

CARTOONS AND ECONOMICS: GENERAL ANALYSIS BASED ON COLOMBIAN ECONOMIC CARTOONS

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CARTOONS AND ECONOMICS

General analysis based on Colombian economic cartoons^α

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Abstract

May cartoons be considered as a viable and credible source for the study of economics? There is hardly any research on the subject, even though there is a quite significant amount of cartoons with economic content. This suggests that economics (and economists) have not paid enough attention and do not incorporate in their analysis a relevant primary source. The present paper aims to explore the value of using cartoons as a complementary primary source in economic analysis. We present a way of analyzing economic history through cartoons; first, reviewing cartoons which describe particular historical circumstances and second, examining cartoons that represent generic economic situations and are not necessarily linked to a historical period. We choose 17 cartoons, from different cartoonist, especially Colombian cartoonists that may give us an idea of economic matters and economic history.

Keywords: *Cartoons, economic history, Colombia, economic cartoon.*

^α *Work in progress. Not for citation without the author permission.*

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The use of images in this paper has strictly academic interest

CARTOONS AND ECONOMICS.

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Introduction

Two years ago, when preparing a Colombian Economic History course, I tried to include a consideration of cartoon material covering a large period (1880 to 2000). I did this out of a conviction that such material was intrinsically important even though I had never seen it considered by economic history professors (mainly economists). I also thought that this approach would be especially productive in helping students to understand Colombian economic history. The starting point was using visuals in an economic history lecture to promote student analysis skills and thinking abilities.

As a result, we gathered a large collection of cartoons with economic content since 1880 up to the present day. We have collected more than 1100 caricatures from a period starting in the late 19th century until nowadays. The central idea of our research is to analyze the legacy of cartoons as a primary source for the study of economic history in Colombia. Evidently, cartoonists have been a vivid and important actor throughout the last century, as Burke says, using images as an insight into the social context and public perception, knowing that images do not represent an objective view of the fact. Making the proper relation between images and history is the role of researchers.

As part of this work, this paper presents a discussion on the relevance of cartoons as a primary source to study economic history. Specifically we try to discuss around the question of *what can be found in cartoons relevant to analyze economic history or even economics?* To do that, this paper is divided in four parts. The first presents a possible definition of an economic cartoon; the second present a literature review making explicit the importance and use of cartoons in historical works from different perspective (politics, methodology, war, among others). The third part, presents a brief analysis of what we consider to be an *economic cartoon*. In particular we categorize cartoons in two groups: cartoons that represent a specific and identifiable historical situation and cartoons representing generic economic problems; and finally we conclude in section 4.

1. Toward a definition of an economic cartoon

We all know cartoons. We all have looked at least once a cartoon and probably laughed with it. As commonly defined, a cartoon is a drawing depicting a humorous situation, frequently accompanied by a caption; also, a drawing representing current

public figures or issues symbolically and often satirically. It can be said that there are three characteristic of cartoons: humor, current public figures, politics or issues and sarcasm. Additionally, cartoons allow us to see features of society that are not usually observable through other sources. Cartoons are a social symbolic representation of problems and issues. As Foxley suggests, cartoons provide drawn support and complement ideas that can be part of a text (Soto: 2003: 99).

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, cartoons are "... comically distorted drawing or likeness, done with the purpose of satirizing or ridiculing its subject. Cartoons are used today primarily for conveying political commentary and editorial opinion in newspapers and for social comedy and visual wit in magazines".

As Pérez says "I think the caricature is essentially a form of satire, a way to unmask, criticize or attack a person, family, party, social class, an institution, a government, a situation, a nation, ethnicity, usually emphasizing their ridiculous or negative aspects [...] The cartoon is a satire that is expressed mainly through a graphic, almost always accompanied by a caption written or by "balloon", or inscriptions" (our translation from Pérez Vila; 1979: 6).

The academic literature has put special attention on political cartoons. As defined by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation -CWF-, "political cartoon has a very subjective viewpoint. The goal of a political cartoonist is to try to influence the viewer to a particular viewpoint and predispose him or her to a particular action. Political cartoons are drawings with a partisan message for viewers about what they should think or do politically. Most of political cartoons are a form of journalistic comment designed to influence viewers with regard to specific political events of the day just as the editorial usually tries to do" (Fetsko, 2001: 3). On the other hand, political cartoons pay less attention to deformation and exaggeration of characters and more attention on making characters identifying using not only physical characterization but also symbols that made the draw perfectly recognizable (Pérez Vila; 1979: 5).

The core of the debate on cartoons is mostly related to political cartoons, as we will present in the second part of this paper. In general, the attention has been placed on the straightforward representation of a situation, policy or character and the importance of the cartoon as register of historical events.

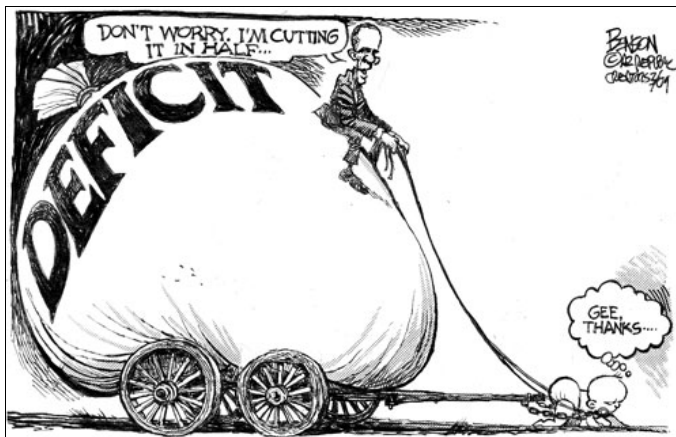
Nonetheless, political cartoons are not exclusive. Cartoons with other intentions are also visible even if they have been less considered by scholars, in particular social cartoons and comics. According to CWF, in social cartoons the artist "aspires to comment about daily life and its problems. His or her main purpose is to bring on the wry smile of recognition hopefully to make life and its irritations a little easier to take.

The social cartoons tend to have a more objective viewpoint [...] than political cartoons” (Fetsko, 2001: 3).

Taking this into account, there is a strong relation between cartoons with economic content and political and social cartoons. It can be said that economic cartoons come together with political cartoons in the sense that both aim to comment and highlight special circumstances of national life, showing tensions on specific issues. As Soto points out, cartoons are critical tools that may work as thermometers of social, political and economic situation as well as to represent people’s sensibility (Soto, 2003: 99).

Besides, cartoons with economic content have also the purpose of describe a social situation. In that sense, economic cartoons share a double purpose: subjective, as political cartoons, objective as social cartoons. In addition, cartoons with economic content have also the intention to criticize aspects of the field and the profession.

The following three cartoons may give an idea of the three purposes found in cartoons with economic content. The first cartoon shows the political economy of the current recession. President Obama is seen seated on top of the enormous fiscal deficit faced by the U.S.; additionally, he is handling the reins of the deficit dragged by a baby. The baby represents future generations who will be carrying the cost of current deficit and the stimulus bill designed to counter the recession. This is a clear criticism of the recent economic policy decision made by the Obama administration. It can be said that it is a political cartoon. However, the topic drawn is typically an economic matter. In that way, it is an economic cartoon with political intention.



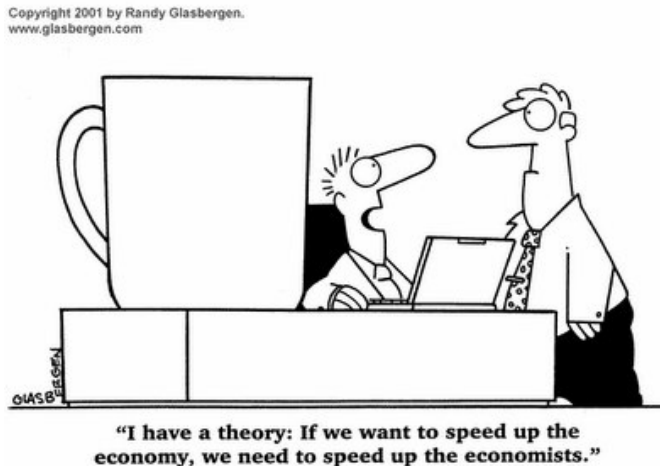
Cartoons for the Week of March 1-7, 2009
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By contrast, the subsequent cartoons show a social situation in a more objective way, as CWF suggests social cartoons should do, that is to represent a daily situation. Here the drawing illustrates the daily pain of the consumer facing the economy (there is no need to know what causes the pain, if prices, budget cuts, taxes etc.). There is a widely shared feeling that consumers face hardship because of the economy.



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The last cartoon presents us a view about economic growth. Finding mechanisms to speed up economy, something common among economists, the solution is given in a clear criticism to what public opinion perceives as sketchy economic solutions.



The former examples lead us to the need of defining the economic cartoon as a concept separate and independent from the political and social cartoon. As defined by

¹ Available in:
<http://www.cartoonstock.com/newscartoons/cartoonview.asp?start=&search=news&catref=cwan75&NC Category=&ANDkeyword=economic&ORkeyword=&TITLEkeyword=&NEGATIVEkeyword=>

the Schools of California Online Resources for Education, "Economic cartoons make a humorous comment about something in the economy of concern (usually of great concern) to the people who have to tolerate economic conditions. Humor can relieve some of the stress that people feel when they must endure unpleasant economic situations such as rapidly rising gasoline prices, interest rates, or job layoffs." (SCORE)

Summarizing, economic cartoons can be defined as an image or drawing that represents context, complex economic situation, public policies and public opinion's view on economic matters and aiming to inform, denounce and criticize those situations. In that sense, the economic cartoon has a triple objective: subjective, as political cartoon, objective as social cartoon and economic as representing issues specific to the discipline. As Peart and Levy (2007) suggest, "Though they have rarely been studied by economists, cartoons and caricatures reflect a great deal of economic controversy" (2007: 2).

2. Literature Review

As Danzer says "primary sources are the ore from which history is produced. Without them there is no history" (1971: 66). From the historical perspective, cartoons have been used as a primary source in works related to war analysis and some political situations that find in the drawings a sound illustration of public opinion, political ideology, partisan and policy issues, among others.

From a wide historical perspective, there are a fair number of works using cartoons. In general, the effort has focused on finding an alternative voice to deepen perception and characterization of a period or historical event. In fact, images and cartoons complement our knowledge through symbolic imagery and popular culture that enrich the view of the subject. In particular, works can be categorized according to the main topic studied, specifically, politics, war and conflict, methodology and teaching with cartoons and economic matters.

Politics is the principal field of the editorial cartoonist's work, and political science is where cartoons are most studied. There are several works about American and European political cartoons like the BBC's Sir David Low's *Compilation* (2002); Benson (2004). There are large compilations including Benson's (2007) work covering British history from Queen Victoria's death to the Iraq war; Champefleury (2001) about *La République* and *La Restauration* of France. In addition, there are publications on specific events such as Benson and Gorst's (2006) work on the Suez crisis on 1956 or Leone, Szumski & Dudley, (2002) about the Watergate situation. Furthermore works about specific characters like Sir Winston Churchill (Benson, 2005), George III (Baker, 2007) and George IV (Baker, 2005).

Latin-American scholars worked in this field following Kemnitz (1973). In the Colombian case, we can mention briefly the following works: Colmenares (1984) highlights the convenience of cartoons as a primary source for political history, despite the ideological bias of the cartoonist. González (1990) suggests that the political cartoon gives history a third dimension, the public opinion, that is not a formal element. Acevedo (2000b) worked on the theoretical background for taking into account cartoons as a source to understand and analyze political confrontation historically. Abreu's project includes a classification of iconographic journalism. He suggests that, as political cartoon is an instrument to fight against power, it can include critics not only of politics but also of economics, education and culture as those topics are closely related with political decisions (Abreu, 2001).

Extensive research can be found on Latin American cartoon's 'Golden Age' (late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century). Luna Victoria Muñoz (2005), Rivera Escobar (2005) and Dettleff and Olivera (2006) worked on the Peruvian case. Rebello (2006), who worked on the Brazilian case, stresses that cartoons are important for preserving collective memory, especially when they go against official memory. Avila (2000) worked with cartoons of the magazine *Don Quijote* (1884) as a primary source to examine political struggle and social relation of the period in Argentina's history known as *El Noventa* (the 1890's). Colombia's most prominent political cartoonist of early 20th century, Ricardo Rendón, has been studied often. In general, such studies highlight the importance of Rendón in political and public opinion in Colombia's history (Colmenares, 1984; Obregón, 1990; Escobar, 1994; Segura, 2004). Additionally, Acevedo's contribution to history through cartoons is significant. His intention is to understand the political imaginary and symbolic violence phenomenon in Colombia, especially during the period called *La Violencia*, characterized by a confrontation between the two leading parties -liberal and conservative- (Acevedo, 1993, 2000a, 2005, 2009).

Lamb (2004) placed attention on nationalism and patriotism in U.S. History, particularly the effect on views of the Presidency after 09/11. Bok (2005) prepared a book reviewing the last 25 years of U.S. history using political cartoons. Chirinos, Franco & Molero (2006) worked on Pedro León Zapata's cartoons in the newspaper *El Nacional* about the national oil strike in Venezuela. Grupo Colombiano de Análisis del Discurso Mediático is currently working on a research of the social representations of poverty (Serventi, 2006). Baumgartner (2008) argues that the political cartoon is currently spreading through the internet. Despite the reduction of fulltime cartoonists associated with paper publications, the number of web pages and visitors has been rising fast. He says that they are part of a revolution on the ways in which information reshapes political perceptions.

A reminder of the political power of cartoons was presented by the incident involving Danish cartoons about Muhammad that circulated widely, generating strong reactions from Muslims worldwide. A similar case occurred with Mike Peters' "Mother Goose & Grimm" cartoon about Colombian coffee which made a humorous analogy between Colombian coffee's worldwide icon -*Juan Valdez*- and Colombia's conflict, producing a broad nationalist reaction including a legal complaint against the cartoonist from the National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia.

Conflicts between countries or cultures are also a focus of research. In this case, cartoons are used to create an image of an adversary and at the same time a self-image. We highlight the work of Zusman & Hevilla (2004); Michlemore (2000); Demetriou (2004); Yüksel (2007) and Moyle (2004). Zusman & Hevilla (2004) worked on the role of cartoons in the construction of the Nation-State notion in Argentina. Those cartoons worked in the construction of the border as differentiation, the national identity and stereotypes as opposite to foreign. Michlemore (2000) analyzed the western images of Islam and their development since the end of World War II and especially from the Islamic revolution. Similar work was undertaken by Palmer (1997). Moyle (2004) wrote about the post-war relations between Germany and Great Britain. He used cartoons as a primary source for his work, using them as symbols of trends in the bilateral relation. Demetriou (2004) studied the work of a mid-twentieth century cartoonist who represented Greek and Turkish stereotypes, arguing that he represented Greek internal politics rather than relations between two countries. Yüksel (2007) worked on the relationship between the U.S. and Turkey, using the cartoons to show that there was a turning point when the Turkish parliament rejected a request for American troops to pass through Turkish territory in order to invade Iraq.

War is a preferred subject for cartoonists and social sciences analysis of cartoons. The U.S. Civil War is an often-studied case of a conflict analyzed through cartoons. Lively (1942), worked on the Civil War cartoons' propaganda function. Ramsey (2000) analyzed the strong image of women during World War I. Tucci (1991) focused on the representations of the Spanish Civil War on Brazilian magazines. She argued that cartoons are one of the best primary sources for studying the mentalities and passions of an historic period. She worked on the songs and representations of the ideologies that were fighting in America, the threat to democracy and the Estado Novo of Vargas (1937-1945). Darracott (1989) published a book that includes cartoons from many countries and years about World War II. Concerning that war, Minear's (1999) writes about the famous writer and cartoonist Theodor Seuss Geisel work at a New York's newspaper, emphasizing his pro-war position. Dodds (1996) studied the Falkland's war cartoons produced by Steve Bell.

From the methodological and teaching perspective, the works of Mattos (1972) and Kemnitz (1973), mention the importance of cartoons as a source for historical analysis. Mattos point out that cartoons are widely effective in making students think about government and other political issues; this preliminary work introduces the effectiveness of cartoons in analyzing history. Nonetheless, the work of Kemnitz is a seminal reference on the use of cartoons as primary source to understand historical issues. In his paper, he highlights the useful relation between the drawing and the context in which it has been published. In addition, he makes a methodological classification between cartoons and caricatures and between opinion cartoons and entertainment cartoons. For historical analysis, he suggests the use of opinion cartoons rather than entertainment cartoons as the goal of the former is to criticize reality and they generally follow the editorial point of view; while the latter usually have no significant association with actuality and may be totally disconnected from the editorial.

Also in methodology, we found the work of Heitzmann (1974, 1988, 1998), Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (Fetsko, 2001) and Thomas (2004). In general those works proposed a methodology to teach political history using cartoons. The former argues the ability of political cartoons to enhance history instruction. The second offers a scheme to interpret cartoons before political analysis. The latter, following the same argument, focuses mainly on the America's GAPE period. Briceño (2005) emphasized the role of the editorial cartoon in a democratic society and the need to include it in teaching. He argues that a coherent and contextualized analysis may help in engaging children and adolescents to study complicated problems and fields, such as politics, culture and economics.

The literature suggests that cartoons are a worthy source for economics. Nevertheless, there are few works on economics and cartoons: Aurrecoechea (1993) and Peart and Levy (2007).

Aurrecoechea (1993), concentrates on a narrow period of Mexican history -1989-1994- to underline economic changes during the North American Free Trade Agreement – NAFTA-`s implementation and the so-called Tequila crisis. Examining cartoons, the author characterized this period showing opposite symbols: the fat man –*El Gordo*- often expressing economic power, and the skinny –*El Flaco*- representing the impoverished population.

From the economic perspective, the work done by Peart and Levy (2007) is perhaps the only one that employs caricatures as a resource to understand the public view and appreciation on the concept of scarcity, so familiar and fundamental for economic theory and analysis. There, cartoons are a visual source that represents the 19th and

20th century attacks against economic theory. The authors tried to find out how the images contribute to understand a basic economic notion in a context of deep changes in economic theory, specially the post-classical period (late 19th century). As they suggest, the straightforward language and message of the cartoons may influence popular opinion.

As Peart and Levy conclude “If we ignore the visual domain of economic controversy we ignore a powerful method of attacking abstractions. Economists are often heard to complain that the general public does not take us seriously as they do with natural scientists. Perhaps the fact that histories of economics do not include the visual domain of economic controversy suggest that we do not take public controversy with all due seriousness” (2007:30)

In addition there are several economic cartoons databases, showing the amount of production in this field. Specifically, the Canadian Association of Labour Media², Carol Simpson Design Works³, Cartoonist Group⁴, Cartoon Stock⁵ and Political Humour⁶, among others.

In the following section we will present the research on economic cartoons in two perspectives, a historical economic situation, illegal drugs in Colombia and general economic topics, like unemployment and middle class economic condition.

3. What Can We Find in Economic Cartoons?

From an economic perspective, cartoons have scarcely been used as a source of analysis; even less for economic history which could probably find a complementary source for researches and studies.

Starting from the definitions given above, how can cartoons be considered a viable and credible source for economic studies?

To do this, we suggest that economic cartoons can complement economic history analysis in two ways. The first one refers precisely to an economic situation that can be traced historically. That is to say, cartoons referring a specific economic issue in an exact period. For example, cartoons referring to the Great Depression are explicitly describing this situation and can hardly be used to explain another period. The second one refers to general economic topics that are not necessarily attached to a historical

² <http://www.calm.ca/cartoon11.html>

³ <http://www.carolsim.com/designworks/archive/cartoon2.htm>

⁴ <http://www.cartoonistgroup.com/bysubject/subject.php?sid=483>

⁵ <http://www.cartoonstock.com/newscartoons/directory/e/economic.asp>

⁶ <http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/economy/ig/Economic-Cartoons/>

moment but rather represent a broad view of economic issues. For example, cartoons referring to poverty, unemployment, middle class condition, etc.

It is important to underline that drawings are straightforward representations of popular views on some topics. Cartoons are not the real story of an event, not even the genuine interpretation. By contrast, cartoons, used with care, can complement understanding of events and situations, asking what they were intending to symbolize and whether they accurately characterize contemporary realities. In this way we will present a topic that can be traced historically: illegal drugs in Colombia as well as a generic economic topics: the condition of the middle class.

3.1 Historically significant economic cartoon

As said above, economic cartoons may represent and criticize an explicit matter in a time period. Here we choose illegal drugs in Colombia, an event that appeared in the 1970's with a marihuana cultivation boom and that is still an issue not only because of the strength of cocaine drug dealers but also due to its significant relation with Colombian national economy, land tenure and defense expenditure.

We present 11 cartoons from Colombian cartoonists like Luisé, Pepón, JairoA, Caballero and Vladdo, from a period extending from 1976 to 2008,.

The history of Colombian illicit drugs began with marihuana in the 1970s's. Marihuana was mainly grown on the Colombian northern coast. At that time, Colombia had a fairly low level of human rights violations and a stable democracy (Tokatlian, 2000). Later on, smugglers began to produce cocaine from coca plants grown in Bolivia and Peru. This rapidly became a huge business, leading to the U.S. government heavy control of Colombian-originated shipping, as ridiculed in Luisé's (1976) cartoon.



Cocaine Psychosis
¡Colombian Ships!
1976.VIII.10. Luisé. El Tiempo. Sicosis Cocainera



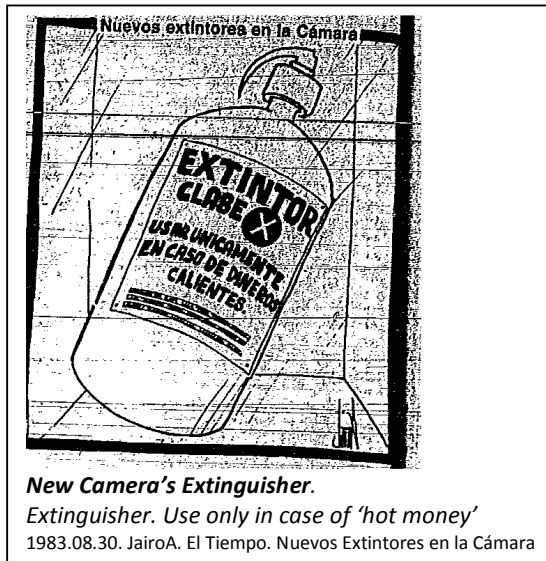
This is the new enriched mixture.
1982. Pepón. *Ahí están pintados. Mezcla Enriquecida*



Booms
1982. Pepón. *Ahí están pintados. Bonanzas*

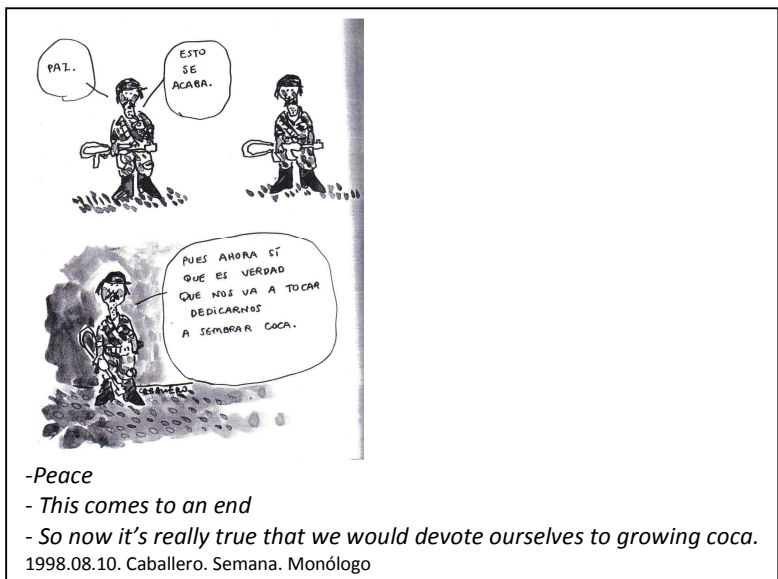
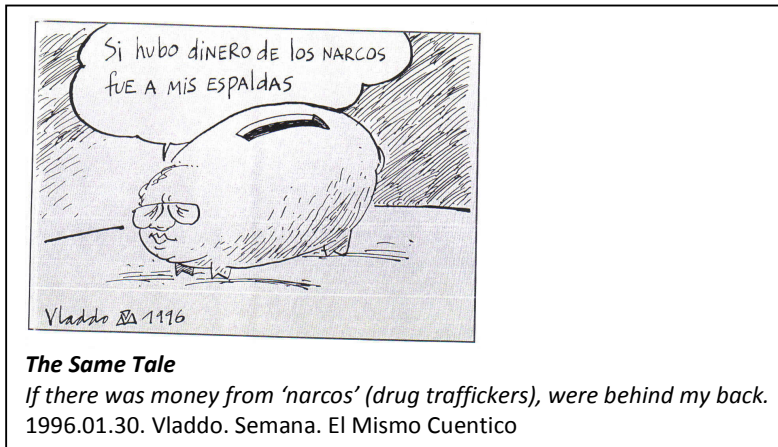
The histories of the Colombian conflict and drug dealing became increasingly intermingled. Drug-traffickers began to be involved in the escalation of political violence (García-Bustos, 1992). The growing violence included alliances between narco-traffickers and illegal armed groups both from the left and the right (Lair, 2000). Public opinion focused on the relations of the M-19 guerrilla –the most popular at that time- and marihuana smuggling, as Pepón illustrates in his cartoon from 1982. Pepón describes the enrichment of M-19 guerrilla group due to marihuana boom. Based on Colombia’s most recognizable export product –coffee- he suggests how marihuana is for the guerillas what coffee is for the country, an essential export product.

At the same time as drug trafficking was rising, its corrupting power expanded and generated many political scandals. Money that came from drug trafficking began to be called 'dineros calientes' (hot money)



1990. Vladdo. El Espectador

The history of Colombian drug dealing has been highly influenced by U.S. anti-drug policies, as portrayed in the “marihuana flag” by Vladdo (1990). Ernesto Samper, a Colombian president (1994-1998) was, during the seventies, a proponent of legalising drugs, when he was the head of the National Association of Financial Institutions – ANIF-. But when he became president he undertook a strongly antidrug position, largely due to U. S. pressures (Tokatlian, 2000). By that time, Colombia had become a producer; processor and distributor of marihuana, heroin and cocaine, and left and right-wing illegal armed groups manage to build vast armies financed by drug-trafficking with a greater possibility of destabilizing democracy, according to Tokatlian (2000). The cartoon of Vladdo (1996) reminds us of the complex situation occurred during the 1994 presidential campaign, when Samper’s campaign was accused of being financed by drug money. Once elected, Samper said he was not aware of the influx of drug money into his campaign, saying that if there was drug money, it had happened “behind his back”, without his knowledge. .

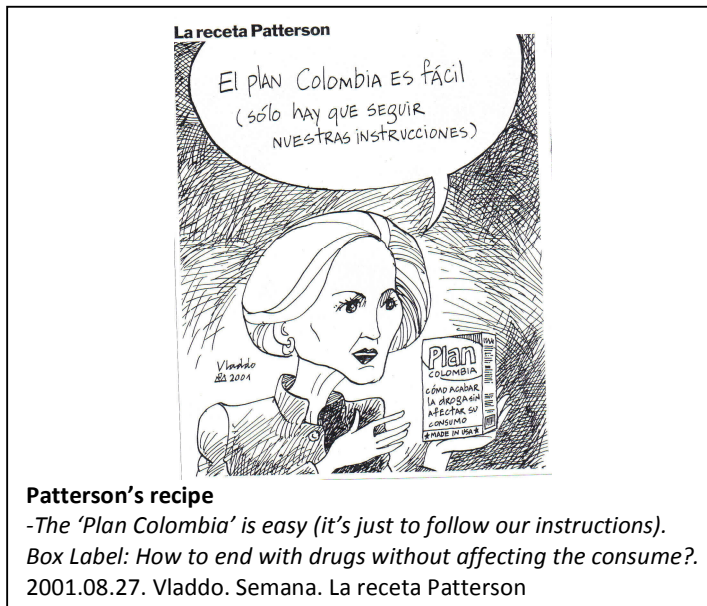


During the 1998 presidential campaign, the most publicized issue was a possible peace agreement with the left wing guerrilla group – FARC. At that time, there was significant skepticism about the guerrillas' relations with drug traffic and their

enormous profits. In addition, Colombia's perception abroad was negative and focused on illegal drugs as can be seen in Osuna's cartoon (1999) which made a negative analogy between the earthquake in the main coffee production zone (Eje Cafetero), and the loss of coca production, rather than coffee: Mr. Curtis K. Kamman, ambassador to Colombia, defender of the war against drug lords, saw Juan Valdez's broken cart axis and instead of saying he was sorry for the lost 'coffee', he said he was sorry for the lost 'coca'.

During the last ten years the focus has shifted to the U.S. anti-drugs aid programme known as the "Plan Colombia" (signed in September 1999) and the relations between drug-traffickers and right-wing armed groups (paramilitares).

Plan Colombia was defined as a "comprehensive plan to seek peace, fight drugs, build the economy, and deepen democracy" (Fajardo; 2003: 28). Here again a cartoon from Vladdo in 2001 suggests that the Plan Colombia is focused on Colombian responsibility of the drug problem (production) while ignoring US responsibility (consumption). In the same way, Caballero's cartoon insinuates the contradictory effect of eradication and spaying over Colombia's countryside and agriculture.





A notorious cartoon about paramilitary violence in Colombia was created by Mike Peter (2009) on his comic strip *Mother Goose & Grimm*, -curiously, a non-politically intended cartoon- where it is said that “there’s a little bit of Juan Valdez on every cup [of Colombian Coffee], maybe they’re not kidding”. As said, before, the cartoon generated many reactions. As a response, Mike Peters formally apologized and asserted that there was no intention to offend anyone; as a result, the Federation desisted of suing him. Mike Peters said to a news reporter from the Washington Post: “It’s crazy. I was totally blindsided by this, I LOVE their coffee. I buy Colombian”; he also said, “So I am totally amazed at this. I’m an editorial cartoonist. I expect bad things from my editorial cartoons, not from my comic strip” (Cavna, 2009).



2009.01.02. Mike Peters. Mother Goose & Grimm.

3.2 Generic economic cartoons

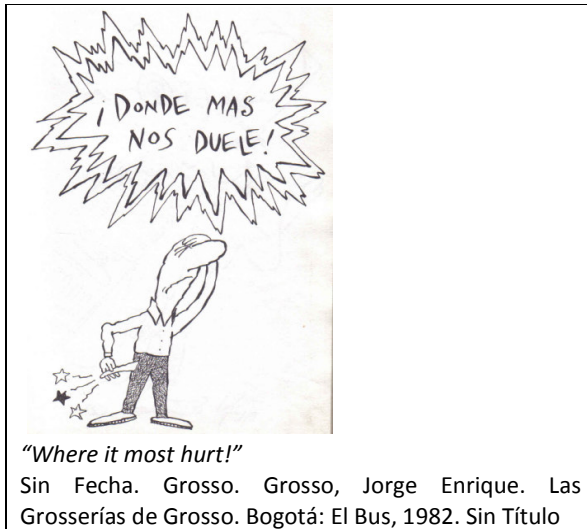
In this section we present three cartoons from Colombian cartoonist Grosso that represent the conditions faced by the middle class, a generic economic situation, at least in developing countries.



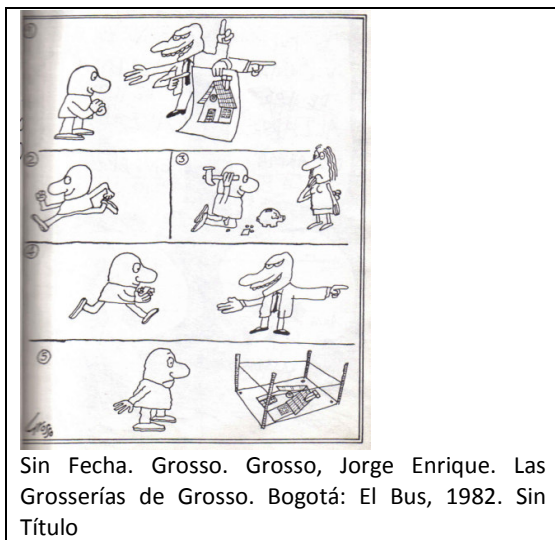
Sin Fecha. Grosso, Jorge Enrique.
Las Grosserías de Grosso. Bogotá: El Bus, 1982. Sin
Título

This cartoon is wordless. It shows the burden that middle class people have on their shoulders: to pay public utilities and everyday items. This is seen as a traditionally middle-class burden. This cartoon is suggestive: it shows the man's frustration and resignation: this is his life. This is the life of millions of people in the middle class. In this type of cartoon the historical period and context is not as relevant as the underlined problems.

However, the cartoon by Grosso, shows something that can be quite different. The man looks poor, without shoes and with ragged clothes. How can this add to the analysis? To answer the question it may be relevant to find out the time when the cartoon was drawn. This information should give us an idea of the situation of people in the country. Is the middle class facing impoverishment? This cartoon was made during the 1980s in Colombia. At that time, as a result of a continent-wide debt crisis, unemployment surged.



This cartoon shows a typical situation for large parts of the population: an empty pocket. Again, as in the previous cartoon, this is a frequent situation that represents daily difficulties for a large part of the population.



The last cartoon represents a common situation of households making efforts to get their own house, often resorting to illegal developers. Why should these people listen to the clandestine developer rather than looking for formal housing projects? The reason might be straightforward in developing countries. A large number of people have never had access to formal mortgage. As a result, they had to rely on informal housing programs risking the loss of their savings and never getting the dreamed house.

Nonetheless, the cartoon also allows us to consider an essential economic aspect: the rationality of agents. As can be seen from the cartoon, three agents interact in the drawing: the illegal developer, the purchaser and his wife. The former, a rent-seeker. The man's wife, astonished from his husband behavior, leads us to think of a reasonable agent who prefers savings instead of an ephemeral house. The man, a traditional agent unable to understand the concept of risk and future. He might do a cost/benefit calculation, *ceteris paribus* in the real world.

4. Conclusion

Drawings are straightforward representations of popular views on some topics. Cartoons are not the real story of an event, not even the genuine interpretation. However, as we intended to present, cartoons are a worthy primary source to complement historical analysis from different perspectives, including an economic one.

The great amount of cartoons with economic content suggests us there is enough material to propose a category named economic cartoon, independent from the political and social cartoon, widely studied by scholars.

In addition, Colombian cartoonists have contributed with a substantial body of cartoons on economic topics. Cartoons presented in this paper show us the ability of images to represent historical periods of Colombian economic history as well as to present generic economic topics.

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