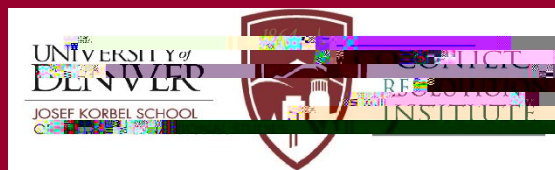


# Center Working Theory Economics



Working Paper  
University of Denver  
Conflict Resolution Institute

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2012





Conflict Early Warning Systems:  
The Guatemalan Experience

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Working Paper Submitted to  
Conflict Resolution Institute  
University of Denver

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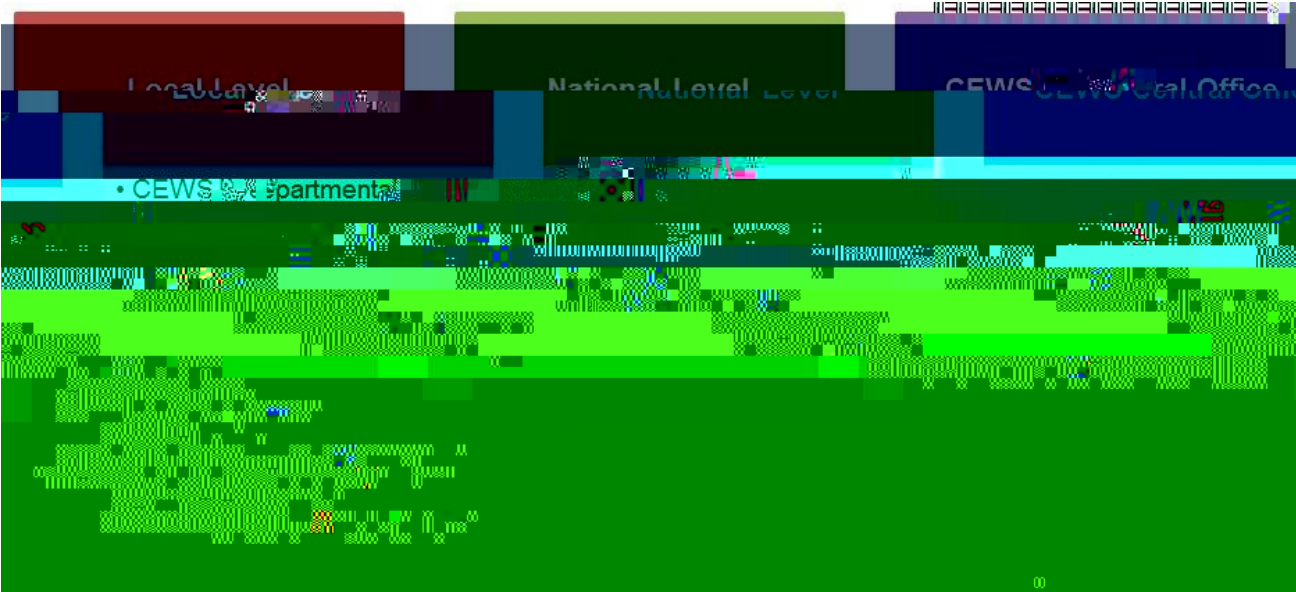
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negotiators. These representatives would convene regularly to assess the state of the CEWS project and to analyze regional trends, and more rarely, to discuss specific conflicts and ways to resolve them.

The central CEWS office was comprised of a Project Coordinator, a Administrative Assistant, two Analysts (each specializing in three Departments), a Technical Assistant (in charge of helping out analysts with organizing and analyzing information) and a programmer in charge of the database and software used by the project. Monthly, this core staff would meet with the Department Coordinators in long sessions where the latter would give a briefing on the latest conflict trends in their jurisdictions.

**Figure 1**  
**Guatemalan CEWS Structure**



**Analytical and Methodological Models**

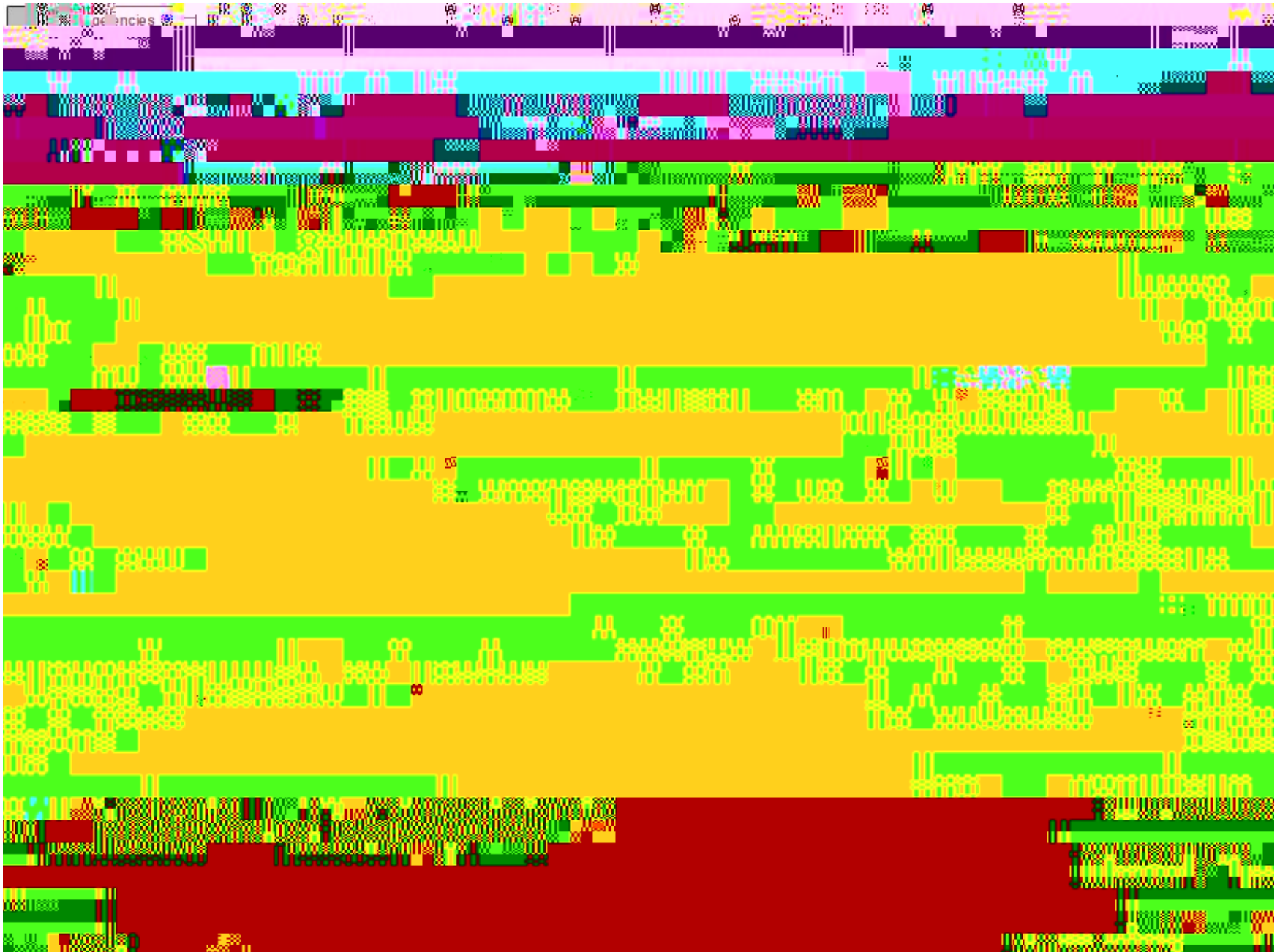
An important contribution to the launching of the CEWS was the elaboration of case studies in conflict issues in different departments throughout the country. Following the conclusion of the initial studies, the CEWS was established in seven priority departments: Huehuetenango, Quiché, Alta Verapaz, San Marcos, Quetzaltenango, Suchitepéquez, and Escuintla. A study was later undertaken in these departments, to identify existing State institutions for conflict resolution and their methods of intervention, as well as a preliminary typology of the most common conflicts in each area.

A second point of departure was the design of an appropriate conflict model. The team sought to create a model with high analytical utility but that could be validated by the field teams in each department. The idea was to work from the bottom up, with a model that would eventually allow nuanced types of analysis, but that would also be flexible and permit continuous feedback between local and central teams. The goal of the model was to identify opportune moments in which it would be possible to avert or reduce conflict escalation.





**Figure 2**  
**The CEWS Conflict Model**



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**The CEWS Conflict Model**

these phases. In certain cases, the State Responses and the Social Situation may indicate a conflict in the

**10** Conflicts involving several institutions (both governmental and non-governmental).

2.5

**If a conflict complies with one of the criterions, it will be weighed accordingly. The simple**

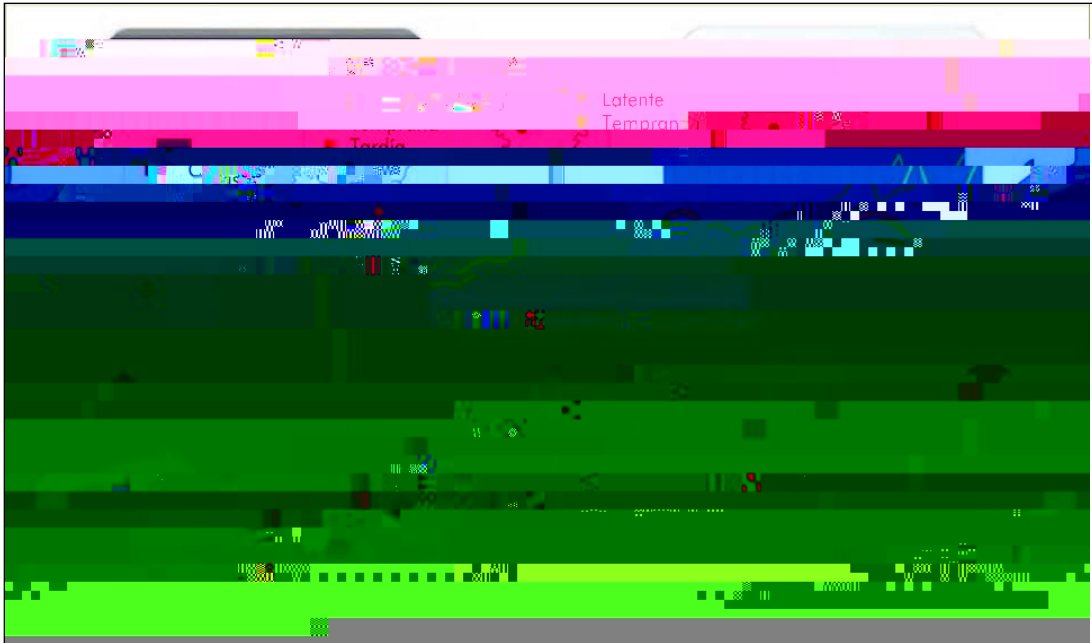
and cultural background. Finally, coordinators were encouraged to annex all relevant information, from digitized documents to digital photographs or videos related to the different conflicts. The process was automated in such a way that Departmental Coordinators could directly submit information to the database in real time, via the Internet, without the need for paperwork to be filled out.

## **The Database**

The database constituted a fundamental component of the CEWS, since all products of the System were stored in it, both raw statistical data as well as complementary items such as photographs, videos, and scanned documents. The versatility of the database allowed the compilation and systematization of all the information, be it quantitative or qualitative. The program's design was constructed on web-based technologies, with the necessary precautions taken to protect information security. A flowchart was also constructed, in which detailed the types of data entry and outputs or products that could be provided by the database.

The following is a list of the outputs provided by the database:

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At the moment, there is a poorly understood relationship between futures methods and conflict, although there are a number of coincidences at the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological levels (Álvarez Castañeda, 2012). Perhaps the most important area of agreement relates to the final purpose of the prospective method: selecting the scenario that is most beneficial to the highest number of people possible out of all the potential choices. In that sense, the futures element was important the whole experience of the CEWS. On the one hand, the System could be conceived as a planning tool for local authorities. On the other, with further development of the scientific and technical tools for the study of conflict, the System could come to possess some level of forecasting capacity.

x 



Parallel to the process of information collection, an unexpected byproduct of the CEWS arose. In having the Coordinators in such close contact with communities and their needs and everyday aspirations, they learned about numerous dissatisfactions with spending, corruption and the overall efficiency of State institution. The Departmental Coordinators' involuntary supervision of diverse programs and state offices (and in some cases, NGO offices) was a double-edged sword: on the one hand, this situation could provoke unnecessary suspicion that might eventually hinder the CEWS. On the other, there was the potential that the System could be configured as an ally of the state in the creation of closer, functional, and transparent relations with the citizenry, particularly at the local level, and this would eventually help the prevention of certain conflicts, especially those related to governmental institutions and their performance.





**communication and information technology.** the appropriate security measures to insure the safety of the information. A better use of Guatemala's very advanced mobile coverage should be considered in future interventions. For example, mobile devices could be used to scan, photograph, record and upload different types of information in real-time.

**Provide regular reports and updates on conflict dynamics to key national and international stakeholders.** Regular briefings were given to key-decision makers and donors. Automatic early warnings and reports generated through the database were sent to certain authorities. A weakness in this sense was the authoritarian tendencies explained previously, since it was difficult to define which official could be trusted with the information. Any future version of the CEWS should consider clear

