-sector agenda) interact to shape the micro-level process of agenda-setting, which occurs by adopting key concepts, such as safe spaces.

On the specific matter of alignment, how the consensus goal and GSH's goal were framed is consistent with organisational and management studies' scholarship that conceptualises goal framing as seeking to minimise differences and highlight similarities between goals (Gottschalg and Zollo, 2007; Pieper, Klein and Jaskiewicz, 2008; Mom et al., 2015). However, because Unsworth et al. (2014) defined alignment as the 'reframing of the representation of goals', a definition that seems to emphasise the rhetorical dimension of goal design, it is essential to discuss how this framing was accomplished in this instance of alignment and also to understand what motivated this alignment, and what benefits Kids Cali sought to derive from such a choice. Two participants responsible for the formulation of GSH's goal elaborated on these topics:

We identified potential financial backers for GSH, most of them eager to understand what was underpinning GSH. They knew that the intervention initiative was linked to Kids Cali's organisational aim, which is to contribute to the well-being of children; however, they wanted specific goals and objectives. Therefore, to ensure they would get on board, we simply backed up what we had in mind with what was out there: locally, nationally, and internationally. To put it bluntly, if you are starting an intervention from zero, you cannot afford to promote it just with your ideas. You need to get that indirect approval that comes from linking what you have in mind with the development agendas of national and international bodies. (Claudia, board member).

Melisa – Kids Cali's director – added that:

If we had presented our goal as something independent from other similar initiatives, that would have made things less appealing and more challenging for those individuals who have to go up the chain of command abroad to get the funding released. That is because the regional representatives of funding organisations all face the same questions: 'Who is behind the idea?', 'Who else is doing it?' and 'How does it relate to our agenda and the agendas of other not-for-profit organisations?'.

These comments directed my attention to how different agendas interact, particularly the direction of causation or influence between agendas. After looking closely at what both participants said, it became clear that Melisa and Claudia regarded the micro-level goal formulation as insufficient, or in other words, lacking appeal in the eyes of the third-sector actors operating at the macro-level, such as grant-making foundations, multilateral development institutions, and wealthy private donors. The participants' comments show us how they believed their goal-design approach was seen; their interpretation and experience is that key institutional actors perceived micro-level goal formulation as less valuable, lacking rigour, and therefore, the micro-level goal design needs to be reformulated in light of goals and concepts that circulate at higher levels, international and national levels. In other words, micro-level goals must be refashioned and/or reinforced by macro-level ones.

Concerning the framing of goals – as was proposed by Unsworth et al. (2014) – the comments made by Marcia and Claudia support another contribution arising from this analysis: a contribution to the development of a better understanding of the rhetorical and structuring dimensions of goal formulation in the context of collaborative action. Hence, what is being advanced here is to see goal framing as the process of backing up the formation of goals, which could be achieved through two distinctive tactics: a) the full

adoption of concepts created by multilateral bodies or other influential national third-sector organisations to formulate one goal, or b) the inclusion of some ideas promoted by these same organisations, to formulate one goal. These two tactics could be seen as part of a continuum in which there are different degrees of interpretation and repurposing of what is being adopted or partially included by third-sector organisations.

Consequently, when the chosen tactic is to adopt – with minimal adaptation and repurposing of concepts – the result will be a more substantial alignment with the dominant agendas. And when the tactic is to include, interpret and repurpose, the outcome is a weaker alignment with the agendas in the field. For instance, the framing-alignment of GSH's initial goal – as Kids Cali's management described it – reflects the adoption tactic to develop a more substantial alignment with the UNICEF's views, which, according to the participants, contributed to legitimising GSH and by extension to increasing its continuity, in other words, its financial sustainability or viability. The participants' views on the legitimising and sustainability effects of goal alignment mirror academic assessments concerning the potential impacts of well-designed goals (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972; Jann, 2016).

Goal framing is a rhetorical structuring choice that is related in a causal manner to the third sector's agenda-setting process. Setting an agenda entails the promotion and positioning to prominence of development problems that are at the heart of third-sector action and, ultimately, its policy and intervention formulation (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Cohen, 1995; Dearing and Rogers, 1996; James, 2010; McQuail, 2013; Wong, 2014). Therefore, the type of framing-alignment discussed above is a key task for the propagation and consolidation of development agendas. That is because, ideally for international development agencies and bodies, what should take place to enhance

coordination and implementation is further adoption instead of the partial inclusion of concepts and ideas. Consequently, persistent adoption-framing will lead to the institutionalisation of agendas. Institutionalised agendas exert their influence through concepts such as safe spaces. Bearing these assumptions in mind, my analysis focuses on another aspect of goal alignment: formulating mutually reinforcing goals.

6.4 Linking GSH's goals. The rise of the contribution goal

Recently, scholars within the development field have focused on studying a particular aspect of goal alignment that concerns the design of mutually reinforcing goals (e.g.Vladimirova and Le Blanc, 2015). Mutually reinforcing goals are attained through implementation approaches that make them feasible (Dawes, 2020). Current research on mutually reinforcing goals uses the term 'linked' to refer to causal relationships or interdependencies between goals, which play a crucial role in attaining these goals. At a basic level, goals are correctly linked when achieved through approaches that enable attaining all the linked goals. At a more complex level, organisations need to look at various factors that could make goals mutually exclusive or hinder achieving other goals. Ultimately, alignment or linking goals is done to avoid mutually exclusive goals; therefore, ideally, mutually exclusive goals must not exist in the development field, as development initiatives should not be successful at the expense of other forms of intervention or mitigation[82].

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[82] For instance, according to Oxfam, reforestation initiatives developed specifically to tackle climate change by planting trees should be limited in the developing world to avoid driving up food prices. 'Food prices could rise by 80% by 2050, according to some estimates, if offsetting emissions through forestry is over-used', which if it happens would make more difficult to tackle poverty (Harvey, 2021).

The participants were asked to consider any potential limitations in GSH's goal-design approach to establish if they experienced any linking issues. Melisa and Claudia – management – did not identify any 'unresolvable problems' as a result of aligning GSH's goal with the collective goal of the field. However, members of the psycho-social support unit, Kids Cali's implementation team, had a different take on the matter[83]. These participants made a series of observations regarding the effectiveness of the intervention approach, which led to the conclusion that GSH faced implementation and attainment issues, paradoxically arising from the appropriate conceptual linking of goals.

GSH's initial intervention approach entailed 'focusing on the individual component' ('Projects - Children's phone line 800'). According to the psycho-social support unit members, 'the individual component' is a person (i.e., a child, a parent, and another minder, such as a teacher). The unit's training sought to develop key traits of individuals' personalities that would help them deal with violence.

The children were taught how to identify violent behaviours and how to protect themselves against them. The minders were assisted in identifying punitive practices and were trained in finding alternatives to avoid physical punishment and abuse. (Clara is a member of the psycho-social support team).

According to the unit, conceptually speaking, their focus on the individual component was mutually reinforcing to the goal of safe spaces, particularly to one of the development 'areas' that make safe spaces possible. According to UNICEF, NPOs must work on six 'areas': 'development, education, health and nutrition, psycho-social support, community

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[83] The psycho-social support unit had five members, all university graduates in the field of psychology, and with specific expertise in children development. In this chapter this group of participants is also referred to, as the unit, the team, and the implementation team.

needs and life skills' (UNICEF, 2009, p. 42). Under psycho-social support, UNICEF recommends running a series of activities (i.e., professional support, peer-to-peer support, parental counselling, play therapy and psycho-social activities), which the unit argued were covered to satisfaction by GSH.

However, members of the unit believed that the area of 'community needs', crucial to enabling the community's participation in creating and managing the safe spaces, was neglected by the inconsistent training and support of other local NPOs. Safe spaces are participatory in nature; however, to participate, individuals from these communities must have specific training to gain the skills they need to engage effectively. Unfortunately, some of that vital training was missing. Lilian – the leader of the psycho-social support unit – elaborated on the matter:

On paper, it was perfect because we all understood that children cannot be safe in any space if the people responsible for their wellbeing are not equipped to look after them. These adults are critical to the operation of those spaces because the NGOs' staff or social services will not be there 24/7 to look after the children. But during the first year we were involved, the training of these minders was inconsistent; that is what we saw. Kids Cali was doing its part, but it was not clear what the other organisations were doing.

The inconsistent training was one of the issues Lilian's team identified during the first year of GSH. Another member of the psycho-social support unit – Clara – elaborated on another issue:

The team agreed that while the goal clearly stated that GSH would make a 'contribution' to the construction of safe spaces, after one year of running the sessions, it was pretty

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obvious that it was not possible to assess and report on the so-called 'contribution', from a broader point of view. According to the notion of safe spaces, different stakeholders must work together to create the foundations of that safe area for children. So, yes, you can say that other NGOs had a similar view on each doing their part, but the coordination to make it happen was lacking.

In a nutshell, the members of the psycho-social support unit argued that these two issues – inconsistent training and the absence of proper co-ordination – got in the way of preparing the community to take a more active role, preventing them from fully participating in the construction and management of the safe spaces being created by the local third-sector organisations. Nevertheless, in the strict terms established by the conceptualisation on alignment, in this case, the goal and approach were mutually reinforcing because all the planned training – if provided consistently – allegedly would have contributed to the attainment of the goal. This created a *virtual mutually reinforcing alignment*, an inconsistency, in which one aspect of the alignment – the conceptual-rhetorical one – took precedence over its structuring function. In simpler terms, the alignment showed to funding organisations was conceptually sound and successfully positioned, but its implementation – the organising structuring aspect – was overlooked or neglected.

Oddly enough, these implementation issues were not unfamiliar to UNICEF. In one of its guides to developing safe spaces, the fund warned implementers about the same potential problems that Kids Cali's staff reported – i.e. 'minimal coordination efforts' (UNICEF, 2009, p. 18). However, without minimising the importance of poor implementation, this poor execution is treated here as a consequence, not a cause; this is to focus on identifying that aspect of goal formulation that could have led to the anomaly, the virtual mutually

reinforcing alignment. To get to the bottom of this matter, Kids Cali's director was asked to comment on the concerns reported by the psycho-social support unit.

Contributions are difficult to track, monitor, and appraise, especially those that originated from an agreement of the NGOs to work together. So, I believe the unit's concerns were valid, but that did not mean that impact and intervention were not taking place (Melisa, the director).

Therefore, from the specific point of view of goal formation, the anomaly above seems to result from how the different organisations understood the meaning of 'contributions', a key term in GHS's goal and other local third-sector goals. Contributions structure because they operate under the principle that what one particular organisation is not contributing, another will. The director argued that other NPOs lost sight of the quality and consistency of the implementation process, probably because they wrongly assumed that someone else would cover their gaps; 'they wrongly relied on other NGOs'. In the same vein, Melisa believed that the complexity or difficulty in monitoring this collaborative intervention could have fostered complacency.

6.5 Assumptions arising from the analysis of complex collaborations

The analysis of the comments made by all the participants regarding the nature of contributions led to two main assumptions. The first assumption relates to existing normative views on collaborative action, which predicate that the increasingly complex social problems we face should be tackled by multi-sector partnerships or networks of organisations (Gray, 1989; Wood and Gray, 1991; Agranoff, 2007; Bryson, Crosby and Stone, 2015). This preference for synergetic action – and its accompanying *contribution*

goals – is also shared by third-sector bodies, including those promoting the creation of safe spaces for children, like the UNICEF (e.g., UNICEF Argentina, 2015, p. 20), and donors, as the director of Kids Cali reported it. In other words, *complex contributions* or *collaborations*, those involving significant numbers of partners and multifaceted goals, have been deemed an effective intervention approach to allocate scarce resources, build community and strengthen inter-organisational ties. This inclination for contributions has persisted despite the caveats of scholars regarding the suitability of complex collaborations to deliver on the development bodies' and donors' expectations (e.g., Thomson and Perry, 1998; 2006).

However, as this case and other research suggest, complex collaborative configurations pose challenges that undermine achieving the expected contribution goals. For instance, Thomson et al. (2008) reported a tension between self and the collective interests of the different partners involved in complex contributions; this tension has given weight to the assumption that the bigger the number of organisations actively engaged in the same programme or project, the less likely a collective outcome will emerge. While this investigation does not reconcile the two opposing views regarding the appropriateness of complex contributions, it is possible to point out that based on the evidence collected, some local NPOs were mirroring, mimicking, and aligning goals and agendas to match their donors' suppositions and preferences. This practice had two distinctive adverse effects rooted in the same challenge: managing the NPOs' financial dependence on their donors.

The first negative effect was a strong alignment to the donors' agendas that likely led to the oversight in the implementation reported by Kids Cali (i.e., inconsistent training and the absence of proper coordination). In other words, each NPO neglected any task deemed

not essential to meeting its donors' requirements for their programmes. As explained in the previous part of the findings, financial dependence could push NPOs to align strongly with their donors' agendas, shaping specific aspects of the agenda-setting process, such as problem formulation. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that the financial dependence faced by each NPO also led to an alignment between their goals and those of their donors. In turn, this alignment encouraged an overfocus by each NPO that had a detrimental effect on the achievement of the central goal of the collaboration, the creation of safe spaces.

The second negative effect was abrogating the dialectic exchange with the donors. By seeking enough goal alignment with their funders, each NPO reduced their room for manoeuvring, curtailing their opportunity to identify and challenge the misconceptions and untested views or approaches held by their financial backers. The participants indicated that some NPOs did not explain that their donors' ideas could clash; put simply, local staff failed to convey that their donors' objectives did not contribute to the achievement of the overall goal of the network. Furthermore, there was no meaningful attempt to figure out how the different goals of the NPOs in the network intersected and whether they were mutually reinforcing; in other words, there was no attempt to test their linkability. Instead, the NPOs relied heavily on their interpretations of the concept of safe spaces, the consensus goal, and proceeded to implement based on that interpretation, assuming there would not be any issues down the line. Therefore, having a dialectic exchange could have prevented the materialisation of a *reinforcing alignment inconsistency*, an issue that, in this case, was created by failing to expose how the realities of the implementation process could have challenged the suitable goal-linking and overall goal-alignment process.

The second central assumption arising from this section of the analysis is that the difficulty in tracking and monitoring the progress of complex collaborations could benefit the NPOs' efforts to promote and legitimise their interventions. Public administration scholars have identified the different features of collaboration (Gajda, 2004); this has led to distinctive definitions and, therefore, an increasing difficulty in operationalising collaboration and appraising its outcomes. Thomson et al. (2007) argues that this explains the lack of work on evaluating collaboration. Consequently, what is being advanced here is that *contribution goals* have a somewhat tenuous relationship with actuality, with the present state of TIOs' communities, and the social conditions affecting them.

Hence, from a rhetorical point of view, contribution goals dissimulate (Baudrillard and Poster, 2001), meaning that contribution goals divert our attention from the severity of social conditions by implying an increasing possibility of successful mitigation that, in fairness, is not certain. This is achieved by promoting contributions and their attendant goals as an effective implementation approach to development by assuming that networks of NPOs could resolve very challenging, complex social conditions. The rhetorical power of the contribution resides in implicitly validating the saying *there is strength in numbers*, presenting it as truth and certainty rather than an axiom, article of faith, heuristic or rule of thumb (Thaler and Sunstein, 2009). This reasoning circumvents the requirement to explain the problem space, to mention the complexity of the social condition at hand and its causal relationship with other problems. Under this reasoning, a resounding 'yes' is the answer to questions such as, can networks of NPOs resolve the water scarcity faced by low-income communities in places like Africa?

Contrary to what Thomson et al. asserted (2008) about the intrinsic limitations of complex collaborations, contributions are full of possibilities under the logic that *there is strength*

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in numbers. Dissimulating the circumstances of the aid recipients turns unreasonable into reasonable, any outcome of a challenging intervention into an acceptable result, and therefore, a legitimate one. Complex collaborations' results become a matter of degrees of success, not degrees of failure. Consequently, contribution goals create a rhetorical space with a significant opportunity to legitimise future or post-implementation results because interventions will not necessarily be appraised in light of the actual situation on the ground, which is unknown to us due to the dissimulating effect of the contribution goal. Furthermore, the contribution goal precludes the existence of wicked problems, the social conditions that are impossible to resolve due to their complexity (Rittel and Webber, 1973); hence, they can only be resolved over and over again. In Chapter 2, I have introduced different definitions of wicked problems, and in Chapter 7, I elaborate on how they shape our understanding of the contemporary meaning of development.

In sum, the first assumption and its two adverse effects indicate that Kids Cali and its network of NPOs chose a goal-alignment tactic between full adoption and the inclusion of institutional concepts and approaches. More specifically, Kids Cali's manoeuvre involved the adoption of notions and minimal repurposing of intervention strategies that have been positioned globally by the dominant donors within the third sector (e.g., safe spaces and complex contributions). This assumption was substantiated by comparing the local network's goal tactic with the existing NPOs' strategies to manage their resource dependence (Batley, 2011; Mitchell, 2014). This comparison indicated that Cali's network against child abuse embraced the 'adaptation strategy', which involves a fair degree of alignment with the donors' expectations to ensure the financial viability of an intervention. While this was the case when Kids Cali implemented GSH, the NPO continued trying to reduce its financial dependence on donors by formulating goal-setting

strategies. This will be substantiated later; for the time being, the analysis has exposed the negative implications of the structuring choices of *adopting* and *minimal repurposing*.

Concerning the second assumption above, the dissimulating effect of contribution goals, what is being advanced here is that goals are also rhetorical devices, not just motivational constructs relevant to individual action, as predicated by the dominant focus of the current scholarship on goals (e.g. Locke and Latham, 2013). The persuasive power of goals and their impact on interventions is a phenomenon overlooked by development scholarship, although some theorisation within the subfield of humanitarian communication covers similar topics (e.g., Chouliaraki, 2010; Chouliaraki and Vestergaard, 2021).

6.6 Re-framing GSH's alignment

Before the second year of GSH started, the psycho-social support unit sought to address another issue linked to the intervention approach. The unit observed persistently poor engagement on the part of the parents and teachers throughout the first year of GSH's sessions and, therefore, believed that the second iteration of GSH should train the children exclusively. According to different unit members, Kids Cali's management did not reject their idea outright, but it took some effort to get their complete agreement. This led to a debate, a rhetorical challenge.

In line with the aim of this research to examine the interplay between communication and structure, different participants were asked to explain how this attempt to narrow the focus of the approach – from training different stakeholders to just training children – unfolded. The participants' recreation of the rhetorical challenge enabled the identification of the arguments and frames that shaped the internal debate. The outcome of this debate had

structuring ramifications. These will be analysed under the next heading in light of goal-conflict theorisation.

Concerning the rhetorical challenge, Marcela – a member of the psycho-social support unit – explained that the idea of narrowing the focus of the approach was initially underpinned by 'field experiences' or 'observations' of the different groups of trainees. Marcela summarised the views of the colleagues attending briefing meetings at the end of the first year of GSH:

We all mentioned on several occasions how receptive the children were. This contrasts with the engagement of their parents and teachers, who found it hard to entertain the idea of reflecting on their negative stereotypical and punitive behaviours. This inevitably led to colleagues wondering if it wouldn't be better just to train the children.

In the same vein, Clara – a member of the unit – explained that the parents and teachers were 'very much set in their ways', and, comparatively speaking, they required more of the team's time to accomplish the same degree of progress that the children achieved during the initial year of GSH. A closer look at the initial reactions of the unit's members revealed a situational frame[84] that foregrounded efficiency over effectiveness. This situational frame – *focusing on efficiency* – consisted of two main points: the entrenched and intractable punitive attitude of the minders and the openness and eagerness of the children to learn. By contrasting these two points, the unit's members created a train of

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[84] Situational frames are lines of reasoning or explanations resulting from synthesising similar views of a new development in the organisational environment. Situational frames provide a convincing answer to the question: what is going on here? In doing so, they put forward a rhetorical attempt to persuade organisational actors to embrace a particular proposition, solution or understanding of the emerging situation (Goffman, 1986; Dewulf et al., 2009; Cornelissen and Werner, 2014).

thought that led to the conclusion that focusing on children would be the most efficient way to tackle the issue of violence.

However, Kids Cali's director, Melisa, was not entirely convinced by these 'initial impressions' and demanded evidence, 'which is the professional way of substantiating these discussions'. Marcela – a member of the psycho-social support unit – explained what was agreed to deal with the impasse:

The director told us that she believed the funding partners would be open to investing more resources in children because the money for GSH came from the same backers of the call centre. However, she needed evidence – not just 'complaints' about how difficult it was to engage the parents and teachers. So, we agreed to assess GSH's attainment for its first year as soon as possible.

Apart from establishing the number of children and minders engaged, the unit also tested the minders' and children's awareness of the content of the sessions to determine the progress made during the first term of GSH. According to all the participants interviewed, the results of the tests confirmed the accuracy of the informal observations made by the unit regarding the drastic difference in engagement and openness between adults and children[85].

Many of the children who attended the sessions acquired skills to protect themselves against violence. That result drew a line under the matter for some time. So, during the

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[85] According to figures on Kids Cali's webpage, 81% of the children engaged through GSH 'demonstrated competency in the identification of the effects and consequences of violence. These children showed a willingness to exercise their rights and help other children.' ('Proyectos - Línea Infantil 106', 2020). No figures were available for those adults engaged by GSH. The precise nature of the tests used to establish the awareness of the children and minders is unknown to the researcher.

second year of GSH, we concentrated almost exclusively on training children. (Lilian is the leader of Kids Cali's psycho-social support unit).

The test results added potency to the unit's argument. However, to wrap up the debate, the team mentioned the inconsistent intervention of the other NPOs, who were contributing to building safe spaces for children in Cali's TIOs. This last point cemented the frame *focusing on efficiency,* which was crucial in winning the approval of Kids Cali's management for the change of focus.

The analysis of Kids Cali's internal discussion on GSH's implementation approach enhances the limited theorisation on framing goal formulation, which currently focuses on the conceptual tasks of dropping, merging or nesting goals (e.g. Unsworth, Yeo, and Beck, 2014). The existing body of work does not explain what rhetorical manoeuvres or strategies are used or should be used by organisational actors to accomplish the framing that ultimately aligns goals or modifies earlier ones through reframing.

On this matter, practical implications arise from GSH's reframing exercise. For instance, it is reasonable to assume – based on the evidence submitted above – that to reframe goals, organisational actors need to challenge the premises of the approach and the goal itself; in other words, actors need to challenge the approach and the goal's effectiveness, feasibility, and legitimacy – ethical or moral. Some of the participants' comments above and also below support this idea. But the intention here is not to circumscribe framing tightly to the accomplishment of symbolic and conceptual changes of goal formation. Therefore, the structuring implications of framing and reframing by Kids Cali are examined below.

6.7 Dealing with multiple goals

The rhetorical victory for the unit had structuring implications. First and foremost, it created a new goal – training children. By focusing on children exclusively, Kids Cali dissociated the populations at the heart of creating safe spaces – framing them as conflicting goals. This development will become a legacy issue for the NPO. Therefore, it will be the subject of further analysis in this section. In the meantime, I should substantiate the existence of this dissociation. Clara's following comment elaborates on the subject:

It was a matter of how best to invest the resources we had for GSH, and therefore, we argued that it would be better just to teach the children to protect themselves from all these people [i.e., parents and teachers], people who were struggling to change.

Kids Cali ended up with multiple goals: training children, training minders, and building safe spaces due to the unit's manoeuvring. But how did Kids Cali align these goals? Current scholarship indicates that when organisations generate new goals, they also create the need to re-assert their importance, in other words, to link them. Failure to do so leads to goal conflict, risking the inefficient use of an organisation's resources. To avoid any potential goal conflict, organisations must: a) drop all the mutually exclusive goals entirely, b) nest the goals by treating one as a higher priority goal, or c) merge all the goals into a compound goal (Unsworth, Yeo, and Beck, 2014).

Kids Cali chose not to address GSH's multiple goals. Instead, the NPO considered its priority to design a project that would seize an opening opportunity to tackle violence

against children differently. In 2013, the passing of the *law on school co-existence*[86] made reducing violence and nurturing a peaceful climate in schools official objectives for all primary and secondary educational institutions in the country. Kids Cali identified gaps in the schools' know-how that would prevent the institutions from complying with the new legislation. Throughout 2014 – the last year of GSH – Kids Cali designed and promoted a programme called Young Champions of Peace and Coexistence (YCPC) to help the schools meet the requirements of the law. In 2015, Kids Cali began the implementation of YCPC. Therefore, to formulate new goals or adapt existing ones, did the NPO develop a method or follow any known strategy to avoid goal conflict? And if that was the case, how did the new alignment of goals look?

YCPC's goal, stated in Kids Cali's annual progress reports, was: 'to contribute to reducing school violence by supporting children and adolescents, families and minders in five educational institutions located in vulnerable areas of Cali, from January 2015 to December 2016' (Kids Cali, Final Report-YCPC, 2016). However, according to Kids Cali's webpage, YCPC's goal was to 'contribute to creating safe spaces for children and adolescents against school violence through champions of co-existence'('Projects - Children's phone line 800', 2020). Kids Cali's staff were asked to clarify how many aims YCPC had since these goal statements suggested it had at least two goals (e.g., reduction of school violence and the creation of safe spaces). Melisa, the director, explained that when setting YCPC's goal, there were two interrelated aims for consideration: one agreed with the funding partners (the CCC) and another proposed by Kids Cali's board. The director explained how Kids Cali dealt with this goal choice:

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[86] The law instructs the creation of the National System of School Co-existence and Training for the enforcement of human, sexual and reproductive rights and the prevention and mitigation of school violence. The scope of this legal instrument goes beyond making the achievement of peaceful co-existence in schools a goal for the Colombian state; it also acknowledges the sexual and reproductive rights of students in and out of educational institutions ('Ley de Convivencia Escolar - Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia', 2020).

The CCC wanted to vigorously pursue the reduction of school violence through the training of the key populations, which are mainly children, adolescents, and minders, like teachers and parents. That goal was linked to the national agenda against school violence, and the CCC was happy to support us in helping schools tackle this problem. This was YCPC's formal goal. We also had a version of the formal goal, an aspirational one for Kids Cali, which retained that connection with the concept of safe spaces, the national agenda on school violence, and our board's views on tackling abuse.

Melisa used the terms 'formal' and 'aspirational' in her explanation, suggesting how the NPO prioritised or nested these two goals. To better understand how Kids Cali formulated and managed these goals, the researcher enquired explicitly about the pros/advantages expected from having a set of goals and how any potential goal conflict was prevented. Concerning the expected benefits, the director explained that at the time, Kids Cali had already decided to expand its organisational mission beyond providing psycho-social support through the call centre; therefore, having a set of goals allowed the organisation 'to remain visible and on the radar of different funding organisations'.

In other words, the main driver underpinning this set of goals for YCPC was increasing the number of funding partners so Kids Cali could pursue its board's 'aspirational' goal. However, it is worth noting that by pursuing the aspirational goal, Kids Cali purposefully or inadvertently expanded the focal point of the intervention. The reduction of school violence – the formal aim – prescribed a narrow but clear scope for YCPC (i.e., reducing violence in schools). At the same time, creating safe spaces, the aspirational goal, implied implementing an intervention with a broader problem space (e.g., reducing violence associated with school environments and their concomitant interactions). The analysis will expand on the implications of having an open-ended problem space later; in the

meantime, I should point out that adopting what seemed to be a distinctive goal-setting approach suggested Kids Cali was aware of the tension autonomy-financial viability. It sought to circumvent it through a goal-setting tactic for YCPC. Hence, the tension autonomy-financial should be considered a driver shaping the goal-formulation process of development interventions. Before the impact of this tension is discussed in detail, the analysis turns its attention to preventing goal conflict between the YCPC's aims.

The analysis of YCPC's linking process required the identification of all the goals under consideration by Kids Cali's staff, particularly by those individuals involved in the programme's implementation. Hence, the psycho-social support unit members were asked to identify YCPC's key goals and describe how the NPO linked these aims. The participants explained that the goal of reducing school violence was agreed upon with the CCC, the programme's first funding partner. While creating safe spaces in TIOs was a legacy goal, key to the previous programme (GSH) and the local network against abuse, this aim was proposed by Kids Cali's board and the director, Melisa.

Members of the unit also mentioned a third goal: equipping children with the skills to protect themselves against violence. According to the participants, this goal emerged from the need to narrow the focus of the intervention to ensure the efficient use of funding. However, as was explained above, this goal was approved by the NPO's management during the last days of GSH, and therefore, its pertinence for YCPC was not entirely clear. Melisa, the director, confirmed that this goal was considered during YCPC's goal-setting discussions.

Concerning the compatibility of these three goals, Melisa and board members, like Claudia, believed these aims were mutually reinforcing because, in their view, the

reduction of 'violence' against children was a unifying aim that straddled the three goals. However, Melisa and Claudia also acknowledged that there was no formal attempt to test the compatibility of these goals. Consequently, no action was taken (e.g., nesting, merging, or dropping objectives) to avoid any goal conflict and ensure mutual support between these aims.

Members of the psycho-social unit confided that this was not entirely an oversight, as there were concerns about the nature of the goals that needed resolution before the linking was done. For instance, about the formal goal, the reduction of school violence, its goal statement prescribed training adults; however, according to the situational frame *focusing on efficiency*, adults living in TIOs had deeply entrenched views favouring the use of punitive behavioural and psychological means to raise kids. Therefore, the team considered training adults 'not an investment' but 'throwing money away'; in other words, this was not the most efficient way of using YCPC's funding, according to these participants.

The team was also concerned about the nature of the board's goal, the creation of safe spaces. As indicated above, building safe spaces implied expanding the problem space and, presumably, the programme's scope. Therefore, to achieve this goal, YCPC would have to become a contributing intervention, a component of a network forming a complex collaboration in which each NPO would be expected to cover a specific aspect of the goal. The unit believed complex collaborations were 'chaotic'; hence, this goal was deemed problematic too.

However, according to Kids Cali's management and the funding partner (the CCC), the formal goal was unsustainable if some adults, specifically the teachers, were not trained.

This point draws strength from a dominant logic within the third sector, developing capacity (OECD 2006; UNDP 2009; Kuhl 2009). Capacity development gives individuals the opportunity to enhance their pre-existing abilities and repurpose them so they are better equipped to achieve goals independently (Vallejo and Wehn, 2016). In this case, the NPO's management and funding partner argued that the teachers must be trained, so the latter train the children and supervise their actions while the students work together to tackle school violence.

This intervention approach assumed that YCPC had an end date, and its goal was to develop the existing capacities of the institutions so the schools could continue reducing violence without depending on the NPO to do so. This is not something the unit's approach conceived, as the implementation team proposed to train students, and those already equipped to tackle violence would transfer their knowledge to other students before they leave the school. Also, regarding the unit's negative view of complex collaborations, Kids Cali's management, like the heads of other local NPOs consulted by the researcher, argued that 'more could be achieved by a network of ESALs (NPOs) than by one single organisation' (Melisa – director). This assertion confirmed the adoption of the logic *There is strength in numbers*, which this investigation argues was deployed within Colombia's third sector to promote complex collaborations.

In sum, Kids Cali's management chose to pursue a set of goals under its YCPC intervention, a choice underpinned by the view that the reduction of violence against children was a unifying aim linking the intervention's aims, regardless of not having any certainty about the potential compatibility between these goals and despise the implementers' objections concerning the nature of two critical goals for the YCPC. This choice, trying to achieve these potentially incompatible goals and expanding the problem

space of the aspirational aim, led to some assumptions concerning the managing of these goals, their feasibility, and the broader implications of this NPO's approach, which I argue are linked to the formation of an incongruence shaping the sector, *the Disneyfication paradox*. These assumptions and their ramifications are introduced below.

6.8 Assumptions and contributions from YCPC's goal formation

According to Gaba and Greve (2019), the current body of work on multiple organisational goals has a few assumptions in common, some of which relate more evidently than others to YCPC's linking case. For instance, one of these assumptions is that decision-making groups within an organisation do not jointly appraise all the goals being pursued simultaneously. Therefore, goal prioritisation is stable and uncontested. In this case, a transient prioritisation identified by this investigation (i.e., the formal and aspirational goals) was imposed on the implementation team by Kids Cali's management. The team transformed goal framing and nesting into tactics to challenge this prioritisation.

Framing was initially defined as a manoeuvre that reduces differences and increases similarities between goals; however, in this instance, the unit highlighted the problematic aspects of the goals under consideration to delegitimise them, exposing their likely ineffective outcomes and, therefore, the goals' potentially unethical nature. This negative framing was supposed to cause the re-prioritisation of the goals, promoting the training of children as the most important aim and, consequently, the nesting of the other goals inside the unit's aim. The NPO's director, board and funding partner were unconvinced, so they opposed these manoeuvres with two institutional logics (i.e., developing capacity and *There is strength in numbers*). This was done to assert that the training of children against violence was an objective, a step that would contribute to the achievement of the

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other goals, and hence, not a goal itself. Therefore, training children to take the role of champions of peace and co-existence in TIOs' communities was ultimately positioned by the aspirational goal statement as a means, an aid, contributing to the operation of safe spaces, but not the end, the expected outcome of the programme.

Nevertheless, the prioritisation of the remaining goals, the reduction of school violence and the creation of safe spaces in TIOs' communities was unclear. This ambiguous goal state takes us back to what Kids Cali's management was trying to achieve by eventually choosing to pursue these goals. But before the analysis delves deeper into this matter, it is worth mentioning that all the evidence examined by the investigation suggested that Cali's third-sector goal prioritisation seemed unstable and contested, in stark contrast to what existing research on multiple goals has concluded is typical within for-profit organisations. This observation expands the existing modest scholarship on meso and micro goal formulation within the development field (e.g., Lasker, 2016; Seo, 2020; Mathews, 2021; Mbzibain and Tchoudjen, 2021).

Another assumption in the extant scholarship on organisational goals is that profit (e.g., ROA or ROI) is invariably a dominant aim because it strongly impacts all organisational activities (Shinkle, 2012). Strictly speaking, this case does not provide any insights on this supposition; however, as was explained above, Kids Cali's management adopted a goal formulation approach that, under further examination, led to assumptions regarding the potential impact of goal setting on the financial viability of development programmes. On this subject, Kids Cali's director (Melisa) indicated that the NPO used these goals as the means to achieve the following distinctive organisational aims: to secure its current source of funding and, at the same time, minimise its dependence on it.

To achieve the first aim, Kids Cali proposed the formal goal of reducing school violence. I should point out that the *law on school co-existence* offered several routes to aid schools in complying with this legislation. Therefore, in finding funding partners, Kids Cali – like any other local NPO – sought to make YCPC appealing to any potential donor organisation. This was done by identifying the expectations of donor organisations interested in mitigating violence against children and developing a preliminary goal that included these donors' expectations. When CCC showed interest in Kids Cali's preliminary goal, discussions followed to agree on the terms of the intervention and/or their refinement (i.e., agreement on the goal statement and intervention approach).

To achieve the second aim, the NPO formulated the aspirational goal, the creation of safe spaces against school violence, a goal that in the past secured the backing of donors concerned about the wellbeing of children in conflict zones (i.e., GSH). According to Melisa, this goal was also instrumental in securing funding from Cali's municipal authority. The funding provided by the mayor's office was also used to support the operation of the call centre. Melisa also explained that in her experience, when the initial terms of intervention are concrete, as the formal goal made clear, it is difficult to find another funding partner, hence the need to 'loosen the terms through the introduction of an alternative goal'.

After examining these developments in light of the existing research on NPOs strategies to manage resource dependence (e.g., Batley, 2011; Mitchell, 2014), it is clear that Kids Cali used its goal formulation process tactically as a *dependence reduction strategy*, an approach that is consistent with what development scholars have called revenue diversification strategies (e.g., Khieng and Dahles, 2015; Despard et al., 2017; Crisan and

Dan, 2018). All the above substantiates the view that the tension autonomy-financial viability is a key driver shaping goal-formulation processes within the third sector.

Also, I argue that Kids Cali's set of goals simulated a similarity and compatibility they did not have. In turn, this simulated state contributed to achieving Kids Cali's organisational aims but not necessarily to attaining YCPC's goals. So, how could this inconsistency materialise? Concerning the similarity claim, at first glance, both goals seemed to share the aim of reducing school violence. However, the creation of safe spaces through a complex collaboration widened YCPC's problem space, from reducing school violence inflicted at school to mitigating school violence within the territorial space of TIOs' communities. In other words, as interpreted and pursued by Kids Cali's management, the aspirational goal stretched the implementation space, encompassing the mitigation of violence associated with school interactions affecting children's lives beyond the realm of the educational institutions intervened. So, instead of focusing on reducing school bullying, the intervention also had to tackle more complex problems, such as the inducement of kids to engage in drug trafficking.

In a nutshell, reducing school violence is not the same as mitigating violence associated with school life; the first goal has a narrower problem space and scope compared to the second one, which may or may not involve tackling the first goal and vice versa. Like Russian dolls, these goals could contain and incorporate each other, but they also exist independently. However, if the NPO's management had nested the goals to assert the intervention's scope, this would have indicated what goal was the most important one. This action would have dispelled YCPC's convenient goal ambiguity, a condition of vagueness that helped Kids Cali find other funding partners and retain the existing one.

The virtual similarity of YCPC's goals, perceived or not by its first donor (the CCC), also helped to divert attention from the potential lack of compatibility of the goals, their possible mutually exclusive relationship. For instance, reducing violence at school requires the training of the different actors involved in school life, as was predicated by the Colombian legislation and acknowledged by the formal goal. However, this training could or could not include strategies to deal with the many potentially violent behaviours associated with school life that are prevalent in the broader problem space, the TIOs' communities in which safe spaces are expected to be in place. In simple terms, whatever was done to protect children from violence at school was not necessarily helpful, relevant, or adequate to protect them beyond the boundaries of the institution, and vice versa.

In light of the existing theory on goals' interdependence, it is evident that Kids Cali's management did not test the compatibility of its aims to understand if they had a divergent, congruent, or asymmetric interdependence. According to Hu and Bettis 'theoretical model of feedback interdependency'(2018), actions undertaken to achieve a particular goal could have the following effects on concurrent goals: positive impact on all the goals (congruent interdependence), negative impact on all the goals (divergent interdependence), and a positive impact on some goals and a negative impact on others (asymmetrical interdependence). Based on this same assumption, it is reasonable to have doubts about YCPC's effectiveness in mitigating violence in both problem spaces simultaneously. Consequently, it is justifiable to have qualms about the NPO's efficient use of funding.

Another aspect of YCPC's goal formulation approach sheds light on how NPOs prioritise multiple goals. According to Gaba and Greve's (2019) third assumption, organisational scholars are divided between those who believe that managers treat goals independently,

pursuing them concurrently and those who think managers prioritise one goal over the rest and, therefore, direct most of the resources to the achievement of that aim without neglecting the rest of the goals. The analysis of Kids Cali's strategy and interviewees working for other third-sector organisations indicated that NPOs in Cali pursue multiple goals concurrently. Another finding uncovered by this investigation also underpins this assumption: the *flexible problematisation* approach adopted by some NPOs in Cali, which has some commonalities with the *simulating goals* formulated by Kids Cali, for instance, a distinctive ambiguity and opaque rhetoric wording, which is not accidental but purposeful. Identifying these agenda-setting strategies gives us a better understanding of the interplay between communication and structure in collaborative action.

In sum, what is being advanced here is that Cali's NPOs developed multiple aims for two interconnected reasons; these reasons exist in a causal relationship. The first reason is that local NPOs are expected to replicate or align their aims with *institutional goals*. Institutional goals are those that mirror the expectations set up by multilateral bodies. These institutional goals are promoted by macro and meso agendas for development, such as the *hybrid municipal development plans* (HMDPs) analysed in the first part of this chapter. Cali's hybrid agendas linked the city's development needs to national and international goals, such as those put forward by the National Council for Economic and Social Policy (CONPES) and the UNDP.

I argue that to construct a convincing goal alignment between the NPOs' aims and those in the institutionalised agendas, the NPOs studied have done the following: a) full adoption of concepts conceived by multilateral bodies and/or other influential national third-sector organisations to create one goal, b) partial inclusion of features or ideas promoted by these same bodies and/or other influential third-sector organisations to

create one goal, and c) the creation of *simulating goals*, which include some of these dominant concepts (e.g., safe spaces), to create two or three goals that form a virtual alignment with the institutional goals. Therefore, *simulating goals* are aims that pose or pretend a similarity and compatibility that is not certain, and yet, as this case shows, any similarity and compatibility seem more likely for those goals that are linked to significant sources of funding.

The second reason has been sufficiently discussed and, based on its influence across both cases, is treated here as a dominant logic for the sector, achieving financial sustainability. Consequently, I assume that local NPOs align their goals to those promoted through institutionalised agendas for development because that increases their opportunities to secure financial backing from private donors and other development funding organisations. The use of goal alignment as a dependence reduction strategy (DRS) and revenue diversification strategy to achieve financial sustainability is consistent with the widespread adoption of other logics, such as rationalisation, professionalisation, marketisation, procedurealisation, and managerialism (Skelcher and Smith, 2015; Sanders, 2015; Maier, Meyer, and Steinbereithner, 2016; Mikołajczak, 2020; Sandberg, Elliott, and Petchel, 2020). Strategies and tactics that reflect the adoption of these logics, such as DRSs, were observed in all the cases studied. However, both these logics and tactics were overwhelmingly about achieving financial sustainability and less about attaining effectiveness and efficiency; they were sometimes even at odds with good intervention practices.

It is crucial to mention that the occurrence of the causal relationship introduced above (i.e., financial sustainability is aided by alignment to institutional goals) substantiates the assumption that the existing third-sector structure and its logics make it very difficult for

NPOs to avoid the globalised agenda for development and its aims (i.e., SDGs). The analysis of evidence concerning problem formulation also supported this assumption. Also, the logics, strategies and tactics, such as dependence reduction strategies and their concomitant alignments, reinforce the positioning of institutional goals as legitimate aims. The assumed legitimacy of institutional goals discourages any potential contribution that local NPOs could make to test the validity, relevancy, and, hence, legitimacy of institutionalised goals.

Legitimate goals arise from proper goal formulation, which requires the analysis of the local problem spaces. In Colombia's case, this analysis is undertaken by national and local authorities, using figures and characterisations. However, these authorities are not the implementers of many interventions, and hence, there is a chance for misunderstanding and poor interpretation of what national and local development strategists identify and define as social problems. Also, this investigation did not find proper goal formulation in the cases under examination. For instance, the NPOs' characterisations were unavailable or never carried out because goal adoption was privileged over goal formulation to ensure financial viability. To conclude, my analysis has established goal-setting strategies that neglect the local problem space and contribute to the *Disneyfication paradox*. The features of this paradox are discussed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7 – Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has examined the interaction of macro, meso, and micro development agendas and their impact on the organisation of modernising programmes. To that end, my investigation established the routes through which social problems and the attendant goals prescribed by the UN and its partner institutions influence national, municipal and third-sector development priorities. I also examined how third-sector organisations make sense and seek to shape their partner's perceptions of macro and meso-level agendas. Additionally, the interplay of agendas and concomitant logics, framing and sense-making were studied to identify the tensions, asymmetries and paradoxes hindering the progress of modernising initiatives.

The above encapsulates the aims of my investigation, so in this chapter, I discuss the relevant findings while indicating the potential avenues for future research; this has been done in light of development and PR scholarship (see sections 7.2 to 7.3). In the last sections of this chapter, I elaborate on the contemporary nature of development revealed by this investigation while reflecting on how the paradoxes of *dislocation* and *disneyfication* contribute to making sense of the current global modernising project.

7.2 On the contemporary meaning of meso agenda-setting

As mentioned in Chapter 1, mostly macro-level studies have been used to support the view that the agendas of the Global South have been historically dictated by the multilateral development institutions (e.g., WTO). Simply put, most development

scholars have examined documentation generated by the UN and associated bodies to advance the view that the agendas of these institutions are imposed on least-developed countries through different mechanisms. So, it is unsurprising that academic research on how middle-income South American nations, like Colombia[87], set their agendas is scarce.

One of the few studies on this subject is the investigation by Horn and Grugel (2018) in Ecuador. Horn et al. claim that 'insufficient attention has been paid to how – if at all – the SDGs shape domestic development policies and practices in middle-income countries' (p. 73). Keeping the above in mind, I formulated a series of specific research questions, whose answers led me to the following conclusion: since 2005, Colombian governments have selectively incorporated the UN's social problems and goals into the national agenda for development, signalling to all regional and municipal authorities – and by extension the third-sector – that this is a legitimate approach to attracting funding intended to finance the country's investment in modernisation.

The downside of this strategy is that it risks displacing the national development objectives because meso-municipal and micro-level actors could prioritise securing funding at the expense of tackling local-specific social problems and goals. At micro-level the latter is not a conjecture; it is the case, as my investigation found evidence substantiating the displacement of local agendas. I have expanded on the roots of this phenomenon in section 7.3.

Concerning the potential displacement of the Colombian national agenda, it could be caused by a) a municipal hybrid agenda, b) the municipal administrations' manoeuvres

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[87] According to the World Bank, Colombia is an 'upper middle-income country'. Under the following link, the institution offers a technical definition of middle-income countries underpinning its classification: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mic/overview#1

to encourage the adoption of a hybrid agenda by the third sector, and c) the resulting tensions arising from a) and b). About a), the municipal meso-hybrid agenda is an uneven combination of Colombian and global social problems and attendant goals. In other words, the Municipal Development Plans (MDPs) examined were not a 50/50 mix of the national and UN agendas. This is the case because, since 2005, the Colombian national agenda has already included some Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2011).

Regarding the extent of the adoption of multilateral agendas, institutional bodies have argued that Colombia has been a keen adopter of the global multilateral agenda, not a discerning one, which chooses problems and goals á la carte (e.g., International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2019). Simply put, the Colombian development agenda is a combination of national and international social problems and goals, which, depending on the source, is an even or uneven mix of agendas. In any case, when the municipal authorities studied (2012-2015 & 2016-2019) added other global problems and goals considered relevant to their cities, this action increased the potential influence of the international institutional agenda over local development intervention because that choice created a compounding effect (i.e., SDGs in the national agenda plus other SDGs added by the local authorities).

Complementing this compounding effect, municipal authorities can only implement the programmes that have secured funding. Colombian governmental funding is ringfenced for investment in health, education and services (e.g., sanitation and water); however, for the rest of development needs, additional funds must be justified to The National Department for Planning (DNP). To substantiate the possibility of requesting additional funding as a relevant factor in increasing the influence of the institutional global agenda,

it is crucial to consider how much is invested in development by Colombia and the multilateral funds. For instance, according to the UNDP (2023), in 2019, to reduce inequality (SDG 10), Colombia invested $2,82 million, while the UN, its international partners and other countries (e.g., Germany, Qatar, Spain, France, Norway) invested $16 million to help Colombia tackling inequality. Similarly, regarding the consolidation of peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16), Colombia invested $12,8 million in 2019, while the UN and other countries invested $14,5 million in the same year to aid Colombia in attaining the same SDG goal.

So, the above figures reveal that when Colombia and the global community fund any SDG programme, they tackle common-agreed problems. Still, distinctive objectives – not shared ones – will be pursued simultaneously. My analysis of Colombia's development problem space confirms that the country has pursued distinct objectives and uses different parameters to appraise its progress (see section 3.4), regardless of its formal adoption of MDGs and SDGs. Hence, in 2019, when the UN and its partners invested 16 million dollars to tackle Colombia's inequality, they most likely pursued some distinctive objectives not included in the nation's agenda. I will elaborate on the implications of pursuing distinctive objectives below.

Therefore, when the UN and its partners fund municipal authorities, these municipalities face the prospect of accepting problem definitions, goals and objectives that might not be a pressing concern for the Colombian state. Nevertheless, municipal authorities attempting to meet their development targets, including expanding employment opportunities, apply for international development funding since this is a legitimate alternative to centrally managed resources. In sum, there would be no reason or use for a hybrid municipal agenda if the social problems and objectives prioritised by the

Colombian government and the UN were the same. Another way to make sense of this is to presume it is a strategy to close the gaps left by Colombia's agenda. Nevertheless, this hybridity or amalgamation of potentially complementary or not agendas creates the prospect of the displacement of the Colombian national agendas.

As for the municipal manoeuvres to get Cali's third sector on board and the resulting tensions, these factors also increase the likelihood of displacing the Colombian national agenda. How? Multi-sector partnerships and TIOs have been policies to implement Cali's MDPs. Cali's TIOs have been developed hand in hand with international and national foundations and local NPOs. However, as some participants have attested, each of these partners has its organisational agenda. Another constant is that some funding partners, for legitimacy reasons, adopt the UN's development goals. While this might not always apply to all CDRs, the wide range of distinctive goals espoused by the significant number of NPOs operating in Cali – 142 international foundations and more than 1,000 local ones (Alcaldía de Cali, 2018) – increases the likelihood of diluting the national agenda. How?

Simply put, 142 international funding partners could – and in the cases studied did – use funding as a lever to dictate the focal point of a programme; these focal points may not reflect the development priorities of the national government or the municipal authorities. In sum, NPOs operating in the country could be pulled in different directions by funding partners, municipal authorities and national priorities. As a result of this dynamic, there is no guarantee that the needs of communities will be met. This foregrounds a tension arising from the interaction of meso and micro-level agendas. I expand on this matter in section 7.3.

About how these findings support or call for the reconsideration of existing ideas within academic scholarship, the most evident contribution of my work is the foregrounding of the little interest within PR in the intersection between development and agenda-setting. My analysis of PR's agenda-setting research indicates that it has been predominantly guided by the view of agenda-setting as a political positioning tool. In line with the latter, the review of work published by the journals of Public Relations Review, Public Relations Research and Public Relations Inquiry (see table in pages 390-391) indicates that scholars have consistently examined the link between political communication and agenda-building to establish how objects (e.g., organisations) and attributes (e.g., legitimacy) achieve salience in the media – mainly the news media[88] – when there is an attempt to position objects and attributes.

So, while a few of the topics discussed by the above body of work concern development challenges (e.g., Cabosky's article on the agenda-building activities of an LGBT rights organisation), this PR scholarship still mainly focuses on the political dimension (e.g., activism), not on the subject of development per se. Also, the same extant PR scholarship has restricted its scope to establishing the transferring potential of PR's agenda-building activities (e.g., framing through press releases). In doing so, it mainly examines the communication or persuasive dimension of agenda-setting-related activities[89], neglecting the structuring component (e.g., including and excluding agenda items and reasons behind these actions); my investigation of the meso-level agendas in Cali covers the latter.

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[88] 'In the context of public relations, agenda building "refers to the sources' interactions with gatekeepers, a give-and-take process in which sources seek to get their information published and the press seeks to get that information from independent sources" (Ohl, Pincus, Rimmer, & Harrison, 1995, p. 90)' (Kiousis et al. 2006, p. 267). According to Browning and Sweetser (2020), 'PR practitioners' interactions with professionals in the news media represents a line of research referred to as agenda building'. Others call this interaction media relations (e.g., Bailey, 2006).

[89] Zoch and Molleda (2006) offer an encompassing review of agenda-setting and agenda-building theory, drawing from media and public policy theory. However, their 'Model of Media Relations' is a prescription for using information subsidies to position or reposition an organisation.

To aid in studying agenda-building activities, PR's scholarship explicitly draws (e.g., Kiousis and Shields, 2008, p. 326) or implicitly from Roper's (2005) investigation on how organisations and political actors create identities to become or remain appealing to publics. 'Where the fit between the desired identity, or policy position, of the candidate and voters is not a natural one, the two can be artificially brought together through the process of articulation. 'Articulation' here refers to the process of bringing together two or more apparently disconnected ideals or concepts to form a new, unified discourse which, it is hoped, will be accepted as common sense' (2005, pp. 142). Roper does not define positioning, but it could be inferred that the scholar meant by it the formulation and advancement of a stance, opinion, or view on a subject.

Authors	Year	Focal point The salience of PR content in the media	Other key concepts
McCombs	(1977)	Yes	Public Opinion, public agenda, mass media agenda and their implications for PR.
Turk and Franklin	(1987)	Yes	Public Opinion, information subsidies, and governments' PR activities.
Ohl, Pincus, Rimmer and Harrison	(1995)	Yes	Media relations, press releases, information subsidies, and coverage of organisational matters.
Esrock and Leichty	(1998)	Yes	Use of online platforms to promote organisations as socially responsible. CSR, online presence, bypassing the news media.
Berger	(2001)	Yes	Corporate agenda, shaping policy agenda through information subsidies, political information subsidies. Lobbying and issues visibility.
Kiousis, Mitrook, Wu and Seltzer	(2006)	Yes	Agenda-Building and Agenda-Setting, Releases, Media Coverage, and Public Opinion.
Kiousis, Popescu and Mitrook	(2007)	Yes	Corporate reputation, agenda building, agenda setting, media relations.
Kiousis and Shields	(2008)	Yes	Inter-candidate agenda-setting, issue salience, political public relations, agenda building, information subsidies, media relations.
Kim, Xiang, and Kiousis	(2011)	Yes	Political public relations, agenda building, agenda setting.
Waters	(2013)	Yes	Fundraising concerning natural disasters, media relations, information subsidies and behavioural change effect of media relations.
Cabosky	(2014)	Yes	Agenda building, framing, power, queer theory.
Benecke and Oksiutycz	(2015)	Yes	Agenda-building, agenda-setting, agenda levels, public agenda, news media agenda, dialogue.

Lee and Xu	(2018)	Yes	Agenda-building, agenda-setting, agenda levels, public agenda, news media agenda, information subsidies.
Browning and Sweetser	(2020)	Yes	Political public relations, OPRs, party reputation, agenda building, news media, agenda setting, framing.
Khalitova et al.	(2020)	Yes	Public diplomacy, political communication, news coverage, information subsidies, news media, intermedia agenda setting, agenda levels, agenda-setting effects, agenda building.
Williams, Archer and Mahony	(2021)	Yes	Agenda setting, agenda building, agenda melding, news media, public opinion, activism, framing.

My investigation of the meso agendas concerns positioning and articulation by municipal authorities but did not examine how these actions were used to constitute discourse. Nevertheless, based on my findings, it is possible to repurpose some ideas on positioning, specifically those introduced by James (2010), to foreground my contribution to understanding agenda-setting for development purposes.

According to James, 'positioning in public relations can be defined as the strategic attempt to stake out and occupy a site of intentional representation in the contested space where meanings are constructed, contested, and reconstructed' (2010, p. 98). In the context of development, James' 'contested space' could be reimagined as a *rhetorical space* determined by the problem space; the latter emerges from the different states of a development problem, the attendant goals, and the constraints to achieving them. So, I define *the rhetorical space* as the opportunity for development actors to propose or challenge existing definitions of problems and goals. In Chapters 5 and 6, I described the attempts by development actors to use and expand Cali's development rhetorical space as they problematised and formulated goals, initially in light of a TIO's problem space and later disregarding it or redefining it, as these actors implemented *flexible problematisation* and *contribution goals* as suitable means to achieving organisational ends.

I also found Wise and James' ideas (2013) on the interplay of agendas and positioning helpful in expanding my contribution. Wise and James explain that 'an entity can deliberately self-position; be forced into self-positioning; engage in deliberate positioning of others; or be forced into positioning others' (2010, p. 331). Hence, to establish which of the positioning states described before is happening, the researcher has to determine if an organisation is setting its agenda, is being forced to do so, or is seeking to set another organisation's agenda. My findings substantiate that these positioning states apply to the cases studied. For instance, in Colombia, macro-institutional agendas have been adopted by national and some municipal authorities to position the country as an attractive destination for development investment. However, the latter has created the opportunity for the UN and its partners to set the country's agenda. The municipal authorities have expanded this prospect through attempts to set up the agenda for third-sector organisations operating in Cali, thus contributing to the cascading of the institutional global priorities for development into the third sector. In sum, resource asymmetries have encouraged the self-positioning of national agendas and the deliberate attempt to position the agendas of third-sector organisations operating in Colombia.

In line with all the above, contemporary meso agendas could be defined as devices used by national and local authorities to position themselves as accommodating partners of the multilateral development institutions. This positioning – self or forced – is done through hybrid agendas that encourage the adoption of global problems and goals within the third sector to address tensions (i.e., autonomy-financial viability) while, at the same time, paradoxes are entrenched – i.e., *dislocation* and *disneyfication.*

Wise and James (2013, p. 331) also elaborated on the reasons for positioning, such as 'ingratiation (entities want to be perceived as likeable and agreeable and will do favours

for, compliment, or flatter others), intimidation (entities want to be seen as strong, threatening or dangerous, and emphasise their ability to bring about negative consequences to others), self-promotion (entities that use self-promotion want to be seen as competent and emphasise abilities and accomplishments), exemplification (entities who use exemplification go above and beyond the normal call of duty to appear dedicated, upstanding and highly moral), facilitation (entities want to facilitate a social outcome/social marketing outcome), supplication (where entities work to demonstrate weakness and dependence as an indirect, strategic way to seek power and influence)'.

My study sought to establish if and how the meso-agendas in Cali contribute to the alleged cascading or relaying function denounced by critical development scholarship, so while it might be possible to draw similarities between the above and my findings, these positioning aims still need to be established in the context of development. Wise and James (2013, p. 331) also introduced some basic communication actions contributing to positioning – which resemble the media relations-PR agenda-building tactics – my study of Cali's MDPs did not include an examination of the communication activities used to position these plans in the public sphere or if and how that same activity was used to shape the development rhetorical space. So, the above foregrounds two additional avenues for further research.

As for how my investigation of meso agendas contributes to the field of development, first, it provides an encompassing understanding of the phenomenon studied because I gathered evidence keeping in mind that social problems and goals exist in a causal relationship. My review of development's agenda-setting literature (see section 2.5) established the extant body of work is goal-centric. Simply put, for development scholars, goals and their formation take precedence over other components of the agenda, such as

social problems and problematisation. The opposite is the case for public policy and political science's work on agenda-setting, for which problems inform the formation of goals (see section 2.3.2).

Even the most poorly designed goals imply a problem, but problems are multidimensional, so ideally, goals should be too. But goals are framing devices used to direct our attention to one or two aspects of a problem while sending to the background other, as proven by the study of Kids Cali's goal formation activities (see Chapter 6). Larsen, Haller, and Kothari recently touched upon the above implications for development (2022). My analysis of the Colombian meso agendas considered how goals emerge from a problem space (see section 3.4 and chapter 4); the latter is what objectivists would regard as the objective reality space. So, goals should emerge from that space and be appraised on how they reflect conditions on the ground. Cali's municipal authorities did that when incorporating the national agenda into their MDPs. Still, at the same time, these authorities added goals formulated in light of global development expectations, which might or may not have been informed by the local problem space. The MDPs examined presented the incorporation of MDGs and SDGs as an unproblematic process; however, future research should look at it in greater detail.

Regarding my specific contribution to the existing body of work on the adoption of institutional agendas by middle-income countries – an overlooked subject according to Horn and Grugel (2018) – my work substantiates the phenomenon of selectivity that these scholars found in Ecuador, as Colombian authorities have since 2005 disregarded some of the MDGs and SDGs. However, this selectivity is potentially undermined by municipal hybrid agendas. Conversely, not all municipal and regional authorities in Colombia have proposed hybrid development plans. Nevertheless, I believe that the ultimate effect of all

the inconsistencies – the national selectivity/differentiation and the municipal synthesis/amalgamation – is increasing the opportunity for multilateral institutional agendas to be adopted at the municipal level.

But five years have passed since Horn and Grugel drew attention to this matter, so it is vital to establish if my work remains relevant and if it aligns with the current agenda for research within the field. A Scopus search – using the parameters 'adoption' and 'selection' of SDGs – resulted in 100 articles published in and after 2018, from which only 22 concern the positioning and adoption of development agendas at meso levels (e.g., national and municipal). My review of the 22 articles identified three themes in this work: prioritisation, interpretation and localisation (see table below).

Sources	Themes
(Asadikia, Rajabifard, and Kalantari, 2022; Eppinga, Mijts, and Santos, 2022; Yunita et al., 2022; Reinar and Lundberg, 2023; Meilland and Lecocq, 2023).	Prioritisation of SDGs
(Park and Park, 2023; Stoddart, Yang, and Atlin, 2023; Waldmüller, Yap, and Watene, 2022).	Interpretation of SDGs
(Valencia et al., 2019; Waldmüller, Jamali, and Nogales, 2019; Ndlovu, Newman, and Sidambe, 2020; Mejía-Dugand and Pizano-Castillo, 2020; Jones and Comfort, 2020; Jönsson and Bexell, 2021; Masuda et al., 2021; Jain, Courvisanos, and Subramaniam, 2021; Annan-Aggrey and Arku, 2023; Blanc and Cotella, 2023; Fox and Macleod, 2023; Ningrum et al., 2023; Reinar and Lundberg, 2023; Vu and Long, 2023).	Localisation of SDGs

The following explanation of what is meant by prioritisation, interpretation and localisation has been informed by my findings; in that way, I am foregrounding the contribution and currency of my investigation. According to the sources in the table,

prioritisation involves making salient and investing in those SDGs deemed critical by the national or local authorities; the resulting outcome is positioning the national or municipal agendas as custom-made ones. Prioritising requires interpretation. Interpretation provides a translation – in sense-giving terms – linking the SDGs to national or local concerns. This framing of SDGs localises the goals, but depending on how it is done, it could disadvantage some communities. Localisation also requires interpretation, as it involves the adoption of the SDG agenda in a manner that legitimises its implementation. This process could result in prioritisation to foster a sense of national or municipal ownership or simply because meso-level actors openly or covertly reject some SDGs. Localisation can also be done to advance the full adoption of the SDG agenda, such as in Cali.

My examination of the Colombian meso agendas touched upon prioritisation and localisation; however, interpretation is something that I only examined in detail at micro-level by studying how CDRs' partners framed problems and goals. Also, while the scholarship reviewed shows an impetus to explore meso-level adoption-interpretation-prioritisation, it does not mitigate sufficiently against the significant amount of discussion about the same phenomena underpinned exclusively by critiques of macro agendas. This nascent literature is a step in the right direction (Masuda et al., 2021); my work could support it. For instance, my investigation explains how resources – such as legitimacy, expertise, access and autonomy – are leveraged to shape these processes of adoption prioritisation, interpretation and localisation, which could lead to adopting an agenda.

Before I elaborate on my contribution to the understanding of micro-level organising phenomena, it has to be pointed out that positioning, in the sense advanced by James (2010), fails to allude to the structuring choices required to achieve a stance within a problem space. Simply put, James' definition sees positioning as a rhetorical strategy, not

as a problem space structuring approach. Similar to prioritisation, interpretation, and localisation, structuring and representational choices must be implemented in a mutually supporting manner to position something or someone (e.g., NPO, agenda, or development actor). Therefore, I define positioning as the coordinated implementation of structuring and representational choices formulated to place an agenda of social problems and goals within potentially overlapping spaces (i.e., problem and rhetorical). The latter is done to facilitate the legitimation and adoption of a development agenda.

While the above definition of positioning deals in abstractions, the contemporary meaning of meso-level agenda setting that arises from the analysis of my findings is an attempt to redress the asymmetry of resources faced by a country in a manner that knowingly or naively opens the door widely for more of the same cultural homogenisation, dependency and subjection to the current international order and its agenda, which is destroying the planet (Rist, 2019; Ghosh, 2021). So, bizarrely, to avoid being melted by the sun, some nations are speeding towards it. Similarly, the Colombian planners thought that to escape the current order and its agenda, the country had to embrace them first. In simpler terms, to eradicate inequality and/or poverty, Colombia has to adopt a historical project that has brought to its shores these two problems. The last sub-section of this chapter expands on the meaning of the latter.

7.3 On the contemporary meaning of organising at micro-level

Collaborative Development Relationships (CDRs) were the domain or type of relationship I considered relevant to modernising intervention in Cali. My findings support the pertinence of that construct. CDRs emerge from the recurrent instances of organising required to implement a development programme (e.g., OP). Hence, CDRs

exist in the space between the multilateral development bodies and other organisations of the third sector. They also exist between each of its constituting NPOs (e.g., the CCE, DNF and PSF) and within the problem and rhetorical development spaces (e.g., Cali's TIOs).

The above elicits questions regarding the nature of a CDR's components, interactions, and outcomes. For instance, in section 1.3, I assumed that NPOs in CDRs are publics. So, based on the findings of this investigation, what type of publics are they? Also, concerning CDRs' dynamics, what factors shape their organising activities? And what are the intended or unintended outcomes of the interplay of micro-level factors?

Regarding the first question, in line with Chay-Nemeth's work on third-sector publics, the NPOs studied in Cali could be characterised as co-opted publics. According to Chay-Nemeth (2001), 'co-opted publics' act within the limits prescribed by influential organisations. This compliance gives them access to resources. Also, because they are compliant, they can share ideas, although those ideas are just reproducing the dominant discourses (p. 143). In light of my findings, it is possible to see some correspondence between the above definition of co-opted publics and the positioning pursued by the CCE and Kids Cali.

What informed my classification of these NPOs as co-opted is the study of the asymmetries shaping the programmes OP and CPC. These asymmetries emerge from unequal possession of the following resources: funding, legitimacy, expertise, autonomy and access. Concerning how local NPOs managed these resources, my investigation established that, to a certain extent, their lack of financial resources could have been mitigated more effectively by further leveraging the NPOs' expertise in implementing

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interventions and their access to local communities; the latter is possible due to the legitimacy of these local NPOs. However, this leveraging has been inconsistent, creating an imbalance of power in favour of the funding partners (e.g., the DNF and PSF), who ultimately have used this imbalance to shape the agenda-setting process.

The above outcome has materialised not because the resources leveraged by the local NPOs were less important or valuable but because these local NPOs agreed to negotiate the focal point of their programmes to secure their viability and, by extension, the sustainability of their organisations. This re-positioning did not involve surrendering these NPOs' agendas but including other problems and pursuing alternative goals through the same intervention. To successfully add the new problems and goals, the local NPOs implemented *flexible problematisation* and formulated *contribution goals*. Both tactics involve the nesting of multiple problems and goals without consideration of how they support each other – their potentially distorting feedback – and their relevance to the problem space (TIOs). Regardless, the latter was done to expand the interventions' scope, irrespective of how this impacts the allocation of the resources available to undertake them.

So, what is the primary outcome of the interplay of flexible problematisation and contribution goals? An agenda-positioning strategy that gives apparent equal weight to all the social problems and goals pursued through one programme. The meaning of 'apparent' here is to pretend that all the problems and goals will be given the same importance when, in practice, that will be difficult to accomplish if the resources available remain the same. So, what are the broader implications of adopting this *apparent equivalence positioning*? Against their will, local NPOs have been forced into self-positioning (James, 2010), and by extension, their choice could have had a domino effect

in two opposing but connected directions. Upstream, this positioning has potentially countered any agenda-positioning strategy adopted by the national or municipal authorities[90]. Downstream, the same positioning has effectively dislocated the local communities from the social problematisation and goal-formation processes, nullifying the positioning of the TIOs communities' agendas.

With at least 1,000 local NPOs running programmes in Cali and more than 100 international foundations, all of them positioning their agendas in light of asymmetries in the possession of resources, what cumulative impact do they have on the direction of development in the country? Do they cancel or reinforce each other? Or do they reposition all the meso and communal agendas in one distinctive direction? These questions prefigure avenues for future research as the extant literature will benefit from more insight into the positioning of agendas in the Global South.

With the above in mind, one of the main takeaway points of my investigation is the foregrounding of the importance of the micro-level agenda-setting process based on its potentially significant impact on the positioning of other agendas. This acknowledges the existence of multiple macro and meso streams of influence through which institutional, national and municipal agendas could penetrate the micro-level in the Global South, but also how the impact of these streams could be amplified or nullified by agenda positioning strategies adopted at the micro-level. In the face of this finding, we could embrace the approach of the invisible and unpredictable but free-from-bias hand of the public-policy process, implicitly advanced by Kingdon (2011) and his followers. Kingdon's libertarian

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[90] I used the terms 'potentially' and 'could' because establishing if the micro-level agenda setting has had an impact on upstream positioning requires determining whether or not and how, for example, the implementation of OP and CPC challenges the specific terms in which the national and municipal authorities see social exclusion, unemployment and violence against children being tackled. That is beyond the scope of my investigation.

hand allegedly self-corrects any imperfection caused by the arbitrariness of how agendas interact. Alternatively, as suggested above, we could study this process to establish the potential outcomes.

Before I continue elaborating on the outcomes of CDRs, it is worth reflecting on the potential contribution of this construct per se. The development scholarship on vehicles for collaboration uses different terms to refer to 'partnerships' or 'relationships' between private, public, for-profit and not-for-profit organisations. For example, Multi-Sector Partnerships (MSPs), Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), Transnational Public-Private Partnerships (TPPPs), Inter-Organisational Relationships (IORs) and Cross-Sector Partnerships (CSPs) (Lu, 2015; Vestergaard et al., 2021; Erdem Türkelli, 2022; Andonova and Piselli, 2022). The focal point of this overlapping literature is partnership or relationship dynamics and how they shape modernising outcomes. However, as discussed above, the micro-level is a very contested domain in which multiple agendas vie to determine a programme's focal point, potentially repositioning other levels' agendas. Hence, the focus on meso-level dynamics alone, through units of analysis such as MSPs or PPPs, most likely provides an incomplete picture of modernising activity. So, the CDR construct should be treated as a vital link between levels of analysis, enabling the expansion of the field's existing scope on meso-level partnerships and relationships for development.

As for the concept's potential contribution to PR, CDRs could be treated as a building block aiding the field's understanding of organisational dynamics beyond for-profit and non-collaborative domains. This view is underpinned by what the current body of work offers to PR practitioners interested in development, which is the treatment of NPOs as social enterprises (Lugo-Ocando and Hernández-Toro, 2016). This interest in social

enterprises is much in line with what development scholars have denounced as the negative influence of business logics on the field (Eikenberry and Kluver, 2004; Sanders and McClellan, 2014; Sanders, 2015; Calvo and Morales, 2016; Maier, Meyer, and Steinbereithner, 2016; Sandberg, Elliott, and Petchel, 2020). Recent PR research shows a sustained clear divide between scholars who knowingly or unknowingly advance these logics (e.g., Mato-Santiso, Rey-García, and Sanzo-Pérez, 2021) and those who push against the dislocation of the Global South publics (e.g., Joshi, 2022; Yudarwati and Gregory, 2022).

Expanding on development logics and their micro-level attendant frames, my study shows how they work with structuring-organising choices to a) shape the agenda-setting process and b) influence the management of tensions. For instance, the situational frame 'the value of parity' was used by local participants to counter the logic of quotas; quotas were proposed to underpin the new gender equality focal point for OP. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), gender quotas are a 'positive measurement instrument aimed at accelerating the achievement of gender-balanced participation and representation by establishing a defined proportion (percentage) or a number of places or seats to be filled by, or allocated to women and/or men, generally under certain rules or criteria' (EIGE, 2023). Logics – like this quota – transcend organisational domains. They structure collaborative activity (e.g., problem definition). *Logics* are relayed by sector and industry narratives, which seek to uniform and standardise practices across the field (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, 2012; Ansari, Wijen, and Gray, 2013).

Regarding the influence of logics and frames on the management of tensions (e.g., autonomy-financial viability and autonomy-legitimacy), the logic 'the power of

translation', which alludes to the knowledge of the local environment, access to TIOs and implementation power expected from local NPOs, this logic was used – although inconsistently – by the CCE and Kids Cali to remind their funding partners that they depend on the organisations managing the programmes. So, based on the asymmetry in possession of knowledge, access and implementation power, funding partners gave up autonomy to accrue legitimacy from partnerships with local NPOs that have the means and reputation to ensure TIOs' communities welcome the proposed interventions (e.g., OP).

Regarding the contribution of my investigation to the extant PR body of work on frames, my review of the literature available between 2010 and 2018 indicates that scholars have sufficiently studied organisational frames. However, the same review also found a handful of articles examining NPOs' frames (e.g., Weberling, 2012; Tsetsura, 2013). Additionally, Anderson (2018) argues that PR scholars have neglected the phenomenon of counter-framing. For Anderson, a counter-frame is a frame that contradicts an existing one (2018, p. 111). By examining how frames emerge from sense-breaking, sense-giving and sense-making moments, my study also reveals instances of counter-framing (see section 5.6). So, how does the occurrence of counter-framing align or not with the classification of NPOs as co-opted and, therefore, reproducing only dominant discourses? My analysis of micro-level framing revealed an inconsistent attempt to challenge the field's logics despite the claims of local NPOs attempting to shape municipal development policy (e.g., the CCE's director claims – see sub-section 5.5.1). For instance, gender quotas were challenged. Yet, the role given to local NPOs as institutional agenda adopters was not effectively or recurrently opposed by any of the frames revealed by my investigation. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that the cumulative impact of all the

frames and counter-frames circulating at the micro-level was negligible on the field's status quo.

The contribution of my frames' study to development should be appraised in light of the current analyses of micro-level agenda-setting. My review of that body of work found little on the subject. Simply put, I found a handful of papers studying agenda-setting at the micro-level. Wong's work examining the three forms of power shaping agenda-setting within human rights NPOs is part of that literature (i.e., 2014; Luxon and Wong, 2017). However, the focal point of her work is the structuring dimension of agenda-setting, not its rhetorical component. The study of frames concerns the latter.

So, what does organising mean in the contemporary context of micro-level development interventions? It means and entails a constant battle against asymmetries and their attendant tensions, which institutional and meso-level actors exploit to ensure NPOs adopt an agenda-positioning strategy that supports tackling the prescribed social problems and goals. While it is possible to reposition the local NPOs' agendas via tactics that lessen the resource asymmetries that constrain their problematisation and goal formation, that possibility has been relinquished by the organisations studied. There is sufficient work on resource dependence by development scholars (Froelich 1999; Verschuere and De Corte 2014; O'Brien and Evans 2017); however, PR scholarship has neglected resource dependence as an organising factor because it has focused on interpersonal dimensions of relationships as drivers shaping OPRs. My work indicates that the study of organising beyond organisational domains would benefit from further examining the interaction between resources and how they empower and disempower organisations in CDRs or similar domains.

7.4 The institutionalisation or deinstitutionalisation of development

Under this subsection, I discuss how my findings shed light on the institutionalisation and deinstitutionalisation of development and its attendant practices and structures. This is done in light of mainstream ideas on these phenomena, which were put forward by DiMaggio & Powell (1983) and Oliver (1992) and which I introduced in section 1.3. So, in line with the above theorisation and also the extensive critique of development, which conceives modernisation as a top-down approach (e.g., Mehta, 1999; Mawdsley and Rigg, 2003; Bek, Binns, and Nel, 2004; Hickey, 2008; Wallace, 2004; Wright, 2012), setting the agenda for development, the agenda itself, its problems, goals, and the related modernising logics are treated here as phenomena that sustain the institutional character and legitimacy of the multilateral development project.

The latter is the case because the collective institutional apparatus of development has successfully sold the view that it operates as a multilateral-consensual institution. Consequently, the agenda for development and the other phenomena mentioned above have been positioned as outcomes of a genuinely global participatory process, which confers these outcomes institutional character-legitimacy. Regardless, I looked for evidence in my findings pointing at coercive, mimetic and normative choices (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) linked to or resulting from the agenda-setting practices of the meso and micro-level organisations studied by my investigation. I also searched for evidence within the information collected of possible attempts to deinstitutionalise the multilateral development project and its structures by exercising functional, political and social pressures (Oliver, 1992). So, based on all the above, the following three questions aided in organising the discussion of my findings: 1) Does the Colombian government institutionalise or deinstitutionalise modernisation with its agenda-setting practices? 2)

Does Cali's municipal authority institutionalise or deinstitutionalise modernisation with its agenda-setting practices? 3) Do collaborative development relationships (CDRs) institutionalise or deinstitutionalise modernisation with their agenda-setting practices?

Concerning the first question, all the evidence discussed in this thesis points to two opposing actions or inconsistencies by the Colombian government. On the one hand, the national administrations considered by this study sought to establish their own development goals and distinctive ways to appraise progress on them (see section 3.4). On the other hand, these national administrations did not attempt to curtail the ability of regional or municipal authorities to include and give substantive weight to the MDGs and SDGs in their local agendas. So, in institutional theory's terms, the national administrations (2011-2019) did not consistently coerce or use political pressure on regional and municipal administrations to adopt or reject any agenda for development. This is in line with the autonomy rights of local authorities, enshrined in Colombian law.

Furthermore, The National Department for Planning (DNP) persistently encouraged the adoption of the MDGs and SDGs (DNP, 2011; 2016); this is evidence of promoting a normative choice and presenting the DNP as a mimetic choice. In previous sections, I elaborated on the reasons behind this inconsistent approach to adopting multilateral modernisation (e.g., securing international funding). So, based on those reasons, the Colombian administrations studied did not challenge the multilateral development project and its structures. Hence, the most likely effect of the national government hybrid agendas has been neutral or institutionalising.

Regarding the second question, the significant inclusion of multilateral objectives in the Municipal Development Plans (MDPs 2012-2015 and 2016-2019) and the adoption of

national goals – which already had been shaped by the MDGs and SDGs – indicates that the development policies of Cali's municipal authorities institutionalise modernisation. My findings provide evidence of coercive, mimetic and normative choices faced by local NPOs and partners in collaborative development relationships (CDRs) due to the agenda-setting practices of the municipal authorities in question. Participants working for Cali's third sector talked about avoiding 'swimming against the tide' in relation to the requirement of including the MDP's goals and objectives in their programmes. The latter is an example of a normative choice. Participants also indicated that the financial dependence of their NPOs on the municipal authorities forced them to consider adopting the authorities' ideas and procedures. This is an example of a coercive choice. The push-encouragement by municipal authorities for NPOs to form inter-sectorial partnerships could be treated as evidence of a mimetic choice. Inter-sectorial partnerships are also promoted by the UN and its agencies (see section 7.3).

Consequently, the agenda-setting practices of the municipal authority significantly contribute to the institutionalisation of the multilateral agenda for development. This is the case because the municipal hybrid agendas for development examined acted as relaying mechanisms of the MDGs and SDGs. Also, in line with the above, there is no evidence in my findings pointing at the use of political pressure by the municipal authorities studied to deinstitutionalise-challenge the UN's agenda or to question the technical utility of its practices and norms; the latter concerns the introduction of functional choices.

Concerning the third question, the collaborative development relationships (CDRs) studied have been shaped mainly by grant-making foundations financing their programmes. These foundations have pushed the CDRs in question to pursue the goals of

gender inequality (SDG 5) and creating safe spaces to protect children against violence (SDG 16.2). This has helped all organisations in the CDR address their tensions (e.g., autonomy-financial viability) and asymmetries (e.g., resource dependency). So, as is the case with the municipal authorities, the grant-making foundations studied acted as conduits of the multilateral development project, reinforcing its institutional status. As Chapters 5 and 6 explained, these foundations introduced their goals with the aid of coercive choices, which were underpinned by the financial dependency of the local NPOs who needed donative income to remain viable. Also, in their grant contracts, the funding organisations stipulated their right to intervene in the governance of programmes to monitor and secure their appropriate implementation. This allowed these foundations to prescribe how local NPOs administer their operations. This is evidence of posing a normative choice.

Having said that, and in line with the opposing effects created by agenda positioning strategies at the micro-level (see section 7.3), some participants working for local NPOs expressed ideas that align with Oliver's (1992) description of deinstitutionalising pressures. For instance, participants indicated they objected to implementing some of the foundations' practices and norms because they were ill-informed, not based on the reality on the ground and hence inapplicable (see section 5.6.1). These comments were more prevalent when the participants worked for an NPO with an intervention model (e.g., Case 2). So, this functional pressure was directed at deinstitutionalising other models, norms and practices that challenge the local intervention methodology. However, the foundations argued that these practices and norms were informed by the institutional logics within the field (see section 5.5.3), which is an institutionalising mimetic-normative answer-choice.

In the cases that concerned this investigation, the deinstitutionalising voices did not amount to anything meaningful. However, after looking at other CDRs, which were not formal cases, I found evidence that points to significant pressures of deinstitutionalisation. This is more evident in CDRs in which the funding partners are religious organisations or with strong religious affiliations, in which the priority goals are in direct conflict or poorly aligned with, for example, the institutional-multilateral goal of gender equality.

Lastly, the above discussion mirrors the result of the analysis of agenda-positioning strategies, meaning that future analysis combining both focal points – choices-pressures for and against institutionalisation and agenda-positioning strategies – could be used to enhance research on the Global South's development programmes and their implications. Also, I have not encountered research by PR scholars on this subject. A Scopus search revealed that the term 'institutions' is commonly used by development academics. The analysis of the vast amount of literature using this term is beyond the remit of this investigation. However, the review of the development scholarship that concerns agenda setting (see section 2.5) indicates significant contribution opportunities to be created if the approach suggested above is undertaken.

7.5 On the dislocation and disneyfication paradoxes

My study found that problematisation and goal formation at micro-level are shaped by asymmetries and tensions that encourage the formulation and adoption of detrimental development practices. Practices that are inefficient and against principles, such as the consultation and involvement of communities in formulating interventions (UN 2020b; 2024a). The detrimental practices identified by this investigation are encapsulated by the

following paradoxes: *dislocation* and *disneyfication*. Chapters 5 and 6 provide ample description of the nature of each of the components-detrimental practices that constitute these paradoxes. Consequently, the following sub-sections establish the causal links between these malpractices and explain how they are linked to other phenomena and functions of development occurring at macro and meso levels. The latter will be done with the aid of contemporary ideas about globalisation and postmodernity.

7.5.1 The dislocation paradox and governmental attention deficit

Dislocation is a negative outcome of a top-down approach to agenda-setting within development, caused by the absence or deficient problem definition leading to failure or the sub-optimal impact of programmes. *Dislocation* is the state of disconnection and alienation in which the recipients of aid are held by an agenda-setting process that is characterised by the following features: a) *de-prioritisation of local problem formulation* by NPOs who choose to neglect problematisation and its tools (e.g., characterisation studies), b) the adoption of *flexible problematisation* by collaborative development partners, resulting in multi-focal interventions, which could be ineffective if programmes have to share a fixed amount of funding to pursue an increasing number of goals, or objectives, and c) the adoption of *problem selection* by collaborative development partners, which involves espousing the definition of a social condition that has been formulated by institutional organisations with limited or no current knowledge of the actual problems faced by local recipients of aid in their problem space.

So, in isolation, the above a, b, and c are the detrimental practices identified by my investigation, which, when causally linked, constitute the *dislocation paradox*. As to what

factors cause dislocation, in previous sections, it has been made clear that the asymmetry of resources – at meso and micro levels – leads to adopting multilateral institutional modernising agendas in exchange for development funding. However, Horn and Grugel's (2018) study of Ecuador's national development programme indicates that other countries in the region are willing to challenge the top-down approach to modernisation enforced through asymmetries and, therefore, independently formulate and implement their solutions to social conditions. This signals to local authorities and third-sector organisations that the national agenda must be prioritised above others, which, as explained above, is not the case in Cali, Colombia. So, expanding on the link between micro and meso-level agenda-setting choices, what other factors, apart from pursuing multilateral funding, could explain Colombia's fondness for the modernising-institutional agenda for development?

One of those factors is globalisation and its implications. More specifically, global governance. Hence, the dislocation paradox is also treated here as an outcome of the internationalisation of governmental activity and the attendant reconfiguration of the nation-state (Held 2010; Stables 2019). The internationalisation or trans-nationalisation of governmental activity is a phenomenon mainly caused by two factors: global development problems and the attendant processes needed to position and implement the multilateral agendas for modernisation, as the following definition of global governance implies: 'Global governance is a process of political co-ordination in which the tasks of making and implementing global or transnational rules, or managing trans-border issues, are shared among governments and international and transnational agencies (both public and private), with the objective of realising a common purpose or collectively agreed goals' (e.g., SDGs) (McGrew, 2004, p. 164).

So, in the modernising governance context, national administrations' attempts to tackle development independently are discouraged by the globalised nature of social problems and the inability of governments to address them unaided without engaging with multilateral bodies through global governance mechanisms. For instance, McGrew (2004, p. 130) explains that national governments are 'too small' – they lack the resources – to tackle the global problems alone (e.g., global warming) and 'too big to deal with local matters such as refuse recycling'. I argue this creates the conditions for dislocation to rise unchecked because governments' ability to direct their attention to micro-level phenomena is severely curtailed.

In line with the above, unresponsive governments are demoted from their traditional position as the central organising entities of modern life (McGrew, 2004, pp. 132-135). This initial cornerstone role given to governments was predicated by the Westphalian system, by which the political and governmental spaces are 'coterminous with national territorial boundaries' (p. 134). However, in the globalised world order, the relegation of governments places supranational entities, such as the EU parliament or the UN, as the new managers of the political, economic and cultural affairs of blocks of countries.

This displacement of national governments has led to distinctive reactions, such as rejecting this repositioning – e.g., Brexit – and the emerging new localisms (Stables, 2019). 'Localism as a political concept has signified a variety of things, including a preference for local solutions and the devolution of funding and political authority to local or regional decision-makers' (Katz and Nowak, 2017, p. 17). These new localisms are advanced as vehicles to close governments' attention deficit, which persists even after they are redefined as meso-level entities. Meso-level governments are inconveniently placed between the macro-level structures of global corporatism and modernisation and

the micro-level structure of the local community (Stables, 2019). In this new position, governments continue struggling to meet the expectations of macro and micro-level stakeholders. So, regarding the matter at hand, the global maze of interlevel coordination and monitoring creates room for dislocation to emerge and potentially consolidate due to the lack of clarity as to if and who should oversee NPOs activities.

Before we continue, it is important to remind the reader that 'attention', the contest for it, is a key unit of analysis of contemporary agenda-setting studies (e.g., Kingdon, 2011; Jones and Baumgartner, 2005) (also see section 2.3). So, in line with the above, another factor firmly directing governments' attention away from micro-level phenomena (e.g., dislocation) is the intensifying effect that globalisation has on all types of problems, as the resources that enable the expansion of activities beyond national borders (e.g., ICTs) are also at the disposal of disruptive and illegal entities (e.g., drug cartels and terrorist groups). For instance, disruptors and criminal groups, with the aid of globalising technologies and procedures, engage with like-minded collectives operating in other national territories, and in doing so, they expand the scope of their illegal activities. Consequently, they impact more people locally and abroad harder, forcing governments to devote a significant amount of attention to these pressing challenges and to seek the support of global governance institutions and mechanisms (McGrew, 2004; Baylis, Smith, and Owens, 2017; Scholte, 2017). A reaction, which I already said, makes it easier for dislocating practices to emerge unchecked.

Illustrating how all the factors discussed above, leading to attention deficit, could shape the meso and micro levels that concern this investigation, persistently until 2016, contemporary Colombian governments were besieged by the same problem: guerrilla movements partnering with drug cartels to destabilise and ultimately topple the state

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(OECD 2015a; 2015b). The former provided the human resources to fight and safeguard drug operations in the national territory, and the latter financed these activities and the guerilla's political agenda (Moreno, 2015; CIDOB, 2020). These organisations were and remain connected to supporting entities also operating globally, increasing the complexity of the challenge faced by different Colombian governments and steering its attention. For those administrations who faced this partnership, development became, to a significant extent, contingent upon the demobilisation and eradication of these illegal groups. In other words, the national internal conflict sustained by these groups, its impact – 6.9 million Colombians forcibly displaced within the country (UNHCR, 2024) – and its legacy were and remain the primary cause or a contributing factor creating the conditions preventing development (e.g., SDG 16, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). From inequality to environmental damage[91], the footprints of these criminal actors have been enduring (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2005; 2018).

Consequently, Colombian administrations have found themselves tackling at the same time the antagonists of the nation-state, the globally heightened pre-existing and emerging risks, and the legacy and current development goals. Hence, Colombian governments have persistently sought to engage with the multilateral governance development mechanisms, delegated to regional and municipal authorities, and relied on the third-sector contribution to meet development goals. So, as hinted above, it is not unsurprising that dislocation emerged in a context in which the reduced attention of national governments and its increased transfer of responsibilities or sharing of the burden

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[91] 'Compared to OECD economies, Colombia displays one of the highest levels of regional inequality in terms of GDP per capita. The legacy of armed conflict, disjointed urban and rural contexts, and limitations in subnational administrative capacity, has generated vast diversity and stark inequality among regions.' 'The internal conflict has also impeded environmental management by restricting access to protected areas, thereby undermining the rule of law (OECD, 2015, pp. 3, 18).

are phenomena of contemporary governance in a globalised world order (McGrew, 2004; Katz and Nowak, 2017b; Stables, 2019).

Concerning the potential use of statutory law to address the Colombian government's attention deficit, the country has passed legislation defining the nature and remit of NPOs operating in the country, called in Spanish ESALs[92] (DANE, 2020; DIAN, 2021). However, this legislation sought to tackle money laundering and tax evasion practices instead of providing a template or guidance on how NPOs are expected to implement development programmes. To address the legitimacy issues associated with self-regulation, the NPOs studied got ISO certifications (e.g., 9001:2008) to prove that their processes follow some acceptable protocols and practices. However, as participants made clear, the ISO certifications they got were not designed with NPOs in mind.

Summarising, the view that I have advanced above and which is suggested as an avenue for future investigations is that the rise of global governance, the re-positioning of governments as meso-level entities and the global dimension of development challenges all contribute to a deficit of attention that creates the conditions for the emergence of the dislocation paradox and its accompanying detrimental practices. This factor, together with the asymmetries created by the lack of resources of the Global South and, hence, the dominance of the multilateral institutional agenda for modernisation, potentially enhances the spread of dislocating practices across the least developed countries.

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[92] Entidades Sin Animo de Lucro, or ESALs, is the legal name for NPOs officially registered to operate in Colombia.

7.5.2 The disneyfication paradox and the development simulation

Disneyfication is another negative outcome of the top-down approach to agenda-setting within development. It is caused by deficient and misleading goal formation, leading to distorting feedback that degrades the goals of all interventions (i.e., diverging interdependency), rendering the latter ineffectual. *Disneyfication* is a state of deceptive hope or expectation in which aid recipients are held by an agenda-setting process that is characterised by the following features: a) *complex collaborations* that dissimulate the lack of coordination in implementation and the absence of shared ideas on what sizable multi-partner collaborative projects seek to achieve, due to a disconnection between the aims of a programme, promoted by funding partners, and the pertinent problem space, and b) *contribution goals*, a collection of goals that have not been nested or aligned, because they are not meant to structure, to guide interventions, but to serve as rhetorical and motivational devices whose primary function is to simulate that the end state of a problem is achievable while dissimulating the severity or complexity of the social problem to be tackled. Below, I expand on the meaning of simulation and dissimulation in this thesis and how these concepts informed the view that where disneyfication is happening, it holds communities and people in two distinctive states: a state of intervention – e.g., intervened communities and individuals – and in a state of deceptive hope or expectation. Also, beyond these specific points, I introduce some ideas concerning the broader implications and conclusions that we could draw from development when we approach it as a simulation, not just discourse.

According to Baudrillard, 'To dissimulate is to pretend not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one doesn't have. One implies a presence, the other an absence' (Baudrillard, [1981] 2004, p. 3). So, for instance, in Cali, multi-partner large-

scale programmes, called here *complex collaborations*, simulate common goals and the coordination needed to achieve them. While *contribution goals* – the type of goals that can only be achieved if every partner involved in a programme effectively tackles a set of objectives – dissimulate deeply rooted problems in Cali's TIOs[93]. Problems such as invisible boundaries, which, if not addressed first, make it difficult, if not impossible, to achieve any other goal in intervened communities.

Elaborating on invisible boundaries to illustrate some of the specific implications of the simulations and dissimulations shaping goal formation, invisible boundaries are a prevalent feature of low-income communities in Colombia. Researchers explain that criminal groups set these to support illegal activities (González Quiros, López Rendón, and Rivera Castañeda, 2015). Invisible boundaries are demarcated using non-obvious signs on walls and pavements and/or by stationing groups of enforcers in their perimeters to facilitate the monitoring of policing activities and control the access of communal members in and out of TIOs' quarters. In other words, criminal or illegal organisations (i.e., drug cartels, guerrillas and paramilitary groups) use invisible boundaries to hinder the movements of individuals that could get in the way of these organisations' aims. So, for those living in TIOs in which invisible boundaries are set up, violent check-ups, intimidation and assaults are constant hazards.

Consequently, pursuing some development goals and ideas, such as creating safety zones for children against violence, a goal pursued by two of the cases I examined, is not feasible unless these invisible boundaries are first demolished. Regardless, the programmes in question overlooked the phenomenon of invisible boundaries and

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[93] Territories of Inclusion and Opportunities (TIOs) are Cali's severely deprived communities.

attempted to implement UNICEF's concept of Safe Spaces (UNICEF Colombia, 2019; Tortello and Jenkins, 2024). In these circumstances, there is little communities can do to participate in the design and implementation of Safe Spaces for the following reasons: a) communities lack the knowledge to outmanoeuvre criminal and illegal organisations. Such knowledge is difficult to acquire, even for governments, and b) people who cannot protect themselves cannot protect others. So, under this approach, according to interviewees, communities were disabled and hence prevented from engaging by the approach taken. Participation makes the difference between intervened and involved communities, as the former are objects, passive recipients of help, with no say on how development will shape them. In contrast, involved communities are the subjects, the designers of their futures. Ironically, participation is a crucial principle for creating Safe Spaces (UNICEF, 2009, p. 11).

To summarise, all the above discussion of invisible boundaries and the creation of safe spaces illustrates the following aspects of the disneyfication paradox: 1) A top-down approach to development's design and implementation and 2) an ill-informed or misleading goal formation that dissimulates the severity or complexity of social conditions. Also, the context described above, which is part of the complex sociology of TIOs, can be further examined in light of Baudrillard's analysis of Disneyland to establish the broader and least obvious outcomes of disneyfication.

But before we proceed, it is important to note that while the mainstream theorisation of Disneyfication and Disneyization, as initially proposed by Bryman (1999; 2008; 2012) and expanded by others (e.g., Matusitz and Palermo, 2014), has some points of affinity with how disneyfication is understood in this thesis, the focus of Bryman's inspired work is on consumer culture not on development. So, the main interest of Disneyfication-

Disneyization work is in examining how corporations have thrived by promoting values and practices – e.g., theming, hybrid consumption, merchandising and performative labour – which inform approaches to globalising businesses and consumerism. According to Scopus searches, the above focus has not discouraged studies on development-related subjects from using these concepts to analyse their findings (e.g., Jones, 2021; Öztürk Büke, 2023; Hashimoto and Telfer, 2024). However, I have found Baudrillard's sociological approach to postmodernity more insightful in understanding the broader implications of globalising agendas for development. Below, I elaborate on the simulatory dimension of development and its consequences.

Concerning the sociological function of Disneyland in postmodern times, Baudrillard explains that: 'Disneyland exists in order to hide that it is the "real" country, all of "real" America that is Disneyland (a bit like prisons are there to hide that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, that is carceral). Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation' (2004, p. 12).

Extrapolating from some aspects of the above, and in relation to where dislocated and Disneyfied aid recipients are held, it could be argued that TIOs, or any other low-income community intervened by development programmes, serve a similar sociological function. TIOs are theme parks of development, a function made possible by the significant investment and promotion they receive from different international and national organisations, regional and municipal authorities and third-sector organisations (see sections 3.4 and 4.2 for further details on TIOs). In this sense, TIOs have two purposes: a) to keep those inside hopeful and therefore demobilised, believing that all the

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support they get equips them to leave behind their current condition while the structural barriers to social mobility are kept in place, and b) to keep those outside believing that they are experiencing a form of development – not the same though experienced by those living in North-Western economies – but certainly much better and privileged than those serving time in TIOs. So, the whole of Cali and, by extension, other cities in the Global South could be conceived as prisons divided into two main sectors: TIOs and non-TIOs (see maps of Cali and TIOs in section 3.4).

Expanding on the above purposes, the disneyfication of TIOs seems to be pursued for contradictory aims or mutually exclusive goals. For instance, development funding is poured into TIOs to improve their conditions, making them liveable, habitable and to some extent pleasant. That aligns with the idea of them being theme parks of development because these places, their people and venues are showcased as modernisation's success stories (e.g., 'Tecnocentro Cultural Somos Pacifico', 2024). So, there is an attempt to simulate that these places have a better future by dissimulating all the least obvious conditions that besiege them (e.g., invisible boundaries) with investment patches, not serious infrastructure and social investment programmes. At the same time, development interventions socialise and equip TIOs members with practical skills so they can function beyond these parks' confines. NPO employees talked about their trainees 'escaping' or 'leaving behind' their TIOs while funding international and national partners, and municipal authorities talked about these intervened communities as places of 'opportunity' and 'inclusion' having the conditions for people to stay and thrive. It is not clear how these two goals reinforce each other.

Nevertheless, the metaphorical prisoners of the Global South are the real migrants attempting to reach the North-Western modernised scapes, the Elysium (British Film

Institute, 2013). The increasing number of multilateral pacts show how the above simulations and dissimulations struggle to contain humans in their Global South penal colonies (UN 2021; EU Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, 2024). Bar those with valuable skills who, in line with extractive policies, can enter the North-Western nations to drive buses, care for the elderly and dream of being professionals, how could the North-West discourage the rest? As target 10.7 of the UN SDG Global Monitoring Indicators makes clear – to 'facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies' – the latter question is relevant. And crucially, we are facing a revelatory moment telling us that development has failed the Global South, as the SDG 10 aims at reducing inequality within and among countries (the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2014). Or, to put it in more sanguine and phlegmatic terms, citizens of the Global South leaving their countries for reasons of inequality is probably the most accurate indicator signalling the failure of the modernisation project.

7.6 My view on the contemporary meaning of development

Throughout my investigation, I have come across different definitions of modernisation. For instance, some post-developmentalists believe modernisation is a post-colonial project (see McEwan, 2008), and others see it as a facet of capitalism (Prebisch 1984; Wallerstein 2004; A. G. Frank 2006). Development has also been conceptualised as discourse (Escobar, 1984; 1995) and a religion (Rist, [1997]; 2021). Above, I advanced the view that modernisation should be treated as a simulation because its dislocation and disneyfication consequences are achieved through dissimulation and simulation of social conditions.

I built this view from the ground by examining micro-to-macro level interactions and incorporating various ideas, some of which did not emerge from studying or thinking about development. With that in mind, it is reasonable to define development as a simulating and structuring discourse that leads to one or all of the following outcomes: a wicked problem, a type three error and a type four error (Rittel and Webber, 1973; Mitroff and Silvers, 2010; Head, 2017). Consequently, and alternatively, we could also say that development is concurrently a wicked problem, a type three error and a type four error due to its multilateral nature.

Development is a wicked problem because, under the current world order, it is not possible to rectify, reconstruct and recover from the historical mistakes made by the North-Western nations while they continue to pursue colonialist projects based on socioeconomic asymmetries that have become the foundational pillars of the current form of universal capitalism that shapes every aspect of our lives. To conceal this from us, we are persistently dislocated and disneyfied. Development could also be a type three error, the unintentional error of attempting to resolve the wrong problems due to ignorance. For instance, when automation has become one of the most disruptive challenges for humanity, some governments still want to tackle low productivity (OECD, 2020; 2023). Under type three error, dislocation and disneyfication are not purposively deployed. They arise from shared ignorance, contributing to the blind pursuit of a type three development. And finally, in its most insidious and long-term destructive form, development is a type four error. An agenda of the problems the North-Western nations have tricked the rest of the world – particularly the Global South – into tackling. In this case, the trick has been to convince us that it is imperative to tackle the problems that challenge the current world order (e.g., financial crises) so a neo-colonialist order is sustained, one that cannot survive without simulation.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that these amalgamating definitions of modernisation do not foreground enough the vital role that multilateralism and collaboration play in conceptualising and practising development. In a recent speech, the UN Assistant Secretary-General, Nikhil Seth, reminded me of multilateralism-collaboration in a paradoxical way (Seth, 2024).

Before elaborating on the current state of multilateralism, Seth reminded us that the collaboration of different nations led to positive developments such as the SDGs and that partnerships are critical means of multilateralism, including those with the private sector, as they realise the agendas agreed by different countries. Nevertheless, Seth argues that we need to reimagine multilateralism because the traditional multilateralism of governments is morphing due to the fault lines in the UN's Security Council (e.g., 'Russia and China versus the rest'), 'the rise of nationalism and horde generated hysteria which has led to a great trust deficit or erosion in multilateral institutions'. All the latter has weakened international cooperation (Seth, 2024, 24:21). As a result, and stopping short of saying that multilateralism is dead, Seth advanced a more encompassing definition of the term: 'multilateralism is not only the multilateralism of governments sitting at the United Nations, [it is also] the multilateralism of academia, the multilateralism of civil society, the multilateralism of enlighten businesses. These are the different kinds of multilateralism today that are powering the expression "multilateralism" ' (26:11).

I find the above paradoxical because it fails to recognise the role of the UN and its partner institutions in consolidating and maintaining the now crumbling multilateralism and its poor outcomes (e.g., according to Seth, the 2024 SDG report shows that only 17% of the development targets are on track, there is no progress on 33% of them and minimal progress on 50% of these targets). So, I believe the institutional development structures

are complicit, others would say responsible, in sustaining a flawed order. The view of Seth is also paradoxical because, without the current multilateralism of North-Western governments, the present development institutions would not be in place, as these two exist in a causal relationship (e.g., a causal relationship presumably predicated on resource dependency, amongst other things). So, any changes on either side of this relationship would have long-lasting implications for the survival of each component; in other words, the transformation of the current multilateralism could not take place without the reorganisation of the current development governance and of the world order too, something that it is acknowledged by Seth when he talked about the fault lines in the security council.

Some may point out that Seth is rehashing old propositions by asking for a more significant role for civic society in international development governance. If that is the case, we are facing an exercise of simulation, one that dissimulates the historical role of the UN in enabling a multilateralism of 'enlighten businesses' – who responsibilise individuals to hide corporative externalities – and of poliarchycal North-Western governments advancing unsustainable capitalism. But suppose Seth is talking about a more radical revision of multilateralism. In that case, the UN Assistant Secretary-General implicitly refers to an alternative development order. One that would enable the de-coupling of the UN from the current multilateralism. So far, the only alternative order is the one led by China and Saudi Arabia, which has made significant inroads in South America (Roy, 2023; Sweigart, 2024; Reuters, 2024). This emerging order is, in my view, not an alternative one, is a gatopardist enterprise, and its success in the region is not fortuitous or based alone on well-financed promises but advanced by the resentment and frustration with the North-Western institutional modernising project, which has simulated a meaningful multilateralism the one that concerns publics.

Appendix 1 – Glossary

Below are the full meanings of the acronyms frequently used in this thesis.

Cali's Municipal Development Plan (MDP)

Colombia's highest national development committee (CONPES)

Colombia's National Department for Planning (DNP)

Collaborative development relationships (CDRs)

Dependency theory (DT)

Modernisation theory (MT)

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs)

Not-for-profit organisations (NPOs)

Organisation-public relationships (OPRs)

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Public-private partnerships (PPPs)

Resource dependency theory (RDT)

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Territories of Inclusion and Opportunities (TIOs)

United Nations (UN)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Appendix 2 – Micro-level Questionnaire

Below are the questions asked during semi-structured interviews concerning micro-level phenomena.

Questions for the Opening Segment

1) Remind me, what is your development programme about?
2) Who are the other partners involved in the programme?
3) What problem (s) are these partners trying to tackle through the programme?
4) Where are they fighting this problem (s)? In which communities (TIOs)?
5) What are the objectives and goals of the programme?
6) What do the partners communicate?
7) How do the partners conceive development?
8) Do these partners follow a particular approach to development?

Questions for the Middle Segment

1) How receptive or open are the communities of Cali to your programmes?
2) How does your NPO persuade a community to give you access to the TIO and engage with your programmes?
3) How do you work with the other partners involved in the programme?
4) How do you convince your partners to take in your ideas?
5) What should be the focal problems guiding your intervention?
6) Has the problem (s) changed throughout the programme's history?
7) How do the communities and trainees help you to identify the relevant problems and establish goals?
8) How do the programme's goals align with the community's views regarding their pressing problems?

Questions for the Concluding Segment

1) What challenges, internal or external to the communities and trainees, have shaped the programme?
2) Are partnerships for development programmes the way forward?
3) Is collaboration with other third-sector organisations a positive factor in development?
4) Who should determine the problems to be tackled by development programmes?
5) Who should formulate the goals for developing communities and trainees?
6) Has Cali's third sector adopted any ideas or approaches to development?
7) What is your experience of the programme and the stakeholders involved?
8) Are programmes effective? Do they resolve the problems they seek to tackle?
9) Do you believe in development?

Appendix 3 – Meso-level Questionnaire

Below are the questions asked during semi-structured interviews concerning meso-level phenomena.

Questions for the Opening Segment

1) How do the national government, the DNP and municipal authorities work together on development?
2) What are the pros and cons of this collaboration?
3) How autonomous are the municipal authorities?
4) To whom the local authorities are accountable?
5) Who are the municipal development plans for?
6) How have municipal administrations engaged the different development stakeholders?
7) Apart from national funding, how else do municipal authorities finance development?

Questions for the Middle Segment

1) How receptive has Cali's third sector been to municipal development plans?
2) How have municipal authorities identified the city's social conditions?
3) How have municipal authorities established the city's development goals?
4) Are there any misalignments between the expectations of the city's development stakeholders and the municipal development plans?
5) How have these misalignments been resolved?
6) How distinctive or similar have the last two municipal development plans been in setting Cali's development agenda?
7) Do you identify an approach or strategy informing or guiding these development plans?

Questions for the Concluding Segment

1) Has the direct relationship between the municipal authorities and multilateral development institutions benefited the city's development?
2) Is collaboration with third-sector organisations a positive factor in municipal authorities' development plans?
3) Who should determine the problems to be tackled by municipal development plans?
4) Has the interaction between the different agendas for development been beneficial to the city?
5) What do you think is the meaning of development that drives municipal planning?
6) Are the municipal development plans achievable? If not, what purpose do they serve?
7) What achievements of the last two municipal administrations stand out, and what are their major outstanding tasks?

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