

OF LOVE, BLOOD AND THE BELLY:
POLITICIZATION OF INTIMATE TIES OF CARING AND BELONGING IN COLOMBIA

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ABSTRACT

Diana Marcela Gómez Correal: *Of Love, Blood And The Belly: Politicization Of Intimate Ties Of Caring And Belonging In Colombia*
(Under the direction of Arturo Escobar)

This dissertation focuses on the relatives and peers of victims of paramilitary and State violence. I investigate how intimate ties of caring and belonging, such as family, communal, and organizational membership, are politicized in the context of pervasive political violence, and how it leads to the creation of a social movement of victims of State and paramilitary violence in the country. This research tackles four main objectives. The first aims to understand the role of emotions in the mobilization of victimized subjects. The second discusses the process of identity construction and subjective transformation. The third inquires into the ways in which power circulates between the State, “victims,” and their organizations, as well as between and within victims’ organizational movements. The fourth objective looks to explore the contributions of the movement of victims of State and paramilitary violence to Colombian society. This dissertation is the product of militant, participatory, and co-intentional research that has been designed as a decolonial effort to decolonize the production of knowledge in a concrete moment: the transition to peace in Colombia. Throughout the dissertation I explore the existence of a deeper ontological struggle in the current transitional conjuncture of which victimized subjects’ experiences are a window into the less evident. This is a struggle in which not only conceptions about democracy and politics are at stake, but also ethical and moral premises, conceptions about the person, the

human, the body, and the collective, as well as the relationship with nature, ancestors, and dead people.

A mi papi, Jaime Gómez y a todos los seres que han sido “deshumanizados” en la configuración del mundo actual. Desde el corazón y con todo mi amor

To my daddy, Jaime Gómez and to every being that has been “dehumanized” in the configuration of the current world. From the heart and with all my love

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PREFACE

I am going to tell you a story. This is my story, but it is not only mine. It is the story of other people that have been known as “victims,” the story of their loved ones, the story of my country, and to some extent the story of Abya Yala and its relationship with the Western/Northern hegemonic world. With this story I am opening my heart to you, and I know that I am also exposing myself. But I am exposing myself as a way to acknowledge and employ the power of emotions.

This dissertation focuses on the relatives and peers of victims of paramilitary and State violence. I investigate how intimate ties of caring and belonging, such as family, communal, and organizational membership, are politicized in the context of pervasive political violence in Colombia, and how this politicization leads to the creation of a social movements of victims in the country.

I am not entirely sure when the questions that gave form to my thesis first came to me. In 2002 I joined the Initiative of Colombian Women for Peace (IMP). There, I met courageous women that had suffered the impacts of political violence in Colombia. I especially remember María Zabala, a displaced leader of the *Valle Encantado* (*Enchanted Valley*), an organizational process of *re-existence*. She lost most of her family at the hands of paramilitaries. I remember when I was seated with her and Elizabeth Quiñónez as we interviewed María Zabala for a research project. María’s words became images about Colombian violence that I processed unconsciously, like so many others that I have collected since I was born. In the IMP, I had the

fortune of travelling across the country giving workshops on human rights, international humanitarian law (IHL), the rights of victims, and negotiation, among other topics. The IMP was born in 2001 as an alliance between different women's organizations to contribute to peace building in Colombia. Unfortunately, the peace negotiation process that was established in 1998 between the FARC-EP and Pastrana's government (1998-2002) collapsed in 2002. The IMP was one of an array of social actors that aimed for the political resolution of conflict in the country. Despite the failure of this initial peace process, the IMP continues to work with women across the country.

It was during my work with the IMP that I first heard terms such as the rights to truth, justice, reparation, and truth commissions, among others, which make up part of the repertoire of victims, human rights organizations, and other social movements. It may also have been the first time that I heard the word *forced disappearance*. I was familiarized with the Colombian situation through news reports and the profound impact of different events that occurred during the 1980s and 1990s, which I will describe through this text. My mind and heart had been imprinted with news about massacres, murders, kidnappings, and assassinations.

I grew up in a working class neighborhood in Bogotá, across from El Policarpa, a neighborhood known for its political engagement, mainly with the *Partido Comunista*, PC (Communist Party) and the *Unión Patriótica*, UP (Patriotic Union); some of their members were killed during the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s. During those years, I witnessed the protests that the UP's and PC's militants staged each time that one of their own was killed. I was only ten at the time. I remember crying with one of my aunts when we saw the news about the murder of Antonio Galán, a presidential candidate from the Liberal Party, who was one of several

candidates for high office to be killed before the election of 1990. Those were difficult years. Bogotá was not a safe place. Explosions set off by drug traffickers were also common.

I also gained a critical consciousness of Colombian reality through my mother and father. Both of them were part of the Left since they were young. I often accompanied my mother to her meetings and her militant work in poor neighborhoods in Bogotá, as well as in her political campaigns selling her party's newspaper and pasting flyers in the streets. Once I became a teenager, it was increasingly common to have deep conversations with my father about a variety of topics, including our country's history and present political situation. I grew up familiar with the discourses, visions, and demands of the Left, and before long, although I share many of my parents' beliefs, I also came to examine them critically.

This dissertation, I must say, has brought me to tears. Sometimes I have doubts about why I decided to “research” about victimized subjects. But deep down I know the answer: because ever since I began my undergraduate program I wanted to produce knowledge closely related to and capable of changing my everyday reality, and because when I had to leave my country due to death threats in 2008, I was determined to win a personal battle against the violence by not only finishing my masters, but also continuing my academic trajectory. When I was a Visiting Scholar at Duke University in 2008, I applied to doctoral programs having in mind that my journey as a graduate student had to contribute to the struggles of my organization—*Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y contra la Impunidad* (Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity)—as well as to other social movements and to Colombia.

Then again, I do not know exactly when the “grandiose” idea came to me to research a topic that is part of my life story, and to do so as a way to heal and grieve. I say “grandiose” because the process initially seemed simple, but I have come to realize its true complexity only

now that I am further along in my research. This appreciation has only come through the experience of fieldwork and the dissertation writing process.

As I write these lines my tears are contained, but in a way, through each key I touch, they are flowing forth with greater ease. Emotions are part of the production of knowledge, but hegemonic logic has denied them. I am writing with all the possible emotions that someone who has lost her father in a war—and whose murder remains unpunished—can experience. But I am also writing with the emotions that he produces in me, with the enormous love and pride I feel for him, and with the emotions that the production of knowledge entails: passion, eroticism, as Audre Lorde (1984) defines it, and a sense of satisfaction and completion. I am also writing with my body, with affection and sensations, with a corporeal memory, with my senses and instincts, with and through my experience. At the same time, complementing rather than contradicting the production of knowledge, I use reasoning that you, the reader, can know and *feel*.

I am writing from a specific standpoint. I am a “victim” of the Colombian “conflict.” My father was forcefully disappeared on March 21st, 2006, when he was doing his morning exercise in a park located in downtown Bogotá. On that day, I left behind my idiosyncratic routine and started, along with other members of my family, to search for him. I have had the same experience as many other “victims” of State crimes and paramilitarism: an incessant search for justice and dignity that seems almost impossible to reach, a journey that exposes the *power of domination* of the State and how impunity contributes to its maintenance. Although I had a political consciousness before my father was disappeared, I came to be politicized as a “victim” with this experience.

My father’s remains were found after 34 days of searching for him alive, on April 23rd, in a place where we had previously looked for him immediately after we noticed he did not return

home. It was a place he did not use to walk on his hike up and down the mountain. After his burial, I kept searching for truth and justice. In July 2006, I joined Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity, and in a less direct manner the *Movimiento de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado*, MOVICE (Movement of Victims of State Crimes). During this eight to nine year process of working within social movements, I have changed in different ways. I am not the same person I was before March 21st 2006, or the same person that arrived in the U.S. in 2008, or the one that did one year of fieldwork between September 2012 and August 2013. I have been in a permanent state of transformation, of which I am more aware now.

I have done this research as a *descolonial* organic intellectual, trying to debunk dichotomies that have been central to hegemonic academia such as inside/outside, university/social movements, academic/activist, among others. Precisely Gramsci's (1971) concept of organic intellectual allows erasing those false divisions and recognizing that academia is only one of the possible places where knowledge is produced.

I add decolonial to Gramsci's notion because I conceptualize this research as an endeavor that moves toward decoloniality. In that sense, it is crucial to delink the notion of organic intellectual from the idea of the political avant-garde, as well as from the hierarchies that commonly exist in organizations, social movements, and political parties that keep intellectuals insulated from organizational tasks, street actions, and collective work. Instead of a vanguard, the way of thinking that guides this research is one of rearguard as Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2011) defines it: one that pays attention to things that have been made invisible and others that are emerging.

I am not only a "victim;" that by itself does not define me. I have been an activist since 2002, a feminist, and part of diverse organizations and social movements in my country. I am a

middle class *mestiza/criolla* (though I also am aware of the problematic elements of these terms) and an educated woman, who in the last few years has recognized herself also as a de(s)colonial thinker. From there, from my story, from my experience, from my mind, emotions, and body, I am writing these lines. You will see and read different versions of myself, among them Antígona Gómez, one of my alter-egos born after my father was buried.

I was introduced to the Greek character Antígona doing theater and later came across many contemporaneous versions of her while holding workshops with victims of violence across Colombia. She was reborn in the midst of the Colombian war. Later, I became her, and transformed that Antígona to an Abya Yala figure of *re-existence*: Huitaca, a woman from an indigenous nation located at the moment of the Conquest in the region I come from in Colombia. As such, my identity as a “victim” is not a static essence; rather it is the possibility of *relationality* with multiple others (Glissant 2006; Gordon 2006). It is from and for this multiplicity of my self that I write this piece of *senti-pensamiento* (thought-feeling).¹

¹ From here on, I will use a hyphen (-) to indicate that what exists between the elements is continuity or relation more than a dichotomous division.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Colombia, my home country, is known as a place where violence is one of the main political, social, economic, and cultural strategies to relate to and deal with “others,” and the home of numerous social exclusions. From a long-term perspective, violence has been central to our constitution as the Nation-State we are today. Different types of violence were a central component of the Conquest of America and the colonial period (1492-1810), as well as Independence (1810) and the formation of the Republic. The latter was characterized by a series of partisan wars that had its maximal momentum in what is known in the country as the period of *La Violencia* (1946-



Figure 1: “You do not disappear from our memories,
from our struggles,
from our skin”

Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity, 2013

1958) (The Violence). Emerging from that logic, Colombia has been a country rife, for more than fifty years, with the confrontation between the State and guerrilla groups, a phenomenon known as an “internal armed conflict.”

As part of our history, the State has displayed an *illegitimate use of the legal monopoly of violence*, targeting and committing human rights violation against civilians, Leftist activists, suspected guerrilla collaborators, and guerrillas. Under this State logic and practice, paramilitary groups were authorized in 1968, degrading the political, social, and cultural conflict of the country. This extreme right-wing violence is responsible for an immense number of forced disappearances, assassinations, and torture of social and opposition leaders, human rights activists, as well as political activists of Leftist movements and parties. Drug traffickers have also contributed to this *irregular war*, impacting our economy, politics, culture, and everyday social practices.

Undoubtedly, the action of these diverse armed actors has dramatically altered the *tejido social* (social fabric) of the country. Although the State, the paramilitaries, drug traffickers, guerrillas and right wing groups have contributed to violence, in Colombia the treatment of “victims”² has been asymmetrical. The media, society in general, and the different presidential administrations have prioritized the victims of guerrillas in their accounts of the country’s past and present.

² The category of victims is a terrain of struggle that is necessary to debunk. When I use the concept “victim/s” I will write it between quotations to make note that there is a huge debate around the category in Colombia. To address one of the problems that the concept entails, I will use the category of victimized subjects (Ruiz Celis 2012) to highlight the active role of both first and second-degree victims since the hegemonic use of the category supposes the existence of passive and apolitical humans. With the notion of first-degree victims, I am referring to people that suffer human rights violations such as forced disappearances, kidnappings, torture, and murder. This category also includes people that are displaced and raped. The other notion, second-degree victims, refers to the relatives and close peers of people that suffer human rights violations. Some of these second-degree victims decide to search for their loved ones, seek justice, and join organizations that demand “victims” rights. I am also referring to them as relatives in the research. They may also experience the violation of political and social rights, with different consequences: persecution, threats, exile, displacement, and/or being forced to stop their activism. During the research process, I realized the overlapping nature between the condition of first and second-degree victims, mainly in the case of victimized subjects coming from the countryside.

As I mentioned in the Preface, this dissertation focuses on the relatives and peers of victims of paramilitary and State violence, in those victimized subjects that the State and a great portion of Colombian society have not wanted to see and recognize. I investigate how intimate ties of caring and belonging, such as family, communal, and organizational membership, are politicized in the context of pervasive political violence, and how this politicization leads to the creation of a social movement of victims of State and paramilitary violence in the country. I understand politicization as the process by which the relatives and peers of first-degree victims claim publicly and collectively the rights of their loved ones, as well as their own rights.

This research tackles four main objectives in order to grasp “victims’” politicization. The first aim is to understand the role of emotions in the mobilization of relatives and peers of victimized subjects. The second discusses the process of identity construction and subjective transformation of these second-degree victims. The third objective inquires into the ways in which power circulates between the State, “victims,” and their organizations, as well as between and within victims’ organizational movements. The fourth objective is to explore the contributions of the movement of victims of State and paramilitary violence to Colombian society and to the current transitional conjuncture.

Regarding emotions, this research inquires into: What kinds of emotions are more relevant in this process of politicization and what is their role? And, to what extent do emotions contribute to the constitution of individual and collective identities in the context of organizing against violence in contemporary Colombia? In relation to identity and subjectivity, how is the identity of victims constructed and challenged? How does victimization impact subjectivity? In addition, how is victimization experienced by “victims?”

To address the objective about power, I explore: What are the State and paramilitaries’ strategies to exercise power and domination? How do victims resist domination and exercise

their own power? What is the historical process of the victims' movement's formation, its trajectories and main conjectures? How do the particularities of Colombia's history and cultural legacies impact the dynamics of the movement? To identify the contribution of the movement, I examine: What are the main discourses, practices, and demands through which the movement constitutes itself as such, vis-à-vis other social movements, the State, and society as a whole? What are the contributions that the movement has made to politics, other social movements, the construction of social relations, society, and peace building in the country?

Engaging with these questions is essential to understand the victims of State and paramilitary violence movement and its role and importance in the Colombian society. From my perspective, without understanding the political meanings assigned to ties of caring and belonging in contexts of violence, we cannot comprehend the nature of, reasons for, and effectiveness of the organizational processes of victims of violence. Overall, the objective of this dissertation as well as the questions it approaches, aspire to contribute to the understanding of the particular way this country has experienced modernity and the ontological struggles it entails, liberatory transformation, and the challenges that a political transitional moment implies for Colombians.

Focusing on the process of politicization of intimate ties, on emotions, identity, subjectivity, on victims' experience, and State and paramilitary violence, allows observing the particular unfolding of modernity in Colombia and how the pillars of the Enlightenment project took place in this geography. First and second-degree victims' experience unveils a whole series of **rationalities** and **practices** that question established (modern) ways of being and relating, and that pose challenges to mainstream modern rationality, particularly modernity's divides between reason and emotion, life and death, living and non-living, dreams and reality, and spirituality and secularism. In so doing, these victims' practices reveal an ontological struggle and point towards

the continued vitality, and ongoing reconstitution, of what could be called “relational ontologies,” defined as those ontologies that eschew the above divides, instead establishing continuities between subject and object, mind and body, nature and culture, humans and non-humans, life and death, and so forth (Escobar 2010a).

Victimized subjects’ experiences raise questions about certain ontological assumptions of modernity. These experiences and trajectories are expressions of processes of “hybridization” that have been made invisible by modernity (Latour 1993). In cases such as Latin America, this phenomenon can be seen partly as a reflection of the continued presence of indigenous and Afro-descended epistemologies embedded in Colombians’ understandings that have been censored by the modern/colonial experience. The inability of the power of domination to silence and destroy these other connections, relationalities, and expressions of community is evident in the life experiences and trajectories of certain victimized subjects.

Despite the constraints within which “victims” operate, they are creating possibilities to imagine, embody, and enact other presents and futures through their discussions, demands, and actions. This has been a situation common in other contexts of violence, such as Vietnam (Kwon 2008), Spain (Ferrandiz 2006), Guatemala (D. M. Nelson 2009), and Argentina (Jelin 2002), where “victims” enable discussions around violence, democracy, and politics. Similar to other contexts, pervasive violence in Colombia may have created conditions that foster the imagination of other types of relations and societies.

Certainly, the terrain that has been created around the victimization by the State and paramilitaries is one full of disputes. Precisely, what we have lived in Colombia for years—and it is possible to observe more deeply in first and second-degree victims’ experience—is a struggle for the kind of society Colombians want. This struggle includes a political, social, cultural, economic, moral, ethical, epistemological, and ontological dimension, that in moments

such as the one the country has been living during the 21th century—conceptualized as a political transition—is exacerbated. In that sense, this research also asks: what are the main characteristics of the current conjuncture? And what has the victims movement contributed to this political transitional moment?

To address these questions, I carried out preliminary fieldwork in Colombia during the summers of 2010 and 2011 with victims' organizations and victimized Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities in Bogotá, Medellín, the Pacific coast, and the Caribbean region. I met with indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders—mainly members of the *Proceso de Comunidades Negras*, PCN (Process of Black Communities); *Madres por la Vida* (Mothers for Life); *Asociación Nacional de Afrodescendientes Desplazados*, AFRODES (National Organization of Displaced Afro-descendent people); the Kankuamos; and the *Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca*, ACIN (Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca Province)—as well as with organizations of women, displaced people, mothers, and relatives and sons and daughters of victims of State and paramilitary violence. These exchanges, as well as my previous journey through social movements, allowed me to define the objectives and questions of this research.

During these two summers, I also conducted fieldwork in Buenos Aires, Mexico City, and Guatemala City³ to become familiar with the main characteristics of the organizations of relatives and peers of victims of paramilitaries and State political violence. This exploratory comparative research enabled me to identify some particularities of the Colombian context for my dissertation.

³ I met with Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia y contra el Olvido y el Silencio, H.I.J.O.S (Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice and against Oblivion and Silence), Madres and Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo (Mothers and Grandmothers of May Square), and Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por razones políticas (Relatives of Forced Disappeared and Detained People for Political Reasons) in Argentina; with H.I.J.O.S in Guatemala; and with Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y contra la Impunidad-Colombia en México (Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity-Colombia branch in México), H.I.J.O.S, Comité Hasta Encontrarlos (Committee Until We Find Them), and AJADEN, among others, in México.

Then, during the academic year of 2012-2013, I carried out fieldwork mainly in Bogotá. I worked with the Movement of Victims of State Crimes, Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity, the Association of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared, and the relatives of the Palace of Justice siege. During this year, I also visited the Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca Province (ACIN). Finally, I did complementary fieldwork during the summer of 2014, when the peace process between the FARC-EP and the Colombian government began to discuss victims' rights, one of the items on the negotiation agenda.

This research is the result of diverse conversations, workshops, and collective discussions that I established with the organizations listed, as well as with others that were part of the dynamics and actions that I joined during my fieldwork. I especially follow the trajectories of Camila from *Asfaddes*, Esperanza and Juan Tomás from *Hijos e Hijas*, Mamoncillo and La Mache from *Movice*, Betty from the *Cafeteria's Relatives of the Justice of Palace*, and Juana, an active mother of a forcibly disappeared person that joined *Asfaddes* and other organizations in the past. With the first five I did life stories, and with Betty and Juana I did long interviews. In addition, I am including in my reflections the short interviews that I did with Manuel from *PCN*, Antonia from *Afrodes*, and Candelaria, Eloisa, and Micaela from *Madres por la Vida*; as well as other conversations that I had in Buenaventura and Santander de Quilichao with members of *PCN* and the *Tejido de Comunicaciones* of the *ACIN*.

Social Movements, Movements of Society and Society in Movement⁴

By the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, the increase in human rights violations against Leftist activists—both from political parties and social movements—led to the *mobilization* of some sectors of society against those violations. In this period two organizations were founded: the *Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos*, CPDH (Permanent Committee for Human Rights Defense) in 1979, and the *Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos*, ASFADDES (Association of Relatives of Detained-Disappeared) in 1983. Since then, other processes of victims' relatives have been established such as the *Familiares de la Cafeteria del Palacio de Justicia*, (Relatives of The Palace of Justice's Cafeteria Siege).

Regarding the latter, in 1985, members of the M-19 guerrilla group carried out the siege in Bogotá, retaining members of the Supreme Court of Colombia. Several hours after the guerrilla assault began, the armed forces retook the Palace of Justice. During and after this event, government forces killed or forcibly disappeared judges, members of the guerrilla group, and civilians who worked there, deepening practices of State terror such as forced disappearance,

⁴ As Archila (2003) states, social movements are expressions of permanent social collective actions oriented to face unequal conditions, exclusion, and/or injustices in concrete time-spaces. Social movements propose alternatives to face the problems of society they are engaged with; they not only perform a reactive or resistant attitude and are not revolutionary or reactionary per se. Social movements express the conflicts of society and are present through time. Escobar, Alvarez, and Dagnino (2001) state that social movements include a cultural dimension of politics and a political dimension of culture. They entail social and symbolic disputes central for the construction of democracy, and are vital for the creation of alternative democracies in Latin America. To expand the concept of social movements and give an account of the variety of social actions that take place in Colombia, I use the concepts of society in movement and movements of society. Zibechi (2007) proposed the former in his study of the events of Bolivia between 2005 and 2006 that allowed the election of an indigenous person as president of the country for the first time in its history. With this concept, the author explores how the past and the tendencies of the present induce some sectors of society to move. In this movement, collective subjects born directly from the struggles that take place, with the community and the relationships they entail being essential. I use this concept of society in movement to acknowledge a phase in which certain people and sectors of Colombian society decide to mobilize around certain situations that are perceived as unjust. Movements of society are the result of social movements and societies in movement that impact the rest of the citizenry, as well as the development of broader dynamics and tendencies—some of them led by the elites—that result in changes in society, including historical, cultural, political, economical, ontological, and epistemological shifts. The transitional phase in Colombia reflects a movement of society.

which began to occur at the end of the 1970s. These relatives, which had to face an unknown problematic, decided to organize and demand the return of their relatives alive.

An important number of victims' organizations have emerged in Colombia in the context of paramilitary groups unification in the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia), that took place in 1997; around their demobilization; and during President Uribe's first term (2002-2006). In June 2005, the *Movimiento de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado, MOVICE* (Movement of Victims of State Crime), was created, an umbrella structure, with the participation of 800 representatives of 200 local and regional organizations. In July 2006, in the context of a MOVICE national meeting, *Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y contra la Impunidad* (Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity), a generational movement of women and men closely linked to the Left, was publicly launched.

After a failed process of negotiation between the State and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army (FARC-EP), that started in 1998, Uribe's government (2002-2010) initiated a controversial "peace process" with the paramilitaries that received many critiques from different sectors of Colombia society. Uribe was criticized for the creation of civilian armed groups called *Convivir* (security cooperatives) when he was governor of Antioquia (1995-1997), which then developed as a paramilitary structure responsible for many human rights violations. For some of the opponents of this "peace process" it is impossible to have a peace negotiation between two actors—the State and paramilitaries—who are part of the same entity (State criminality and/or right wing groups). Many Colombians claim that the main goal of this "peace process" was not to demobilize but instead to legalize paramilitaries and the phenomenon of paramilitarism.

Demobilization occurred as part of a larger framework of transitional justice. The notion of transitional justice itself has been controversial since then, because it speaks to the idea (if not

the reality) of a country no longer in “conflict.” This is a mantle that at that moment Colombia could not claim. Under this legal framework, the rights of perpetrators were often favored over those of “victims,” who received little in the way of truth, justice, or reparations. The numbers of paramilitaries in prison, the years that they have to pay for crimes against humanity, and their contributions to truth and reparation have been an insult to victimized subjects. “Victims” and critical sectors of society consider that the paramilitaries’ demobilization openly strengthened historical impunity and a false construction of victimized subjects’ histories. As many have shown, among them researchers and human rights activists, paramilitarism was not eliminated, and victimized subjects continue waiting for the fulfillment of their rights while many of the demobilized paramilitaries began to leave prison during the second half of 2014.

The process of the paramilitaries’ demobilization generated a debate in the country on victimized subjects’ rights, those named as truth, justice, reparations, and guarantees of no repetition. Therefore, victimized subjects of paramilitary and State violence, as well as their demands, have gained visibility and have played an important role in the country since 2003, offsetting the imposed silences and invisibility of these victimized subjects.

In 2012, the current president of the country, Juan Manuel Santos, opened a peace negotiation process with the FARC-EP. The agenda of negotiation includes six different topics: a. Land and rural development. b. Political participation. c. The end of the conflict. d. Solution to drug trafficking. e. Victims, and f. Implementation, verification, and countersignature. Since September 2012, when the president announced the beginning of the talks, the country has experienced a heated debate around the peace negotiation process. Sectors of society from the Right, among them ex-president Álvaro Uribe’s party, have opposed the talks, arguing that the State cannot negotiate with terrorists, that the process will lead to impunity, that guerrillas cannot be part of Colombia’s political life, and that the State’s military cannot be judged for actions they

committed during their service. Between the months of June and December 2014, the peace negotiation process addressed one of the most difficult items of the agenda to face: “victims.” The country witnessed the dispute that exists between the recognition of State, paramilitaries’, and guerrillas’ victims’ rights. At the center of the debate is peace building, transition, the past, present and future of the country, as well as the suffering of millions of Colombians. It was precisely in this context that victims of State and paramilitary criminality confront one of their most difficult challenges.

Today in the country there is a large social *movement* of victims. As the product of long and intense struggles, we can identify an important sector of that movement: the movement of victims of State and paramilitary violence, a movement that is characterized by an important organizational and militant tradition. There are also organizations of victims of guerrillas. These include organizations such as the *Asociación Colombiana de Miembros de la Fuerza Pública retenidos y liberados por grupos guerrilleros*, ASFAMIPAZ (Colombian Association of Members of the Military kidnapped and liberated by guerrilla groups), created in 1999. This wing of the victims’ movement, as a whole, does not have the same organizational trajectory and tradition as the victims of State and paramilitary violence movement. Similar to the conjuncture of the paramilitary demobilization, in the current context of the peace process with the FARC-EP, new organizations that claim to be guerrillas’ victims are emerging. In addition, as a result of the *Ley de Víctimas y Restitución de Tierras* (Victims and Land Restitution Law) created by President Santos in 2011, *Mesas de Víctimas* (Victims’ Roundtables) have been organized throughout the country to follow the application of the Law.

There are other organizations and communitarian processes that are part of the Colombian victims’ movement, where there is not a clear distinction between victims of right-wing groups, the State, paramilitaries, and guerrillas. This is the case of *Madres de la Candelaria*

(Mothers of the Candelaria) and *Comunidades Construyendo Paz en los territorios*, CONPAZ (Communities Building Peace in the Territories). This is also the case of many towns throughout the country that have experienced pervasive violence. Historically discriminated subjects such as Afro-descendants, indigenous, peasants, and women have been targeted by all armed actors in the country.

The movement of victims of State and paramilitary violence—the subject of this research—is constituted by organizations that are based on family relationships specifically, including mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, brothers, fathers, husbands, and sons of victimized subjects. Other actors that are part of this movement come together from other social movements, human rights organizations, NGOs, Leftist parties, and unions. Also, there are actors who are united through communal ties and some of them are part of ethnic communities and/or organizations. Some of the ethnic organizations have not had an organic participation in this movement, but they contribute to this society in *movement* through their demands, such as the *Proceso de Comunidades Negras, PCN* (Process of Black Communities), and the *Cabildo Indígena del Norte del Cauca, ACIN* (Indigenous Council of Cauca, ACIN).

These different types of belonging display a concrete manifestation of care and emotions that are a core part of the initial process of politicization. Care is a fundamental human action without which it would not be possible to build society. It is cornerstone to relationality, and the expression of the human and non-human necessity of being interconnected. In the experience of the victimized subjects that comprise part of this research, care is the result of an ethics that considers others and takes them into account in daily life, not only in terms of norms but also in terms of personal attitudes, habits (Camps 1990), and emotions, and that looks to contribute to preserve, continue, and repair subjects' closest environments. The processes of politicization that I research are an example of caring for *Others*, with whom a pre-existent care and emotional

relationship was established. These diverse belongings and the care and emotions that constitute them, are the starting point for the formation of the victims of State and paramilitary violence *movement*, as well as for the *movements* of society and the society in *movement* around victimized subjects' claims, demands, and proposals.

The prolonged violence that Colombia has experienced—which partially contributes to undo relationality—negates horizontal care, certain emotions and affects, and generates individual and collective social crisis. This is part, from my perspective, of the civilizatorian crisis for which there are not modern alternatives (B. de S. Santos 2006), and that could become a time/space that trigger new affects, rationalities, and emotions capable of remaking the experience and practice of power, fostering new subjects.

Methodology: Towards a Decolonial Research

*“Sabemos que es la huella
lo que a todos nos coloca,
vengamos de donde vengamos,
en Relación”
(Glissant 2006: 22).*

*“We know what the trace is
that locates everyone,
wherever we come from,
in Relation”
(Glissant 2006: 22).*

That morning I was in Carrboro lying flat on my back. It was maybe the fourth time that I was doing acupuncture since I returned to the U.S. to write my dissertation during Fall 2013. That day, I could not relax. After thirty minutes of impatience, I lifted up my head and panicked. I asked the therapist to take out the needles. The needles in my body had evoked, more than an image, a feeling of my father being tortured. I had experienced a similar reaction while doing yoga without realizing what had occurred. When the therapist was taking out the needles she asked me what had happened. I already intuitively knew the answer. Through my body I feel and remember. Through it I develop an empathy with my father's pain, and I produce knowledge.

The methodology of my research has unfolded through experience and practice. It has not been completely defined, even now as I write. It has been a constant process, a dialogue with reality, with victims and social movements, with theory and research inquiries. Methodology and theory go hand in hand (Law 2004). Methodologies need to be consistent with the theoretical approaches we choose, and the relationship between them should enable innovations on both sides. In this process, I used a wide as well as a focused lens, but always from within. I have learned to listen and talk with the others and with myself. During this journey I have not done everything I proposed, and many aspects of my research have not been done perfectly.

Thus, I follow seven theoretical/methodological premises that are interconnected: 1. Linking theory and praxis 2. Producing militant, participatory, and co-intentional knowledge 3. Comprehending reality from its complexity 4. Enacting an embodied research 5. Exploring absences and emergences 6. Developing knowledge of healing and mourning 7. Enacting a liberatory pedagogy.

The methodology that makes this dissertation possible addresses six different questions. How will theory and methodology intersect constantly during the research to help me grasp the complexity of my topic of investigation and Colombian reality? How do I avoid a colonial/imperial research? How do I develop a decolonial project? What are central aspects of a decolonial ethics of research? What is the transformative situated knowledge that I produce? How do I develop a pedagogy of liberation?

Research “is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions” (Smith 1999: 5). It is, as Smith declares, a site of struggles that is impregnated with ideology, thus it is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized (Smith 1999: 7). Research defines what counts as real and as a matter of concern. In

consequence, it entails power. The modern/colonial monopoly of “the real” operates through control of the production of reality and over its visibility and intelligibility (Vázquez 2012). This deep bond between power and knowledge impacts subjects in a differential manner depending on their location within particular power relations.

Any research effort that aims to produce liberating knowledge has to avoid reproducing colonialism and imperialism, as well as the social relations they imply. In that sense, my research is an effort to develop decolonial methodologies, for which there is no recipe. On the contrary, it is a continuous process of experimentation, discovering, and learning. As Leyva (2010) argues, decolonial research practices are a “process that is gradually built collectively through practice, from below, from the personal, the politics, the spiritual, the subjective, and inter-subjective” (370). Accordingly, we have to recognize the production of knowledge as a process, never something concluded or fixed.

A. Connecting theory and praxis

As Marx (1978) states in his Thesis on Feuerbach, more than to interpret “the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it” (145). In contexts such as the one Colombia is currently living, in which peace and transition are central topics, and the government, from its hegemonic notion of transition, looks to impose the type of society that it envisions, a society that maintains inequities, inequalities, and violence, and that seeks to favor the political and economical elites through a particular political economy, it is necessary to have a critical production of knowledge that disputes the meaning of transition and the definition of peace.

Intellectuals that do not conceive of themselves as engaged are unconsciously allied with the *status quo*. Neutrality does not exist; neutrality is one of the bigger fallacies of the modern/colonial thought, one of the best façades reifying the current world. All knowledge

affects, produces, and is power. All politics entails knowledge production and all knowledge presupposes a particular politics (Gómez Correal 2013a).

To produce knowledge as a decolonial organic intellectual entails constructing bridges between academia and social movements, looking for dialogues between both spaces, and mutual affectations that have included the exercise of a constructive critical view. To do this, it has been vital to permanently go from one register of doing-thinking to another: from the streets to the computer, from meetings to readings, from Colombia to the United States, from classes to social mobilizations.

B. Producing militant, participatory and co-intentional knowledge

A decolonial methodology has to make the effort to not reproduce the unequal power relationships that underlie knowledge production. Towards this goal, it is essential to begin debunking the foundational colonial/imperial dichotomy: the division subject/object. Therefore, both “victims” and myself are the subjects of this co-intentional production of knowledge. This means, more than a simple change of label, recognizing these subjects as agents of transformation, knowledge producers, and senti-racionales beings.

Through different methodological strategies—workshops, collective discussions, and life stories—I have been able to learn about and explore a wide array of victimized subjects’ proposals and insights, some of which challenge the current boom in scholarship and practice on memory, peace, and political transition, as well as allow imagination of other paths, actions and projects. For example, people in the Bogotá Chapter of MOVICE talk about *verdad verdadera* (*the true truth*), questioning all attempts to make the country's history a relativist recounting of events narrated by certain points of view. They also propose renaming the “right to reparation” as *the State’s and other victimizers’ obligatory indemnification*, according to the reflections that

the loss of a loved one is irreparable, the State has a debt to its citizens, and victimizers should respond for what they have done, and not merely through jail time.

Exposing the place from which knowledge is generated, as well as the subjectivity that produces it, contributes to a critical and objective apprehension of reality. Situated epistemologies (Flórez Flórez 2010) identify the limitations and potentialities that specific positionalities imply for the production of knowledge without discarding *intentional objectivity* (Gómez Correal 2013a), that is, an intellectual attitude seeking to account for the social phenomenon that is being described, explained, and analyzed in close proximity with *the materiality of the real*, pursuing the task of giving a “total” account of the research topic from within the complexity that it contains.

Working with *intentional objectivity* must go hand in hand with Hale’s (2008) idea of deepening consciousness about the ethical and political context of research (11), and with Wynter’s (2001) question about the subjects with whom we are going to epistemologically marry, that is to say to which subjects’ realities we as intellectuals are going to engage and for whom we are going to center our concerns. It includes asking why, how, and with whom research is done. Following this logic I speak about a co-intentional investigation, since my research questions and objectives emerge from concrete personal and intimate trajectories, but also from within the victims’ movement, Sons and Daughters, MOVICE, and other organizations’ preoccupations and demands.

The fact that I am part of the “subjects” of study gives me a privileged perspective to answer particular questions due to my personal history, political trajectory, and involvement with the movement. My positionality permits me to cultivate an approach that goes beyond the strictly academic, logo-centric one, which has led me to take seriously the role of emotions, dreams, spirituality, and the relationship with the dead. All of these expressions of other onto-

epistemologies, that have been rendered invisible, non-existent, and therefore useless for hegemonic knowledge, could contribute to the construction of another project of society.

One central element of my research is the participatory dimension, which I conceptualize as a “*minga de senti-pensamiento* (Minga of feeling-knowledge).” *Minga* is an indigenous word that implies not only collective work, but also the idea of taking responsibility for the other (Muyolema 2001). Some of the components of the participatory research included: a. Discussions of the main research questions with different organizations of the victims’ movement. b. Workshops and trainings in which we shared specific understandings useful for both their work and my research. c. Presentation and exchange of research findings. d. Collaboration with the victims to define the ways in which the final results of my research will be discussed and presented, and to learn which audiences they consider most important to address. I also explored the networks they wish to create and strengthen.

The participatory component of this project initially began in my pre-dissertation fieldwork. During the summers of 2010 and 2011, I spoke with many members of victims’ organizations in Colombia and I asked them how my research could be made useful for them. They considered most of my questions important for their organizations and life experiences. The majority of second-degree victims think it is important to make their experience and their relatives and peers’ stories visible. For other victimized subjects, it is central to highlight their demands and struggles, their contributions to Colombian society and peace building, as well as to find out what happened during the “conflict.”

I developed the participatory component of this research most deeply with MOVICE’s Bogotá Chapter. We had workshops and collective interviews in which we explored the role of emotions in their struggles, the connection between body and emotions, the process of identity construction, subjective and body transformation, as well as the changes their life trajectories

experienced due to violence. We went into their definitions of memory, truth, justice, reparation, peace, and guarantees of no repetition, among other key concepts and demands. In July 2014, we had a session in which I presented the advancements of my findings. And finally, I collaborated with their activities in diverse ways, such as moderating discussions, organizing training and debate meetings, and helping them to define their annual plan of activities.

I seek to delve more deeply into what Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) mentions as part of a decolonial research: making myself the subject of research, challenging the imperial and colonial logic of studying the “Others.” It has been fundamental in this self-ethnography to be reflexive. This dissertation has been a project that has questioned research queries, findings, assumptions, activism, and the organizations I belong to. In this exercise I have cultivated an auto-critical perspective that looks to be productive and transformative. This includes an attitude that avoids universalizing my experience to that of the rest of the victims, or to idealize or essentialize the movement. This also involves recognizing my place within the movement and observe how my own experience is affecting the reflections I am generating about it.

In addition, to be part of the “subjects” of research does not mean that I am not reproducing the power relationships that knowledge implies, or that all my understandings are correct. The privileges that being a researcher entails do not disappear simply because one is part of the community of study (Smith 1999). I have been attentive to these privileges, and I reflected on this with several of the victims, especially with Bogotá’s MOVICE chapter, in order to create horizontal relations during the development of the research and in the collaborative process in general.

In one of our meetings, when we were elaborating the Bogotá chapter’s annual plan of activities, we had a discussion about the power relationships between researchers and “victims,” since they, as many other victimized subjects, are continually sought to be interviewed and

investigated. That day I recognized my differential power as someone that although a “victim,” is a PhD student from a U.S. institution coming from a middle-class background. It was inevitable to talk about the specialized and complicated language that academics and even human rights defenders use, as well as about rural and popular languages and understandings that sometimes are not in dialogue with one another. That day I realized again, as I did when I was part of the *Iniciativa de Mujeres Colombianas por la Paz, IMP* (Initiative of Colombian Women for Peace), that “educated” and urban populations have always had the tendency to impose their understandings of the world onto people from rural areas and popular sectors of society. After that discussion, we agreed to make an effort to not talk using complicated terminology, and to listen carefully to what the other people have to say. The fact that we are Colombians and speak Spanish does not necessarily mean that we are talking with the same “language.” Inasmuch as epistemic colonialism and imperialism have included the imposition of languages, any decolonial research should make a big effort to be communicative with those with we are working with.

C. Comprehending reality from its complexity

Modern knowledge consists of dichotomous, rational, and classificatory reasoning that usually cannot give an account of the complexity of reality. To comprehend complexity includes thinking of the long-term, relational, and going beyond the imposed dichotomies, classificatory systems, and pre-established categories and ways in order to realize what we have interiorized. This requires approaching reality from a historical and interdisciplinary perspective, from “within” and acknowledging relational dynamics. It means a focus on practice, discourses, and histories, as well as the production of meaning and collective identity, as well as on aspects of human life that are difficult to grasp and on intangible and invisible dimensions such as feeling, the sensorial, and the spiritual. As Bourdieu (1977) states, it is by studying practice that one can grasp social dynamics (see also Holland et al. 1998). Research “is to go to meet life head on in

order to comprehend how they and us feel, imagine, represent, speak, and make the world of life” (P. Guerrero 2010: 110).

The point of departure of this investigation was the individual as a subject situated in a concrete historical and social context. Therefore, this study concentrates on personal and collective trajectories and historically situated practices. I investigated the different histories of the organizations, individual life stories, and the day-to-day experiences of the movement.

In order to approach the complexity of the victimized subjects’ experience, I participated almost daily in victims’ public and internal activities, the majority of which revolved around the peace process between the government and the FARC-EP because the day after I arrived in Colombia, September 4th 2012, President Santos officially started the peace talks. I attended local, national, and international meetings, workshops, planning sessions, photo exhibitions, commemorations, rallies, and public forums, among others. I explored how victims individually and collectively deal with the loss of relatives and peers, what changes occur in their lives; the forms that their demands, strategies, concrete actions, and discourses take; the role of emotions in their action and experience; and the manner in which power circulates within this contentious field of victimization. To explore these, I used five different methodological strategies to answer the questions of my research: workshops, collective discussions, life stories, primary sources research, and auto-reflexive ethnography.

I seek a radical methodology: to learn *from* the world and not *about* it, as the Zapatistas invite us to do (Esteva 2013). The victims’ movement in that sense is not an object, but a verb, a possibility, which leads me to focus on the things they have done, in their phenomenological praxis (Gordon 2006). In order to give an account of the world of life, it is urgent to anchor the production of knowledge in life itself, and not in theory since it can mean escaping from human reality (L. Gordon 2006: 34).

Departing from here, and in articulation with the other methodological/epistemological premises that I propose, can help Colombians to *observe* what we have unavoidably *seen* at this point of our history, but that some of us have preferred not to truly witness, feel, and reflect upon its deeper dimensions: human suffering inflicted on others by people that are part of a shared community of belonging. Colombians need to *observe* and *understand* history and reality from its complexity. In order to contribute to changing the pervasive violence we have lived through, it is important to counteract the imposed, hegemonic politics of remembrance and oblivion that prevent us from grasping the logic of violence.

Our societies need new analytical and conceptual frameworks, the creation of which are only possible from within the processes that generate the issues of analysis in the first place. Concrete political moments, such as the one that Colombia is living in the present with the peace process and transition, produce theoretical movements (Hall in Walsh 2013: 23). Nowadays, there are aspects of society that need to be understood in a deeper and novel way. It includes focusing on new aspects of old issues such as domination and resistance, emotions and social bonds, identity, and subjectivity. It is fundamental to re-think categories, classificatory systems and dichotomies that long ago have been established and interiorized, such as the notion of “internal armed conflict,” State criminality, victims and victimizers, oblivion and memory, reconciliation and hate.

D. Enacting an embodied research

*“Sabes mi nombre, pero no mi historia
Has oído lo que he hecho, pero no por lo que he pasado
Sabes donde estoy, pero no de donde vengo
Me ves reír, cantar, bailar, pero no sabes lo que he sufrido”
(La Mache 2013)*

*“You know my name, but not my history
You have heard what I have done, but not about what I have lived
You know where I am, but not from where I come
You see me laugh, sing, dance, but you do not know what I have suffered”
(La Mache 2013)*

Embodied knowledge, that is to say, as a holistic and relational being, that is, with my entire body and in dialogue with others, is a way to confront logocentricism, modernity/coloniality, and individualism. There are core concepts of my research that have agency within them: the body, emotions, identity, and subjectivity. I do not only want to understand what they are and how they work, but also to produce knowledge through them from the dimension of reality that make it possible: experience. This dimension enables different *becomings*.

One of my intentions with this dissertation is to understand how power and resistance construct our identities and subjectivities in a concrete context, and consequently how power defines the body. Through identity, subjectivity and the body, I aim to comprehend how we resist and transform the world and how these can be expressions of liberating power. This specific question raises a methodological inquiry: can the body speak? This forces me to reflect carefully on how to produce knowledge about and through it.

During the research process I had to train my “eyes,” that is, to divest myself of the “inner” eyes that I have internalized (Wynter 1994): eyes constructed by modernity/coloniality, especially by social sciences and humanities, reinforcing “imperial eyes” (Smith 1999: 56). These are “inner” eyes, imperial eyes that objectify social subjects, produce classificatory systems that frequently allow dominations, and also lose sight of the complexity of reality; detached eyes that pursue objectivity and neutrality that is neither neutral nor objective; colonial and imperial eyes that define what is real and what matters through the reification of the other.

I have re-trained my eyes by positioning myself in this intellectual endeavor; developing a participatory component and co-intentional research; breaking dichotomies (emotion/reason, body/mind, living/dead); avoiding the reification of victimized subjects; creating horizontal relationships with them; recognizing victimized subjects as someone of equal value but different

from me; and monitoring myself each time that I was making value judgments about their experiences, realities, and worldviews.

In the process, I also realized that eyes are not enough. After all, eyes are the modern metaphor *per excellence* of knowing. This has led me to make an effort to listen and feel what has been rendered invisible or unimportant, and to approach the *world of life* with the holistic and relational “I.” This indicates that I am researching with my entire body: my mind, senses, emotions, intuition, organs, fluids, subjectivity, and spirituality; this has made it essential to learn to “listen” when the entire body speaks. I believe this is perhaps the only way to grasp the complexity of reality, to approach many aspects of human life that are difficult to comprehend and translate into words, such as human suffering, and to tackle others that have been silenced by different means.

I recognize emotions as a core part of the production of knowledge. It is my impression that if we acknowledge them, another kind of research can be conducted. Each researcher should first ask what emotions the investigation and the subjects of study produce in them. If we conceptualize research as a humanizing endeavor, we have to avoid emotions that devalue others, for instance, those related with the feelings of superiority, domination, or pity. As Gordon states, the “ability to know and understand us without harming us is a profound act of love” (L. Gordon 2006: 33).

Understanding others, without wishing to dominate them, requires love (Fanon 2008). I feel that horizontal relationships can be only constructed from a *liberatory love*, and this kind of love is the possibility of re-forming the self and the world (Sandoval 2000). After many years of colonial and imperial knowledge that has done harm, including the knowledge produced by anthropology, it is imperative to move from “philosophy as the love of wisdom to philosophy as

the wisdom of love” (Maldonado-Torres 2005: 156). As Paulo Freire (2001) realized, love is an act of courage.

I have learned with my entire body, with a body that has been subjectivized by different structures of domination and the power relationships that these entail. I have also learned through my subjectivity, and the different identities that have made me who I am today.⁵ It has been this holistic and relational knowing, that is to say, in permanent conversation with others, which contributed to question my identity as a “victim,” a notion always in debate, contentious, and fully comprised of domination and possibilities at the same time. I died one time—when my father was killed—and I have been born different times during my entire life: as someone with class-consciousness, as a feminist and mestiza/criolla, and as Antígona and Huitaca.

Any research is the product of a relation that transforms the “researcher,” the subjects of study, and the topic of study itself. I research in relation and in *becoming as relation* (Glissant 2006). This entails a delinking from dichotomies that divide subjects (academics vs. objects of research); the different aspects of reality and human experience (dreams vs. rationality, life and death); humans (blacks vs. white); and the cosmos (nature vs. culture). What I have wanted to do with this dissertation is to establish a dialogue, breaking with the individualistic way of

⁵ Three discourses have been essential to this process: Marxist, feminist, and decolonial. The encounter with the latter problematizes my life even more. When I was an undergraduate and I read Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 written by Karl Marx, I was shocked by the impacts of capitalism on our identities and daily life. The commodification of humans and the dehumanization of workers clutched me. Then, when I started to join the women’s movement in Colombia, the feminist discourse made me realize that I was constructed as a woman, and that this has a lot of consequences. That discourse helped me to understand many discomforts that I had experienced my entire life. I was exposed to decolonial discourse during my first semester of the doctorate. It opened a big door and all the windows of my home, and I started to comprehend in a more nuanced manner the Colombian situation and my condition as someone born in “Latin America.” These discourses and experience/practice, such as theater, allowed me to realize that my body was codified as a middle-class woman’s body. This was a discovery that I made thanks to my participation in a working class feminist organization, Huitaca. Then, I began to be more aware of my racialization when I started to travel outside my country. Little by little I comprehended how my body was charged with stereotypes and discrimination linked to my “indigenous/mestiza/criolla” phenotype. I translated into words the discomfort of my body in places where I was situated and that were mediated by the same structures of domination that generated the inconformity. For instance, time-spaces where I was a woman; a middle-class women with a working-class background and history; and a racialized woman of Abya Yala.

producing knowledge (Freire and Faundez 1989), and recreating a *relationality* with many others that are part of this story: victims, movements, the society at large, my father and myself, my multiple selves. These relations have allowed me to become others such as Antígona Gómez and Huitaca, the last one a figure of re-existence in a scenario drowned with death.

E. Exploring absences and emergences

The dominant Eurocentric notion of reason has worked to produce that which goes beyond its frameworks of domination as inexistent. The sociology of absences has the task to make visible what has been negated and rendered invisible (B. de S. Santos 2011), such as emotions and their preeminent role in the creation and maintenance of life, politics, and the production of knowledge; the agency of death; dreams as a space of knowledge and communication; the holistic body; and historically marginalized subjects, their epistemologies and ontologies.

This sociology of absences goes hand in hand with a sociology of emergences that focuses on the alternatives based on the experience and practices of these victimized subjects that are part of the horizon of concrete possibilities (B. de S. Santos 2011) . This implies that I need to re-train my approaches to the topic of study in order to *observe/witness* things that I am not *seeing* because I was taught by the dominant logic of knowledge and by the State's ideology to observe victimized subjects as objects and suffering beings; their experiences, trajectories, and demands as discourses; and their gaps and inconsistencies as evidence of their guilt or a biased place of analysis. This has taken me to *observe* what it is not obvious, the no and the not-yet (B. de S. Santos 2011), as well as the different, unexpected becomings.

To inquire into absences and emergences requires learning the wisdom of silence (P. Guerrero 2010) and other ways to be present. We must learn to read “the signs of what is not easily perceptible; since to comprehend the world of sense implies to make visible the faces of

the invisible, reveal the spiritual and cosmic dimension that inhabit all that exist” (P. Guerrero 2010: 115). This is imperative to address topics related with violence, suffering, and victimization, and to identify which aspects of reality cannot be fully described or said, or, at least not from the Eurocentric rational register. In the world there are opacities. They do not have to be understood as a “fright” but as a “party” (Glissant 2006: 31), as the possibility that differences and what has been made invisible emerge.

This encourages research with creativity and imagination, exploring diverse paths in order to generate questions and knowledge, starting from experience and dialogue. Contrasting second-degree victims’ experience—including mine—with modern premises has enabled me to comprehend the relevance of death alongside its agency. For victimized subjects, their killed relatives and peers remain alive. Life and death are not opposed, but to the contrary, they are part of a continuum. Present! Present! Present! Many of us tend to cry in the streets and the auditoriums. To grasp this is also to dispute the hegemonic senses of the world of life.

The sociology of absences and emergences make it possible to observe the existence of telluric movements in Colombia, micro seismic movements that at least contain three seismic layers: the modern/colonial hegemonic project, emancipatory movements, and decolonial processes. Behind them there are ontological struggles, and, as a result, a dispute over the definition of the real, the entities that are part of it, their function, and the type of society we want. Since victimized subjects are products of these struggles, I aim to bring to light the traces of relational ontologies and creolization through conversations with the long past and the active present, with indigenous and Afro-descendent people.⁶

⁶ I use the notion of creolization in two senses. First, to denote the processes of hybridization that have taken place in the American continent since the Conquest; and second, as the project to establish, in the present and in the entire world, relation among two or various cultural “zones” (Glissant 2006: 28). Glissant uses this concept to highlight the interrelation between humans (that mainly works as fractures and ruptures), permanent becomings, and as an

This sociology will contribute to see us in the mirror as a nation and be capable of reflecting, seeing, and feeling the different colors of our soul, a soul that was taught to see itself as and aspire to be European, forgetting its own anchorage. For that reason it is of tremendous importance to permit the ancestors (Olivella 2010) and the dead victimized subjects to speak, and that we learn to listen to them. Thinking with Fals Borda, we should see the anfibio (amphibious) and the hicoteas (Fals Borda in Bassi Labarrera 2008) of our world.⁷ A sociology of absences and emergences should strengthen the process of creolization as the possibility to recognize and live the different relations unleashed with the Conquest, with our concrete and particular experience of modernity/coloniality.

F. Developing a knowledge of healing and mourning

I also decided to carry out this research as a way towards healing and mourning without being completely conscious of what it means. My initial thoughts were that addressing a topic closely related with my painful experience would help me to advance in that difficult and really unique personal process of healing from an intellectual elaboration that combines academia and militancy. Since the beginning, I decided to focus more on victimized subjects' strategies than on the description of violent acts performed by the perpetrators because I know it affects me emotionally, but also because the history of political violence in Colombia should not necessarily

alternative to the totalized Western world that negates and erases differences. The becomings that are possible from here are unpredictable, not stable, do not stop, and are not included in absolute identities.

⁷ With these two figures: the amphibious and the hicoteas, Fals Borda (in Bassi Labarrera 2008) is describing the strength of the people of the Colombian Caribbean Coast to adapt to different conditions, struggle for better conditions of life, and be happy. For Fals Borda, the people of the Caribbean developed an amphibious culture that combines the richness of land and water, the mixture of two central elements of the universe that allows people to survive. Part of this anfibio culture is the hicotea, an animal that has a particularly productive rhythm of life. If there is water, Fals Borda says, it goes out and makes love. Conversely, during the summer, it buries itself in the ground and sleeps for various months until it starts to feel the humidity. When this happens, it raises its claws and little head, returning to life with equal energy and enthusiasm as before. The fishermen of San Jorge say that "we are like them." The hicotea man is thus a 'sentipensante' being (he/she feels and thinks) that has the strength and capacity to face life's setbacks with the knowledge to overcome them. Fals Borda comments that these people taught him the concept of "sentipensante" (feeling-thinking). Thus, the hicotea person is the one that is capable of adapting and facing difficult conditions by thinking and feeling at the same time.

be narrated through them. That way of remembering produces, from my point of view, more fear and indifference than consciousness and possibilities of transformation.

During the first conversations and interviews with the subjects of my research, I noticed that at the end I felt emotionally and energetically charged, almost without energy, tired, and sad. I promptly comprehended, as I already knew intuitively and some people had warned me, that to listen to each second-degree victim's experience reminds me of my own story, and that I was receiving victims' energy, their affect-effect. After I experienced some of these episodes, I started doing a short ritual before and after each interview/conversation. In silence, I asked for permission to address these difficult and painful histories to myself, dead people, and "victims." Sometimes I did this aloud. I also protected myself by visualizing a light with soothing colors. Although the pain and sadness still remained after the interviews and conversations, I felt more relieved. I also did these rituals in some of the workshops I had with MOVICE's Bogotá chapter.

Carrying out fieldwork, especially during the entire year that I was in Colombia, was not easy. I had previously been forced to leave Colombia in May 2008 due to death threats. I came to the U.S. in a non-traditional type of exile, since I was able to return to my country frequently to continue with my activism, the investigation of my father's murder, and relationships with my family and friends. During that year (September 2012-August 2013) I realized that healing and mourning take a long time and that it is different to do that while you are in your home country than when you are abroad. To have a quotidian life for more than two months—the most prolonged time I had spent in Colombia after May 2008—confronted me again with sadness, anger, helplessness, and my father's absence.

During that year I again experienced intensively the feelings that impunity awakens. In January 2013, my father was exhumed as part of some incipient advances in his murder

investigation. It was a painful moment. It was a moment that evoked all the emotions caused by his loss, and also a moment to say good bye and somehow the closure of a cycle of my life.

Writing, as well, has been a difficult exercise. During the years I wrote this dissertation, I came up with personal strategies that helped me to deal with my emotions and to face my personal journey of healing and mourning such as yoga, meditation, therapy, exercise, swimming, dancing, and rest. None of them have entirely sufficed, but all of them were useful for a healing knowledge. The exercise of writing has unleashed conversations with my father, with other relatives and mourning elaborations.

Although the intention of healing and mourning was initially envisioned for myself, I developed an ethical protocol with the intention to not harm victims with my questions and reflections. Before each interview, I explained the objectives of my research and I also explicitly said that it was fine if they did not want to answer some of my questions. My questions, in individual and collective interviews, look to push—without violence, prejudice, or judgment—reflections about sensitive topics, some of them related with healing and mourning. There were moments in which I made undue questions that caused harm to the victimized subjects; it is through practice and during conversations that I learn not to replicate such modes of conversation.

Certain lessons and initial thoughts I have about healing and mourning have to do with the big challenges that victimized subjects face in order to be happy; this is a conscious process in order to confront domination. To lose happiness and remain fixed on the power of domination and death is one of the main victories of the hegemonic actors. It is crucial that we pay attention to the ways we have interiorized some of the effects of dominant power, such as feelings and states of fear and paranoia. Learning to listen to our body and the way we somatized is

fundamental. Anger, rage, sadness, and despair locate in our bodies, producing illness in the colon, kidney, breast, womb, and changes in weight.

For that reason, it is fundamental to relocate ourselves in the center, not in order to reproduce an individualistic, liberal notion of the individual, but as a way to take care of ourselves, heal, and continue with more energy, disposition, and capacity to struggle. From my point of view, it is necessary to explore other beliefs, ontologies, and practices that allow an internal-collective reconnection and reconstruction of ourselves. We were broken, they shredded us into pieces, and it is our task to regroup our individual and collective self. Research about violence and “victims” in Colombia should contribute to the paths of healing and mourning, and not only extracting knowledge, publishing books and writing essays that are difficult for the victimized subjects to comprehend. The country needs to heal, and everyone should contribute to it. In my effort to do that, I am writing also as Huitaca.

G. Enacting a liberatory pedagogy

“July 2014. Bellavista Prison. Meetings between the civil society and the ELN during the exploratory phase of the peace process. The objective of this meeting is to advance proposals and methods to address victims’ rights in a future peace scenario with this guerrilla group. At the end of the meeting, after listening attentively to various statements and questions, a leader of a community in Antioquia communicates his anguish that notwithstanding a process of paramilitary demobilization that already took place and the possibility that others will occur with the guerrilla groups, the violence will not stop in his territory. Besides this anxiety, little by little, his words form a revealing statement: ‘we still need to comprehend why what happened occurred’” (Huitaca 2015).

This same worry and desire emerged constantly in different conversations with the victimized subjects. They want to understand the reasons and logic of what has happened to their loved ones and to them. Any researcher that studies violence and/or peace in Colombia should attend to the question of the type of truth and memory they are going to contribute and its utility. In Colombia today, the truth itself is at stake. The struggle for truth and history is not new, but it is intensified in “transitional” moments.

Researchers that study violence should foster the possibility that victimized subjects, and Colombians in general, comprehend what took place in the country. This necessitates pedagogies that offer sensory references to weave together existence (P. Guerrero 2010), analyze reality, and potentiate social transformation. Pedagogies should contribute to politicizing Colombians, as well as to think and create new, appropriate, and affective-effective political strategies.

The current moment calls for pedagogies that “locate ruptures, transgressions, shifts, and inversions of imposed and inherited concepts and practices” (Walsh 2013: 64). The significance of these pedagogies is that it is not enough to produce knowledge about reality, in this case, violence; rather, it is essential to use those understandings and impact the arrangements and contemporary organization of society of the present. In this same logic, truth, memory, and history have to give life. We need a history (Nietzsche 1873), and with it a truth and memory, for life. Truth, included on the agenda of negotiation between the FARC-EP and the national government, should break the death code and bring the possibility of real being to Colombia. For that reason, truth cannot be any kind of truth, i.e. truth for the sake of truth.

The type of history and memory that will contribute to truth, more than partial recounts of the past or the sum of different versions, must produce a narrative that accounts for the complexity of Colombia, the deeper roots of structural violence, and the causes that gave it origin. This type of truth ought to produce critical knowledge of our past and present. These are times in which nothing is more feared in the political life of our nations than an informed public (L. Gordon 2010: 27). Creating an informed public requires pedagogies of history and memory that overcome the production of narrations of the past to which few citizens have access and a lower number seize as their own, as has occurred in other contexts that have created—as part of transition and peace accords—Truth Commissions (for example, Peru, Guatemala, and South Africa).

Theoretical Perspective: giving an account of Colombia's complexity

My research draws on several distinct theoretical trends such as feminism, decoloniality, relational ontologies and the theory of practice. The dissertation approach avoids a dichotomist understanding of structure and agency, recognizing the existence of material conditions (discourses, practices, culture, ontologies, structures of domination, and the specific relations of power these structures imply) that impact people's decisions and actions in concrete historical settings. At the same time, I acknowledge the agency of humans, non-humans, of the living and the dead, and the capacity that they have in impacting and transforming "reality."

Thus, I understand "reality"—specifically, the reality of Colombia during the period of my study—as the result of a series of interactions in different realms of daily life. There, structure and agency interact with each other to create a contentious space in which versions of the past and possibilities for the present and the future are disputed in a broader context: modernity/coloniality in the phase of a crisis of civilizations.⁸ In this context, the agency of the victims movement in Colombia accounts for interactions that draw on but also challenge modern assumptions, calls attention to the existence of other ontologies, and their importance in the transitional moment and for the construction of a stable and lasting peace. Accordingly, I will use feminist, decolonial, and relational ontologies as well as the theory of practice to enrich certain anthropological domains that are essential to achieve the objectives of this dissertation: the anthropology of modernity, emotions and affect, identity and subjectivity, and power and transformation.

⁸ As B. Santos (2006) claims, what defines the current moment is that we are facing modern problems for which there are no longer sufficient modern solutions; this means that it has become crucial to expand the range of experiences that can be considered credible alternatives to what exists.

A. Anthropology of Modernity

Colombia, as part of Abya Yala,⁹ is the result of the interaction of different structures of domination that constitute a system of domination: modernity/coloniality. The specific comprehension of Colombia and region's reality I am employing in this dissertation is the result of a Latin American political and epistemological perspective—decoloniality—that allows understanding the region's history from a long-term perspective.¹⁰

From my point of view, this gaze helps to grasp some of Abya Yala's particularities and complexities, as well as its relationship with the Western hegemonic world. It also permits us to think about liberatory transformation and the challenges that a prolonged history of violence means for the Colombian present and future. Decoloniality contributes three central discussions to this research. First, the understanding of modernity; second, the consequences of America's Conquest for the present; and finally, the characteristics of the modern/colonial power arrangements, including the formation of Nation-state.

For the group modernity/coloniality, modernity started with the Conquest of America. Dussel (2000) distinguishes between two types of modernity that overlap until the present. The first is the encounter between the two worlds—where Spain and Portugal are central—and the second originated with the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment in Northern Europe.¹¹

⁹ Abya Yala is the manner Kuna people refer to the American Continent. As part of the struggles of decolonization during recent years, some Indigenous people use this name to refer to the continent. I will use that concept as well as Afroamérica to acknowledge the proposal, demands, and struggles of Afro-descendent people.

¹⁰ What I name decolonial thinking is related not only with the modernity/coloniality group's intellectual contributions, but also with Indigenous and Afro-descendent epistemologies and critiques of colonialism. These contributions are central to the developments of the modernity/coloniality group's ideas, and from my perspective are sometimes misrecognized or not sufficiently identified. In the Conference Indigeneity, Decoloniality and Art that took place in May 2014 at Duke University, with the participation of some of the founders and oldest members of the modernity/coloniality group, the plurality of the genealogy of decolonial thinking was recognized, as well as the diversity of proposals and visions. I am talking from this plurality of histories.

¹¹ In contrast, European Philosophers, such as Kant, conceives the Enlightenment as the moment at which humanity reaches adulthood. Foucault (1984) defines modernity as a historical moment that was guided by a particular attitude toward the present and reached its maximum expression in the Enlightenment. We can conceptualize this as

The encounter between Europe and America implied an important series of changes that transformed the configuration of the planet. One of the main transformations that the Conquest brought about was the change from a poly-centric to a mono-centric world. This transformation went hand in hand with modifications in the economic circuits that involved a process of capitalist hegemony through the control of the Atlantic after 1492.

Under this framework, coloniality (Quijano 2007) is conceptualized as an essential part of modernity, not as an outcome of it. Accordingly, I use the concept modernity/coloniality to recognize the historically situated dark side of modernity,¹² that of domination, violence, expropriation, and invasion. This perspective, besides redefining the temporality of modernity and recognizing its dark side, highlights that the modern illustrated project is not only a product of Europeans but also of its colonies.

Quijano (2000) proposes the notion of “coloniality of power” to describe the specific kind of power arrangements that were established with the Conquest during the 16th century, and that have been extended to the rest of the world. Race and, as Lugones (2008) will demonstrate, gender are cornerstones to this new power. Both gender and race are powerful modern/colonial fictions through which European hegemony is constructed and maintained. Mignolo (2009), who further develops Quijano’s idea of the colonial matrix of power, states that there is a colonial matrix of power that works as an invisible structure imprinted on the bodies and minds of women and men (75). The matrix includes domains such as authority, economy, gender and sexual

Dussel’s second modernity, which I name through this dissertation as enlightened modernity. I recognize that modernity has not been a uniform experience for the entire world, thus, the notion of enlightened modernity refers to a dominant-hegemonic form of modernity.

¹² In contrast to standard critiques to modernity such as postmodernism or other internal critiques including Latour’s (1993), I consider that modernity includes a dark side. For Latour, “we” have never been modern. From my point of view, those contradictions that the author describes as examples of the non-realization of modernity are illustrations of what modernity precisely is; thus, “we” have been modern.

structures, knowledge, subjectivity and the relationship with nature. Paredes (2011) prefers to talk about a matrix of power in order to make visible its patriarchal character.

Thus, a modern colonial world system appeared, characterized by the “ensemble of processes and social formations that encompass modern colonialism and colonial modernities; although it is structurally heterogeneous, it articulates the main forms of power into a system” (Escobar 2007: 185).

The European colonial/modern project, forced by violence and seduction, entailed the imposition of an economic project (capitalism), a specific ontology, and ways of being in the world that affected knowledge production, subjectivities, religion, culture, and politics, among other central spheres of society. This new system included different types of violence—epistemic, symbolic, and physical—as well as a concrete inter-subjectivity between Europeans and the “Other” that devaluated indigenous and African people ontologies and reinforced the idea of Europeans as superiors. Similar to patriarchy, modernity/coloniality would be impossible without the use of violence. Therefore, violence was a central element for the colonial period, and as we will see, for the continuation of the modern/colonial model after the processes of Independence in Abya Yala.

A dominant European ontology based on an anthropocentric, logocentric, and phallogocentric perspective was imposed. In this hegemonic system, the world is ordered following rational principles from the perspective of a male Eurocentric consciousness that included “the extreme economization and technification of the world” (Leff 2000 in Escobar 2007: 183). The violent imposition of European ontology creates the *common sense* that there is only one viable model of society and a single path to achieve it. In this paradigm, only one possibility exists: the Western modern in its version of capitalism or socialism. This civilization model has ignored the “*colonial and decolonial difference*” with profound consequences for our present: the

devaluation of other ways of being in the planet, the intensification and imposition of European tradition dichotomies, and a concrete way to understand reality.

For mainstream modern rationality, binaries such as reason/emotion, life/death, living/non-living, dreams/reality, spirituality/rationality, body/mind, woman/man, us/them are essential not only as ways to comprehend reality but also as constituents of it. Although there is a sense of totality in the modern stance that is expressed in the idea of “universality,” Quijano states that for the enlightened modern sense, this universality was understood from two different perspectives that lost the sense of interconnection. The first is a notion of organic totality, and the second a structural-functionalist standpoint. Both of them enacted reductionist approaches to reality and the metaphysics of a macro historical subject (Quijano 2007: 175-176).

Communal and place-based groups conceive some of those modern binaries, understood through the lens of modernity as exclusive and separate (Latour 1993), in a relational manner. Ethnographic work (Escobar 2008; De la Cadena 2010; Blaser 2010) has shown how communal and place-based groups are examples of relational ontologies.¹³ Relationality, as well as actor network theory (ANT) are approaches useful to understand second-degree victims’ experience in Colombia, specially those related with suffering and embodiment, the relationship with death, the role of objects in memory processes and spirituality in dealing with painful episodes. While relationality constitutes a new area within Political Ecology, which recognizes the existence of relational ontologies as a different expression to western modern ontologies; actor network theory recognizes the agency of non-humans and the role that material and semiotic networks play in social relations.

¹³ Ontologies are the visions that define the existent as well as the relations that are established between entities that are considered real. Escobar (2008), De la Cadena (2010), and Blaser (2010) differentiate between a dualist modern ontology and relational ontologies. The latter are characterized by the territory as a condition of possibility, and for the communal logics that are part of this conception.

Drawing on theories of decoloniality and relationality, I aim not only to recognize the existence of these other ontologies in Colombia and victims' experience, the implication of the colonial enterprise in our present, and the dark side of modernity,¹⁴ but also to acknowledge the “traps” and crossroads that the modern illustrated project implies, even in the principles that look more compelling and “just” to us. The enlightened modernity uses principles and ways to organize society that were defined during the colonial period and correspond to the dominant Eurocentric/Western worldview. Among these principles are the discourses, practices and political structures of human rights, democracy, and the State. Some of these discourses and practices have been central for a political practice of emancipation, and in the case of victims, for their struggles. Notwithstanding the possibilities these discourses and practices entail, they can also place limitations on victims' political action.

I understand modernity/coloniality as a hegemonic system of domination in which struggles, contentious practices, resistance and processes of emancipatory/decolonial/liberatory change happen.¹⁵ The discourses, practices and political, social and cultural structures that constitute it allow for domination but also for resistance and emancipation. “The colonial difference” still remains in this system and, as decolonial thinkers propose, is a potential epistemological and political space. Transformation can arise from neglected subjects such as women, indigenous, and Afro-descendent people, and from geographies where domination and the dark side of modernity have taken place. Without essentializing, there is a greater possibility

¹⁴ The Holocaust was an opportunity for Europeans to rethink modernity. Bauman (1989) recognizes the Holocaust and violence as constitutive aspects of modernity.

¹⁵ I follow the distinction that Dussel (1977 in Mignolo 2007) and (Mignolo 2007) propose between emancipation and liberation. Dussel (1977 in Mignolo 2007) prefers to use the category of liberation (employed by the social movements of “national liberation” in Africa, Asia and Latin America) to include both the political and economic decolonization and the epistemological, “de-centering the universal emancipating claims in the projects grounded in the liberal and socialists traditions of the European enlightenment” (2008: 454). When I mention liberatory power and transformation, I am referring to a power and transformation that addresses emancipatory and decolonial demands.

to find alternatives in the spaces where modernity has not worked “perfectly” than from the regions where it has been more or less successful. This research looks to generate questions about modernity in contexts where political violence has been one of the main characteristics of the constitution and consolidation of the Nation-state.

B. Anthropology of Power and Transformation

This dissertation aims to contribute to understand and potentiate liberatory transformation. For that reason it is essential to comprehend how power in its different types works and impacts subject construction, the manner in which “victims” identity and subjectivity are formed and transformed, as well as the role of emotions in the process of victims’ politicization, creation, and maintenance of social movements.

As I mentioned before, I contextualize my focus on Colombia in ongoing historical and political processes as product of structures of domination that imply concrete relations of power, which generate a system of domination: modernity/coloniality.¹⁶ Domination is reified and challenged in daily life through concrete practices that also have a symbolic dimension. In order to comprehend the structures of domination and the hegemonic system that they generate, it is essential to observe *how* power is exercised. Power gives to dominance materiality and permanence, but it also contains the possibility to transform it.

Power will be understood, first, as the relational exercise of forces¹⁷ between persons and collectivities that contains the idea of “I can, you can, we can” (Gómez Correal 2011a). Second, there is a microphysics of power. It circulates through society and in the interaction between

¹⁶ Domination is conceptualized as the exercise of control or influence over someone or something, or the state of being so controlled. In order to achieve domination, it is necessary to construct hegemony in the sense expressed by Gramsci (1971b).

¹⁷ Zibechi (2007) proposes a notion of power as the capacity to do. This capacity makes possible the achievement of social auto-emancipation. The author proposes the idea of potency, something that should not be defined, but rather is a quality and has use-value. Potency changes people, and it is always an incomplete process of becoming. As a result, potency expands to the extent to which people act and build liberatory relationships.

individuals.¹⁸ Third, power is a force that is owned and exercised by concrete actors. The State holds power as well as subaltern subjects.¹⁹ Depending on the structures of domination—capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism, imperialism—and the way the actors are located, one subject can exercise power and at the same time be the object of its exercise.

Fourth, power is productive in the sense that it generates effects. There are economies of power that produce subjects, identities, subjectivities, bodies, discourses, truths, realities, resistances, and so on. Power, as Foucault (1980) states, is linked with truth and knowledge. Effects of truth are produced historically within discourses “which in themselves are neither true nor false” (118). Power constructs regimes of truth and produces the way desire is read, thus creating realities and bodies. Power reorganizes the way we look at and conceive the real.²⁰

As a central element that produces and reproduces domination, power is essential for the construction of hegemony, its re-codification and dissolution. In this sense, power has three different “uses:” powers for resistance, liberation, and domination.²¹ Power for domination

¹⁸ Challenging the idea that power could be associated with specific actors, Foucault (1979) insists that everyone exercises power. It is disseminated throughout society (160). The author concentrates on capillary power and on the micropolitics or microphysics of it. At this level, power constitutes the capacity to create relations that affect capacities, but these relations and the power they exercise are not mediated by consciousness. Thus, neither the guard nor the prisoner are aware that they are watching or being watched.

¹⁹ For Foucault, there is not a correspondence between forms of power and specific subjects, political structures or modes of production. Therefore, power cannot be described as something located in the state apparatus, or in a specific economic structure. As feminists have showed, men—in a concrete framework of domination—have power over women. Though this is not so simple—since in certain contexts women exercise power over men—from my perspective it is useful to recognize that men hold power “privilege” over women in relations influenced by gender; thus, for this research it is important to identify the structures and people to which certain types of power are linked. In the Latin American context, for example, it is central to associate power to specific actors and economic enterprises such as the State and capitalism. For Quijano (2000), the State is a space of “domination that is disputed and victoriously guarded against rivals” (558). The power of the sovereign remains essential in order to understand the history and the present of Latin America, as well as the existence of the coloniality of power. Although Foucault makes important contributions to the discussion of power, his definition misrecognizes the ways in which power is held by certain actors, an approach that can have political/material consequences.

²⁰ For Foucault, the latter is the main place of struggles, which makes necessary to detach the power of truth from hegemony, social, economic, and cultural forms, within which it operates.

²¹ There is an important difference between resistance and liberation. Not all the social actors that resist are creating liberatory processes. On the other hand, notwithstanding the important contributions of Foucault’s insights, I find that he pays more attention to the concept of power/domination than to power/liberation. This can reproduce, from

conveys different kinds of power: power as war (one concretization of the microphysical power), the coloniality of power, patriarchal power, and biopower.²² The power of resistance and liberation includes the notions of power within collectivities, from below, power-caring-affect-life, and power I-can, which are the expression of other materializations of the microphysical power.

From my perspective, it is essential to recognize the different forms that power can take in specific contexts and how they are the result of different cultural and historical sediments. Following the insights of Foucault (2003) and Paredes (2010), I focus on the “how of power,” the ways it works and its methodologies, observing its extremities and where it becomes capillar. Thus, I will observe from below the practice of power and its material operation. Foucault (2003) considers necessary to look at the mechanisms of power, techniques, tactics of domination, and relations of domination as operators (34), as well as the knowledge apparatuses that are formed, organized, and circulated. Then, he states, it is important to investigate how they have been and are invested, colonized, and used by increasingly general mechanisms and forms of overall domination. Paredes (2010) highlights the importance of revealing coloniality’s methodologies. This Bolivian communitarian feminist emphasizes the tools that made colonial relations of power

my perspective, a “negative” vision of power that demonizes it, making it something that should be avoided. A “negative” conception of power fails to recognize the capacity that power has to do, to produce, and to enact social transformation.

²² Foucault argues that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a new mechanism of power appeared which was incompatible with relations of sovereignty. This new power—bourgeoisie and disciplinary power—applied primarily to bodies and what they do. Therefore, the mechanism of power that was constructed made it possible to extract time and labor from bodies. In this new scenario, Foucault identifies the appearance of biopower, the discipline of bodies and the calculated management of life. In this context, the body is constituted as an object of manipulation, and man as species becomes a population that is the object of interventions and calculations of political economy. The author associates biopower with governmentality, a specific form of power based primarily on governing life through political economy and apparatuses of security (Foucault 1991: 102-103). It is important to note that before bourgeoisie power, the bodies of women were under control by patriarchy. The dimension that I want to highlight in regard to biopower is that it is a power that is linked with capitalism and the forms of government that modernity proposes, such as the Nation-state.

possible, among them violence against women and sexual harassment, which locates women bodies in the center of domination.

This research recognizes victimized subjects as political actors invested with power, and subjects that are the product of different powers: State and paramilitaries' power—in its dominant use—and even the result of their own power, in their uses of resistance and liberation.²³ These powers, as Foucault states, are part of a chain, something that circulates in different spheres of Colombian society. In consequence, the power interaction between the State, paramilitaries, and “victims,” creates a contentious field that as I mentioned before, include a variety of struggles ranging from the political to the ontological.

Regarding State and paramilitaries' exercises of dominant power, I pay less attention to their intentions or decisions, and instead focus more on places where it implants itself and produces its real effects, especially in victimized subjects' lives, identities, subjectivities, and bodies, as well as in the definitions of Colombian past, present and future. To assess the exercise of power by victimized subjects, I observe power/resistance, power/emancipation-liberation, and power/domination, its microphysics within the organizations and the victims' movement, as well as between “victims” and other actors. As Zibechi (2007) says, popular sectors of society discover their potencies only at the moment in which they display them. In this unfolding, collective subjects are born directly from the struggles that take place.

Therefore, I analyze the unfolding of power in its macro and micro levels as well as in its different manifestations. This research contributes to analysis, theories, and praxis that look to challenge and decode dominant power, and to potentiate resistance and liberatory power that adds to transformation. Transformation and change are intrinsic parts of society, but I am interested particularly in social transformation as part of liberation and not as exercises that

²³ Obviously, there are also power dynamics between second-degree victims and their organizations that include the three types of power I previously defined.

strengthen the *status quo*. Liberatory social transformation is the result of a process that implies to break a relationship of subjection and processes of decolonization. Emancipation always requires critical subjects since it is “the recurrent upheaval and escape from what is imposed on us as actuality and destiny” (Gutiérrez 2012: 57).

As Esteva (2005) states, “changes can only be realized with the transformation of the society by itself, from within, in people’s social fabric communities, barrios, municipalities” (143). The liberatory power dimension that this transformation entails is embedded in social relations but, following Polanyi’s ideas (2001) regarding economy, modernity/coloniality and its “apparatuses of control” such as the State, have tried to separate it from people.²⁴

Thus, liberatory transformation is related with the exercise of power that comes from within communities, the one that is embedded in social relations and that is part of what has helped to constitute social bonds, different communities and senses of belonging, including social movements. This power expresses to some extent the potentiality of affect and emotions as driving forces for change as well as the force of a communitarian sense of caring. This liberatory power represents the force of the “communities” and the expression of relationality and interconnection. Practices, affect, feelings, memory, cultural values, actions, relations, and knowledge production feed it. This power needs to be embodied in persons and communities/organizations’ bodies in order to counteract the *biogeopolitics* and *tempopolitics* of domination (Gómez Correal 2011a).

²⁴ I argue that this is the product of any imperialistic/colonial enterprise, even before the Conquest in the New or the Old world.

Liberatory power requires the construction of subjectivities capable of decoding coloniality of power, biopower, the war dimension of power, and patriarchal power.²⁵ From my perspective, it is essential to counteract the *biogeopolitics* and *tempopolitics* of domination; that is to say, the impacts of power/domination in racialized, gendered, and classed bodies localized in specific geographic contexts (*biogeopolitics*) and performer in daily life with the intention to control people's sense and experience of time (*tempopolitics*). Both materializations of power are also exercised in those that have a counter-hegemonic ideology and/or onto-epistemology.

C. Anthropology of identity and subjectivity

This research focuses on practice. Like Bourdieu (1977) argues, an emphasis on practice is necessary to grasp social dynamics. It is also in practice that individuals perform everyday life and reification and change occur. In order to understand the process of identity construction and subjective transformation, I approach identities as a result of the intersection of individual trajectories, history, context, and culture. I conceptualize identity as the most elaborated and objectified component of subjectivities, a fluid process (D. M. Nelson 2009) of self-understanding that takes into account and contributes to the construction of “figured worlds”²⁶ in specific local contexts while engaged in practice (Holland et al. 1998).

Drawing on Bourdieu's insights, Holland, Lachiotte, Lave, and others (1998; 2001) have developed the framework of a social theory of practice. According to this framework, identities are historically and culturally situated. This implies that notions about the self and personhood are conversely specific, that is to say, we have to avoid modern biases and essentialism (Rouse

²⁵ Zibeche and Esteva recognize the productivity of power and that subalterns hold it. However, they do not reflect on the microphysics of power, and on its implications in daily life and political projects such as Zapatismo or those that have been taking place in Bolivia.

²⁶ Figured worlds are created and performed in spaces in which cultural politics are enacted, and they result in particular personal and collective identities. New activists become actors in and through these figured worlds as a result of “situating learning” in “communities of practice.”

1995; Escobar 2008). Identities are constructed and performed in practice, where individuals are positioned in a relational way with others.

There are multiple contexts in which one becomes a person, and contexts are not static (MacDermott 1993). Individuals have multiple subject positions and develop different relational identities crossed by different relations of power that configure their subjectivity. Holland et al. (1998) point out that there are three essential time/space dimensions in identity construction: intimate space, local contentious practice, and enduring historical struggles. These dimensions correspond with intimate identity, socio historical identity, and localized identity.²⁷

Identity is a process of intimate and social struggle. The “I” is always unfinished, and is a result of what Bakhtin (1982; 1986) names dialogism. Identity is a discourse about us and for us. Identities are the production of objectifications of self-understandings that may guide subsequent behavior, as well as the imposition of certain categories, as is the case with the notion of victims. Escobar, following Grossberg’s analysis, considers that identities have certain fluidity, and precisely “this context of flux is the ground for identity development and sets the condition for ‘a space of authoring’” (2008: 218). The permanent construction of the self does not mean that there is not at least a possible modicum of self-direction. The notion of history-in-person (Holland and Lave 2001) recognizes the possibility of relatively stable identities that are the result of personal histories intermingled with habitus and embodied dispositions in a local terrain.

Identities are dialogic, practice-oriented, and processual dynamics that have place in local contentious spaces of practice (Holland et al. 1998; Escobar 2008). It involves the creation and at times dissolution of boundaries between the self and others. Local contentious practice mediates

²⁷ Since I will focus on individual as well as on collective identities, I consider it necessary to investigate the manner in which the victims’ individual and collective identity emerges in the local connected with a historical dimension.

between history-in-person and enduring struggles.²⁸ Thus, the local is the concrete space where change takes place. It is the space of the emergent, changeable, and not definable.

Identities (Holland et al. 1998) are “possibilities for mediating agency” (4). They are “key means through which people care about and care for what is going on around them” (5). In this dissertation, I pay attention not only to the construction of individual identities but also to collective ones. These collective identities impact subjectivity, creating different subject positions. I focus on the manner in which collective identities of “victims” are constructed. Some central aspects in the construction of collective identities are: the recognition of injustice through experience; a political decision to act, product of a slow process of awareness that enables trajectories of *becoming*; collective dialogues and discussions around “experiences” of subordination and exclusion; circulation, use, and creation of discourses that explain the unfair conditions under which neglected subjects live as well as the transformative possibilities that those discourses enact (Gómez Correal 2011a).

Satterfield (2002), Escobar (2008), Price (2009), Holland and Lachicotte (2007), and Nelson (2009) introduce identities in a broad set of discussions related with social change and new ways to inhabit the world. Satterfield argues that identities are expressions of particular combinations of larger cultural forms and means through which transformation is possible.

Holland et al. (1998) similarly stress the cultural production of new figured worlds and associated identities. Identities thus articulate dialogues of change and reconfiguration of cultural

²⁸ Social struggles are related with cultural dispute, with conceptions about the world. The same cultural resources are used for different actors but in diverse ways or with dissimilar goals and meanings. Although the actors share the same space, they conceive the world and relate with it in different manners. For Satterfield (2002) the dialogical approach allows an understanding of identities as something improvised and modifiable for other actors and different contexts (local and political). Identities are negotiated and situationally constructed through dialogues across difference. Thus, for Satterfield, it is essential to understand the implication of how the “other” conceptualizes his opponent, the manner in which it influences the construction of identity in both groups, their repertoires of struggles, and the way in which the dispute is performed. In the case of Colombia, the identity of “victim” of State crime and paramilitary violence is constructed to some extent in dialogic relation to “victims” of guerrilla groups, although they share some aspects. This is the result of the configuration of the war, its actors and relationships in Colombia.

and ontological forms. For this reason, identity is an important means for the creation of collective actors and transformation. This is an undesired and unexpected outcome of domination in regard to the *production* of “victims.”

As feminists point out, change cannot occur unless it includes a personal dimension. This makes vital to reflect about subjective transformation. Both identity and subjectivity are central to liberatory change. They are more a means than an end; “less a thing than a set of relations” (Nelson 2009: 47) that enable certain actions and goals. According to Nelson, the formation of new identities not only results in the creation of new subjects, but it also impacts contexts of violence and political dispute. Since identities and subjectivities are the result of power productivity, they in themselves are expressions of power and driving forces in liberatory/emancipatory collective transformation.

D. Anthropology of Emotions and Affect

To understand emotions, I first draw on feminist critiques of reason and rationality and the common modern assumption that relates women with emotions and the private sphere (Gilligan 1982; Fraser 1997; Haraway 2008; Gibson-Graham 2006), and with other “irrational” feminized and dehumanized subjects such as peasants, children, lower-class, indigenous, and Afro-descendent people. A corollary of those debates has been the emphasis on emotions and care in the constitution and maintenance of society.

Second, I engage with anthropological discussions about emotions that, like feminist debates, examine their role in society, emphasizing both their cultural specificities and universal dimensions, and situating them beyond the dichotomous understanding of nature/culture. Thus, emotions are comprehended as a product of the interaction between the social and the biological dimensions of human beings (Oatley 2004), situated in specific social contexts, individual trajectories and history, and linked with subjectivity and identity. Although they are historical,

cultural, and social products, they are first-person experiences (Beatty 2014). The body, as socialized and socially situated, is recognized as a key element in the expression and experience of emotions; it is a “metaphor people live by” (Leavitt 1996: 344, 520). “Emotions are thoughts somehow ‘felt’ in flushes, pulses, ‘movements’ of our livers, minds hearts, stomachs, skin. They are *embodied* thoughts, thoughts seeped with the apprehension that ‘I am involved’” (M. Rosaldo in Leavitt 1996: 524).

Third, my study enhances a growing body of literature about social movements and emotions. As Gould (2009) states, before the 1970s political activism was conceptualized by social scientists as irrational, and members of social movements were portrayed as people who are psychologically unstable or otherwise susceptible to being swept up into a “crowd.” In this perspective, emotions interfere with reason and are synonymous of irrationality. In the 1970s, new studies of social movements recognized the rationality of political activism but dismissed emotions.

In the late 1990s, the emotional turn took place, and the centrality of emotions in social life was recognized. In this paradigm, emotions are part of rationality, challenging the dualistic approach and the conception that emotions entail irrationality. For scholars in this tradition, emotions are a crucial means by which human beings come to know and understand themselves, their contexts, their interests and commitments, their needs and options in securing those needs (Gould 2009: 17). Emotions are judgments, evaluations of the world, as well as commitments (Oatley 2004), and forms of explaining and predicting (Beatty 2014). Emotions are not only reactions but also actions (Ahmed 2004: 7). As Gould (2009) points out, this new vision about the role of emotions brought a new ontology, a different conception of social reality.

This field of study brings to the forefront the important role of emotions in the initial politicization of social actors and in the maintenance of social movements (Jasper 1998; Elster

2002; Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001; Flam and King 2005; Gould 2009). From this perspective, social action cannot be explained only or mainly by the idea of rational choice or instrumental rationality. These authors recognize both the cultural character of emotions and the complementarities between emotions and rationality in politics. This tradition acknowledges the use of emotions for the maintenance of established power relationships, but also for change and transformation. Thus, emotions are conceptualized as a force. Social movements are spaces of sense-making, in which affect plays a central role.

Fourth, this research draws on the concept of affect, which opens a space for the non-cognitive, non-conscious, non-linguistic, and non-rational aspects of the general phenomenon of emotion. Affect is an expressive mediation; it names a “complex set of mediations/effects that are ... a-signifying (although they can produce signification), non-individualized (although they do produce individualities), non-representational (although they can produce representational forms), and non-conscious (although they produce various forms of consciousness)” (Grossberg 2010). Both emotions and affect are closely related. Emotion is the aspect of affect that gets actualized or concretized in the flow of living (Massumi 2002), and emotion “incites, shapes, and is generated by practices of meaning-making” (Gould 2009: 13).

Affect implies flows of energy and intensity “that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body.” It “prepares the organism to respond to that which is impinging on it, but in no predetermined directions” (Gould 2009: 21). Lutz and White (1986) highlight the role of emotions as mediating social action since emotions are used in the negotiation of social reality (420). Precisely, people make sense of life’s events through emotions, as we will observe with the experience of victimized subjects.

Gould’s use of the concept of affect in the study of the ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) movement brings us closer to understanding the irrational in politics, such as

engaging in illogical, senseless, and unreasonable behavior that goes against one's interest (2009: 24).²⁹ This approach allows us to comprehend one of the major sources of the complexity and indeterminacy of human motivation, behavior, needs and desires; “the often ambivalent and contradictory nature of our feelings; our more bodily and non-conscious forms of knowing and sense-making; inconsistencies and non-coherences within our thoughts and between our cognitive and felt responses to the world; our non-rational attachments ... and the non-instrumental components of human behavior – all phenomena that have political consequences” (Gould 2009: 26).

To recognize emotions as fundamental to political life does not signify that the role of reason is dismissed or misrecognized. Both reason and emotions make people move and act politically. But it is important to acknowledge that there is something beyond “rationality” that makes people participate in politics; therefore, it is necessary not to “rationalize” emotions. Gould states, making emphasis in the cognitive aspect, we “not only lose sight of the bodily, visceral qualities of feelings, but we also obscure a number of insights that an affective ontology provides for understanding political action and inaction” (2009: 23).

Rosaldo (1989) states that we have to take into account the “emotional force” behind social phenomena. Force involves “both affective intensity and significant consequences that unfold over a long period of time” (192). As the anthropologist suggests, I focus on victimized subjects' formal rituals and informal practices of everyday life. I also am using my own experience of loss to comprehend emotions and to communicate their force, their affective power (Rosaldo 1989: 188) to readers. As Leavitt (1996) suggests, using one's own body in fieldwork, instead of just a set of theoretical tools, yields knowledge that is otherwise unavailable (519).

²⁹ “Affect is always nonrational ... outside of – but non necessarily contrary to – conscious, cognitive sense-making” (Gould 2009: 24).

Emotions and affect are essential for: a. creating, recreating and comprehending reality; b. constructing relations and communities of belonging; and c. challenging or maintaining domination. As Gibson-Graham comment, thinking is always conditioned by feeling (2006: xxix); we are *senti-pensante* (feeling-thinking) beings (Fals Borda in Bassi Labarrera 2008). Anthropologists have shown that emotions are inextricable elements of thinking, speaking, and acting (Beatty 1996: 546). There is also a relationship between emotions and power. Power operates through affect. For Gould (2009), every “capture” of affect (by culture) coincides with an escape of it. There is indeterminacy in the experimentation of affect that opens up possibilities for transformation. Affect is a motivational force in individual lives and therefore a force in social life as well.³⁰ Emotions are terrains of struggles and forces that mediate experience and enable practices, thus the modern dichotomy of emotions vs. reason does not make sense. We are/enact *senti-pensamiento* (feeling-thinking).

Affect is a body’s capacity to affect and to be affected. Affect acts, and it is integral to a body’s perpetual becoming. Deleuze locates affect in the midst of things and relations (in immanence) and, then, in the complex assemblages that come to compose bodies and worlds simultaneously. For the philosopher, affect is an entry, vital, and modulating field of myriad becomings across human and nonhuman (in Seigworth and Gregg 2010: 5-6). Grossberg (2010) analyzes how apparatuses of affect produce or have subject-ifying (emotions) and socio-ifying assemblages (belongings). Thus, affect is fundamental in the construction of relations and collectivities.

Ahmed (2004) emphasizes that emotions are relational: they involve (re)actions or relations of “towardness” or “awayness” connected to certain objects (8). Following Descartes’

³⁰ Gould explores Raymond Williams’ “structures of feeling” and Lawrence Grossberg’s preoccupation with the relation between affect and ideologies. Attending to “affect can illuminate how hegemony is effected but also why it is never all-encompassing” (2009: 27).

affirmation that we “do not love or hate because objects are good or bad, but rather because they seem ‘beneficial’ or ‘harmful,’” Ahmed studies how others leave impressions on us, and how in this process certain communities of belonging are constructed. “To form an impression might involve acts of perception and cognition as well as an emotion. But forming an impression also depends on how objects impress upon us . . . So not only do I have an impression of others, but they also leave with an impression; they impress me, and impress upon me” (6). These impressions, Ahmed says, are the “marks left by others, in which the other might leave their mark insofar as they have already left” (2004b: 30).

In this process, emotions work as a form of cultural politics or world making that play an important role in the “surfacing” of individual and collective bodies, defining the boundaries of the diverse worlds that are constructed (Ahmed 2004a: 12, 25). Following Sartre’s idea that emotions work as a ‘contingent attachment’ to the world, Ahmed points out that what attaches and connects people to specific places—to the extent that they cannot stay removed from others—is also what moves, affects people, and makes them displace. Moreover, that movement not only *affects* one person but due to the proximity with others, it impacts many others in different ways. Affect and emotions move the world, shape the collectivities that are part of it, and in that process construct and alter reality.

This dissertation is an exploration of how unexpected, *affective events* unleash affect and produce *effects*, how they are read and enacted by the victimized subjects, how they are part of and/or challenge the hegemonic emotional habitus, and what are the different outcomes they lead to. As Lefebvre argues, social theorists have to “examine not just institutions but moments – moments of love, poetry, justice, resignations, hate, desire” moments that are “at once all powerful and powerless” (in Seigworth and Gregg 2010: 20). The loss of a relative and/or the experience of violence unleash trajectories that make possible becomings where affect is always

present. From this affect and its effects, reality is built and power is disputed, and the actual and the virtual, employing Deleuze's (2007) notions, emerge.

Thesis outline

This dissertation is organized into three different sections. The first section, *Blood: the Fluid of life and death* discusses Colombian history from a long-term perspective, trying to understand the present through the past. Towards that goal, I engage critically with the history of the country discussing five central processes: colonialism, the formation of the Nation-state, the National Front, the Constitution of 1991, and the struggle for peace during the final years of the 20th century and the first fifteen years of the 21st century. Throughout this first section I am describing how all four have worked as transitional moments and *movements* that have helped to maintain and consolidate—in their Colombian/Latin American particularity—the Western model of civilization. In addition, this section aims to propose new conceptualizations for some of the categories that are most commonly employed to comprehend Colombia's reality such as the internal armed conflict, State violence, State terrorism, and transition. During this section, I draw a “cartography” of the structures of domination and relationships of power that have been central to the configuration of the present, situating the eight life trajectories and the organizational processes that I follow more closely in the entire dissertation.

This section is composed of three chapters. The first one: *Walking backwards: Reflections on Colombian History*, presents the historical and anthropological perspective from which the history of the country is approached and situates how “victims” rights were addressed in some of the Public Forums that took place as part of the peace negotiation process between the FARC-EP and the government in 2013 and 2014. The second chapter: *My way to remember*, starts contextualizing the forced disappearance of Jaime, and it then explores the history of the

second half of the 20th century and the circumstances in which *Orlando*, *Fernando*, and *Ramiro* were also forcibly disappeared. This chapter looks to identify the main political actors of the time and to comprehend the characteristics of the National Front and the Constitution of 1991.

The final chapter: *If I only walked forward ...* is a journey to the other three historical processes that help to understand the present: colonialism, the formation of the Nation-state (which includes a brief discussion of the well-known period of *La Violencia*), and the transition to peace. This chapter concludes with an exploration of the efforts to build peace that have taken place since the 1990s, a tentative identification and explanation of a hegemonic emotional habitus in the country that emerged with the Conquest, and a partial conclusion.

The second section, *From Love: Becoming with Others*, explores the role of emotions in the process of politicization of victimized subjects, the construction of victims' identity and their subjective transformation, as well as the power dynamics that take place between "victims" and the State and paramilitaries. This section aims to understand the interrelation that exists between identity, subjectivity, emotions, and power, and how social suffering is lived by the subjects of study. Towards that end, I analyze these dimensions in two different chapters, one titled *Caring, Feeling and Relating with Others*, and the other *Seeds Planted in the Heart: Through Life to Death ... Through Death to Life*.

Thus, the fourth chapter of the dissertation starts with a brief story of second and first-degree victimized subjects' past, weaving a collective history that situates the complexity of Camila's, Esperanza's, Juan Tomás', Mamoncillo's, La Mache's, Juana's, and Betty's trajectories, as well as the experience of Manuel, Antonia, Candelaria, Eloisa, and Micaela, with whom I conversed in Buenaventura. Then I investigate the moment in which the violent episode interrupted the flow of living and the emergence of the victim's identity, exploring in its complexity the specificities of victimization, victimized subjects' resistance and demands,

manifestations and lived experiences, as well as the present of their struggles, how they relate with the *affective event* and the manner they change in this process.

In the fifth chapter, I study how power circulates between the victimized subjects, the State and the paramilitaries focusing on power effects, and how victimized subjects challenge them. Therefore, I analyze the multiple consequences and impacts that the violence enacted by these two actors have in people's daily life, the constitution of the self, communities, organizational processes, and in the national *body politics* (D. M. Nelson 2009). In so doing, I engage with other ways in which the *affective event* is lived, describing how victimized subjects relate with the dead, death, objects, as well the past, dreams, society, and the State. Exploring the ways that victimized subjects challenge the power of domination, I describe how the power of resistance works, identifying some initial contributions of these subjects to Colombian society.

The third section titled *The Belly: Toward a re-birth*, has the intention of comprehending the current conjuncture in Colombia from its own unfolding and identifying the main *gifts* that relatives and victimized subjects are offering to Colombian society and peace building. This final section is divided into three chapters. The sixth chapter, *Emancipatory struggles for a non-hegemonic transition*, situates the struggles of victimized subjects in Colombia within the human rights framework, exploring some of its "global" particularities as well as local adaptations. This chapter explores the friction (Tsing 2005) between the global and the local and the new arrangements that are produced, identifying the possibilities, limits, and challenges that result from the conversation between human rights talk and relatives and victimized subjects' claims.

In the seventh chapter, *The enchantment of transitional justice: We will Always be Imperfect Copies of the Original*, I develop a brief genealogy of transitional justice, exploring its relation with human rights and international law, its historical development and the way it has materialized in Colombia. I also contrast the victimized subjects' proposals with the application

that is commonly proposed in contexts of political transitions following this model of global governance.

The remaining chapter, *Blood, Love and the Belly: enacting other world(s)*, discusses the way relatives and victimized subjects conceptualize peace, and how they “donate,” beyond the now stabilized discourse of truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non repetition, to rethink the way society is organized. Discussing memory and healing, among other *gifts* of these subjects, I try to make visible some of the logics, visions, and conceptions that underlie the *social assemblages* that victimized subjects are proposing.

Finally, I present some conclusions that seek to enrich the background questions of this dissertation concerned with liberatory transformation, the processes of politicization and modernity. The conclusions include some closing ideas for my own rethinking of anthropology that goes back to the auto-reflexive ethnography, the healing-mourning knowledge, and the pedagogical component of this research. As I already mentioned, the chapters develop following eight pairs of second and first-degree victimized subjects’ life trajectories: Camila- Orlando, Juana-Fernando, Betty-Ramiro, La Mache- Majayura, Juan Tomás-Antonio and Alfredo, Mamoncillo-Pedro, Diana-Jaime, and Esperanza-Álvaro, and their organizations: *Asfaddes* (Association of Relatives of Detained-Disappeared), *Familiares de la Cafeteria del Palacio de Justicia*, (Relatives of The Palace of Justice’s Cafeteria Siege), *Movice* (Movement of Victims of State Crime), and *Hijos e Hijas* (Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity). Throughout the chapters, I also include conversations with members of *Proceso de Comunidades Negras* (Process of Black Communities); *Madres por la Vida* (Mothers for Life); *Asociación Nacional de Afrodescendientes Desplazados* (National Organization of Displaced Afro-descendent people), and the *Tejido de Comunicaciones* of the *Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca*, (Weaved Network of Communications of the Association of Indigenous

Councils of Northern Cauca Province), and some of the particularities of these organizations. In order to help the reader, I include below a brief synopsis of the most visible subjects of this research.

Synopsis research subjects

Camila was born in Bogotá. She is part of the *Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos*, ASFADDES (Association of Relatives of Detained-Disappeared). Her brother, Orlando, was forcibly disappeared. He was a high school student leader that at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s was demanding, together with other students, better conditions for public schools in Bogotá. He was involved with the Left, specifically with the civilian organizations that support guerrillas' work in the cities, and also with ASFADDES.

Juana was born in Medellín. She has been part of ASFADDES and other organizations. Her son, Sergio, was forcibly disappeared. He was also part of the student movement in Colombia, but in Medellín, the capital of Antioquia province. Sergio was a member of a youth Marxist-Leninist movement, part of the *Partido Comunista Colombiano, Marxista Leninista* (PC-ML) (the Communist Party, Marxist-Leninist) that was created in 1963. The PC-ML collaborated with the *Ejército Popular de Liberación Nacional* (EPL) (The Popular Army of National Liberation). When Sergio was forcibly disappeared, he was finishing his undergraduate in Sociology.

Betty was born in Bogotá. She is part of the Relatives of the Palace of Justice's Cafeteria. Her husband, Ramiro was working in the Cafeteria of the Justice Palace when the M-19 guerrilla took it over. Then, the Armed Forces retook the Palace of Justice and carried out some enforced disappearances. Ramiro was part of a group of people that were in the Cafeteria and were forcibly disappeared. He was the father of four daughters. Ramiro did not have any political

affiliation. Before working in the Cafeteria and after finishing high school, Ramiro did his mandatory military service.

La Mache is part of the Wayuu people, an indigenous nation that is settled in the Guajira province and also in the northern part of Venezuela. She has been part of different organizations such as *Asociación de Mujeres Indígenas, Negras y Campesinas de Colombia*, ANMUCIC (Association of Indigenous, Black, and Campesino Women), and the *Movimiento de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado*, MOVICE (Movement of Victims of State Crime). Her daughter, Majayura, was forcibly disappeared and raped. She was part of the *Juventud Comunista*, JUCO (Communist Youth) and other organizations of young people before being killed.

Juan Tomás is a Kankuamo indigenous, part of the Kankuamo indigenous youth organization and *Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y contra la Impunidad* (Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity). Juan Tomás' surname is Lame. Since very young, he had to face persecution, the extermination of his people, forced displacement, and the enforced disappearance of two cousins: Antonio and Alfredo, one of them accused of being a member of the guerrilla.

Mamoncillo was born in Boyacá and is a member of the MOVICE. His son, Pedro, was killed during the 2005 rally in Bogotá that takes place each year on Labor Day, the 1st of May. He was killed by the *Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios* (ESMAD) (Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron), a special force of the Police created in 1999 with the objective to maintain social protest under control. During his last year in high school, Pedro joined a group that carried out anarchist actions.

Antígona was born in Bogotá. She has been part of the feminist and women movements in Colombia, and is part of *Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y contra la Impunidad*. Her father, Jaime Gómez, was forcibly disappeared on March 21st, 2006. At the time, he was working with

Piedad Córdoba, a well-known former senator part of the political opposition to Álvaro Uribe. Jaime was part of different expressions of the Left, a trade unionist, and popularly elected to the City Council of Bogotá.

Esperanza was born in Bogotá. She is part of *Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y contra la Impunidad*. Her father, Álvaro, was forcibly disappeared in 2008. When he was forcibly disappeared, he was working with the *Contraloría Distrital* (District Controller's Office), and part of the Contraloría's trade union. During his life, he joined different expressions of the Left, including the *Partido Comunista* (PC) (Communist Party) and the *Unión Patriótica* (Patriotic Union), among others.

Manuel is part of *Proceso de Comunidades Negras*, PCN (Process of Black Communities) since 1992, and an active member of his community. He was the first president of the Yurumanguí River ethnic-territorial organization, Aponuri. He has lost several members of his family.

Antonia is an Afrodescendent woman from Chocó, but since December 22nd, 1999 she lives in Buenaventura. She is part of *Asociación Nacional de Afrodescendientes Desplazados*, AFRODES, (National Organization of Displaced Afro-descendent people).

Candelaria, Eloisa, and Micaela are part of *Madres por la Vida* (Mothers for Life). While Candelaria's father was forcibly disappeared, Eloisa lost her husband, and Micaela her son. All of them are living in Buenaventura, a place where different armed actors are present, making not only the rural areas but also the city a space of territorial dispute.

Organizations and Movements:

ACIN: Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca (Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca Province).

AFRODES: Asociación Nacional de Afrodescendientes Desplazados (National Organization of Displaced Afro-descendent people).

ASFADDES: Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos (Association of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared).

Familiares de la Cafeteria del Palacio de Justicia (Relatives of the Palace of Justice's Cafeteria Siege).

HeH: Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y contra la Impunidad (Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity).

Madres por la Vida (Mothers for Life).

MOVICE: Movimiento de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado (Movement of Victims of State Crime).

PCN: Proceso de Comunidades Negras (Process of Black Communities).

CHAPTER 2: BLOOD: THE FLUID OF LIFE AND DEATH

Section I. Walking backwards: Reflections on Colombian History

*De vez en cuando camino al revés:
es mi modo de recordar.
Si caminara sólo hacia adelante,
te podría contar cómo es el olvido.*

*Sometimes I walk backwards:
it is my way to remember.
If I only walked forward,
I could tell you how it is to forget
(Ak' Abal 1996)*

History(s) is the deployment of people's trajectories and endeavors, a set of processes that constitute the expression of power, interests, worldviews, emotions, needs, and coincidences. Histor(ies), (History as the action: H, and as a narrative: h), is the result of subjects' agency materialized in "events."³¹ As Marx (1978b) states, people make history, but not under conditions that they choose.

Understanding Colombia's past is central to identifying the main actors, events, and processes that have given life to the country's present, as well as to observe how they are interrelated and are the expression of different uses of power (for domination, resistance, and liberation) in its diverse forms (power as war, the colonality of power, patriarchal power, microphysical power, biopower, power within society, from below, power-caring-affect-life, power-I can). Thus, in recounting Colombia's history, I pay attention to power relationships and the structures of domination of which they are a part.

³¹ The approach to historical events requires reflecting about their place in a concrete structure and their role in the process of change (Topolsky 1979). Events need to be contextualized in time-space, in an ongoing process of change and concrete spatialities. Since history is the result of constant change, a relevant question is what kind of transformation is generated. Events condense the past and can facilitate its comprehension, and they also shape the way we conceive the future. Some events help to maintain the status quo while others enable liberation.

As Trouillot (1995) states, the narration of the past is a fruit of power. Documenting the past has become a field of struggle in which politics crossed by diverse interests, points of view, and the desire to impose certain “truths” battle to create multiple versions of the past. To write/tell history is in itself a political act (Popular Memory Group 1982). This has emerged as a major theme in Colombia since the demobilization of paramilitaries and under the application of the transnational framework of transitional justice.



Figure 2: “Dignity”
Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity, 2009

Between inequalities in the historical process and inequalities in the historical narrative, there is an interplay that preexists the historian (Trouillot 1995). Counteracting this H/historical power entails the inclusion of other logics distinct from the dominant ones. “To contribute to new knowledge and to add new significance, the narrator must both acknowledge and contradict

the power embedded in previous understandings” (Trouillot 1995: 56). As Benjamin (2007) points out, we cannot have the same concept of history that the fascists have.

The contentious character of history does not necessarily imply that all reconstructions of the past are equally valid. Although the distinction between what happened and what is said to have happened is not always clear (Trouillot 1995), it is essential to appeal to the “materiality” of the past since events matter. This does not mean that by themselves they make history. The narration of the past is the result of analysis, interpretations, explanations, and a critical approach to sources that should contain a processual perspective. There are accounts of the past that are more rigorous and truthful than others, closer to what really occurred.³²

In order to construct a comprehensive narration of the past in a non-dominant logic that addresses and goes beyond the “weaknesses” of memory and history,³³ it is peremptory to analyze how to produce the most rigorous and truthful accounts of the past-present and present-past. A first step in the construction of a collective/non-dominant history is “fidelity” with the materiality of what previously occurred.³⁴ Since any reconstruction of the past contributes to regimes of truth, “intentional objectivity” is essential in attempting to recount the past. This approach includes an analytical, explanatory, and critical attitude toward it. As I mentioned in

³² In his book *Silencing the Past*, Trouillot (1995) affirms that while positivism hides the “tropes of power behind a naïve epistemology... [constructivism]... denies the autonomy of the sociohistorical process” (6). The historical process has some autonomy vis-à-vis the narrative. Trouillot also states that there are “presences and absences embodied in sources” (48). These are neither neutral nor natural; they “occupy competing positions in the historical landscape,” positions that have meaning (50).

³³ The trilogy of memory, past, and history as well as its relationship with truth needs to be re-examined in Colombia now that a Truth Commission has been proposed for different actors as part of the process of transition to “post-conflict.”

³⁴ Though I consider that no one can be neutral, neither objectivity nor truth can be thrown away. I am particularly critical of discourses that conceive of some statements as “truths” without revising them and discussing the impacts they can have in daily life. To recognize that knowledge production is impacted by the positionality of the subject, that it entails power, and that truth is situated culturally, historically, and “politically,” does not have to imply the negation of truth. We should be aware of the consequences of relativism and constructivism in the materiality of life. Under these perspectives many crimes have been negated in Colombia and around the world, deepening polarizing and dichotomous readings of reality that do not acknowledge the complexity of our societies and contribute to the resolution of society’s problems.

the introduction, what victimized subjects and the entire Colombian society need, is to understand what occurred and why.

The narration of the past—history—is more than a discipline. A historical phenomenon that is purely and completely known and resolved into an object of knowledge is, for the person who has recognized it, dead (Nietzsche 1873). As Nietzsche states, history should inject life and promote action.³⁵ History belongs to the living person in three ways: “as an active and striving person; ... as a person who preserves and reveres; ... [and] as a suffering person in need of emancipation” (Nietzsche 1873). Specific methods correspond to each of these ways: the *monumental*, the *antiquarian*, and the *critical*.

Monumental history generalizes, universalizes, and the individuality of the past is lost. The past is idealized and only one of the multiple pasts in a concrete period has the right to continue in the present and in the future. This history is not able to produce a full truthfulness, harming the past. Antiquarian history emphasizes both custom and tradition, and venerates the past and whatever is old. New trends are conceived a threat, life is mummified and preserved, but not generated. Critical history, on the contrary, is for those whose heart is “oppressed by a present need and who wants to cast off his load at any price” (Nietzsche 1873).

More or less, these three methods correspond to certain key Colombian actors in the present. Monumental history is proposed by the State, guerrillas, and paramilitaries, each of them placing emphasis on different causes and consequences of violence, highlighting the responsibility of the other in the development of the war, and looking to deepen and spread their own conceptions about society. Antiquarian history is represented by the most conservative trends of Colombia society, who stress old manners and social arrangements, avoiding changes

³⁵ Nietzsche also contends that an excess of history harms the living person, taking us back to the discussion on forgetting as part of human life. For “the health of a single individual, a people, and a culture the unhistorical and the historical are equally essential” (Nietzsche 1873).

in the *status quo*, and supporting their ideas in the conceptions of Opus Dei. A good current example is the *Procurador* (Prosecutor General) Alejandro Ordóñez, who, in his reading of Colombia history, condemns guerrillas' acts without acknowledging State and paramilitary violence. Meanwhile, critical history is enacted by some victimized subjects, intellectuals, politicians, and citizens that are capable of comprehending the complexity of Colombia's history beyond the polarization society has been living for many decades, accentuated since the first term of ex-president Uribe (2002-2006).

Critical history requires historians capable of being “rebels” even with what they love and revere: their struggles, genealogies, groups of belonging, loved ones. All of us are “the products of earlier generations, [and] we are also the products of their aberrations, passions, mistakes, even crimes. It is impossible to loose oneself from this chain entirely” (Nietzsche 1873). Therefore, we have to recognize the faces of those that precede us and evaluate their actions. More than a condemnatory attitude, it is important to make an effort to grasp the circumstances of the past within its context as well as its consequences, and to formulate the questions suggested in the present. Any approach to the past is marked by a specific present. History is always produced in a concrete historical context, in the here-and-now (Benjamin 2007). The past should not be idealized and/or demonized; life by itself, Nietzsche (1873) says, condemns the past.

We need *history for life* (Nietzsche 1873), which makes possible multiple futures and could produce effective knowledge and truths, truths capable of affecting the arrangements of the present. Colombia requires truth not for the sake of truth, but for triggering critical comprehensions of the past that contribute to people's politicization. This is not a vanguard proposition, but rather a statement that recognizes that the power of domination is perpetuated in part by counterfeiting reality and promoting ignorance, that is to say, avoiding critical thinking.

History has to be appropriated critically by Colombians, and the accounts of the past should be pluralized.

To narrate “good” history requires an historian that is an architect of the future and a connoisseur of the present (Nietzsche 1873). This statement brings to the forefront the question of what kind of futures we are talking about. If this history is for those who want to emancipate, for those for whom the present is oppressive, and/or they have been injured by the past, the future is/will be far away from the past-present in which these individuals are situated. All Colombians should be historians with the capacity to evaluate the rigorousness of any past reconstruction.

In this first section, I explore Colombia’s past with the intention of contributing to a critical history for life and grasping victims’ stories and the movement’s dynamics. Although it is an enterprise that exceeds the scope of this dissertation, in the narration that follows, I aspire to contribute to a more complex reading of the country’s history, acknowledging that it will be partial and incomplete. This non-linear telling seeks to situate in a concrete time-space the subjects of this research. It is in this pair—time-space—that emotions, identity, subjectivity, and power can be comprehended since they emerge from experience, practice, action, and interactions, that is to say, from a specific location in time deployed in a concrete context.

I read Colombian history through five central historical processes that are deeply intermingled: colonialism, the formation of the Nation-state, the National Front, the Constitution of 1991, and the struggle for peace during the final years of the 20th century and the first fifteen years of the 21st century. Behind these processes there is an ideological matrix, a system of domination: modernity/coloniality. These five eras contain political, economic, cultural, and social foundations that are central to glimpsing the present. Moreover, as we will observe, four of

them have been worked as transitions that have enabled the continuity of the modern/colonial system.³⁶

This system includes different structures of domination such as colonialism, hetero-patriarchy, imperialism and capitalism. These structures entail specific relationships of power, namely racism, misogyny, the notion of the undeveloped, classism, and homophobia. The system and the structures of domination that make it possible work through the construction of the “Other” as something devaluated and opposed and that has to be controlled. Behind this conception rests a profound fear and desire that denies the necessary interconnection that exists between the “Other” and the “I,” a connection that has made each present possible. Since the Conquest of Abya Yala, these structures have not worked in isolation, but to the contrary, as many feminists have shown (Lugones 2008; Segato 2011; Paredes 2010), they are profoundly intermingled affecting the diversity of subjects in diverse ways.

The disruptive encounter between Europe and Abya Yala configured two central actors: the dominant (Europe, the I) and the subaltern sectors of society (Abya Yala, the Others). The dominant includes the political, economic, religious, cultural, and social elites. The subaltern comprises a number of diverse actors that are part of what I call historically subjugated subjects (women, indigenous people, and blacks) (Gómez Correal 2007), some of which decide to organize and struggle, acting for different emotions and rationalities, among them the profound

³⁶ Escobar (2013) asserts that “the discourses of transition ... are appearing today with particular relevance to the extent that it is possible to talk about a field of ‘transition studies’ as an academic and political emergent area” (34). From his perspective, this is part of an extensive change of epoch that at the same time expresses the depth of the contemporaneous crisis. These discourses are part of a variety of domains such as culture, ecology, religion, and spirituality, alternative science, political economy, political ontology, and the new digital and biological technologies. For Escobar, one of the main characteristics of these contemporary transition discourses is the fact that they propose radical cultural and institutional transformations: a transition toward a world significantly different from the existing (Escobar 2013: 35). However, in the case of Colombia and the discourses of transitional justice, this is not what is happening. Rather, we can observe that the discourses of political transitions tend to maintain the status quo. It is in this last sense, that I am using the concept of transition.

feeling of injustice. From them were born *los sujetos subalternos de la digna rabia* (the subaltern subjects of the dignified rage).³⁷

In the present there are sectors that situate themselves in the “middle space” but that historically are part of the subaltern sectors of society. The “middle space” has been a result of the developed of the modern/colonial system and its fictional and seductive side. As a product of domination, these middle sectors do not recognize themselves as “organic” to the history that made them possible; consequently they do not conceptualize themselves as subjugated subjects. Other hierarchical pairs that reproduce the I/Other dichotomy feed the initial modern/colonial configuration of actors: men/women, white/black, civilized/savage, left/right, liberal/conservative, young/adult, homosexual/heterosexual, among others.

Starting the chronological narrative of Colombia’s history with the European Conquest does not misrecognize the existence of a variety of pueblos in Abya Yala before the Europeans arrived. My intention in starting here is to recognize the transcendental changes that the Conquest meant for the people of the “entire world” and in subsequent years and centuries. I conceive *el hecho colonial* (the colonial event) as a turning point in humans’ histories that strives to suppress historical plurality, using Segato’s (2011) term.

I follow the K’iche Maya poet Humberto Ak’Abal’s proposal to approach to Colombia’s past. I consider of great importance, in the present conjuncture that promises a new future, to carefully observe the past in order to comprehend the complexity of what is going on. I am walking backwards from the present as a way to remember and enact a memory of social transformation (Gómez Correal 2012a).³⁸ In that path, I stop in key times-spaces, and in other

³⁷ The notion of *digna rabia* has been used by the Zapatista’s movement.

³⁸ Memory for transformation includes long-term memory, memory of struggles, and critical memory (Gómez Correal 2012a). This is a definition that emerges as part of collective discussions in *Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity*. I will discuss this proposal later.

moments I come back to revise more carefully conjunctures that I previously walked, pursuing a non-linear time. This non-linear methodology is my own pedagogy to understand Colombia's past and present, and to situate in a broader context what occurred to my father. His murder, *an affective event*, is a condensation of the past and a time-space full of many futures that are being deployed in the ever-present present. In this non-linear path, I also go back and forth from reality and experience to theory.

This first section is mainly illuminated by feminist, decolonial, and relational ontologies theories. I use primary and secondary sources, and among the latter, reconstructions of Colombia's past and theoretical stands. As primary sources I employ my own experience, the experiences of the victimized subjects I work with, as well as newspaper reports and other analytical documents written by activists, organizations, and relevant actors of Colombia's political life.³⁹ I pay attention to events and their deployments as *condensations of the past and future* of Colombia history, in an attempt to make sense of them and explain their origin and relation with broader processes of the country's past. Therefore, with a certain pedagogical approach, events can enable a complex comprehension of history.

This section is organized in three different chapters. The introduction: *Walking backwards: Reflections on Colombian History*, in addition to presenting the perspective from which the history of the country is approached, situates with an ethnographic vignette how "victims" rights are addressed in the current peace negotiation process between the FARC-EP and the government, and the differential trajectories of the victimized subjects initiatives. The second chapter: *My way to remember*, starts contextualizing the forced disappearance of *Jaime Gómez*, and then it moves backwards to narrate the history of the second half of the 20th century,

³⁹ I conducted archival newspaper research that includes news from February 2008 to April 2015, written in one of the two national newspapers, El Tiempo, as a way to observe, comprehend and follow the deployment of recent events in Colombia.

paying attention to the configuration of relevant political actors in explaining the outcomes of violence during that period, and including two of the five central processes through which I will narrate Colombia's history: the National Front and the Constitution of 1991. Here I contextualize the history of *Orlando, Ramiro and Fernando, and Jaime*.

The next chapter: *If I only walked forward ...* employs a long-term perspective—mainly a decolonial feminist one—to understand the structural violence of the present starting with the Conquest, and including the creation of the Nation-state and the period of *La Violencia*, framing the history of the *Indigenous and Afro-descendent* subjects of this research: *La Mache, Juan Tomás, Manuel, Antonia, Candelaria, Eloisa, and Micaela*. Then it concentrates on the fifth process of Colombian history (the struggles for peace), contextualizing the history of *Álvaro and Nicolás*, and concluding the section conversing with some of the more widespread understandings of Colombia's history. The exploration of Colombia history from a long-term perspective has allowed me to think about the formation of a specific *emotional habitus* that I describe in this first section and then discuss in later chapters.

I contribute to understand Colombia's past proposing a connection between the colonial experience, the formation of the Nation-state, the period of *La Violencia*, and the “internal armed conflict” (1948-2015), demonstrating that violence has been consubstantial to the modern western model of civilization implemented in Abya Yala and inherited by the Colombian elites and the type of State that has been produced. To this respect, for example, the report *Basta Ya* (Stop Now), produced by the *Grupo de Memoria Histórica*, GMH (Historical Memory Group),⁴⁰ locates the beginning of its investigation and the violence it looks to explain (the internal armed

⁴⁰ This group—a type of Truth Commission—was created in the midst of the process of paramilitary demobilization and was part of the Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación, CNRR (National Commission of Reparation and Reconciliation), organized by the State in 2005. This report is the result of 24 studies published since 2008. The GMH states that approximately 220,000 people were killed between 1958-2012 (GMH 2013: 31).

conflict) in 1958, the year in which the bipartisan violence transitioned to guerrillas' violence, without questioning the modern project (GMH 2013).⁴¹

I also explore the limitations of the notions of “internal armed conflict” and “State criminality,” highlighting the existence of State delinquency since its configuration, including the existence of structural violence—which includes cultural, political, economical, social, ontological, and epistemological violence over specific subjects—since the colonial period. I also signal the main beneficiaries of the violent clash we have lived. In relation to this, the GMH anchors its explanation of Colombia's reality in the notion of internal armed conflict without directly addressing and recognizing State violence. In the report, State personnel appear only as collaborators (2013: 20), a vision that at the same time reinforces a common theory that explains violence in the country by the inexistence or weakness of the Colombian State. This dissertation questions that argument.

The specific reading of Colombia's reality I present in this thesis is in conversation and at the same time challenges the hegemonic approaches of the State, the elites, and the armed actors. It also dialogues and wants to contribute to the conceptualizations that have been produced from academia, social movements, and victimized subjects. I am looking to go beyond monumental and antiquarian history, in addition to the history of the two evils, which is common in political

⁴¹ Last year, on August 5th, 2014, the FARC-EP and the government agreed to create a Comisión Histórica del Conflicto y sus Víctimas (Historical Commission on the Conflict and its Victims) in charge of preparing a report about the conflict's origin, its multiple causes, the main factors and conditions that have facilitated or contributed to its persistence, and the most significant effects and impacts on the population (Comisión Histórica del Conflicto y sus Víctimas 2015). The Commission was integrated by 12 experts and two rapporteurs selected by both parties. They presented the final report in February 2015. A first reading of the report makes evident that the understanding of Colombia history remains tied to the notion of the internal armed conflict and the existence of a weak State. The only expert who proposes thinking before the first decades of the 19th century was the feminist María Emma Wills. The Commission has been the object of critiques and controversies, including that one of the experts publicly said that one of the rapporteurs did not include his suggestions to the final report. Professor Jaime Arocha wrote an article in which he stated that Afro-descendent people were re-victimized by the Commission with the omission of their reality and how the internal armed conflict has affected them. From my perspective, this is the result of the absence of a long-term perspective that includes analysis of the experience of colonialism and its impacts until the present. For some relatives, the report is evidently the expression of two different readings of Colombian reality (Camila 2015): the hegemonic view and the most commonly held critical view.

transitions that include violent actions coming from the State and Leftist guerrillas and groups. This theory equates the actions of both actors without acknowledging the differences in the origin, nature, and obligations that the State and guerrillas have with the rest of society, allowing the re-legitimization of the nation-state and the modern western model of civilization without making profound critiques and the necessary transformations.

I recognize that the State is not a homogenous entity. It takes different forms depending on the context, governmental and State officials' interests, as well as the interaction it establishes with other actors. Notwithstanding, the Colombian state has certain particularities that are necessary to highlight. First, it is a particular materialization of the Western civilizational project in a colonial setting that conceives the State as the reign of the Sovereign, which is chosen by the people and entrusts the power not only to govern but also to *care* for them.

Second, it is a replica of the power of the *pater familias*, an expression of male dominance and a condensation of patriarchy. Third, it is an expression of race and class interest. In consequence, the State—a place of power—has been monopolized by the Colombia elites, and it mainly reflects, although not exclusively, their interests. The State is also a site of struggles (D. M. Nelson 2009); it has been a war and power booty disputed even by the Left and social movements. Nelson (2009) asserts that the State is two-faced, repressive and persuasive; with one face it adopts the most terrible forms of terror and repression, and with the other it becomes the desired State, the one that is described by the classical theory of liberalism and craved by its citizens. As Asad (2003) points out, the citizen presupposes a State that Enlightenment theorists called political society.

The modern State has the monopoly on the force of “caring” for the citizens, but at the same time it has also the means of securing its own power (Asad 2003), which it does through the “legal” and “illegal” use of that monopoly, exercising terror and spreading fear. The

mechanism of regulation, such as the law, never seeks to eliminate violence since its object is always to *regulate* it (Asad 2003). The secular State, in addition, defines the “truly human” (Asad 2003) determining who has the right to live and who cannot, and under which conditions. Like modern history shows, the State is a potential killing machine that not only attacks its citizens but also the citizens of other nations.

In the here and now (Ibagué and Villavicencio, Colombia, 2013 and 2014)

The rapporteurs are reading the minutes of the different discussion groups. We are in Ibagué, Tolima, in the *Mesas Regionales de Trabajo para contribuir al fin del conflicto* (Regional Roundtables meetings to contribute to ending the conflict) organized by the country’s bicameral congressional Peace Commissions that were held during May 2013 and July 2014. These Regional Roundtables meetings address the negotiation agenda item of victims.⁴² The Ibagué meeting brings together the victimized subjects of the central region of the country, including Bogotá. Two victims have to read the main conclusions of each of the groups that were formed.

For group No. 9, the spokespersons are a victim of guerrillas and a victim of State crime. After a few comments, it was clear that the victim of guerrillas, a young, educated middle class man, was trying to delegitimize the peace negotiation process. He is part of the group that—around the debate on victims that has taken place in the country—has been organized by *Uribismo*⁴³ and has attended the Regional Roundtables meetings with the objective to ruin the peace process and generate a feeling of discomfort in other victims. This young man, similar to

⁴² The agenda of the negotiation includes six items: a. Land and rural development. b. Political participation. c. The end of the conflict. d. Solution to drug trafficking. e. Victims. and f. Implementation, verification and countersignature.

⁴³ Uribismo refers to the group of people that support ex-president Uribe, elected in 2014 as a member of Congress.

other victims, is planning to run for the upcoming local elections in 2015 for mayor, the head of state, and city council membership.

That sector's objectives have not always been easily achieved. In these meetings, like in others, including those that took place in July and August of 2014, "victims" of State and paramilitary crime were more prepared for discussion, contributing proposals for the peace negotiation process as well as interpretations of Colombia's reality. In addition, some victims of guerrilla violence support the process and have concrete demands for the guerrillas groups. The young man, after the statements by other victimized subjects that put forth arguments and proposals—including victims of guerrillas, paramilitaries and the State—is forced to change his position against the peace negotiation process to focus more on proposals and make his arguments more compelling for the rest of the group in order to be elected as a spokesperson.

Both "victims" as elected rapporteurs have to work together and verify that the memories contain all of the participants' proposals and ideas. There is tension between the two, but it decreases in some moments. There are strict rules for reading the minutes. The victims are not allowed to say anything else besides what is in the document. Each of the parties has the same amount of time to speak. The minutes have to be divided in equal portions. The young man approached me and said: "please, read the name of my organization correctly. My supervisor is here, and he could get upset." I saw the supervisor, a senior older white man of rough appearance. He observed me carefully and aggressively. My group was called. The young man and I approached the podium. I started the intervention, then he took the floor, and finally I closed. But I could not avoid adding additional comments. In my mind thought: "we, 'victims,' are politicized."

One year after the meeting in Ibagué, the forums organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Colombia's National University under the petition of

both negotiation parties, the State and the FARC-EP, were held. In this case the forum for the central region took place in Villavicencio, Meta. Both states hosting these gatherings, Tolima and Meta, have a long-term history of violence, with strong presence of guerrillas and paramilitaries, respectively.

In these forums, victimized subjects were not allowed to participate in the elaboration and presentation of the discussion groups' minutes. Both organizing bodies continually insisted on their role as neutral actors that have the responsibility to guarantee equal participation of victims of State, paramilitary, and guerrilla action. This time I joined the first group, which was responsible for discussing the right to truth. The group dynamic, quite similar to the forums in 2013, started with an exposition of papers. Those persons that had their proposals written out were given five minutes to present them. Then any person that wanted to talk had three minutes. A great number of the papers that were first presented came from victims' organizations of State and paramilitary violence, while others' papers were presented by human rights organizations and oppositional political parties, as well as by delegates of the *Mesas de Víctimas* (Victims Roundtables). These *Mesas* have been organized at the local level as part of the Victims and Land Restitution Law, created during President Juan Manuel Santos' first term in office in 2011.

A senior man, who introduced himself as an independent shopkeeper, asked the moderators to give him the floor at the end of the first round of presentations. This man started his speech by talking positively about the FARC-EP, giving a history and explanation of the conflict in the region, something that was not the objective of the discussion at that moment but that he and other "victims" in the Forums constantly did. He then solicited an indictment of the FARC-EP for the crimes that they committed, especially the assassination of one guerrilla member in the Meta state. The independent merchant started to raise his voice and with a flushed face, the speaker went over his time to speak.

At the end of his intervention, he addressed Piedad Córdoba, asking her to give their message to the FARC-EP. While he was talking and addressing this well-known politician, someone outside the room was recording, which was forbidden during the time of the discussion groups. A *Marcha Patriótica*⁴⁴ member asked the independent merchandiser to clarify why he was asking Piedad Córdoba to deliver the message when she is not part of the guerrilla group. When one man from the region clarified that the *guerrillero* mentioned by the elder man was killed not by the guerillas but by the State military, the elder man apologized to Piedad and the rest of the group.

On the second day of the Forum it was even more evident that the victims of State and paramilitary violence were more prepared than the victims of guerrillas in this group. The moderators started reading the minutes of the previous day. After they finished, the independent merchandiser asserted that the minutes did not reflect the discussion of the previous day because the majority of the proposals had to do with State and paramilitary violence. One of the moderators replied that these minutes echoed the discussions of the previous day, as the majority of interventions addressed the violence inflicted by the State and paramilitaries. After the entirety of the minutes was presented, the elder man took the floor again and started applying the proposals that were used to denounce the State and paramilitaries on the previous day to condemn the FARC-EP. I spoke out, asking participants to respect the forum rules. I observed that a woman, maybe from a rural area, a town, or a small city, had been silenced by this discussion and I concluded that she was a victimized subject of the FARC-EP and therefore was not prepared to talk in a discussion of this type. From what I gathered, she did not belong to any

⁴⁴ *Marcha Patriótica* (Patriotic March) is a national Leftist movement founded in April 2012 that emerged as part of the commemoration of Colombia's independence that took place on July 20, 2010. One of its main political slogans is to achieve the second and definitive independence. *Marcha Patriótica* supports the current negotiation process with the FARC-EP. Some sectors of society, state officials and politicians maintain that this movement is directly associated with the FARC-EP. Many of its members have been assassinated (*Marcha Patriótica* 2015, see: http://www.marchapatriotica.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=featured&Itemid=435).

organization and was not against the peace process. This woman was a victim that had the opportunity to attend the Forum to present her demands and proposals. I thought that perhaps she had intended to talk publicly about her painful history, a history that many of us who attended these Forums, shared in certain ways. But her voice was silenced by the struggle between those that wanted to delegitimize the peace process and those that supported it.

These power dynamics were not the same in other discussion groups, or in the rest of the four 2014 Forums or the nine that were held in 2013. Many victimized subjects were struggling for recognition and visibility in this context. Although “victims” of State violence were more prepared in these forums, overall they have not had the visibility and recognition that “victims” of guerrillas have had in Colombia and even less recognition than “victims” of paramilitarism. For decades, the victims of State violence have been almost non-existent for the majority of Colombians.

How do we understand that victims are political actors and that some are more prepared than others for these kinds of public spaces and discussions? How do we comprehend that some victims are in favor of peace while some of them oppose it? How do we grasp that a “similar” suffering leads to a different set of trajectories and experiences, and to asymmetrical treatment, recognition, and visibility for Colombians? Behind these two events that condense the past, there is a long-term complex history regarding the politicization of “victims” in Colombia; systematic violence against the Left and social movements that overlap with violence against historical subjugated subjects; the formation of a bourgeois Nation-state; and the configuration of power arrangements between an array of social actors.

Section II. My way to remember...

Some years ago (Bogotá, Colombia, 2006)

My personal history was divided in two when my father, *Jaime Gómez*, was forcibly disappeared: a “before” and an “after” March 21st, 2006. At the time he was working with Piedad Córdoba, a well-known former senator part of the political opposition to Álvaro Uribe, the then president of the country, and an important intermediary for humanitarian actions with the FARC-EP. My *daddy* was one of her advisors in *Poder Ciudadano* (Citizen Power), a Left wing political project within the Liberal party.

The context of my *daddy*'s forced disappearance is part of a particular historical conjuncture highly significant for Colombia. For the first time in our contemporary history, a presidential reelection was allowed upon modification of the 1991 Constitution proposed by Uribe. Thus, during the months of March and May 2006, Uribe ran for a second presidential term. After many national and international denunciations and mobilizations, my father's remains were found on April 23, days before the second and final round of the presidential elections in a zone where we had previously looked for him.

At the moment of his reelection, Uribe's government had to face different accusations and scandals that were not insolated cases but rather the functioning of the State and politics in Colombia. These included the *DAS*, *Agro Ingreso Seguro*, *parapolítica*, and *Falsos Positivos* scandals. *The Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad Nacional*, DAS (The Administration's Department of National Security) was a federal intelligence office created in 1953. The DAS provided paramilitaries with information on trade unionists, social activists, and Leftist politicians who should be assassinated, and conducted illegal surveillance on judges, including members of the Supreme Court. The office was closed in 2011. This episode is an example of the State's *illegal use of the legal monopoly of force* as well as of the criminal politics that have been foundational to the Colombian state. The *Agro Ingreso Seguro* scandal erupted after it was revealed that Uribe's Minister of Agriculture, Andrés Felipe Arias, used government funds to

give economic subsidies to the wealthiest landowners that should have been used by peasants. This episode shows the use of the State for the economic benefit of the elites and, consequently, their responsibility in the country's economic inequalities. He is now a fugitive of Colombian justice, and is part of a group of four of Uribe's closest collaborators that have abandoned Colombia, among them the DAS's director, María del Pilar Hurtado.⁴⁵

On the other hand, the *parapolitics* scandal evinces the intimate relationship between politics and paramilitarism that seeks to maintain some elites in power at the national and local level. Since 2005, the year in which one of the paramilitary leaders stated that they, "the paramilitary groups[,] had more than the 35% of Congress that were their friends" (*Verdad Abierta* 2005), 200 Congressman and 470 State officials have been involved in this judicial process (*Verdad Abierta* 2012). Between 2002 and 2010, approximately 3,500 civilians ("false positives") were killed by the Armed Forces and presented as combatants with the objective of showing advances in the counter-insurgency war. The military personnel involved in these killings received benefits such as vacation time, monetary compensation, and rank promotions. The majority of the persons executed came from poor, rural, and marginal sectors of society, including people with drug abuse and mental disabilities. The *Falsos Positivos* scandal made evident an intrinsic logic of the pervasive violence in the country: the dehumanization of certain peoples, taking them out of the "universe of moral obligation" (Wynter 1994).

As I mentioned in the introduction, after the failure of the peace process between the FARC-EP and Pastrana's government in 2002, Uribe was elected (2002-2006). Uribe reinvigorated the terrorist discourse of September 11th, giving preeminence to the military solution rather than to dialogue and negotiation with the guerrillas. He exploited people's

⁴⁵ These also include Uribe's Peace Commissioner, Luis Carlos Restrepo, plus Luis Alfonso Hoyos, advisor of the presidential candidate supported by Uribe in the elections of 2014. Hoyos has been founded responsible for illegal interceptions of the State's current peace negotiators (El Tiempo 2015: <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-15120218>).

discontent with the failure of the prior peace negotiation process to gain office and deepen his political project.

Uribe presented himself as a warmongering, strong political character with an iron fist, capable of confronting the “terrorists;” this was in contrast to Pastrana’s perceived weakness, after he was stood up for a meeting by the FARC-EP’s delegate at the installation of the prior peace negotiation process. Uribe represents a regional leader, based on *caudillo* (*gamonales* and *cacicales*) relationships. His leadership included a messianic attitude supported by the Catholic tradition of the country, a temperament that Colombians need and have been taught to demand and respect. Colombia has been characterized by *gamonalismo* and patronage, two dynamics that have influenced and infused political and social arrangements at the local, regional, and national level, and that have led to the consolidation of a paternalistic and coerced citizenship.

Uribe himself is a “victim” of the Colombian “internal armed conflict.” His father was murdered by the guerrillas. His political decisions are mediated by his personal story, as well as by the emotions and feelings that he has experienced due to the loss of his father, and by those emotions and feelings that he has given more preeminence. His political trajectory and choices are marked also by his economic and social history/position, and by an ethic and moral of the political and the collective.

At the end of 2002, Uribe started a “peace process” with the paramilitaries, the goal of which was to “demobilize” the paramilitaries with the hidden agenda to legalize and re-organize them, in addition to rearranging the political, military, social, and economic power relationships that sustain them. Many victimized subjects, human rights defenders, intellectuals and Leftist activists and politicians denounced the impunity to which this process could lead. Among them, ex-Senator Piedad Córdoba presented an alternative proposal to the Peace and Justice Law—the

legal instrument aiming to demobilize the paramilitaries—which my *daddy* helped to formulate. In the midst of this discussion, **MOVICE** emerged in June 2005.

The paramilitary demobilization process was marked by many irregularities that can be better appreciated with the passage of time. As victimized subjects of paramilitarism and State violence repeatedly highlighted, victims' rights to truth, justice, and reparation were not fulfilled. The Colombian state also failed to guarantee the right to no repetition (*el derecho a la no repetición*) since many paramilitaries continued to commit crimes. Some of them were reorganized in *Bandas Criminales*, BACRIM (Criminal Gangs), among them the *Águilas Negras* (Black Eagles), *Rastrojos*, and *Ejército Anti-Restitución* (Anti-Land Restitution Army). These paramilitary structures are responsible for many victims' murders, especially of those victims that have been active in claiming the materialization of their rights such as land restitution. The demobilization process was not transparent. Uribe's Peace Commissioner, Luis Carlos Sarmiento—who is now convicted—made false demobilizations.

The demobilization of the paramilitaries was merely a façade to consolidate and nationally expand the power of right-wings groups, especially those associated with Uribe. This right wing is constituted by political and economic elites, and is intimately related to the State. Consequently, different State institutions and officials have been involved in this power project. Uribe's objective has not been easily reached. Even though the then President had control over many institutions and decisions, there is a critical mass in the country that did not allow him to do everything that he wanted; power, even among the elites, has been constantly in play. As in an illiberal democracy (Zakaria 1997), some of the democratic mechanisms worked to avoid certain fascist and dictatorial actions, permitting to a certain degree the maintenance of the rule of law. Given the weight of events, even the hegemonic media—a cornerstone of this illiberal

democracy—has to report the scandals that accompany Uribe’s terms, including the false demobilizations and the *Yidis política*.

As previously mentioned, these scandals, understood from a critical and long-term perspective, are a condensation of Colombian history that helps to illuminate the interrelation between politics, economy, violence, and the nation-state.

My immediate origins (Colombia, second half of the 20th century)

“Jaime Gómez was born in 1950. He was the first son of Ana Elvia and Luis Enrique, and later the eldest brother of four girls and three boys. Ana Elvia, his mother, remembers that one day, when he was just a child, he returned home crying because he saw a woman with her children asking for food and money in the street. That situation broke his heart. Jaime grew up in a working class neighborhood in Colombia named after president John F. Kennedy, as part of the U.S. *Alianza para el Progreso* (Alliance for Progress) program for Latin America. This neighborhood, as well as others located in the southern part of Bogotá, was a social space in which Leftist ideas circulated during the 1970s, touching the lives of young people.

Jaime did not have the chance to go to university because he had to economically contribute to his family; thus, he started to work during his adolescence. He worked with one of his relatives fixing musical instruments. Jaime loved music and at the end of his life was taking piano lessons. At the age of 19, Jaime joined the *Empresa de Teléfonos de Bogotá* (Bogotá Telephone Company)—a city public utility company—and almost immediately its trade union. He was the union’s president in different periods and was on many occasions in charge of the negotiations with the company, collaborating with workers from other public companies to defend the state character of these services. He participated in the creation of one of the most important trade union federations in Colombia: the *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores*, CUT (Unitary Workers Union). Jaime worked in the *Empresa de Teléfonos* for 20 years, after which he earned his pension and registered at the Javeriana University to study history and later a master in Political Science.

During his life, Jaime was part of different expressions of the Left, and as many Leftist activists, was a self-taught person. He was a professor and researcher, an aide of Liberal politicians such as Antonio Galán and Piedad Córdoba. He was popularly elected to the City Council of Bogotá, where he served in 1995. Jaime was recognized by many sectors of the Left and in social movements as a person committed to social justice that, among other things, was not sectarian, having the opportunity to dialogue with different expressions of the Leftist political spectrum. He loved salsa, like many of his generation, and he really enjoyed bolero, classic and popular music, as well as rock and a myriad of other musical expressions. If now I love theater and cinema, among other things, it is because he introduced them to me. Jaime is also the father of Juan Sebastian, my only sibling. I remember vividly my father’s expressive laugh, the activities we did as a family, and our intense conversations. He is known for phrases like: *Correcto! Al ánimo!*

Hay que pelear! (You are correct! You can do it! We have to fight!)” (Huitaca 2015).

From the 1950s to the 1970s the Leftist political field of the country was re-configured. A New Left took form amidst of the political exclusion that the National Front (1958–1974) intended for social and political actors not part of the two traditional Liberal or Conservative parties. Between 1958 and 1965 different expressions of the New Left emerged, including “armed adventures,” that were consolidated in the period of 1965 and 1970 (Archila 2003).⁴⁶

The elites of the two traditional parties hold political, but also economic, social, and cultural hegemony. The National Front was a “strict alternation in power of the traditional parties - four years of Liberal government followed by four of the Conservative for a period of 16 years, distribution of public offices down to the millimeter, plus the explicit prohibition of the Left to compete electorally” (Wills 2007: 104); this also aimed to overcome the armed bipartisan confrontation that had reached extreme levels during the period of *La Violencia*. To a large extent, it determined the development of political alternatives in the country. Although Colombia has not experienced a dictatorship similar to those that took place in the Southern Cone and Central America in the course of the 20th century, the regime was closed to the parties and sectors of society that opposed the hegemonic trends of bipartisanship, while maintaining certain democratic characteristics.

Specifically, the National Front emerged as a manner to re-establish and preserve

⁴⁶ In Colombia, the Left was constituted as a legal and extra-legal oppositional political force against bipartisanship. Although I use the singular, the Left is plural and it is central in the composition of certain social movements in the country, including armed and unarmed civilian initiatives. A central characteristic of the Left is its demand of economic equality. As Archila N. et al. (2009) point out, after the Cuban Revolution, the New Left in Latin America has been associated with the armed struggle, in contrast to a traditional Left linked with the Communist and Socialist parties. The New Left emerged as part of critiques to the Western Social Democrat and Communist parties. The end of the Second World War granted the Left an important prestige due to the role of the USSR, European Communist and Social Democrat parties. The USSR had world leadership within the Communist Left between 1948-1956, but the events of 1956 (the XX Congress of the PCUS and the USSR invasion of Hungary) changed this situation and opened the way for the New Left. After the Berlin Wall fell, the notion of the New Left was again employed. In Latin America in the 21st century, the notion of a giro a la izquierda (turn to the Left) is used to refer to the Leftist and populist experiences of different countries in the region.

democracy in the country when the then President General Rojas Pinilla (1953-1957)—the only official dictatorship of the country—announced his desire to stay in power for another term. The General was pressured to step down from the Presidency on May 10th, 1957, by powerful actors including the Church, the Liberal and Conservative parties, and entrepreneurs (Archila 2003).

The National Front was a closed political regime that coincided with an ideological expansion (Leal in Wills 2007: 324) of the Left and other sectors of society. In this period some alternatives within the two traditional parties emerged such as the *Movimiento Liberal Revolucionario*, MRL (Revolutionary Liberal Movement) and the *Alianza Nacional para el Progreso*, ANAPO (Popular National Alliance); as well as processes of popular unity such as the *Frente Unido* (United Front) and the *Movimiento Democrático Nacional*, MDN (National Democratic Movement).

The creation of different Leftist guerrillas—formed between the 1960s and the 1970s— took place during this closure of the political system. In May 1964, during a military operation against one of the peasant self-defense zones, Marquetalia, in the State of Tolima, communist guerrillas regrouped, giving origin two years later to the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, *Ejército del Pueblo*, FARC-EP, (Revolutionary Army Forces of Colombia, People's Army). In January 1965, the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, ELN (National Liberation Army), was established in Simacota in the state of Santander. During the same time, Maoist dissidents in the northeast of the country created the *Ejército de Liberación Popular*, EPL (Liberation Popular Army), which became public in December 1967. In April 19th, 1970, the M-19 guerrilla group was created following an electoral fraud and, in 1984, the Quintín Lame guerrilla, an indigenous armed movement, was founded.

The Leftist guerrillas emerged after the demobilization of liberal and communist guerrillas organized during the period of *La Violencia* (1948-1957), an epoch characterized by a

violent confrontation between the Liberal and Conservative parties that affected the entire population. The guerrillas of the 1960s benefited from the experience of the irregular war that developed during *La Violencia*. The social bases of the insurgency formed during that period, as well as the elaboration of political messages that combined Marxism and populist proposals attractive for certain sectors of the countryside (Ortíz 2006). Although the onset of the guerrillas makes sense within the particular development of Colombia's history, as Medina (2011) discusses, the formation of Leftist guerrillas was not an inescapable phenomenon, as their metanarrative tends to claim. It was the result of people's will, an option chosen under conditions they did not choose. At the heart of the "internal armed conflict" is the political, economic, and social exclusion of great segments of Colombian society enacted through constant violence.

The expansion of Colombia's guerrillas and Left were also reflective of international dynamics. Across the world, the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were years of an active mobilization of critical sectors of society against different structures of domination—imperialism, colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity—and the power relationships they entail. Thus, pacific protests against the U.S. war in Vietnam, May of 1968, the African decolonization, and Latin American revolutions and the emergence of guerrilla groups, challenged the power arrangements of that time, especially Cold War geopolitics. It is precisely in the periphery of the "modern world-system" (Wallerstein 2004) where to some extent the destiny of the Left around the world was decided—especially the Marxist and communist Left (Archila and Cote 2009)—and also where the consequences of the Cold War were intensely lived (Kwon 2008).

For Latin America, the Cold War implied a stronger U.S. influence and a turn to the right in the post-world war era. In Colombia, the beginning of the Cold War signified the insulation of the communist Left and the defeat of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's populism through his assassination on April 9th 1948. This assassination produced a massive backlash known as the *Bogotazo* and

the intensification of violence in the entire country. At the end of the 1940s, the Communist Party proclaimed the necessity to assemble peasant self-defense organizations against official violence (Vieira in Archila and Cote 2009: 64).⁴⁷

In the context of the region, the overthrow of Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán in Guatemala in 1954, financed by the United States, along with the resistance to the dictatorship of Fulgencio Bautista in Cuba influenced the action of the Left now more inclined to armed means. The Cuban Revolution in 1959 became the revolutionary model for an important portion of the Latin-American New Left (Archila and Cote 2009: 65), together with the Chinese-Soviet rupture at the beginning of the 1960s that changed the configuration of the Left around the world.⁴⁸

The struggles of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s were accompanied by cultural transformations, among them the hippy and pacifist trend, the sexual revolution and feminist demands, more focused on the body, sexuality and the private sphere, counteracting the dominant *biopolitics* and *tempopolitics*. Overall, these struggles changed the everydayness of restless youth, artists, intellectuals, and political women and men re-thinking the world and their closest environments (Gómez Correal 2011a). In Latin America, regional thought was developed in conversation with Western Marxism such as Dependency Theory and new methodologies and pedagogies, among them popular education and participatory research (Harnecker in Archila and Cote 2009: 69).

Even though the formal dismantling of the National Front was in 1974, it continued to operate informally until a new political pact, the Constitution of 1991, was ratified. At the same time that the National Front appeased partisan hatreds, located the military under civil control,

⁴⁷ The official persecution of the PCC was ratified during the government of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla when the party became illegal. It remained illegal until 1958 and the PCC ordered their militants to participate in the first elections within the National Front and support the Liberal candidate Alberto Lleras Camargo (1958-1962), the first president of the bipartisan agreement. Until that moment, the Communist Party held the hegemony within the Left.

⁴⁸ The Chinese Communist Party ordered the pro-Soviet communist parties to divide into “Leninist-Marxist” groups that then received the name of Maoists. In Colombia at the end of the 1960s, strong critique to the traditional Left was developed, discussions that in the case of my daddy took place at home, since my grandfather was a militant of the Communist Party and my father was a young militant of the Left.

kept economic development more or less constant, and advanced the modernization of Colombia, economic and regional inequalities were deepened, the military gained autonomy, and the State expanded its bureaucratic structure (Archila 2003).

The National Front, a strategy of the two traditional parties to consolidate their hegemony now as a more unified political, social, cultural, and economic elite, contributed to the consolidation of a stronger and more complex manifestation of violence than the one it looked to cease (Gómez Correal 2011a).⁴⁹ The hegemony of this new actor did not result in the monopoly of force by the State, since a significant array of guerrillas emerged, among other armed actors.

It was precisely during the National Front, under the liberal Carlos Lleras Restrepo's government (1966-1970), that the State established Law 48 of 1968 that regulated the creation of armed groups under the control of the Armed Forces, the embryos of paramilitarism (Wills 2007: 159). Since then, the Colombian national defense policy authorized the creation of self-defense structures following the guidelines of the United States for the contention of the "enemy" (Leal in Romero 2006: 359). This law aimed to counteract the emergence of communist guerrillas as part of Cold War ideology.

The National Front worked towards a second transition in Colombia's history, that looked to consolidate the nation-state and guarantee the control of the State not only by one of the traditional parties, but by both of them. Similar to other moments during the development and consolidation of the bipartisan hegemony, a closed regime and repression—although making it more difficult and dangerous to struggle—seemed to motivate more processes of collective social action. That does not mean that these processes are long-term, successful, or liberatory.

In this clash of interests and worldviews, violence takes place not mainly as part of a bipartisan confrontation for control of the State, but as a response to a class struggle that attempts

⁴⁹ The National Front aimed to overcome the armed bipartisan confrontation that had reached extreme levels during the period of La Violencia.

to locate at the center of the political confrontation the physical elimination of the enemy, the “Other.” Cold War ideology characterizes the second half of the 20th century in Colombia. The idea of the “communist threat” as well as the factual existence of different guerrillas groups highly influenced State and military approaches to social protest. If the National Front signified the exclusion of the political “Others” through the rule of law, since the end of the 1970s the strategy that gains force to confront power of resistance and liberation was *an illegal use of the legal monopoly of the force* by State officials, mainly the Armed Forces against social protests and political alternatives.

The consolidation of generational, class, gender and rural struggles

My mother, father, and I participated in one of the main milestone actions of the legal Left during the second half of the 20th century. While my father and mother fulfilled their duties as trade unionists, I was in my mother’s *belly*. Some months before *love* and *blood* merged generating another social bond, another member of the collective:

On September 14th, 1977, “I arrived to my job at 7 a.m. The main door was already militarized. Our participation in the civil strike was framed by a popular dissatisfaction with the economic and labor policies of Alfonso López Michelsen. The trade union confederations agreed in a general strike. Our task consisted of arriving to our work places, the *Empresa de Teléfonos de Bogotá* (Bogotá Telephone Company) and *Telecom* (National Telephone Company) to motivate our fellow workers to leave. In order to guarantee the long-distance telephone service, Telecom made some workers sleep in the building the night before. When I arrived, a policeman asked me for my ID and did not allow me to enter the work place. When they were ready to take me, the telecommunication operators [all of them women] noticed and came down and threw a planter pot at the policemen from the mezzanine. Since my co-workers protested and I was pregnant, the police released me. I went to El Quiroga [a working class neighborhood] where people were protesting. *Jaime* was detained as soon as he arrived to the *Empresa de Teléfonos*, and was detained in a police station for two days. Workers protested the illegal detention of trade unionists ... the civil strike continued for three days in Bogotá ... López was forced to release the leaders that were detained due to people’s pressure ... Students and neighborhood leaders played a relevant role in the strike. People’s spontaneity had a place in the protest. They organized barricades in the neighborhoods and looted big supermarkets also ... Your father gained prestige among the workers” (Correal 2014).

The 1970s saw great social mobilizations in Colombia. As Villareal states, the 1970s marked the beginning of a period of social agitation in which the “deferred demands and forgotten subjects began to be present in different scenarios” (Villareal 1994: 148). The struggles of these years are noteworthy for their radicalism and resonancy. In the first months of 1971, the conservative President Misael Pastrana (1970-1974) had to face a significant number of mobilizations that “constituted the biggest challenge of the subaltern sectors to the bipartisan regimen” (Archila 2003: 105).

At the end of the National Front and throughout the 1970s, student, labor, civic, and peasant mobilizations increased. The student movement was one of the prominent actors of the 1960s and 1970s. Schools and universities were places of socialization where rebellious thought circulated, contributing to women’s and men’s politicization. They not only protested for better educational conditions, but also for a different conception of education and for a more just and equitable society. These ideas were stimulated by different Leftist tendencies and Liberation Theology.

Years before, in 1968, Golconda—a group of priests influenced by Liberation Theology⁵⁰—was created. While a few of them later joined the armed struggle, others were close to Leftist processes. This same year, the *Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos*, ANUC (National Peasant Users Association), one of the main branches of the peasant movement, was formed with the intention of addressing the country’s agrarian situation (Kalmanovitz 1995; Archila 2003; Múnera Ruiz 1998).

From the 1970s forward, feminist ideas started to circulate in Colombia, accompanied by consciousness-raising groups and the creation of different organizations in diverse cities of

⁵⁰ This emerged from priests and nuns’ growing concern for social conditions as part of the ecclesiastical renewal promoted by the Second Vatican Council and the Latin American Episcopal Conference of 1968 (Archila 2003: 104). A central figure was the priest Camilo Torres, founder of the Sociology Department of the National University in Colombia and leader of the United Front that later became guerrilla.

Colombia. Feminists were an active and disruptive actor for a Catholic and conservative society, including the Left. At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, public demonstrations in favour of abortion were organized. Also, demands for a pleasurable sexuality, orgasms, and new power arrangements between men and women circulated within Leftist organizations (Gómez Correal 2011a). Feminists were also part of other social movements and Leftist political organizations. Similar to other social movements such as those of peasants and students, the feminist was embedded with Leftist and modern ideas.

Between 1971 and 1979, diverse subaltern sectors articulated efforts. The first half of the decade was a moment of rethinking and organizational proliferation that included the fragmentation of the Maoist wing (Archila 2003) and the emergence of socialist tendencies (García 2008). In 1974, the *Unión Nacional de Oposición*, UNO, (National Unity of Opposition), comprised of the *Partido Comunista Colombiano*, PCC (Colombian Communist Party), a political sector of the *Alianza Nacional Popular*, ANAPO (Popular National Alliance) and the *Movimiento Obrero, Independiente y Revolucionario*, MOIR (Independent and Revolutionary Workers' Movement), was created in the electoral conjuncture. After the dismantling of the National Front, the civilian Left decided to run for presidential elections in 1974 and 1978.⁵¹

The first administration not elected through the explicit arrangement of the National Front was led by the Liberal Alfonso López Michelsen (1974-1978),⁵² a former leader of the Liberal Revolutionary Movement (MRL), which generated hope in different sectors of society. In 1975, a significant number of collective actions took place that forced the government to permanently implement a state of emergency. 1977 was an especially important year for the

⁵¹ Between 1975 and 1981, other processes of confluence took place, among them the *Unidad Obrera y Socialista*, Uníos (Worker and Socialist Unity), which emerged in 1978 in the midst of presidential elections (Archila 2003). The candidate of this Leftist expression was Socorro Ramírez, a well-known feminist and trade unionist.

⁵² Although parity in the legislative branch disappeared, it remains in the executive branch through Article 120 of the Constitution, which requires equilibrium in cabinet and public appointments (*cargos públicos*).

labor movement. The trade union federations called for a national strike. Almost the entirety of the Left, as well as the *ospino-pastranismo*—a conservative tendency—joined it. The main cities and some of the populations in between (*poblaciones intermedias*) were paralyzed.

As I previously announced, at that moment the military already had great autonomy in managing public order. Under López Michelson, the Verbal War Councils (*consejos verbales de guerra*) were employed to judge civilians involved in protests and raids. Other suppressions of individual freedom occurred. After the 1977 strike, the military high command asked for increased autonomy to “punish with an iron fist those actions that, under their judgment, were offences against the State,” a petition that was granted at the beginning of Turbay’s term (1978-1982) (Archila 2003: 112).

Throughout the National Front, the military was conceived as apolitical, seeking to avoid the previous bipartisan loyalties and any military intervention after the government of Rojas Pinilla. Notwithstanding that declaration, from the 1950s, the military adopted a counter-insurgency policy rooted in Cold War ideology (Borrero Mansilla 2006) that constructed the idea of the internal enemy, the latter imagined as an ally of the international adversary. Precisely, in 1978, social protests declined because of, among other things, the issuance of the National Security Statute by the conservative Turbay government (1978-1982), a vernacular version of the National Security Doctrine. This Doctrine—elaborated for the Brazilian Military Forces following the conceptions of the United States’ National Security Act, enacted in 1947—considered the entire nation to be at risk, an ideology that helped to break military officers’ isolation from the political realm.⁵³

⁵³ Since 1907, Colombia has had compulsory military service, but the majority of men that have joined the military have come from the poorest sectors of society. Although between the 1970s and 1990s the State tried to democratize this process with the figure of “soldados bachilleres” (soldiers with a high school diploma), they did not go to combat. Behind compulsory military service is the rationale that Colombia is involved in total war and the entire population should be part of national defense since the threat calls into question the existence of the Nation itself. As

The State started to carry out forced disappearances in López Michelsen's term. Omaira Montoya, the first Leftist activist subjected to this practice, was forcibly disappeared days before the civil strike of 1977. Omaira was part of a young generation that decided to join the guerrilla and did civilian work with the "masses." She was objected to illegal retention and dehumanized treatment. By the end of that decade, the greater autonomy of the Armed Forces was accompanied by an increase in human rights violations against Leftist militants, including guerrillas and supporters. This reality led to the creation, in 1980, after the First Human Rights Forum was organized in 1979, of the *Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos*, CPDH (The Permanent Committee for the Defense of Human Rights), whose role was to monitor the human rights situation in Colombia.

This period was characterized by human rights violations and the restriction of individual freedom enforced by the Armed Forces who, supported by the government, focused on persecuting Leftist activists and popular leaders. Torture was used widely and other human rights violations were inflicted. Throughout this presidential period military mayors were appointed in "territories of conflict."

In the words of General Fernando Landazábal, the internal enemy was "anyone ... a peasant that inhabits a guerrilla zone, a worker in strike, a political activist ... anyone ... in a given moment ... It is an error to exclusively combat the armed element ... without having put great care and energy into understanding the organization of the intellectual leadership within revolutionary organizations" (Gómez Velásquez 2007: 60).

Borrero Mansilla (2006) declares, in "the totalization of the war, you move to the point of thinking that everything is permitted" (127). It is possible to observe some of the main characteristics of the National Security Doctrine in Colombia since the 1920s, when the conservative government of that time conceptualized social conflict as "the internal concretion of an exterior revolutionary threat" (Cited by Blair Trujillo in Gómez 2007: 57). Since the 1960s, the general conception of this Doctrine is prevalent in Armed Forces' institutional documents (Cited by Leal in Gómez 2007: 56).

Under this context of political polarization between Left and Right, both guerrilla groups and self-defense groups grew. In January 1979 the M-19 guerrilla movement stole weapons from the Cantón Norte—a military base—in Bogotá. In addition, in February 1980, they seized the Dominican Republic Embassy with the objective of putting pressure on the negotiation of a political amnesty. Turbay started peace dialogues due to pressure from the guerrillas, reports of human rights violations, and Colombia's isolation in the international arena. The governmental proposal of amnesty was rejected, and the only item that was achieved was the lifting of the State of Emergency on June 12th 1982.

The Self-Defense Law was enacted in Turbay's term. The Commander of the Army, Luis Carlos Camacho Leyva, then Minister of Defense, asked the population to assume their own defense in the face of possible abuses of agitators and rebels (Gallón in Romero 2006: 360) after the assassination of the ex-minister of government Rafael Pardo Buelvas by *Autodefensa Obrera*, ADO (Workers' Self-Defense).⁵⁴ The civil population that followed this call was a group of drug-traffickers that in 1982 organized themselves into *Muerte a Secuestradores*, MAS (Death to Kidnappers), an expression of paramilitarism also funded by landowners and cattle ranchers.

By the beginning of that decade the State's proposal of taking justice into one's own hands was circulated in society. An official report of the time showed that the MAS became a model to fight crime and face the different manifestations of social and political conflict, mentioning that fifty nine members of the Armed Forces were directly or indirectly involved in

⁵⁴ This was a small guerrilla organized in 1974 and comprised of middle-class and some working-class people, which with this assassination aimed to pay tribute to the people that were killed during the 1977 strike. From their perspective, those deaths were the responsibility of the then Minister Rafael Pardo Buelvas. This crime was censored by the legal Left (Celis 2008).

its functioning.⁵⁵ The MAS was supported by polarized sectors of the State that were concerned about “*order, institutionalism and democracy*” (Romero 2006: 361).

The “dirty war” in the lost decade

“Orlando loves to paint. He used to go to one of his professors’ art studios to do some of his assignments. Orlando was born in Bogotá in a big family, and is the brother of Camila. Both of them grew up in a popular neighborhood in Bogotá and joined, in different moments of their lives, ASFADDES. Orlando was a student leader that at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s was demanding, together with other students, better conditions for public schools in Bogotá. He was studying at the National School Andrés Bello, in which he organized, when he was in 7th grade, a group to demand the appointment of the necessary professors to teach all the classes. He, as many others, was observed as a “problem” by and for the society (Camila 2013).

Orlando was part of the national student movement. He reflected, like many of his generation, a rebellious character that was punished by schools and the State. In 1981, Orlando was studying in the Bravo Páez School, where he led a petition for better infrastructure and education quality. With other students, he organized a meeting in the school’s courtyard that then walked to the *Secretaria de Educación* (Secretary of Education) to demand the relocation of the school to a place where they did not have the risk of being injured by a wall that was in bad conditions. At that time high schools were one of the privileged places where Leftist thought—including the ideas of guerrillas—circulated; consequently, they were a monitored locations. Thus, the Bravo Páez School was catalogued as a subversive focal point (Camila 2013), along with its students. The M-19 guerrilla was at a peak as well as other groups at that moment. Orlando first had contact with the ELN and then, close to the moment that he was forcibly disappeared, with the M-19.

Orlando joined the search for the students that were disappeared in 1982, whose history is known as the Colectivo 82 (the Collective 82). Some of the people that were forcibly disappeared were studying in the Bravo Páez and were Orlando’s classmates. When they started to accompany the family to look for the students alive, “they did not suspected that it was a chain after chain of persecution towards the students, and that they were silently leading them to the security forces of the State” (Camila 2013). After that, Orlando was captured at the age of 19 years in 1983 when he left home to buy some bed sheets. Days later, his body was found in Medicina Legal (Forensic Sciences and Legal Medicine Institute), with signs of torture. State officials were involved in his murder. When Orlando was forcibly disappeared he was 19 years old. Orlando is a talented painter that, through lines, circles, figures, faces, and landscapes, expresses his passion for building a more equitable society. He enjoys not only being a painter but being a leader as well; he was “totally committed to the struggle” (Camila 2013).

⁵⁵ Italics are mine. The Military Criminal Justice carried out the investigations. By 1986, none of the twenty-four officially accused of crimes were convicted.

Sergio was also part of the student movement in Colombia but in Medellín, the capital of Antioquia province. He was born in a small family and at the end of elementary school, Sergio told his mother, Juana, that he wanted to join a religious high school. There he was an altar boy and had the intentions for a couple years to be part of the priesthood, until he became a member of a Marxist-Leninist youth movement, and part of the *Partido Comunista Colombiano, Marxista Leninista* (PC-ML) (the Communist Party, Marxist-Leninist) that was created in 1963. Sergio helped to organize a meeting of the PC-ML with young people in Caldas province in 1984. His religious faith and leftist militancy is characteristic of part of the Left and social movements in Colombia, to some extent the product of Liberation Theology and the history of the Priest Camilo Torres, which were widespread by that time not only in secondary schools but also in universities.

The *Ejército Popular de Liberación Nacional* (EPL) (The Popular Army of National Liberation), the armed wing of the PC-ML, a Maoist guerrilla group, was constituted in 1967. During President Betancur's term, the EPL joined the cease-fire in order to carry out peace dialogues with the State. In this context, at the age of 26 and finishing an undergraduate in sociology at Antioquia University, Sergio was forcibly disappeared. The 3rd of October, 1984, without having planned it, he had to travel to a village close to Medellín to help one of the guerrillas that was injured due to an attack of the Armed Forces on an EPL camp in a moment in which the armed confrontation was against presidential orders. After assisting his comrades, Sergio was the object of an ambush; the Armed Forces illegally retained him, tortured and finally disappeared his body. Sergio was one of many that joined Leftist initiatives closely related with the guerrillas, and that in that moment believed in the possibility of ending the armed struggle through dialogue. In reality, that was not possible at that moment, among other things, due to the Armed Forces' emphasis on military victory, a conception that included the dehumanization of the enemy" (Huitaca 2015).

The 1980s faced a staggering violence that included other armed actors and the intensification of State violence closely tied to paramilitary groups. Some intellectuals in Colombia have named that degradation of violence the "dirty war," a period that followed the first failures of peace processes in the country. For the Latin American context this has been recognized as the Lost Decade due the Debt Crisis the region experienced.

From 1981 to 1985, important sectors of Colombian society and the left focused on peace dialogues between the conservative President Belisario Betancur (1982-1986) and the guerrillas. This was also a moment of organizational reunification for the left. The period of 1985-1990 was characterized by the "return of war" and the polarization around the Constituent Assembly.

According to Archila (2003), there was an increase in social protest between 1980 and 1987, with a spike in 1985.

Since 1984, political fronts of the armed structures have been organized such as *A Luchar* (1984), the Popular Front as part of the *Partido Comunista-Marxista Leninista, PC-ML* (Marxist Leninist Communist Party) and the *Union Patriótica, UP* (Patriotic Union) (1985) (Archila 2003: 295).⁵⁶ The members of these organizations, as well as those previously constituted that had political relations with the guerrillas such as the PC-ML, became some of the main military targets of right-wing groups, which resort to State terrorism and paramilitary violence.

In the first years of the 1980s, students were one of the main military targets of that violence. Students were perceived as a threat, not only by the military, but also by teachers and high school directors. Some professors represented the conservative expression of Colombian society that rejected change and aspired to maintain the current social, political, economic, cultural, and gender arrangements intact, the entire *patrix* of modernity/coloniality, while others spread Leftist ideas.

In 1981, university students' struggles were animated in part by human rights violations committed by the State. 1982 started with student protests, and with the first demonstrations against violence organized by women during the commemoration of November 25th, the Day of Non-Violence Against Women. In some cities "silent rallies" were organized with the participation of other sectors of society (Archila 2003: 155).

In 1982, twelve students from the National and District (Bogotá's city university) Universities were forcibly disappeared. As I mentioned, their story is known as *Colectivo 82* (Collective 82) and remains in impunity, although a military official was involved. In the wake

⁵⁶ These organizations would continue to emerge in subsequent years in Colombia. During the 21st century the Movimiento Bolivariano para la Nueva Colombia (MBNC) and the Partido Comunista Colombiano Clandestino (PCCC), linked with the FARC-EP, were established.

of all these forced disappearances, *ASFADDES* was created in 1983. This same year, *Orlando*, a high school student, close to the M-19 guerrilla movement and the ELN, was disappeared too. Orlando was part of the group that denounced the story of Colectivo 82 and participated in the creation of *ASFADDES*.

He and other students accompanied the relatives of the *Colectivo 82* in the “Calvary”⁵⁷ that the search for a forcibly disappeared loved one implied, looking for them in the amphitheater and other places, and creating the first *retablos* (the relative’s picture) and slogans (Camila 2013). With other students and relatives, Orlando also organized the first rally of the Claveles Blancos (White Carnations), the 4th of February, 1983, with the intention of denouncing what happened (Camila 2013). That day they screamed: *Qué nos los devuelvan vivos porque vivos se los llevaron!* (We want them back alive, because they were alive when they took them from us!), one of the main slogans that are said when someone is forcibly disappeared.

Some of the relatives of the twelve people that were forcibly disappeared, as well as others that started to join *ASFADDES*, did not have the awareness that their loved ones were part of Leftist organizations and that the State was involved in these occurrences. As Camila (2015) exclaimed: “they trusted the State.” Precisely the students and other human right defenders, among them Orlando, helped the relatives to understand what was going on. They were almost the only people in the country that were conscious of that problematic, among other things, thanks to their knowledge about the situation in the Southern Cone. The creation of *ASFADDES* was also supported by the Jesuit Priest Javier Giraldo (*ASFADDES* 2013) and the work of well-known lawyers, human right defenders, and organizations such as Eduardo Umaña Mendoza, the Colectivo José Alvear Restrepo, the CPDH (Permanent Committee for Human Rights Defense) and CINEP (Research and Popular Education Center).

⁵⁷ In the Christian Gospels, Calvary is the place where Jesus was crucified and connotes a walk of suffering.

During the first years of its formation, ASFADDES' main actions consisted in searching for the forcibly disappeared people, formulating national and international *denuncias* (public denunciations), making visible to society what was taking place, and having meetings with diverse State offices, including the Presidency. Soon, ASFADDES initiated a weekly ritual, doing a rally every Thursday at 12 p.m. as a continuation of the White Carnation Rally, which started in front of the Presidential House and walked approximately ten streets across the 7th Avenue and returning by 8th Street to the Presidential House again. Relatives, classmates, and comrades of the forcibly disappeared people walked with posters with the pictures and names of their loved ones, adding the place where the *affective event* took place: "Fernando Ospina. Detenido Desaparecido (Retained and Disappeared). Bogotá." In one of the pictures in the book that re-counts the experience of ASFADDES from 1983 to 2003, the people on the frontline are children, some of them in their school uniforms. The rallies had to be suspended in 1984 due to official pressure and harassment (ASFADDES 2013).

ASFADDES worked closely with some expressions of social movements and the Left, among other things because some of the forcibly disappeared people were part of this political spectrum. In 1983, the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* (Mothers of May Square) visited Colombia and met with member of ASFADDES, after which the organization became part of the *Federación Latinoamericana de Familiares Detenidos-Desaparecidos*, FEDEFAM (Latin American Federation of Detained-Disappeared People), founded in 1981 as part of a collective effort of relatives of forcibly disappeared people from diverse countries of the region (ASFADDES 2013). These connections with Latin America were fundamental to comprehend the problematic, strengthen international relations, and participate in activities outside Colombia. It is precisely the experience of other countries of Latin America that partially influenced the way that human rights discourse developed in Colombia.

During the Calvary and the Pilgrimage – expressions that the relatives I work with use to describe the journey that they have had to face after their loved ones were forcibly disappeared – they had to experience a dismissive treatment by State officials and the indifference of Colombian society. Their work took place in a tense environment that included security problems, and that helped to develop a culture of stigmatization and, to some degree, underground cultures.

“No, it was like that! ... Everything was intercepted. In that era, everything we did ... was in code ... If we said ‘hey, what's up, where will we meet?’ ‘No, well, there in the market square. You bring the tomatoes or me?’ ‘No, I will bring the onions.’ ... That meant that we would see each other in Bolívar Square and that we would show the pictures of relatives” (Camila 2013).

In that context, on October 3rd, 1984, Sergio, a student and member of the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party, was forcibly disappeared in the village of Jardín, Antioquia province.⁵⁸ His mother, Juana, and his brothers and sister started their own “Calvary.” The first of them to join ASFADDES was Mauricio, who later had to go into exile, and then due to this situation, also Juana. She has joined some organizations and has collaborated with many others, but as she exclaimed, she prefers to maintain independence in her search for Sergio and in demanding their rights as a family.

President Betancur had a different approach to social conflict than the two prior administrations. He was the first to recognize the “internal armed conflict,” the existence of structural causes that gave birth to and maintained the armed conflict, and the urgency of a national dialogue. Therefore, in order to legitimize the regime, he proposed three fundamental issues: peace, a political reform known as *apertura democrática* (democratic opening), and

⁵⁸ According to the Comité de Derechos Humanos de Antioquia (The Human Rights Committee of Antioquia), Sergio became the 329th forced disappeared person in the country. A report of the Comité Permanente de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos documented that during the first year of Belisario Betancur’s term 181 people were killed by the MAS, 146 for other similar groups and 187 by the security service of the State. The Procuraduría’s (Prosecutor General's Office)_report showed that 150 people were forcibly disappeared, with significant participation of the security forces of the State (Ramírez and Restrepo in Romero 2006: 362).

reversing Colombia's isolation from the Latin American and world arena; he employed the discourse of the third-world (Archila 2003: 119).

Since both the guerrillas and the State combined dialogue and violence, and pursued the strengthening military capacity, peace was not achieved. This peace process, similar to others, had to face the opposition of the "extreme right" to any negotiation with guerrillas. The Armed Forces and business associations were key opponents to the peace negotiation process, making evident their power.⁵⁹ The President created a Peace Commission with participation of the Left that proposed a wide and unconditional amnesty to the guerrillas. In 1984 the FARC-EP, the M-19, EPL and ADO signed truce agreements with the government. On November 20, after *Sergio* was forcibly disappeared, Oscar William Calvo, the spokesperson of the EPL, was killed in Bogotá, sending a negative message about the peace process. At the end of 1985, the truce was completely broken. The EPL and the M-19 returned to war, while the FARC-EP maintained the truce for two more years.⁶⁰

On November 5, 1985 the M-19 took the Justice Palace. The violent action of the M-19 to pressure progress in the peace process was confronted with more violence. The retaking of the Justice Palace by the military forces revealed their power and autonomy even over the President. Thirteen people, including a magistrate, employees of the Justice Palace's cafeteria and members of the guerrilla, were forcibly disappeared by the Armed Forces. That day *Ramiro* never returned home. Ramiro was working in the Cafeteria of the Justice Palace, was the father of four daughters, and was married to Betty. Both of them were very young, without any political

⁵⁹ Gómez (2007) states that both of them opposed the peace talks, even using the kidnapping of a well-known politician, Gloria Lara, and subsequently framing different innocent sectors of the Left, to discredit the peace process.

⁶⁰ During these years new guerrilla organizations such as the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria, MIR-Patria Libre (Revolutionary Leftist Movement-Free the Nation) (1983) and the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores, PRT (Workers' Revolutionary Party) (1982) were created.

affiliation. Before working in the Cafeteria and after finishing high school Ramiro did his mandatory military service.

He told Betty days before the siege, that there was evidence about a possible military attack on the Palace of Justice. Later it has become clear that the Armed Forces knew about the attack, and that they deliberately let the guerrilla enter the building with the intention of killing them, thus putting at risk the lives of many civilians using weapons of war such as tanks. As one of the Colombian Armed Forces commanders of the operation declared during the trial that was held 23 years later against him: “if an Army wants to be victorious, it needs to employ more powerful weapons than the ones the other Army has” (Plazas Vegas in Gisbon and Salazar 2011). This same serviceman appeared on the radio during the armed confrontation saying that he and his people were “maintaining democracy.”

“Here, they will not scare us or strike a blow against any of the powers ... of any of the branches of public power. At this moment, this is an attack on the judicial branch and this has to be clear: the Army is capable of maintaining and ensuring the functioning of all branches of public power because this is a democracy and we’re here to ensure it’s respected” (Plazas Vegas in Gisbon and Salazar 2011).

Although the military agreed to stop the armed confrontation in conversation with the President, the then Minister of Defense expressed that after leaving the Presidential House he heard “the most intense shots [I] had heard since the siege had begun” (Parejo in Gisbon and Salazar 2011). There is evidence that some people were taken from the Palace of Justice to the Casa del Florero (Vase House)—a type of Museum that narrates the Independence from the Spaniards—with the intention of being interrogated by the Armed Forces and that some of them were later moved to military garrisons where they were tortured and killed following the military operation Rastrojo (Operation Brush Field), whose objective was to kill any surviving guerrilla.

The order, as established in the juridical trials, was to disappear them. The people of the Cafeteria that were retained were assumed by the Armed Forces to be collaborators and/or

members of the guerrilla, and in consequence, under their logic, they should be disappeared. The Armed Forces, after some spectacular actions by the M-19, saw this episode as the opportunity to take revenge for their daring actions. Plazas Vega said to his troops at the end of the military action: “You have done a great job. You are the bravest” (Plazas Vegas in Gisbon and Salazar 2011).

During the armed confrontation around one hundred people were murdered, others were injured (Colectivo José Alvear Restrepo in ASFADDES 2013: 47), and thirteen disappeared. Betty, Ramiro’s wife, as well as other relatives of the disappeared that were in the Cafeteria of the Palace of Justice started working together, giving origin to the *Relatives of the Justice Palace’s Cafeteria*, more than an organization an example of a *society in movement*, that is to say the expression of some citizens that mobilize against something that they perceive as unjust. They are not formally an organization. As one of the relatives of the Cafeteria says: “we started gathering because where one went, all went. We had the same grief, the same suffering. We became a big family” (Gisbon and Salazar 2011).

Similar to the relatives that were part of ASFADDES, the Relatives of the Cafeteria received support from human rights organizations in Colombia and from ASFADDES itself. A rally was organized one year after this *affective event* took place, which has been followed year after year by a commemoration in Bolivar Square and a mass, where the Justice Palace is located. From that moment new posters with new phrases and faces joined the scene of *denuncias* (denunciations) in Colombia: “Dónde están los desaparecidos del Palacio de Justicia?” (Where are the forcibly disappeared people of the Justice Palace?). This group of relatives created their own particular demand: S.I.N O.L.V.I.D.O (Without Forgetting), a slogan that has accompanied the struggles of relatives and human rights organizations across the country.

The Relatives of the Cafeteria has the particularity that none of those forcibly disappeared people were part of the guerrillas, social movements, or other expressions of the Left, which has created distance between some of them and the relatives of Leftist militants and their organizations. In this particular case, for example, there is an explicit effort by some of the Relatives of the Cafeteria to not include in their activities the history of Irma Franco, a guerrilla that was tortured, raped, and disappeared in the same event.

ASFADDES, the Relatives of the Cafeteria, lawyers, human rights organizations, and FEDEFAM organized a Latin-American Colloquium for a Convention against enforced disappearance in 1986 in Bogotá. In this meeting, the relatives promoted the first draft of the Convention, which ten years later was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. In 1988, ASFADDES, the Relatives of the Cafeteria, and FEDEFAM traveled to denounce the situation of impunity in the cases of enforced disappearance at the United Nations' Human Rights Commission.



Figure 3: Without Forgetting: 27 years of impunity in the Justice of Palace Holocaust

[Source: <http://elturbion.com/?p=6035>]

After the episode of the Justice Palace, the women's movement in Bogotá took to the streets on the 25th of November denouncing State and guerilla violence under the slogan: "Las

mujeres alumbramos la vida y exorcisamos la muerte” (Women light up life and exorcise death).

That day the document “For life” was read:

“And today, before our country overshadowed with violence, injustice, intolerance, hunger, and settling differences through death, we are willing to not only grow, but to overflow, to become rivers and seas of hope, ... a universe of open alternatives ... With fervent willingness ... we gather ourselves against the violence, against those that never admit or recognize that they make mistakes, those that are inflexible, and those that do not change ... We gather to be re-born each dawn, nourishing ourselves with shooting stars in order to struggle for the word, for bread, for love, truth, and joy ... We gather all of our angst, all of our hope, all of our rebelliousness, to root ourselves like the night sky and the sun, like the stars and constelations, like breath and air, like mountains, like an imperishable strength, our deep footprint as women, children and men that are being re-born, reconstructing, and creating our personal history, our history: the history of humanity (in Colectivo de Mujeres de Bogotá 1988).

Peace was completely lost. Violence, rather than dialogue won, and a new wave of violence, “the dirty war,” took place. In this context of pervasive violence, the *Unión Patriótica*, *UP*—created as a legal political organization in the midst of the peace process with the FARC-EP—was decimated, the object of a “political genocide.” Behind its extermination lied an extreme right wing ideology that employs paramilitary and State action, including military doctrines such as el *Baile Rojo* (Red Dance): operational directives to assassinate UP members. The almost total elimination of the UP sent a clear message: any civilian that has an ideological affiliation with the Left and the guerrillas is a possible military target.

This situation generated a “*desbandada*” (disbanding) of the UP. Some were exiled. Others joined the guerrillas, such as Ricardo Palmera, alias Simón Trinidad, later extradited to United States for drug trafficking in 2004. Some went into hiding. Others such as Iván Marquéz, who was previously demobilized and democratically elected to the Congress, returned to the armed struggle (Elvira Bonilla 2014). Currently, Marquéz is one of the FARC-EP negotiators in Havana, Cuba.

In addition to peace, President Betancur proposed a political reform that faced opponents such as the business associations and the political elites. Only the popular election of mayors and

some decentralization policies were approved. Betancur's political reform was deepened during the presidential term of the liberal Virgilio Barco (1986-1990). This political opening allowed more space for decisions in relation to local resources. The process of decentralization increased the political and economic value of the local and regional, which enhanced the control of the armed groups (Ortíz 2006: 328). Since the constitution of the nation-state it has been clear for Colombian elites that the control of the local remains integral to the consolidation of hegemony and power. Therefore, the local became the main space of power disputes among the State, guerrillas and paramilitaries, as well as the place for power of resistance and liberation.

Barco proposed a constitutional reform as well as a different strategy toward guerrilla groups. While the constitutional reform did not work, the second proposal resulted in the sign of peace agreements between some of the guerrillas—the M-19, EPL, Armed Movement Quintín Lame and the Workers Revolutionary Party—and the Colombian State. In 1989 the M-19 guerrilla movement left the *Coordinadora Guerrillera Simón Bolívar*⁶¹ and started peace dialogues with the government. At the end of Barco's term the M-19 reintegration to civilian life was signed, and the foundations for negotiations with the EPL, the PRT and the Quintín Lame were laid.

During Barco's term, regional mobilizations were stronger than national ones. 1987 was one of the years with the most social mobilizations. The CUT coordinated trade union activities as well as mobilizations for labor rights and the respect for life. After the failure of the peace processes “war returned to replace politics” (Sánchez in Archila 2003: 122), which meant a

⁶¹ In 1987 Colombia's guerrillas—with the exception of the FARC-EP—unified into a Guerrilla Coordinating Board (Coordinadora Guerrillera). The FARC-EP later joined it during President Barco's term (1986-1990), adding Simón Bolívar's name to it (Archila 2003).

return to the exercise of violence against social leaders, intellectuals, human right defenders and leftists politicians. Once again violence escalated in Colombia.⁶²

In October 1987, the Patriotic Union candidate Jaime Pardo Leal, who got 5% of the votes in the presidential elections of 1986 – a historical record for the Left - was killed. Many reactions, such as the one I witnessed in my neighborhood and described in the Preface, occurred in the country. After participating in the first major elections many leaders of the UP were killed (Wills 2007: 159).⁶³ The opening of the democratic system to other non-hegemonic political forces actually corresponded with the use, extension, and degradation of violence. The micro – the local and the body – has been the privileged territory of dispute over power and violence. Once again, as happened with Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948 - who awoke the sympathy of the most unprivileged sectors of society – any candidate and political option that is perceived as a threat by the hegemonic sectors of Colombian society became a military target.

The dimensions of the “dirty war” forced President Barco to think about a referendum in the regional elections of 1988, an option banished by an Anti-Terrorist Statute and the result of a bipartisan agreement. In 1988, many other murders took place.⁶⁴ The CUT, before the presidential elections of March 1990, tried to pressure for a referendum to reform the Constitution and stop the violence. Inasmuch as the referendum was never held, the CUT called for a general strike around a “minimum petition for life” (“*pliego mínimo por la vida*”), and that also was unsuccessful.

⁶² Antioquia University became a military target. Some professors and students were killed, such as the well-known human rights defender Héctor Abad Gómez and the student leader Francisco Gaviria. His daughters joined Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity in 2006.

⁶³ The majority of them were killed in zones with a historical presence of the FARC-EP and in electoral periods (Trujillo in Archila and Cote 2009: 79).

⁶⁴ Manuel Gustavo Chacón, a leader of the USO was killed in January, which provoked a strike in Barrancabermeja. In addition to being a trade unionist and a civic leader, he was a poet and singer-song writer. His murder by paramilitaries, similar to other stories, remains in impunity. His sons joined Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity in 2006.

1988 was terrorized by paramilitary action (Wills 2007). Many massacres happened that year. The town of Vista Hermosa, Meta, was targeted in February because of the presence of UP supporters. In April, residents of Mejor Esquina in the state of Córdoba were gunned down due to the presence of the EPL guerrilla. In the same month banana workers were found dead as a warning to the same guerrilla group. In Granada state of Meta, in June, 17 people were killed. Similar to other places, this zone was observed as a UP bastion. In November, in the town of Segovia, state of Antioquia, “in the vicinity of a military brigade, a paramilitary group entered the urban zone (...) and killed, as retaliation against the election of a Leftist mayor, 43 citizens that day who were calmly walking around the village streets and Central Square” (Wills 2007: 210). At the end of the 1980s the MAS was a death machine specially located in the regions in which the FARC-EP were strong.

By the end of the 1980s political violence was increasingly impacting social actors’ agendas. Peasants and indigenous people denounced the different ways they were objected to political persecution by legal and illegal armed forces. In 1989 the mobilization in favor of peace and against violence increased.⁶⁵

Although President Barco attempted to disband paramilitary groups, it was too late. At that time they had the support of sectors of the political elite and the State, including the Armed Forces, as well as drug-traffickers and landowners. The political doctrine of attack on drug trafficking was not clearly formulated,⁶⁶ which allowed the perpetuation of terrorist actions and the conceptualization of the MAS as a force in service to drug trafficking, but not as a political

⁶⁵ In Colombia the murder rate increased from 3.2 of 10.000 habitants in 1960 to 8.6 in 1990 (Archila 2003).

⁶⁶ In 1984 Pablo Escobar killed the Minister of Justice, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, which unleashed a war against the “Colombian political oligarchy” (Camacho Guizado 2006: 396). The main objective was to avoid extradition. After this assassination president Betancur activated the extradition of drug traffickers, who created the organization “Los Extraditables.” Violence perpetuated by these actors was exacerbated during the latter half of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s.

actor by the State. Many actions of the MAS were part of an attempt to disable the peace negotiation process with the guerrillas (Romero 2006: 365).

In August 1989 the leader of New Liberalism, Luis Carlos Galán - the presidential candidate with the highest likelihood of being elected in the 1990 presidential election - was killed by an alliance between drug-traffickers, paramilitaries, and State agents. President Barco declared an open war against drug trafficking that resulted in the loss of many lives. These were the days when it was common to hear bombs in cities, including Bogotá.

After Luis Carlos Galán, another two presidential candidates were killed. On March 22, 1990, Bernardo Jaramillo, member of the UP and successor of Jaime Pardo Leal, was shot and killed. In April 26, Carlos Pizarro - member of the Democratic Alliance Movement (*Movimiento Alianza Democrática*) that emerged as part of the peace agreements signed between the M-19 guerrilla and the State in 1990- was gunned down in an airplane. That year Colombia had three different elections and a political reform. Thus, violence and democracy have gone hand in hand for many years in the country.

In the course of the 1980s military personnel were involved in assassinations, forced disappearances, massacres and the genocide of the UP, including Mayor Alvarez Henao, General Gil Bermudez and General Faruk Yanine. Alvarez Henao was central to the development and propagation of the ideology of self-defense, training some of the main paramilitary chiefs such as Fidel and Carlos Castaño, who then constituted the *Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba and Urabá*, ACCU (Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá). This training, organized by active members of the Army Forces and Rodrigo Gacha, a well-known drug trafficker, was imparted by British and Israeli instructors and included techniques of urban terrorism. The Israeli instructor, a former member of the Armed Forces, gave ideological foundation to paramilitarism in Colombia. Under his conception, States should be defended within the laws of the constitution

but also outside the law. To be a mercenary of the State should be a motive of pride and satisfaction (Aranguren in Romero 2006: 364).

The events at the end of the 1980s represent a further heightening of violence not only in the countryside or intermediate cities but also in Bogotá and for the elites, which lead to the call for a National Constituent Assembly with the objective of establishing a new political pact. This pact within the rule of Law, similar to others, did not entirely dismiss the use of violence. The day that the country voted for the establishment of the Assembly, the headquarters of the FARC-EP, Casa Verde, was attacked while the guerrillas were contemplating the possibility of participating in the Assembly process.⁶⁷

The construction of a new political pact

“When the Constituent Assembly took place, I was around 12. In a neighborhood close to my home there were polling stations and people were around giving information about the different candidates. I also remember a picture of my father with political propaganda in his hands and behind him a flag of the M-19. It was not the first time that I joined these national days of citizenship. I used to accompany my mother to promote certain candidates and I have within my memories one day that she voted and one of her fingers was painted as a sign that she exercised her right. Behind the day of the Constituent Assembly elections were painful memories, including the siege of the Palace of Justice. When it happened, I was 7, and what I most retain is that my grandfather – a conservative person - got upset with my mother, even though she had nothing to do with the M-19 or any other guerrilla group. It was the result of two different points of view about what was taking place only 20 blocks from our house, and the stigmatization of any Leftist voice in the country. To avoid my grandfather’s bad mood we went to my mother’s aunt’s apartment and continued watching the news. After the Palace of Justice event many other reports surprised me and I imagined that they made me feel, besides sad, also scared. My generation grew up in the midst of the “dirty war;” we played in the street at the same time that we heard and watched stories about murders, massacres, and bomb attacks. We matured into adults in a polarized society full of fear, stigmatization, and violence. At the same time, we witnessed the possibility of a negotiated solution to the armed confrontation with the guerrillas, and the formulation of a new political pact. I cannot recall what my feelings were when the peace accords were signed, but for sure I can tell you that I got sad various times during the 1990s when different professors, human rights defenders, and public figures were killed. I also started to undergo indignation” (Huitaca 2015).

⁶⁷ The Assembly, result of the desires of important portions of society, was not approved by majority vote. Less than a third of registered citizen voters participated in this process.

The delegates to the Constituent Assembly were designated under the new president, the Liberal César Gaviria (1990-1994). The majority of the participants were part of the traditional parties, but the Alliance of the M-19 and the National Salvation Movement (*Salvación Nacional*) played an important role. Among the constituents were indigenous and evangelical representatives. Even though no woman was elected to represent women's demands, some of the elected women contributed to putting forth their demands and proposals.

Notwithstanding that the 1991 Constitution was the product of different social actors,⁶⁸ of movements of society and society in movement, it was captured by the elites to face the bipartisanship crisis,⁶⁹ legitimize the Colombian nation-state, and get into step with global norms. This served as another transition in Colombia's history. Colombia's Constitution was part of the new global order after the fall of the Berlin Wall, which included the ideology declaring the "end of history" (Fukuyama 1992), proclaiming neoliberalism as the only possible model for the future. This ideology included the recognition of differences within the rubric of multiculturalism.

Indigenous people and Afro-descendants were recognized as a fundamental part of the Nation, as well as their ways of government, jurisdiction and territorial rights. The inclusion of these historically neglected subjects' rights - including women - opened the door for them to demand the fulfillment of those guarantees by the State. This recognition was not a concession. To the contrary, it was the result of long-term struggles that intersected with a concrete window of opportunity that served both historically neglected subjects and Colombian elites.

⁶⁸ According to Carranza (2001) the Constitution is product of the consensus of heterogeneous groups of society such as ex presidents, paramilitaries, drug trafficking lawyers, ex ministers, sociologists, economists, politicians, indigenous people, trade unionists, and reinserted guerrillas (5).

⁶⁹ For Gutiérrez Sanín (2006) the Constitution of 1991 was the outcome of a political crisis. The Constitution created more modern and institutionalize political practices counteracting the cacique-gamonal logic. Although there was the attempt to change the traditional power structures, it did not work. For that reason, despite the crisis that bipartisanship experienced in the period between 1970 and 1998, and since 2002, the two dominant parties still exist.

The Colombian Constitution is almost a perfect piece of law. The modern principles of democracy are set out, but that does not necessarily mean that they are concretized and/or practiced. Significant reforms included: statements that participative democracy and political pluralism are fundamental parts of the country's democracy; the *Tutela* – a new democratic mechanism conceived as a means to protect Colombians' rights, whereby citizens can make demands to and denouncements of the State – was created; a civilian began to lead the Ministry of Defense; and transformations in the juridical branch limited the reach of the military. Moreover, The Concordat – the agreement between the Church and the State that gives the Church the power to determine the educational curriculum of public schools and the right to regulate marriage-related issues and civil legislation – was banned. Like in other moments of Colombia's history, enlightened modern principles are observed as the solution for moving beyond the *impasse* of violence. Law is observed as a way to modernize and civilize Colombian State and politics.

Law on paper is just rhetoric if it is not put in practice, a rhetoric that benefits those in power. The main power dynamics and the logic of the war were untouched in this transition, limiting the possibility of making a truly new political pact. Although more formal procedures were established to manage disputes within Colombia's democracy, for “minorities” and the Left, it has been difficult to become a third force in the country because of, among other reasons, the permanent symbolic and physical violence that has been exercised against them, social movements and alternative options, as well as the structural political exclusions of great sectors of society.

After the new Constitution, the country moved in the same decade from democratic hope to hopelessness. In the course of César Gaviria's term neoliberalism was applied impacting the configuration of the State and society. The State restructured and privatized national offices, and

some “rights,” such as health, education and labor, were commodified. The country implemented flexible working conditions and joined the globalized economy with consequences such as unstable labor conditions and the impoverishment of disadvantaged sectors of society, such as small businesses, ethnic groups,⁷⁰ peasants, and state officials (Restrepo 1994: 143).

This political transition could not leave behind the stage of society it was supposed to transform because it was a process that did not include all of the armed actors. It was not rooted in the people and the local level, and it did not have the intention of challenging the economic interests of national and international elites. Thus, political violence continued to be part of Colombia’s daily life. In 1992 armed confrontations were exacerbated (Restrepo 1993: 9). In October the ongoing peace talks with the FARC-EP were suspended, and Pablo Escobar, one of the main drug traffickers during the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, involved in several murders and bombing attacks, escaped from jail.

The executive branch declared a state of emergency (*estado de excepción*), an “integral war” (*guerra integral*) and a “permanent offensive” (*ofensiva permanente*) against the guerrilla and drug trafficking. State actions included increasing war expenditures within the national budget, strengthening the Armed Forces, and acquisition of military equipment, without visible results. To the contrary, during these years drug trafficking expanded, guerrillas consolidated their national presence, and State violence escalated.

After the 1991 Constitution a war began between drug traffickers – the Pepes and Pablo Escobar – impacting civil society, especially in the state of Antioquia. In the words of one of the main paramilitary chiefs of the 1990s, Carlos Castaño, the Pepes became a para-governmental group with the support of different state offices. Private justice was welcomed as a necessary way to defend particular interests, an idea masked under the notion that violence and direct

⁷⁰ As part of the group of subjugated subjects, Indigenous and Afro-descendent people have been object of violence due to national and international interest in their territories, which is part of a long-term process of land grabbing.

actions (*vías de hecho*) were necessary to defend institutions and the *Patria* ("Fatherland") (Romero 2006: 367). In 1994, the ACCU was created, followed by an internal process of organization with the aim of giving more of a political and military profile to paramilitarism.

Under this militarization of society, social conflicts – in part the result of the state's new economic policies - were addressed as terrorism through the judicial system. The government responded to social and political activists by strengthening judicial and repressive state apparatuses. Two well-recognized public figures - Eduardo Arias and Karl Troller - described the logic behind this historical moment in a parody of one of the country's main news magazines, *Semana*. They retrospectively wrote "from the year 2018":

“It was an era of irredemable dreamers that desired to change the world. The era of utopia of the free market, fiscal discipline, tradable and non-tradable goods ... of turnaround, of free trade agreements, of the political Constitution of 1991 that was so poetically, joyfully, and unabashedly called the "Navigation Chart for the 21st Century," of extreme and fundamentalist privatization so that the commons would remain in the hands of two or three, the era of the last elected subject and the great monopolies that ... took by assault all that there was, and marked an era of crazy poets and dreamers in which, in name of the spirit of the individuals, left behind electricity for an entire country ... It was a glorious period of man liberated from the yoke of ideologies, by the creative power of private initiative ... Everyone did what they wished. Pablo Escobar, a symbol *par excellence* of that unrepeatable time's contradictions ... was enemy and friend of everyone at the same time. Like any damn poet, he entered and left the high security prisons that he himself designed and constructed ... All those that lived through the monetary liberalization, the monopolization of piecework, that **Far West** of festive and clientalist politicking, that juridical Sarajevo in which unionists were condemned to 30 years of jail while the most feared - the prophets of the religions of narcoterrorism - only received six months even before the reductions and releases, all of them remember that era with a nostalgic tear because, unfortunately, it did not succeed” (Arias and Troller 1994: 56-57).

The next president, the liberal Ernesto Samper (1994-1998), had to face an arduous polemic around the infiltration of drug money in his political campaign that is known as the Scandal 8000,⁷¹ which opened a national discussion regarding the influence of drug trafficking in

⁷¹ In 1995, the scandal erupted and made evident massive financing from the Cali cartel (Reyes 1996: 55). The Procurador (Prosecutor General) Orlando Vásquez Velásquez and the Contralor (Public Controller) David Turbay were prosecuted as well as other politicians such as Fernando Botero and Santiago Medina. Botero was one of

Colombian politics.⁷² The 8000 Scandal revealed other national problems: the deterioration of the traditional parties, public and private corruption, political violence and organized crime, as well as the state's material and moral precariousness, previously existing issues that became more visible and the subject of public discussion.

This episode in Colombia's history was marked by the United States' pressure. In public discourse, Colombia shifted its concern of communism to drugs after the "end" of the Cold War. Drugs have been used in the last decades as a device for North American intervention in Colombia. The country was decertified for aid in 1996 and 1997 for drug-related issues.⁷³ Since the end of Gaviria's government, the United States showed dissatisfaction with the results of combating drug trafficking in the country. After that, the United States changed its foreign policy toward Colombia, considering it as an "international threat."

This discussion around drug trafficking and politics lead to the formulation of a national policy against drugs that included laws to eradicate illicit crops⁷⁴ and criminally charging drug traffickers. These policies did not solve the problem; to the contrary, they have generated several consequences, ranging from environmental degradation to increased violence.

Throughout these years, the country experienced an economic deceleration that generated uncertainty and skepticism (Bonilla 1997). The money coming from drug trafficking impacted both the illegal and legal economy, allowing the country to maintain the economic growth rate experienced under previous administrations. Drug trafficking impacted culture and social life,

Samper's main collaborators and designated Minister of Defense, while Medina was the treasurer of the campaign (Ibíd: 56) Despite the fact that President Samper was absolved, he had to face three years of illegitimacy.

⁷² Beginning with Turbay's presidency (1978-1982), liberal and conservative parties have had alliances with drug-traffickers (Gutiérrez Sanín 2006).

⁷³ The decertification included economic sanctions. The United States certifies nations according with their progress in the struggle against drug trafficking (Reina 1997: 139).

⁷⁴ These actions were coordinated, financed and advised by the Narcotics Affairs Section of the United States government through an agreement signed in December 1994.

fomenting consumerism and ostentation and creating more “intolerable social conflicts” (Restrepo 1995: 194).

Over the course of this government, the guerrillas strengthened their economic, military and political capacity,⁷⁵ and paramilitary groups extended their actions. On April 18, 1997 the Self-Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá, of Magdalena Medio, and of the Llanos Orientales, unified into an umbrella organization: the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia). They intensified terror in the north of the country, especially in Urabá and Córdoba, and then in the FARC-EP’s sanctuaries in the country’s central and southern regions (Restrepo 1998: 11).

Álvaro Uribe was the governor of the state of Antioquia from 1995 to 1997. One of his advisors, Pedro Juan Moreno, former president of *Federación Antioqueña de Ganaderos* (Antioquia Federation of Cattle Ranchers), proposed the militarization of the region and the creation of Communitarian Associations, *Convivir*, which worked as security cooperatives. This policy looked to increase popular support and suspend constitutional protections of civil liberties in order to facilitate the struggle against guerrillas and legalize the already existing paramilitary groups. Although in 1997 the Supreme Court of Justice declared the *Convivir* unconstitutional, it was too late; the phenomena was already in place at the local level.⁷⁶

On July 15, the AUC killed thirty peasants in Mapiripán, a town located in the south of the state of Meta, a region of FARC-EP influence. This massacre showed two central dynamics

⁷⁵ In 1995, in spite of the State’s proposals for peace, the ELN canceled its attempts to negotiate with a “government bought by drug trafficking” (Reyes 1996: 57), maintaining that position during the entire presidential period. The FARC-EP also refused to negotiate.

⁷⁶ Uribe’s term as governor of Antioquia was the most violent period in the history of Urabá, the coastal region of Antioquia state. Murders increased from more than 400 in 1994, to more than 800 in 1995 and more than 1200 in 1996. Then it decreased to 700 in 1997 and to around 300 in 1998 (Dávila in Romero 2006: 370). In the same period, Rito Alejo del Río, a military official involved in human rights violations, was the Commander of the Army’s 17th Brigade, located in Carepa, Urabá antioqueño. During this period, in 1997, another paramilitary structure, the Bloque Metro, was created.

of the violence perpetuated by paramilitaries: a. the dispute for territory with the guerrillas, and b. the alliance with the Armed Forces. During this period the paramilitaries were the main armed group that expanded their territorial presence. 1997 ended with confrontations between paramilitaries and guerrillas in diverse regions of Colombia that had as one of their outcomes the forced displacement of thousands of Colombians.

Between 1996 and 1998, important guerilla victories over the Armed Forces occurred.⁷⁷ In 1998 the insurgent challenge to the state reached its zenith. The ELN was equipped to disrupt an important number of Colombian exports through their tactic of sabotaging pipelines and infrastructure, while the FARC-EP controlled important zones in the Southeast of the country, established their presence in relevant economic zones such as Antioquia, and built a siege to Bogotá. In addition, both guerrilla groups intensified kidnapping, making it risky to travel across Colombia. The state response was a modernization of the military and the opening of the negotiation process with the guerrillas.

The next President of Colombia, the conservative Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002), proposed a negotiated end to the armed conflict. The majority of Colombians, after the series of violent acts committed by all of the armed actors, supported the peace dialogues. Therefore, in 1998 two different institutional spaces were in motion: the demilitarized zone for advancing peace dialogues with the FARC-EP and the National Convention (*la Convención Nacional*), a space of encounter between civil society and the ELN previously established during Samper's term; the latter had no future under Pastrana.

Similar to the peace process during President Betancur, the Armed Forces opposed the negotiations with the guerrillas. The Minister of Defense, Rodrigo Lloreda, rejected the

⁷⁷ It is precisely in this context that the Asociación Colombiana de Miembros de la Fuerza Pública retenidos y liberados por grupos guerrilleros, ASFAMIPAZ (Colombian Association of Law Enforcement Officers' kidnapped and liberated by guerrilla groups), was created.

possibility of extending the demilitarized zone and this statement did not receive the support of the President. Lloreda resigned on May 28, 1999. The military establishment asked to be relieved from active service, unleashing an institutional crisis that evidenced the “inconformity of the militaries with the conduction of the peace process, with the destitution and judgments of high officials accused of links with the paramilitaries, as well as with the critique regarding human rights violations, corruption and incompetency in the battlefield” (Zuluaga 2000: 41).⁷⁸ With pressure from the Armed Forces, the president agreed to strengthen the modernization, professionalization, and deployment of the military as a response to the possible failure of the peace dialogues.

The paramilitary wing also objected to the peace process. During Pastrana’s term, Carlos Castaño stated that the only way to defeat an insurgent force was opposing it with another illegal force, regardless of whether the main target was civil society.⁷⁹ Paramilitary opposition materialized through a struggle for territory, expanding their armed capacity and influence. The commanders of the AUC considered their action as part of a strategy of territorial and institutional recuperation. Paramilitary expansion at the end of the 1990s especially affected the peace process with the ELN, avoiding the establishment of a zone for negotiation similar to the Caguán. The significant growth of paramilitarism between 1998 and 2002 was a topic of discussion in the peace agenda between the FARC-EP and the State, discussing its regional influence and the extreme violence exercised against civil society.

This logic of the “right” to armed self-defense (Romero 2006: 373) came to have dramatic consequences for civil society: murders, massacres, forced disappearances and

⁷⁸ Once more, military responsibility in human rights violations was evident. In 1998 the Superior Military Tribunal (Tribunal Superior Militar) processed 6,221 members of the institution, and 240 received convictions for human rights violations. Violations of International Humanitarian Law increased during those years, reaching 1,583 cases, in which the most affected were peasants as well as factory and independent workers.

⁷⁹ This point of view was also shared by the United States at the end of the last century (Romero 2006: 372).

displacement. In November of 1998, 27 massacres were reported, increasing the number of people in a situation of forced displacement. At that time Colombia had the second most forcibly displaced persons in the world, after Sudan (Zuluaga 1999: 53).⁸⁰ Kidnapping – a human rights violation mainly perpetuated by guerrillas – also increased significantly.⁸¹

Under a war code, peace always means war (Foucault 2003). Thus, in 1999 intellectuals and well-known national figures that contributed to peace building were the object of violence by the paramilitaries, military, and extreme right-wing groups. Professors Hernán Henao and Jesús Antonio Bejarano were murdered, the latter on the campus of the National University. Professor Darío Betancur was forcibly disappeared, while Carlos Castaño -the chief of the AUC - kidnapped the then Senator Piedad Córdoba. On the 13th of August, Jaime Garzón, a public figure of Colombia, known for his satiric comedy as well as for humanitarian actions towards the release of kidnapped people and for the realization of a peace negotiation with the ELN, was killed. By the end of the century Colombians had almost lost hope. The massive demonstrations around Garzón's murder constituted a national catharsis of hopelessness (Gómez Correal 2002).⁸²

The 1990s saw the crisis of the Left after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reinvigoration of alternative social movements and movements of society. Around the world, indigenous movements and demands were reinvigorated in the context of the commemoration of

⁸⁰ In 2000, 380,000 people were forcibly displaced. In 1999, 200,000 Colombians of the upper and middle classes left the country (Restrepo 2000: 11). In these years, Colombians living outside the country reached 4,2 million, 10% of the population (Sarmiento 2001: 23). The majority of them left the country due to economic problems and violence.

⁸¹ In 1998, 2,216 people were kidnapped, 30% more than in 1997. Some of these kidnappings occurred in more metropolitan areas, which moved the conflict closer to the cities. During 2000, the number of people kidnapped by the guerrillas reached 3,000 (Sarmiento 2001: 23).

⁸² Colombians experienced this murder as the killing of laughter, associating this assassination with the degradation of violence in the country. Two million people marched against Garzón's death, at the same time rejecting violence in general. This number is only comparable with the civil strike of 1977, joined by approximately 1,300,000 people (Leongómez 1999, *El Espectador*, Opinión, 3a, 28/08/99).

the five hundred years of the Conquest in 1992, which showed the strength of indigenous resistance. In 1994 the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, EZLN (The Zapatista Army of National Liberation) emerged, displaying a new political imaginary rooted in indigenous cosmologies that included the re-examination of leftist proposals. In 1999, “The Battle of Seattle” occurred, showing the profound critiques of capitalism by large segments of society; environmental justice struggles expanded on a global scale and showed human impact on the planet, the relationship between environmental degradation, and race-class belongings (Martinez-Alier, Joan Anguelovski, Isabelle Bond et al. 2014), and the geopolitics of environmental and planetary degradation. New theoretical and methodological approaches were developed in that decade, including indigenous and Afro-descendent thought, along with the group modernity/coloniality. Modernity, capitalism, liberal democracy and the western model of civilization were again thrown into question, but now in a more radical way since the Eurocentric heritage of political alternatives was more deeply interrogated and by a wider array of social subjects.

In Colombia, the Indigenous and Afro-descendent movements (*society in movements*) have a long-term history. During the 20th century, indigenous people resisted the legacy of colonialism. The struggles of Quintín Lame are especially important. During the 1920s and 1930s, Lame masterminded the recuperation of land assigned to indigenous people during the colonial period but had been violently appropriated by settlers and landowners (Gnecco 2004). Then, in 1971, the *Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca*, CRIC (Regional Council of Cauca Province Indigenous) was created (CINEP 1981), followed for other regional indigenous organizations. In 1982, the *Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia*, ONIC (The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia) emerged as a consensus of indigenous nations and communities brought together in the First National Indigenous Meeting (www.onic.org.co).

Additionally, in 1994 the *Asociación Nacional de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca*, *ACIN* (Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca Province), was constituted. A central demand of indigenous organizations has been territory, as well as autonomy, unity, and the recognition of their culture (www.onic.org.co).

Afro-descendent people have also a history of struggles related with the Conquest, and focused in counteracting the legacies of enslavement. In 1982, the *Movimiento Nacional Cimarrón* (The National Maroons Movement) was created. Then, around the National Constituent Assembly, different black organizations articulated work with the goal to have a black representative in the Assembly, an initiative that was the result of ongoing discussions about the Pacific region, black people and their rights, as well as territory and identity (Rosero 2012). *The Proceso de Comunidades Negras*, PCN (Process of Black Communities) finally emerged as part of this effort in 1993. Afro-descendents' main demand in the Constituent Assembly was the recognition of territorial rights, which was achieved with Law 70 (Grueso 2012). PCN has focused its work around the defense of identity, territory, natural resources, the participation of black communities, and the defense of their own conception of development (Rosero 2012: 117).

After many debates and discussions, in the 1990s ethnic differences started to be perceived as important within some social movements, though it would be only in this new century that such discussions are circulated and taken seriously amongst the partisan Left.⁸³ A faithful heir of the modern blindness to difference, the spectrum of the Left privileged the universal, abstract subject, focusing on the elected subject: the true revolutionary was always the

⁸³ It is interesting to observe that after state recognition of “differences,” parties, not only leftists, started to recognize in a more systematic and “legal” way the existence of the “Other.” That this recognition might exceed the liberal logic of multiculturalism, which acknowledges difference without changing unequal power configurations, continues to be a struggle.

proletariat, dismissing feminist, indigenous, Afro-descendent and non-heterosexual's demands as secondary.

The same happened within social movements regarding these other exclusions. The modern/colonial system was successful in insulating the impacts of the different structures of domination, making people compete for ownership of the “main” subordination, or the one that made most sense for them. For instance, after an almost invisibilization of indigenous and black women in the struggles of second wave feminism in Colombia, the feminist and women's movement started recognizing the plurality of the experience of being a “woman” during the 1990s thanks to the debates that indigenous and Afro-descendants introduced (Gómez Correal 2011a). It did not mean, however, that the recognition of difference was translated into practice, or that Bogotá lost its power and centrality; the debates initiated by indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples were not taken seriously until the 21st century, and in the last several years have become increasingly prominent (Gómez Correal 2011b).

As previously noted, war pervaded the demands of *social movements* and *society in movement* in the 1990s, generating *movements of society* around peace. It included massive mobilizations in favor of the humanization of the conflict, a cease-fire, humanitarian exchange and the political resolution of the conflict. Throughout the 1990s, especially because of paramilitary and guerrilla actions, victims started becoming more visible actors.

Violence and powers

Throughout the second half of the 20th century, Colombia underwent the formation of a New Left, which included partisan, social movement, and guerrilla wings; two transitions that aimed to maintain the *status quo* and deepen the modern project—the National Front and the 1991 Constituent Assembly—as well as economic, cultural and social transformations.

The country experienced a particular modernization that changed women's and men's lives. Industrialization, migration from the countryside to the cities, urbanization, the expansion of the education system, an increase in literacy and the implementation of development⁸⁴ were processes aimed at encompassing modernization with modernity, and worked as a way to deepen the Western model of Civilization.

If the 1980s was the lost decade due to economic precarity, in the 1990s the country was achieving its economical goals. However the economic prosperity a great majority of Colombians were not enjoying it. While peace was negotiated between the guerrillas and the State with significant participation of civil society throughout the Caguán Public Hearings, economic inequalities were deepening. During 1998 and 1999 the number of people in conditions of poverty increased to 4.5 million, affecting 61.5% of the population. In 1999 the country had the highest unemployment rate in its history. At the same time the income and wealth concentration increased, making Colombia one of the most unequal countries of Latin America. In 2000, State public spending only represented 33,3% of the national budget (9.6% in relation to the GNP) (Sarmiento 2001: 26). The state spent more money on war than on social needs.⁸⁵

Over the course of the 1970s, alternatives to bipartisanship were consolidated. The protagonists of this history are women and men born during the 1930s and 1950s, a generation that in different ways lived and experienced the period *La Violencia*, as well as other structural

⁸⁴ The category of "development" emerged after World War II. The "West (and the East) tried to redefine itself and the global power structures" (Escobar 1989: 144). It was introduced in Colombia in the late 1940s and early 1950s, resembling the Western ontology and reinforcing the lineal conception of time: "The country must thus awaken from its lethargic past and follow the one way to salvation" (p. 141). Development impacted State planning and worked as a "mechanism of social control" (p. 144). Its implementation is also linked with the occurrence of violence in Colombia.

⁸⁵ For example, Plan Colombia, a project financed by the United States to fight drug trafficking and promote social and communitarian development programs, assigns a significant part of the budget to the struggles against guerrillas, which includes military equipment.

injustices of the Colombian nation, and that staked their hopes on an array of anti-hegemonic imaginaries nurtured by different Marxist trends of thought and Maoist, Cuban, Central American, and USSR trajectories, as well as anticolonial, feminist, and pacifist struggles. Their demands ranged from equality to equity and freedom. They re-thought and re-imagined the world under a plurality of actions, thoughts and desires, convinced that *revolution was around the corner*.

The demands around land distribution (Kalmanovitz 1995), political inclusion, and equality that animated the emergence of guerrillas, were shared by leftist parties, social movements and society in movements such as indigenous nations and Afro-descendant communities. The main differences between the armed actors and other sectors of the Left had to do with the strategy chosen for achieving these demands, influenced by contrasting readings of Colombia's history. While some expressions of the Left explicitly rejected violence as a strategy to be used in that historical conjuncture, others used it openly as a means to achieve power, and still others in a subtle way combined the democratic arena with the armed struggle. In the two latter cases, violence was perceived as the right to rebellion against a system that excluded them.⁸⁶

In the same way that violence allowed a group of people—first Creoles during Independence and then the elite of the Liberal and Conservative parties in the formation of the Nation-state—to become governors, violence was seen by some sectors of the Left as the path to build another type of society. For many in the Left and social movements, taking State power was fundamental as a way to concretize their political imaginary. These complex movements of the “subaltern society” made them the anti-elite, with some such as guerrillas and leftist parties, looking to generate a new hegemony.

⁸⁶ Following Marx and Engels' insights, as well as the Russian, Cuban and Maoist revolutions, violence was considered the midwife of history.

Overall these “subaltern actors,” some more than others, were perceived as “enemies” of the economic-social-political-cultural elites and the State. The “main” enemy was the one that challenged the political power and class configurations of the time. This hegemonic perspective was infused by the geopolitical ideology of the Cold War, an intrinsic expression of modernity and its constituents: violence and the subjectivization of the “Other.” Collectivities with contrasting ideological perspectives and political demands were conceived of as outside the nation and, consequently, outside humanity,⁸⁷ justifying the use of every means to defeat the adversary, including, as Romero states, illegal means (2006: 360).

Thus, this new generation faced political exclusion, repression, and their dehumanization. State violence prevailed, exercising extreme violence against enemies’ bodies, torturing, disappearing and murdering them. This violence and pain was not only imposed on “enemies” but also on their relatives and colleagues’ bodies-lives inasmuch as these violent acts became a war strategy that profoundly impacted victims' loved ones and the entire society.

Leftist activists that joined underground political organizations were perfect targets for forced disappearances. They were located at the margins, in the liminal space, treated as dispensable humans for the State and paramilitaries, and even for guerrillas. This liminal situation made them neither good citizens nor entirely subversive, its location “authorizes” killing them in a particular way. In the unfolding of this “class struggle” guerrillas have been conceptualized as the *evil*. Everybody that is suspected to do not be part of the *good* is treated as the enemy. The frontier of this religious dichotomy is difficult to identify in a supposedly secular model of society: modernity. These leftist militants joined the ranks of the disposable, the lesser citizens, and the less-than-human. In the face of this, another ontology is necessary to overcome the de-humanization of *humans*. The *state’s illegal use of the legitimate monopoly of force* led

⁸⁷ As Arendt (1994) voices, in the nation-state, citizenship became the condition that replaces the recognition of humanity. Once outside the nation, their humanity is discounted.

the Left, social movements, society in movement, organizations such as ASFADDES and processes of confluence such as the Relatives of the Justice Palace siege's Cafeteria, as well as the loved ones of Orlando, Fernando and Ramiro, to use the discourses, frameworks and demands of human rights.

Violence was inserted and embodied in our daily life, bodies, and subjectivities. *Sicariato* (hired killers), a phenomenon associated with drug trafficking, became common phenomena. The consolidation of certain types of violence were accompanied by cultural and social changes.⁸⁸ Violence overran social relationships, approaching new subjects under diverse manifestations. It is increasingly accepted the elimination of the Other: the political contradictor, anyone that is perceived as an obstacle to reach individual and “collective” goals and/or anybody that was “in the wrong place at the wrong moment.”⁸⁹ Violence is always accompanied by fear, silence and forced *oblivion*. It is also the expression of deeper emotions, pain, revenge and hatred that leads to more deaths. As Jimeno (2003) states, cognitions and emotions are intermingled in its exercise (123). Violence is always an annihilation practice of those that are conceived of as dispensable (Mignolo 2009), a moment in which the necessary interrelation with multiple others is negated.⁹⁰

In the course of the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, an important array of actors disputed power in Colombia. The subaltern is constituted by a variety

⁸⁸ Some sectors of society accepted the sicariato avatar, which is seen, in a tremendously unequal economic society, as an easy way to acquire money, while life and death lose their value. As Salazar (1990) shows, sicarios—mostly youth (Ortíz Sarmiento 1991: 60)—are also linked to political elites who make use of them for their particular interests. The drug trafficking logic intermingled with a long-term exercise of violence in Colombia and at the same time perpetuated and solidified the negation of the Other. It altered class structure, generated social fragmentation, and contributed to the dismantling of justice, the corruption of the fuerza pública (law enforcement) and human rights violations (Camacho Guizado 2006).

⁸⁹ Pécaut claims that what Colombia has experienced is a war against society (in GMH 2013). The GMH uses this idea to describe the violence of the 1990s in particular.

⁹⁰ In this case both the killer and the murdered are dispensable. The majority of sicarios are young people from poor sectors of society that “were not born to be seeds” (Salazar 1990: 185). Salazar contends that the phenomena of sicariato is also the result of the period of La Violencia, and the interrelation of different interests, powers and social processes such as drug-trafficking, guerrillas, police and social cleansing groups (grupos de limpieza social). Salazar maintains that sicariato is a product of the weakness/absence of the State, a common hypothesis in the explanation of violence in Colombia.

of Leftist parties, organizations and armed structures, diverse social movements and ethnic processes. The hegemonic sectors of society include the political elites that are part of the traditional Liberal and Conservative parties, as well as the Armed Forces and business associations, which hold cultural, political, social, military and economic power. Great segments of these groups have opposed the political negotiation of the conflict, obstructing the development of peace negotiations and privileging military solutions as was seen during the Betancur and Pastrana administrations.

The Armed Forces are a central actor for comprehending war dynamics in Colombia—the internal armed conflict and State violence—as Borrero Mansilla (2006) states, following Janowitz, military personnel are political subjects that make decisions. During the 20th century, but especially since the 1970s, the Armed Forces gained a significant autonomy that contributed to the evolution of State criminality and paramilitarism, as an expression of a right wing ideology. In Colombia the end of the Cold War did not represent an identity crisis for the Armed Forces. To the contrary, they prolonged the urgency of Cold War conceptions that marked not only soldiers but also state officials. The new power configuration of the world supposedly would induce a change in military discourses and justifications, allowing more attention to the endogenous factors of the conflict in Colombia (Borrero Mansilla 2006: 116). Thus, during the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, the Armed Forces underwent a technical modernization without an ideological one, which included the strengthening of their political character as well as changes in the cultural and organizational terrain (Borrero Mansilla 2006).⁹¹

⁹¹ These changes included transformations in the modalities of territorial presence; equipment and armament; size and professionalization. For example, between 1998-2004 the Army almost doubled in size. As Borrero Mansilla (2006) notes, professionalization implied changes to the conception of war itself. Another important adjustment was the Army's participation in the war against drugs – a role attributed before to the Police.

On the other hand, guerrillas experienced a modernization and expansion period during the 1980s and part of the 1990s due to political and economic resources⁹² and the consolidation of their base and structure,⁹³ but then faced a strategic crisis since 1998 (Ortíz 2006). The guerrillas and the military have made use of the combination of different means of struggle and have employed both negotiation and increasing military capacity. While the state has employed both negotiation and armed confrontation as its game plan to eliminate guerrillas as a political actor (Ortíz 2006), the guerrillas have used both as a way to take power.⁹⁴ In consequence, politics has been materialized through weapons and work with the masses (Borrero Mansilla 2006: 135).

The guerrillas developed a combination of political and military action (Ortíz 2006: 335)⁹⁵ and the State developed cohesive civilian support, also enacting *an illegal use of the legal monopoly of force*. In this military dispute of power, both armed actors have displayed different conceptions and tactics of war,⁹⁶ which are part of the dispute for control of the State, its institutions and resources, as well as the control of local communities and territory.

⁹² Drug trafficking was essential for the FARC-EP during the 1980s. During the 1990s the guerrilla group started to produce and sell its own cocaine. The relationship with drugs was different for the ELN. In the 1980s there was a rejection to get involve with this business. This situation changed in the 1990s, but the ELN's main financial aid came from the extortion of multinationals (Ortíz 2006: 326).

⁹³ In 1978 the ELN had 190 combatants and the FARC-EP 1200. This figure increased to 2600 and 5800 respectively in 1990. In 1994 the FARC-EP had 9500 combatants and the ELN 2460. This differential growth has to do with the different grades of structural strength of the organizations. The FARC-EP is characterized by a more hierarchical organization (Ortíz 2006). In the state between 1990 and 2004 the number of law enforcement officers went from 190,990 to 350,040. And in the same period the public spent from 2.2% to 5.1% of the GNP (Ortíz 2006: 352).

⁹⁴ Peace processes have followed a patriarchal model.

⁹⁵ Guerrillas are not a homogenous actor, among them there are significant differences that have to do with ideological frameworks, strategies, regions of influence, economy, internal organization and relationships with civil society.

⁹⁶ Among others, choque military war, counter-insurgency, irregular war, guerra oculta, guerra nocturna, containment, offensive, paramilitarism, among others, for the Armed Forces; and foquismo, prolonged popular war, Nueva Forma de Operar (NFO), mobile war, dynamic equilibrium of forces, guerra de interconexión, guerra de guerrillas and commandos móviles.

Paramilitaries have also joined this dispute. Paramilitaries and guerrillas have replaced some functions of the State such as security, identity references, justice, and have protected illegal activities and created or suppressed social movements that contest the State (Borrero Mansilla 2006: 136). The paramilitary, who have worked in close relationship with the military, political national and regional elites, as well as with drug traffickers, have also disputed local power.⁹⁷

Paramilitarism was seen as a successful way to fight guerrillas, another manner to achieve regional stability beyond peace processes. Paramilitaries seek to conquer territory and institutions at the regional level as a way to disable peace negotiations and weaken the guerrillas. Since an agreement with the guerrillas would include reforms that could modify the regional power equilibrium—a risky situation for the political groups and the traditional and emerging economic elites (Romero 2006: 368) linked to drug trafficking and other economies⁹⁸—paramilitarism was authorized as a way to maintain elites’ power at the local, regional and national level.

The armed self-defense groups emerged as the result of the confluence between sectors outside and inside the law for the defense of the *status quo* (Romero 2006: 359). The maintenance of that *status quo*, of the type of society we have in the present, has signified the physical elimination not only of guerrillas within and outside of armed confrontation, but also of those that profess other legal political opinions and anyone in civil society “opposed” to it.

⁹⁷ Drug trafficking has made Colombian reality more complex since this phenomena entails an indiscriminate exercise of violence that economically and militarily supports the violent actions of politics, the State, guerrillas, and paramilitaries, permeating the entire society and culture. Camacho Guizado (2006) states that the consolidation of organized crime was not necessary for drug trafficking but for the violent confrontation with the State. The violent strategy is a result of strategic decisions and the correlation of force with the State armed apparatuses and other enemies. For the same author, the Cali Cartel used another strategy, through which they penetrated the State, gave economic support to political campaigns and bought loyalty. Drug traffickers also have run for elections and have created political movements such as MAS-Morena (National Movement of Restoration).

⁹⁸ Álvaro Uribe Veléz is part of this emerging elite.

Some sectors of the establishment “played a double register: on one hand, the law discourse, and on the other hand, transactions with those that hold power resources, anyone whatever its nature” in order to defend their privileges (Romero 2006; drawing from Pécaut 2001). In Colombia the State kills. But I am not talking of an abstract State; to the contrary I am referring to a classist, racist and patriarchal State, a modern/colonial patriarchal State to which concrete actors have been associated.

A quotidian, local, armed and civilian dispute of power was unleashed that not only included the attempt to eliminate the Leftist “enemy,” whether he/she was a member of the guerrilla or not, but also the “enemy” of the bourgeois, the people. The booty, the object of desire is the same for those that wanted to take power⁹⁹: the State. Guerrillas assert that the use of violence was inevitable. During the period *La Violencia* peasants and local civilians were killed in a dispute amongst the elite. The former were dispossessed of land and economically exploited. Then the majority was excluded from politics with the National Front. For the general spectrum of the Left - armed and civil – violence is central to social transformation and for taking power.

I am not narrating another version of the story of the two devils. Although guerrillas, the Army Forces and the paramilitaries constituted each other in a process of relational identity, they are neither the same nor completely different. In spite of the fact that there are some similarities in the strategies the guerrillas and the Armed Forces have used, there is a significant divergence related to the nature of each actor. The State is an entity that is supposedly founded in legality

⁹⁹ This has been a central goal for the partisan and armed Left. This idea has been questioned mainly for: a. forms of struggle, and b. the conception of power and its relationship with the State (Archila N. et al. 2009: 17).

and has the obligation to protect its citizens. It has the right to the monopoly of the force in order to protect the entire population, not by killing or favoring some segments of it.¹⁰⁰

The actions of the diverse actors that have made History in Colombia are infused by goals, ideology, interests, choices, and emotions. Behind the political actors that dispute power, there is an ideological¹⁰¹ matrix that was born during the second modernity. Since the French Revolution Left and Right have been conceptualized as two different political places of enunciation that differ in political principles, ways of action and behaviors (Archila N. et al. 2009: 13). Since the 1930s socialism and communism have been assigned to the Left, and capitalism to the Right. In the center emerged social democracy (Archila N. et al. 2009: 16). The political dichotomy has been reinforced for a variety of ideas and projects associated to each side: Left-change-progress-utopia-materialist-collective-solidarity-public-State intervention vs. Right-stability-order-realism-idealistic-individual-selfishness-privateproperty-invisible hands (Archila N. et al. 2009: 14-19).

The ideological matrix and its main promise, modernity, are fundamental to both the Left and the Right, including their extremes. The history of the nation-state in Colombia has always been the attempt to modernize the country. The National Front and the 1991 Constitution were endeavors for doing that, a venture to consolidate the liberal economy and democracy. Modernization and modernity in Colombia have signified a concrete economic conception, capitalism, in its diverse versions (development and neoliberalism). This matrix enacted a concrete geopolitics that has affected the country. The history of Colombia during the 20th

¹⁰⁰ The Armed Forces has been essential for the Colombian nation-state in order to maintain certain legitimacy, ergo defense and security have been considered military problems.

¹⁰¹ Ideology conceptualized as a world conception that does not necessarily hide the reality (Archila N. et al. 2009: 16).

century was influenced by the United States as was the case with the entire region and the “Third World.”

Inasmuch as the Leftist imaginary is profoundly rooted in modernity, modernity has been seen as the solution for inequalities and the loss of freedom. Thus, Marx’s proposal entails the deepening and real fulfillment of modernity. For him the “wounds of modernity can be cured with a more plentiful and deepened modernity” (Berman in Archila N. et al. 2009: 46). The prolonged political violence in Colombia has contributed to the perdurability of modernity as the political horizon. Common sense dictates that we have violence because we are not completely modern. Perhaps it would be more helpful to ask: what has been the role of modernity in Colombia’s current situation?

Political violence, an expression of patriarchal modern/colonial violence, has degraded society and social relationships. Violence became uncontrolled as part of a war logic that is the sphere of the unpredictable (Clausewitz in Caballero 2014).¹⁰² We have also reached the banality of evil (Arendt 1994a), the execution of orders of killing and torturing others that are a part of complex bureaucracies. In Colombia, anybody that lives in the countryside or in intermediate cities isn't outside war either because the armed actors have forced people to support them, or because they have been made “victims.” Political violence has come to be part of daily life, a basic constituent of social relationships. It is invasive and pervasive to the extent that it is common to find members of the guerrillas, the paramilitaries, and/or the Armed Forces in the same family. It is possible that my son kills my neighbor’s neighbors, or that in my family there is someone forcibly disappeared by the State force and that my son is part of the paramilitaries or the Armed Forces. A guerrilla becoming part of the paramilitaries or vice versa also occurs. Everyone, including loved ones and members of close communities and organizations have the

¹⁰² <http://www.semana.com/opinion/articulo/antonio-caballero-guerra-es-guerra/409762-3>.

potential to be inscribed in the discourse of “my enemy”. We are in a war with each other, a war against “us.” The “enemy” is different from me, but at the same time is my equal. Connections have been permanently undone in Colombia.

Section III. If I only walked forward ...

“The Kankuamo and the Wayuu are two indigenous nations located in the northern part of Colombia. The Kankuamo are in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, close to other indigenous groups such as the Wiwa, the Arhuacos, and the Kogi. Among the four indigenous nations that inhabit the Sierra Nevada, as Daniel Maestre (2015) has explained in some of our conversations, the Kankuamo are the group that experiences the major impacts of colonization, to the extent that they have had to go through a process of cultural consolidation since the 1970s. After 1991—in the midst of the national recognition of a pluriethnic and multicultural nation—an organizational dynamic of cultural strengthening was initiated. At the same time that the Kankuamos were consolidated as an indigenous nation, they started to be objects of violence in part due to their strategic location in the César Province. Atánquez, one of the main towns of the Kankuamo’s reservation, is an obligatory corridor to visit the Sierra Nevada. Since the 1980s different guerrillas groups have had a presence in the zone, exercising territorial control and in consequence, killing some people.

In the 1990s, one of the members of Valledupar’s elite, part of the Araujo Molina family, attempted to rape a woman that was with him, but the event was avoided due to a watchman whose surname was Lame. Mr. Lame killed Araujo Molina and since that moment, the Lame family has been the object of a violent extermination perpetuated by the paramilitaries with the complicity of the Armed Forces. This is also the result of the pervasive racism of the region’s elite and economic interests, which similarly has affected other Kankuamos. Valledupar, the capital of César province, is a racist city that denies, as other places in Colombia, the indigenous and black heritage. *Juan Tomás’* surname is Lame. Since very young, he had to face persecution, the extermination of his people, forced displacement, and the enforced disappearance of two cousins: *Antonio and Alfredo Lame*, one of them accused of being a member of the guerrilla. Juan Tomás is also part of *Hijos e Hijas*, and some years later, took part part of the process of popular education of the movement: *Hescuela: Desaprendiendo para Liberar* (School: Unlearning to Liberate). As part of Hescuela, the member of Hijos e Hijas in César province, developed a campaign that was titled: “Saca el indio que llevas adentro” (Bring out the indigenous that you have inside you), with the intention to counteract the racism of Valledupar and contribute to the Kankuamo’s cultural strengthening.

Majayura and *la Mache* are part of the Wayuu people, an indigenous nation that is settled in the Guajira province and also in the northern part of Venezuela. This region experienced the violence related with the control of marimba crops, and then the dispute between the guerrillas and paramilitaries, the last one in association with local and regional politicians and the Armed Forces. Majayura, born in 1985, was part of the

Juventud Comunista, JUCO (Communist Youth) and other organizations of young people before being killed. The 26th of May, 2001, Majayura was raped by different men that, as La Mache, her mother, states, were part of the paramilitaries under the command of Jorge 40. They killed her and threw her body into a pit. Although her mother disagreed with that decision, Majayura was looking for the truth about her father's assassination. The day that Majayura was killed, she was selling some indigenous handcrafts to collect money for her father's murder anniversary.

La Mache and Majayura are part of an indigenous nation whose collective body has been the object of physical and symbolic violence. As the result of the process of registering citizens and giving them their IDs, State civil servants during the second half of the 20th century assigned terrible names to indigenous people such as: Popo, Cosita Rica, Coito, Mariguana, Paraguas, Tarzán, and Bolsillo (Excrement, Delicious Little Thing, Sexual Intercourse, Marihuana, Umbrella, Tarzan, and Pocket) that degraded them. Furthermore, they wrote in their IDs that all of them were born the 31st of December and that they "say that they do not know how to sign their name" (Simanca Pushaina 2010). The State has been present in Wayuu's territory mainly in electoral conjunctures but not when the community needs it. During the last five years, 4,700 Wayuu children have died from malnutrition without any significant intervention by the State.¹⁰³ Besides a racist violence that is the result of prolonged histories of territorial control, Majayura was the object of gender violence, a common war strategy of patriarchy that has been used to exercise military control and disseminate fear in Colombia, perpetuating the conceptualization of women as an object of sexual control. La Mache remembers Majayura as an active leader and very fashion-conscious lady that always had her haversack and accompanied her mother daily. La Mache, who is part of the *MOVICE*, shared that with me in some of our conversations.

Although it has its own particularities, the situation of afro-descendent people is similar to the one described by the Kankuamo and the Wayuu people, as is also the case for the Indigenous of the Northern Cauca region. There are many situations that can exemplify the intersection between territorial control, racism, and violence in Colombia that speaks to the consequence of capitalism, development, and the western model of civilization in their territories. Manuel, Antonia, Candelaria, Eloisa and Micaela all lived in Buenaventura. Some of them are from that area while others arrived due to forced displacement from the Chocó. In the Chocó, there has been also a territorial dispute between the guerrillas and the paramilitaries that had meant the death of many people and the displacement of others. Part of the terror that has taken place is related to the appropriation of land for the plantation of oil palm (Ballvé 2013). I still vividly remember when in one of my undergraduate classes about afro-descendants, one leader spoke to us about how the paramilitaries arrived to their town, killed many of the people in horrible ways, and finally played soccer with their heads.

Buenaventura is located in the Valle del Cauca province. It is a sea port which, although makes possible the circulation of great amounts of wealth for the country, is a poor city that since the 1990s has dealt with paramilitary violence and their territorial dispute with

¹⁰³ In Morales (2015): <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/nacional/el-exterminio-del-pueblo-wayuu-articulo-555826>

the guerrillas. In the recent years, Buenaventura, a city of black people, has experienced terrible manifestations of gendered/racist violence and the exacerbation of State and paramilitary techniques of terror to the extent that in the present it is the city where the majority of enforced disappearances occur in Colombia; a great proportion of them are women that are first raped; and there are *casas de pique* where people are tortured and chopped. Those responsible for this violence are criminal bands, which are the continuation of paramilitarism, and that exercise territorial control in order to guarantee and monopolize drug trafficking routes. But in addition, this violence is closely related with the “modernization” of the port to the extent that there is a correlation between violence and the development of infrastructure projects.¹⁰⁴ It is in this context that *PCN*, *Afrodes*, and *Mothers for Life* are working, trying to build a society that respects life and differences, including the territory.

Close to Valle del Cauca, in the province of Cauca, the indigenous of the northern region have been confronting for years the presence of the guerrillas, the paramilitaries, and the State, asking all the armed actors to not involve them in their power dispute and to respect their territory. This exigency has not been listened to, and has resulted in the continual loss of indigenous lives. In order to defend themselves without any weapons, the indigenous of the region have created the *Guardia Indígena* (Indigenous Guard), a group of indigenous who only carry *bastones de mando* (decorated leadership rods) to protect their people. Notwithstanding, this pacific strategy has not been enough to stop the violence since the war that surrounds them is tremendously powerful. The current peace process is taking place concurrently with the ongoing armed confrontation between the State and the FARC-EP. Even though different social movements, political parties, and public figures have asked for the signing of a bilateral cease-fire, it has not been agreed to by the two sides. The FARC-EP has declared unilateral cease-fires in some moments – especially during Christmas and New Year -, and the last one has been in effect since December 20, 2014. President Santos ordered a halt in armed attacks against the FARC-EP in March, but the truce was spoiled last Wednesday, April 15th, when the guerrilla attacked a command of the Army that was inspecting the area around the town of Buenos Aires in Cauca.

After the guerrilla assault, the President ordered the resumption of bombing against the FARC-EP in the entire country, which mainly includes the towns located close to the FARC-EP’s recent attack, and where indigenous and Afro-descendent communities live. As always, the complete logic of what is going on is not explained to Colombians, which jeopardizes their comprehension that what is behind beyond the armed confrontation and the “irrationality” of the guerrillas is the interest of the State, the guerrilla, and paramilitaries to control territories where there are “gold mining and corridors to towns in the Pacific region central for drug trafficking” (González Posso 2015).

Indigenous and Afro-descendent people have experienced violence during the 20th and 21st century that is the product of colonization, the particular development of a racist Nation-state, and the territorial dispute of guerrillas, paramilitaries, drug trafficking, and the elites of the country. Their territories: land and body, are conceived as a spoil of war,

¹⁰⁴ Semana (2015): <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/buenaventura-se-le-salio-de-las-manos-del-gobierno/419906-3>

a conception that emerged with the Conquest. For that reason, the indigenous in the north of Cauca have been struggling during recent months to *liberar la madre tierra* (free Mother Earth), and for that same reason, a member of the Cauca elite and Congresswoman of the Democratic Center Party, Paloma Valencia, proposed dividing the province in two: one for the indigenous people—who delay development and always desire more and more land—and another for the mestizos” (Huitaca 2015).

Colombia’s present cannot be understood without a long-term perspective and comprehension of its historical complexity; this implies searching in the past, developing an archeology of our current conjuncture. It requires thinking critically about the Conquest of Abya Yala and its consequences in the constitution of what we are today. This disruptive event dramatically changed the configuration of societies at that time as the world transformed from a polycentric to a monocentric one, led by a European onto-epistemology. In this process simultaneity was negated and Europe conceptualized itself as universal, giving rise to a modern subjectivity (Lander and Dussel in Ochoa Muñoz 2014). This episode in “human history” is rooted in patriarchy, having violence as one of its core components.

The European arrival to Abya Yala initiated both modernity and the colonial organization of the world (Lander and Dussel in Ochoa Muñoz 2014) without implying a radical rupture with the Middle Ages. Thus the inhabitants of Abya Yala were observed through the **eyes** of the Christian medieval tradition and the concept of tyranny (Borja 2002). What those eyes observed was registered in chronicles, a display of a concrete type of knowledge-power. Writing became an act of space appropriation; narration and expansion walked together (Borja 2002: 46). The Indians were described physically according to Aristotelian ideas, where moral and intellectual faculties were thought to be reflected in one’s physical appearance. This notion helped to strengthen unequal power relationships between Europeans and indigenous people, making space for the emergence of the category of race.

Under Christian medieval conceptions ugliness was related to idolatry, cannibalism and bestiality. A notion of beauty that accompanied the concept of race was implanted and

internalized. This impacted the configuration of the self, identity and subjectivity, on both sides of the “encounter,” the colonized and the colonizer, instigating a coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres 2007) and the colonizers’ sense of superiority (Dussel 2007).

The task of observing, describing and accounting for everything founded in the New World included ways of government, customs and rituals. An inventory of the “Other” was in place that contributed to despising, dominating and eliminating difference. Chronicles justified the domination of another element of nature – Indians - as well as evangelization as a constituent aspect of civilization. Through European eyes humanity was redefined with the universalization of Western thought, including some of its main dichotomies such as nature/culture, women/men, private/public and good/evil, among others. The two Great Divides that Latour (1993) considers characteristic of modernity (from Dussel’s perspective the second modernity) were put in place: Nature/Culture, Us/Them.

These readings of reality legitimated the Conquest, the abuse of power, evangelization and the appropriation of territory. As Borja (2002) states the true triumph of the Conquest of America was to install an imaginary. “Idolaters Indians” were conceived as illegitimate to assume power (Borja 2002) and their destinies. In this process representation was at stake, through which the “Other” became the barbarian, the beast. The narration about Indians, more than being an accurate account of the world, was the expression of the Conquerors’ ideas (Borja 2002). The two modern “Great Divides do not describe reality ... but define the particular way Westerners had of establishing their relations with others as long as they felt modern” (Latour 1993: 103).

The colonial period in Abya Yala, then named as America – this naming itself being one of the first violent acts -, was part of the European attempt to expand their civilization worldwide. The self-consciousness of the West about civilization “authorized” them to bring

civilization to others by violent means (Rojas 2002: xiii), performing a necropolitics (Mendoza 2014a). As other imperial enterprises, violence was consubstantial to this project; thus, to assassinate became a civilizing act. The religious commandment to not kill lost its meaning in America, where it was morally correct to murder those that resisted conversion (Mendoza 2014a: 139-140).

Violence first materialized in a concrete time-space: territory, namely land and the body. Conquered land and bodies; mainly women, though not exclusively, were raped.¹⁰⁵ As Paredes (2010) states, humanity learned to dominate in women's bodies, the first territory of political control (Quiñónez Toro 2002) in interpersonal relationships. Patriarchy, a primary exercise of power due to a fear of difference, was enacted in the closest proximity, against women, in the here and now, the quotidian and intimate spaces of community (Gómez Correal 2006).¹⁰⁶

Alongside the rape of land and bodies, a specific notion of family, sexual relations and procreation was imposed.

“They [chiefs of an Indian group] complain that the *corregidor* [Spanish mayor], in addition to forcing the Indians to provide free labor, coerced their women to work in pottery and the young daughters to provide their domestic service; having in their kitchen four, six, and eight, to make bad use of them, using force and robbing women of their virginity. ... If they do not consent, our daughters are severely punished. ... If he does not want the women for himself, ‘he gives the women to his friends,’ and even more, ‘he does not allow our daughters to get married, only those designated by him can get

¹⁰⁵ Ann McClintock analyzes the relation between the ways Christopher Columbus portrayed the earth as a breast and the male voyage as an erotic of rape (in Lugones 2008).

¹⁰⁶ To mention patriarchy as part of modernity/coloniality does not mean that patriarchy was not present before the Conquest in Abya Yala. Within decolonial feminism there is an ongoing discussion about the existence or not of patriarchy and gender before 1492. Segato (2010) and Paredes (2010) state that both patriarchy and gender were present in “indigenous societies.” Segato contends that with the Conquest caste, status and gender hierarchies previously existent in the pre-intrusion communitarian order deepened and intensified. She uses the concept of a low intensity patriarchy (*patriarcado de baja intensidad*) that was exacerbated with the colonial encounter, emphasizing that gender relations were different in pre-intrusion societies. Paredes, who is an Aymara communitarian feminist, recognizes a precolonial and Inca patriarchy. With the Conquest there occurred an “*entronque*,” a melding of patriarchies between the original and European patriarchies. For Paredes coloniality is *entronque* patriarchal, and patriarchy is the system of all oppressions, of all exploitations, and of all types of violence and discrimination that humanity and nature experience. It is the first structure of domination and subordination of history. On the other hand, Lugones (2008), drawing in the work of Oyéronké Oyewùmi and others, maintains that gender did not exist in Abya Yala before the arrival of the Europeans.

married” (quoted in Gutierrez de Pineda, *la Familia en Colombia: Transfondo Histórico*, in Rojas 2002: 32).

Patriarchy, not understood as a universal and ahistorical enterprise, but to the contrary, as *differential patriarchies* (Gómez Correal 2012b)¹⁰⁷—a contextualized intersection of structures of domination that produces contrasting outcomes and manifestations—it requires violence. Without this structure of domination in which male authority and leadership is central, women were not subordinated (Varela 2005). The control of sexuality, reproduction and women’s bodies was cornerstone to it, together with women’s subjugation in the symbolic order, in myths and religion (Reguant in Varela 2005: 177).

The implementation of European patriarchy presupposed and assumed a concrete sex-gender system that affected previous relationships between female, male and other beings. A colonial/modern gender system (Lugones 2008), that required concrete marriage arrangements, was established. Spaniards imposed heterosexuality, making sexual and romantic relationships among the same sex sinful. Previous *Nego* nomenclatures were reinterpreted under the European vision, transforming male positions since it was with men that the colonizers fought and negotiated (Segato 2010). These new and sometimes temporal “alliances” constituted a radical loss of women’s political power in the places where it existed (Arlette Gautier in Segato 2010; Rivera 2004). Colonizers promoted women’s “domestication” to facilitate the colonial enterprise.

As part of this process of disempowerment, female representations were transformed during colonial times. The primary female role and sphere of interaction were motherhood and the private. The figure that best represents this is the Virgin Mary. Spaniards presumed the

¹⁰⁷ This is a concept I am developing in a work in progress about the book *Ritos y tradiciones del Huarochirí*, a text written in the colonial era under the petition of the Spaniards in their campaign of extirpación de idolatrías that contains some Andean indigenous myths. I hypothesize that imperial enterprises such as the Inca involved the modification of horizontal gender relationships in quechua populations and the display of a specific type of patriarchy (Gómez Correal 2012b), and its specific system of sex-gender (Rubin 2006). In the case of European invasion we can see how it included more vertical, violent, and embracing exercises of power.

inherent impurity and inferiority of women in relation to men (Silverblatt 1990). The Conquest eroded the traditions that secured women's autonomous access to material resources. Europeans, for example, prohibited women's participation in the indigenous structures of government, undermining the dual Andean gender chains of authority (*las cadenas genéricas andinas de la autoridad dual*) (Silverblatt 1990). Spain was considered the *madre patria* (the motherland) and the Virgin the figure of salvation, redemption, the possibility of the future.¹⁰⁸

Differential patriarchies produce – depending on the location of the subject – divergent experiences of domination in the modern/colonial world. Therefore, black and indigenous females did not reach the category of “woman” due to their racial belongings (Lugones 2008). Female beings, Africans, and indigenous people were demonized, subordinated, bestialized, and feminized under this matrix. Ochoa Muñoz (2014) asserts that the theological discourses of the 16th century set out the bases for justifying and underpinning that process of feminization, already initiated with the Conquest. Both indigenous people and women were conceived as dependent, infantile and incapable of responsible and autonomous actions (Silverblatt 1990: xxii). Blacks were envisaged as animals, non-humans, a representation that contributed to their ongoing enslavement.

The modification of female and male notions and relationships between them was central for the imposition of the Western model of society. The “will for civilization was located in women spatially (in the womb), temporally (in the future), and in terms of desire” (Cristina Rojas 2002). Indians and blacks provided the subordinated women and Spaniards provided the conquering men (Rojas 2002: 31-32). Europeans dramatically changed the dynamic of the *Aldea* as Segato mentions (2010). In societies where hierarchies previously existed, the contact with Europe resulted in a hyper-hierarchicalization that overrode women. Furthermore, new

¹⁰⁸ A representation transformed during the struggles for Independence, when it shifted towards the “stepmother” (Rojas 2002: 14).

masculinities emerged. Those that existed previously and were associated with violence were reinforced. The others lived through a process of radical transformation toward an identity that emphasized risk, weapons, war and confrontation.

The coloniality of power and power as a war were implanted. Almost everyone was against everyone else. The allies of the past became the enemies of the present. Colonized men accepted the subordination of their own community women, with which the entire society lost since women played a central role in the maintenance of their specific ontology. As Paredes (2010) states to threaten one half is to threaten the entire community. The communal bonds of solidarity were adversely affected as well as the experience of community.

Gender relations are ubiquitous and omnipresent (Segato 2010); they are not insulated phenomena but, to the contrary, cornerstone to the ontology that illuminates them. The misogyny of the modern/colonial project is a central element of the genocidal violence perpetrated against the colonized people, a point of departure (Ochoa Muñoz 2014: 111). Europe implanted a conception about women, indigenous and Africa people during the colony that is still in play.¹⁰⁹

This misogyny, patriarchal violence, and the loss of women's power continue to have consequences in the present. Violence against women has been interiorized, legitimized, and almost legalized. It is embedded in today's relationships between man and woman, and in each historical moment it gets exacerbated with the corresponding war logics of the time, including capitalism (Gómez Correal 2008). I remember clearly, that it was 2004 and we were in the midst of the *First Women's International Meeting Against War* in Colombia when a feminist announced to the public that in a paramilitary attack in Medellín on the body of a young lady – more precisely on one of her breasts – the acronym of the AUC was written.

¹⁰⁹ Treatment of women in Abya Yala was intimately related to the witch-hunt that initiated in Europe during the 15th century (Federici 2004; Mendoza 2014b).

In the process of paramilitary demobilization, attributable to the pressure of women and feminist organizations, violence against women came to light, although it continues in impunity. Thus, it became nationally public that HH, one of the paramilitary chiefs that operated on the Caribbean Coast, exercised the “*droit de seigneur*” - the feudal lord's right to bed a servant girl - primarily with indigenous women.¹¹⁰ During the last four years, the murder of black women in Buenaventura have called attention to new manifestations of violence in racialized and gendered subjects following the paramilitary demobilization. In Colombia, violence against women has its own specificities depending on regional origin, class belonging, race, age, and political affiliation. Patriarchy is experienced by all women but evidently in a differential way.¹¹¹

The colonial/modern construction of gender and race helped to undo relationality. The social world was divided depending on the color of skin, making coalitions harder. Gender was also organized around race and vice versa. The modern/colonial gender system could not exist without the coloniality of power, since population classification in terms of race is a necessary condition for its possibility (Lugones 2008: 68). Sexual and marriage unions between black and Indians were prohibited, “surrounded by myths of cursed progeny, such as the possibility of being born with a stigma of color and other vices, that were often considered congenital or acquired in drinking ‘breast milk’” (Pineda in Rojas 2002: 32). To have intercourse and procreate with someone of the same or inferior race represented *un salto hacia atrás* (a step backwards). The teleology of linear time could not be more explicit.

¹¹⁰ Recently, the State condemned Mancuso, one of the paramilitary leaders that participated in the demobilization process and was extradited to the United States for drug-trafficking in 2008. Mancuso was found responsible for 8,518 acts against victims, including 205 cases of gender violence such as rape, forced abortion, and STD transmission (Sarralde Duque 2014).

¹¹¹ Beyond this physical violence, women continue to be a minority in spaces of political decision making in the country; they are subordinated in the symbolic sphere, conceived as sexual objects, while those that assume an active political role are military targets (Wills Obregón and Gómez Correal 2006), and have to face double or triple work shifts and machismo in their own political organizations.

Some of Abya Yala's inhabitants and African people were stripped of their power. The power that emerged from community bonds, constituting a power from below, was silenced by the Conqueror. In other cases, existent hierarchical power that had never reached European dimensions of destruction was captured. The body was the object of violence, physical, symbolic and psychological. The *holistic body* was turned into an object of domination. The body was lacerated, the mind and the spirit controlled. A new way of thinking and enacting spirituality was imposed. Religion and education were foundational strategies of control and effacement of Abya Yala's and Africans' onto-epistemologies.

A political economy of meanings and things materialized during the colonial period (Rojas 2002: xix). Violence was also exercised in interpretation (Rojas 2002: xiv) and representation. Ethnocentrism, androcentrism and anthropocentrism are monologic, violent interpretations of reality and the holistic world. Not only was relationality among humans undone but also relationality with nature. Another ontology centered on humans was imposed, alongside with others feelings and ways to relate with multiple others.

This violent enterprise was central to the development of capitalism. Nature was conceived as an object of intervention, a commodity. Territory became land, a resource for individual accumulation, wealth was compared with money, and economy was alienated from community (Polanyi 2001). Race and gender worked as social constructs useful for the control of labor (Lugones 2008; Mendoza 2014b). The economic, cultural and social practices associated with Capitalism were present during the colonial period though they have changed over time. "Colonial practices of domination and the political economy of capitalism are related to the formation of identities and differences between civilizers and those to be civilized" (Rojas 2002, 164).

By the same token, race and gender constructions were essential to the configuration of liberal democracy. Without colonization it would have not been possible to establish Western nation-states and racist, patriarchal capitalisms (Mendoza 2014b: 96). The modern/colonial system of domination was sustained by the production of knowledge and the objectification of the “Other.” Throughout the centuries, chronicles, maps, diaries, expeditions, paintings and letters have enacted an epistemological violence that attempted to erase others’ epistemologies. This process went hand in hand with the negation of others’ ways of government, sociability and justice. An ontological imposition necessarily entails the attempt to blur difference, which is feared.

From this onto-epistemology and history emerged the notions of democracy and citizenship. Mendoza (2014a) states that the current notion of citizenship can be traced back to the definition of humanity during the 16th century, when the Vatican recognized that Indians were humans, and to the debates of Juan Gines de Sepúlveda and Fray Bartolomé de las Casas. The legal, theological discourse of the “rights of people” did not change the colonial violence against non-whites. It was not able to stop the development of the colonial social *ethos* characterized by violence, the absence of law and the impunity of the colonizers, giving way to a senseless ethics that infringed on the precarious lives of the people of the New World (Mendoza 2014a: 138-140).

Nevertheless, domination is never completely reached. Resistance is an intrinsic part of domination, but does not necessarily support domination. Sociology of absences and emergences requires seeing the permanent capacity of resilience, inventiveness and adaptation of “women,” Indians and blacks, the neglected subjects. The power of resistance was acted out in bodies, minds, spirits and social organization. Black women “chose” to abort fetuses rather than give birth to a new slave. Although the Europeans tried to banish indigenous spirituality through

evangelization and the construction of churches in the same places where tribute was paid to deities, indigenous people were capable of maintaining part of their beliefs by way of syncretism (Gruzinski 2000).

In spite of the fact that the Africans that arrived to Abya Yala lost their communal belongings and were divided in the New World in order to avoid solidarity and rebellion, they were capable of maintaining some aspects of their cosmologies, which helped them to face domination and create some alternatives to Spanish domination, such as San Basilio de Palenque. Maroons—black slaves that ran away from their owners and concentrated themselves in insolated territories—created San Basilio de Palenque, where an autonomous economic and administrative system was built, as well as linguistic and cultural expressions that still live in the present. This town was the first free territory of América recognized by the Spanish Crown (Hernández 2012).

The new gendered and racialized subjects continued moving their bodies to the tune of the African drums, their souls followed birds, observed the moon and the sun, listened to mountains and rivers, talked with animals and spirits. Some of them, especially females, continued cultivating life, giving love, performing solidarity. In spite of the fact that hegemony always wants to erase resistance, here it is, walking potentially towards liberation. It is in this history of domination, resistance, emancipation and liberation, where the other organizations of this study were born: *Proceso de Comunidades Negras, Madres por la Vida, Asociación Nacional de Afrodescendientes Desplazados*, and the *Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca*. Both La Mache and Juan Tomás' relatives are part of this long-term history, as well as the indigenous peoples of the Northern Cauca and the relatives of Manuel, Antonia, Candelaria, Eloisa and Micaela, who were killed in the rivers, forest, towns and cities of Cauca and Chocó, in the Pacific region where enslaved people, and Afro-descendent and indigenous

communities have lived for centuries and are now claiming the right to remain there and follow their particular ways of relating with territory, animals, and minerals such as gold.

Becoming a Nation-State

*El problema de la Independencia no
era el cambio de formas,
sino el cambio de espíritu
José Martí (1891: 35)*

*The problem of Independence was
not a change in manners,
But a change in the spirit
José Martí (1891: 35)*

Independences, conceptualized as revolution and emancipatory epic (*gesta*), became the first moment of transition of modern/colonial worlds in Abya Yala. Transition does not imply a radical transformation of a state of affairs; to the contrary it is one of the ways in which the hegemonic modern/colonial ontology is perpetuated through time. It achieves that because some of the minds and souls of the *damned of the earth* (Fanon 2004) were conquered. Thus, political imagination was captured by the Western ontology, making its model of society the only valid and possible one. In that way, linear time, a core part of modernity/coloniality, was enacted and reinforced.

The independence of Europe's colonies in Abya Yala was related to the revolutionary cycle that started at the end of the 18th century under the anti-feudal conceptions of the European bourgeoisie (Viqueira Albán 1987) inspired by the French, Belgian, Swiss, Dutch and North American revolutions and impacted—in the case of the *Nueva Granada*—by the Napoleonic invasion of Spain. The processes of Independence in the region followed the same path and principles of the European model. Therefore, it was imperative to build a nation-state, pursuing the principles of Freedom, Equality and Fraternity.

The ideals of reason, progress, popular sovereignty, democracy and cultural independence, integral to the Enlightenment discourse (the second modernity), were also a core

component of the discourses of the newly independent politicians. These ideas potentiated new beliefs for a society that henceforth sought to be modern, “anthropocentric, democratic and liberal” (Ocampo 1989: 10). The goal was to build a republican government that allowed political independence and the realization of the national being. Under the imposed model, this task required the conquest of a geo-political space for its development.

The Creole¹¹² elite faced the challenge of creating a political-administrative structure where the national territory and an ethnic and spatial consciousness previously did not exist, and where the State could become a unifying entity of nationality. Therefore, the State preceded the nation in almost every aspect, and became the unifier and creator of a common past and future consciousness in order to invigorate a sense of national unity (Ocampo 1989: 44). When Creoles wanted to replicate a republican democracy, following the Western and North American model, this task was not easy, given the inherent characteristics and problems that the colonial experience entailed. It was not easy to establish modern forms of government in a space used to a system of colonial dependence (Ocampo 1989: 44).

The years 1819 to 1926 were crucial for the consolidation of the independent republic. The initial foundations of the nation-state took place between 1849 and 1878 (Cristina Rojas 2002), a period in which the Liberal and Conservative parties were also stabilized. In this period, “different articulations between knowledge, gender, and race allowed Creoles ... to consolidate power over mestizos, blacks, women, and Indians” (Rojas 2002: xxix). If in the past the Spaniards performed the task of civilizing now it was enacted by the Creoles. They not only replicated the master model, but they also wanted to be like them (Fanon 2008; Fanon 2004).

The new elite aspired to be the masters, thus they refused “to be governed in the name of civilization” but at the same time they “desired civilization because they wanted to be recognized

¹¹² Creoles are European descendants born on American soil that lead the Independence movements. Later they would recognize themselves as mestizos, since their project included the construction of a *civilización mestiza*.

by Europeans” (Rojas 2002: 6-9). A distorted image of themselves was deeply internalized. The mirror reflected a “white” subject, paying homage to the master, to the Father or the Colonial mother, forgetting the violence under which the colonial endeavor was built. A specific mechanism of oblivion and memory was performed.

The coloniality of power was internalized along with power as war. The Creoles initiated a dispute among themselves in order to become *the elected subject*, the One, the “I” truly capable of performing the civilizing mission. For Rojas (2002), the main disagreement within the Creole elite turned on how to achieve that endeavor. The series of civil wars that took place in the 19th century after 1810—the year in which Independence was attained—were part of a struggle for civilization on the part of an enlightened Creole elite.

Nine civil wars and nearly fifty regional or local conflicts occurred, most frequently in the period from 1863 to 1865 (Rojas 2002: 19). The violence that constituted them originated from those pursuing the civilizing task of that time, performing a war against everyone that opposed their project, a war that cost many lives, with the majority of them coming from the subjugated subjects. Violence was ingrained as “an ontological practice” (Rojas 2002: 23), making it consubstantial to the formation of the Colombian nation-state and its political identities. The struggle for Independence helped to justify the use of violence as an appropriate means for achieving what was observed as “ valid” political objectives.

If violence was the midwife of colonialism and Independence, it continued to be the midwife of the history of Colombia’s civilization as part of the Western endeavor of civilizing the savage territory. Society established violence as a legitimate guarantor of the dominant order. The Enlightenment principle of reason did not banish the practice of violence; to the contrary, reason was performed through violence not only in Colombia or Abya Yala, but also in Europe, as the Nazi experience showed.

The desire of the Creoles for civilization continued to be racialized and gendered (Rojas 2002: 24). The ‘will to civilization’ “was related to the prospect of the disappearance of old systems of hierarchy and power and the emergence of new [Europeans] forms ... European civilization furnished the model to be emulated, whereas indigenous practices were considered vices to be eradicated” (Rojas 2002: xxvi-xxvii).

The social pyramid had the Spaniards at the top, followed by the Creoles, large landowners and the incipient petit bourgeoisie, who had economic and political control in diverse regions of Colombia. Historically subordinated subjects such as blacks, indigenous people, less affluent sectors of society and castes, with some exceptions, continued to nurture the colonial social division. Although the emancipatory gesture allowed enslaved blacks to achieve freedom, and some poor people to ascend the social pyramid through military merits, the social structure remained divided according to race and class origin. In this “new” social structure the majority did not have access to formal education, political influence and material comforts (Bushnell 1996).

Racial differences continued to be produced under the colonial gaze. They were conceived as an impediment and a tool to legitimize the elite position of dominance (Rojas 2002: 16). Based on previous colonial racial divisions, the new elite proposed a mestiza civilization, of which the main intention was to achieve whiteness and remove, physically and symbolically, the traces of a black and indigenous past. José Eusebio Caro, a conservative intellectual, states:

“The human race conforms to the same laws as the other living species. Inferior races are destined to disappear in favor of superior races. Indians in America are almost extinguished. African and American blacks will disappear in the same way ... It is the destiny of the white race to replace all human races. In the end, the white race will provide the most perfect attributes” (in Rojas 2002: 31).

Although mestizaje is supposed to be a mixture of the “races,” its identity is constituted through the negation and hatred of a great part of the historical foundation of this concrete

subject—indigenous and black traditions—giving preeminence to white/European tradition. This subjective constitution is a core part of present-day Colombia, which not only negates the existence of racism but also Indigenous and black ontologies, and consequently, the alternatives that have emerged from them in terms of political, economic, cultural and spiritual possibilities.

As Muiyolema (2001) affirms, Latin America is a cultural project that is neither innocent nor neutral and that has as its foundation *mestizaje*, which mainly negates the indigenous. This project not only seeks to change the physical appearance of the inhabitants of the region, but also their minds. It continues to be a colonial enterprise that looks to integrate and assimilate indigenous peoples, conceptualizing them as a “problem.”

The war against blacks and indigenous peoples that was instituted as a fundamental axis of colonialism, continued during the 19th century. Indigenous and black women again became the object of violence due to their race and gender with the development of capitalism during the 19th century, and as new subaltern subjects, the peasants and the poor, were created as part of consolidation of the nation-state. Thus, the modern/colonial patriarchy continued delineating different subject positions—gender, race and class—developing new expressions of the diverse structures of domination and new power relationships and experiences for individuals.

The new power interactions materialized in the relationship between subjects and the State. Only the Creole elite had access to the control of the State and certain social subjects to the status of citizens. Indigenous peoples, blacks, women and poor people were not considered citizens, alienated from the right to vote and to decide the future of the Nation. The main identity of action-power-belonging of the time was denied to them; they were again infantilized, while the Creoles thought of themselves as the holders of Enlightenment reason. During the Republic “groups were differentiated by their capacity to “understand” the meaning of the revolution” (Rojas 2002: 28) in spite of the fact that the subjugated subjects were essential to the

Independence struggles. Similar to the French Revolution women were thrown back after the Republic was established. If Olympia de Gouges was guillotined in Europe, in Latin America they were under men's tutelage.¹¹³ The fate of blacks and indigenous people was no better. Slavery continued until 1852 and indigenous people had to face a permanent process of assimilation and extermination.

Reason, knowledge, government and economy were closely related. The figure of the sovereign took form in the recent constituted Colombia. Those that are "reasonable" can govern. The citizen par excellence was a white, heterosexual, literati and property male owner. A concrete political economy around civilizing qualities came about. "The literati were the architects of civilization, and their power stemmed from their capacity to produce, circulate, and value their most precious commodity: words" (Rojas 2002: 166).

Rojas (2002) argues that the wars of the nineteenth century were based, in great proportion, on moral and religious disagreements and on "a mixture of religious, ethnic, educational and regional objectives;" further, "violence during the nineteenth or twentieth century did not occur as a result of conflicts over material objects, such as wealth or land" but rather in the "formation of identities, especially partisan affiliation" (Rojas 2002: xxiv, 21). However, it is important to take into account the role of the material in a society that had previously constituted the power of domination in close relationship with the development of capitalism and the possession of material wealth; that was the way Spaniards conceptualized territory, nature, and subalterns.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ While during Independence female representations changed from the Spanish Madre Patria to a female Amazonian Indian, in the course of the consolidation of the Republic, the indigenous figure was replaced by the masculine depiction of Simón Bolívar, now the father of La Patria. America is "still represented as an Indian [but] she has lost her combative appearance. She is represented as a delicate girl dressed in European clothes (but with an Indian headdress) and protected by the patriarchal figure of Bolívar" (Rojas 2002: 16).

¹¹⁴ Fals Borda (1986),¹¹⁴ reflecting on the war of 1840, considered it essential to pay attention to the economic reasons behind the war, and not only the political radicalization of different local factions and regional dynamics.

The new “nation-state” was conceived as a booty of power. Emulating the colonizers included having both the material and the symbolic capital associated with them. It is precisely for that reason that citizenship is the product of the interrelation of property, education, race and gender in Colombia. In the Republican society the rigid colonial social structure continued nearly intact. High levels of wealth and power concentration were present, as well as tenure of land system of large landholders as the dominant group (*una propiedad latifundista de la tierra*), "a monopolistic dominance of natural resources" and the constitution of “landowners as dominant group with caudillistas and regionalist aspirations in their areas of influence” (Ocampo 1989: 49).

The formation of the “national” was accompanied by a struggle for the elimination of large landed estates (*latifundio*). While trying to avoid the war, peasants colonized different regions of the country (Nieto in Fals Borda 1986: 80), generating diverse forms of leadership and social organization that challenged the foundations of feudal tenure (*tenencia señorial de la tierra*), and permitted the organization of small farms in remote areas (Fals Borda 1986: 80). The history of domination, resistance and liberation is related in Abya Yala to territory and land, an ongoing struggle that continues until the present, and that has been central to the development of violence.

Even if one of the major changes that Independence brought was in the political structure (Ocampo 1989: 9), it did not imply a cultural political transformation. What Quijano (2007) names the coloniality of power was also performed through colonial institutions that remained after Independence, such as religion and education. Therefore, the structures of domination that

The Caribbean coast commercial bourgeoisie tried to strengthen the position of power they had acquired during and after the war of Independence, challenging the power groups of Bogotá—the capital of the country—and of the interior of Colombia that had the same objectives at the national level (Fals Borda 1986: 65). In this case the author states that what was at stake were divergent interests for the control of concrete economic mechanisms of commercial exchange at the regional level.

were produced with the colonial *de-encounter*, such as colonialism and capitalism, were deepening during the Republic. The “adoption of economic liberalism during the second half of the nineteenth century was related to the desire to overcome Colombia’s “barbarian” stage and to achieve “civilization” (Palacios in Rojas 2002: 2). Even though the Creoles criticized the economic model established by Spain in the colonies (stagnant production, barriers to external trade, higher taxes), during the 19th century an insulated regional economy with a close relationship with the metropolis remained in place.

Deas (1993), criticizing understandings of Colombian history that deny the existence of a State during the 19th century, considers that a "famélico and escueto" (famished and simple) State was in place at the local level, which enabled the spread of the national politics through media, language and the administrative order that the colony implanted in the past. This State was accompanied by elections, the mechanism that makes a nation-state a democratic entity. In the Colombian case elections promptly became a dangerous action. ***Blood penetrates the electoral system, intensifying antagonism and local and partisan loyalties*** (Deas 1993: 209). Elections were linked to the dispute of power among the elite.

The founding of the Republic meant the construction of new identities, as transitions and revolutions generally entail. The years after Independence were central for people’s politicization. The nation saw the establishment of the two traditional parties—the Liberal and the Conservative—in the midst of civil wars and at the local level.¹¹⁵ To understand this politicization it is important to take into account regional differences as well as the “naïve love” and local and personal identification in the comprehension of men and women’s political decisions during the Republic (Deas 1993: 178). Alongside the constitution of the nation-state, it was common to appeal to feeling, to people’s mobilization for the love of “something” (Deas

¹¹⁵ In 1849, the two central political factions, centralist (old Bolivarian) and federalist (old Santanderist), were declared political parties.

1993: 179). It was precisely at the local level during the civil wars that the two parties produced leaders that have what the old war manuals (manuales viejos) call the “art of enthusing the troops” (Deas 1993). Bipartisan affiliations are the result, Deas (1993), concludes, of the human condition of being a "client" of someone, either because they need favors or because one has inherited the condition.

Arguments related to the inexistence of a true State in Colombia have been common as a way to understand our particularity. This interpretation is an internalization of the colonial onto-epistemic imaginary. It supposes that we have not followed the model of the European State and that in correcting some of the errors, we will be able to be completely modern. Observing the formation of the Colombian state as part of the colonial experience, as part of one of its possible outcomes, can enrich the historical analysis. The history of the formation of the nation-state necessarily implies considering the particularities of the European civilizing mission carried out by the Spaniards, Creoles and the elites of the 20th century in the specific territory of Colombia-Abya Yala-Afroamérica.

Colonialism and the colonality of power produce a sort of *schizophrenia*¹¹⁶ in some of the dominated, who in the process of domination lost not only their cultural background but also their social and political past; their agency is coopted and trapped in the hegemonic logic. While new subjects emerged from domination through whitening, forgetting their indigenous and African roots, and emulating the Europeans, others remain as subjugated subjects. If during the colonial period black and indigenous people were conceived as inferiors and/or non-humans, during the Republic their sense of humanity was withheld from them through the denial of

¹¹⁶ I use the term in its general use, for instance, a “mentality or approach characterized by inconsistent or contradictory elements” (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/schizophrenia) with the intention to highlight that in the process of domination the dominated subjects negate their history and aspire to be like the masters, as Fanon (2004, 2008) described it.

citizenship. The sovereign has the power to decide who counts as a political being, and consequently who is truly human.

Colombia was one of the first countries in Latin America to grant women the right to vote. Although in 1855 the Province of Vélez approved it, this right was readily banned.

“Public life is not a woman’s place. Women must remain at home, softening with their **care** and smiles the bitterness we brought from outside. ... [To women I say,] Stay at home. Allow us the pleasure of being president or dictators, to intrigue in elections, insult in Congress, lie in newspapers, and **kill** our brothers in civil wars ... Women must be women: if they become politicians, and wear vests and boots and make speeches, that would mean their suicide. We will not be able to stand the presence of a woman in the Congress, even in defense of the Republic ... To accomplish her beautiful and heroic destiny, a woman does not need political rights, nor emancipation and independence as claimed by modern innovators. This is her humanitarian and civilizing mission, her true and heroic destiny: to support those suffering, to sacrifice for the ones she loves, to bring relief to the sick, to inspire compassion and virtue in her son’s heart, to fully accept the responsibilities of mother and daughter, to practice charity in the middle of a society full of egoism and love for money, to smoothen out habits and to bring home poetry appropriate to her charm, beauty, grace and tenderness” (Emiro Kastos in Rojas 2002: 33-34).

As we can observe in the later statement, the exclusion of women that was in place during the colonial period remain in the Republic, time in which modern/colonial dichotomies were reinforced along with their hierarchical character and the interrelations among them (reason-man-public / emotion-woman-private). The fear to the multiple Others also continued after the Independence. Each subject configuration that did not belong to the hegemonic subject was perceived as a threat, and consequently addressed with violence. Gender and racial violence against women, other genders, blacks and indigenous people continue over time changing its repertoires, and combining with class violence.

The schizophrenic dominated subject aspires to belong to the human community. To achieve that they need to follow the dominant logic although it is the same logic that excludes and dehumanizes them. Even though the people of the present are not the same as the people of the past, the *historical relationality* with a collective that gave rise to the subjects of the present

is completely lost, forgotten. Creoles, the new racial, economic, social, cultural and political elite—product not only of Spaniards but also of indigenous peoples and blacks—never really understood how colonialism worked beyond the occupation of land, its subtlest ways of operation.

They deprived themselves of other non-western cosmologies, ontologies, epistemologies and imaginaries. Creoles did not comprehend or care about the complexity and consequences of colonialism in their identities and constitution as subjects, and the main achievements of the master (Europe): to change the minds and souls of the dominated. This occurred, of course, because they wanted to hold power, power for domination. This onto-epistemic effacement has impacted Colombian identities and subjectivities, alongside with their/our political imagination.

As José Martí says, the problem of Independence was mainly the change of spirit. Latin American elites neither questioned civilization nor considered an alternative project than that of the European; the greater question turned on which European civilization to follow, giving birth to a process of dependence that has an inescapable source: the coloniality of their power (Quijano 2007).¹¹⁷ To follow the civilizing mission for the construction of the nation-state necessarily implied a change in the geography of the dichotomy, savage and civilized; now it could be found in the division Europe/America, but rather within America (Cristina Rojas 2002): elites/Others. Europe did not lose its superiority, but to the contrary it was re-conceptualized in other dichotomies such as developed/underdeveloped, first/third world.

For Elias “the concept of civilization played an important role in the drawing of borders among nation-states ... [it] organized the relations between nations as hierarchical differences” (in Rojas 2002: 166). Colonialism takes another form, the imperial globalization of the 20th and

¹¹⁷ During the 19th century, while the Liberal Party discrediting Spaniards’ capacity to install civilization embracing the Anglo-Saxon project, the conservative party established continuity between the Spanish past and the new republic (Rojas 2002: 26-27).

21st century, predominantly lead by the United States. Similar to colonialism, imperialism seeks to be a universalistic endeavor (Huntington in Rojas 2002). Plurality continues to be preyed upon by universalism. Transformative liberation cannot occur if the logic that illuminates it is the same as the dominant logic. It does not mean that the modern discourse that emerges with the European revolutions is in its totality useless. There are modern premises and practices that could lead to liberation if the patrix that gave birth to them is questioned, challenged and transformed.

La Violencia

*"Es verdad que el quinto mandamiento
manda no matar,
pero cuando es en defensa de la Iglesia,
el asunto no tiene estampillas"
Memorando Sucesos Soatá, 1933*

*"It is true that the fifth commandment
tells us not to kill,
but when it is in defense of the Church
the matter does not have an affiliation"
Memorando Sucesos Soatá, 1933¹¹⁸*

At the close of the 19th century, the Conservatives gained hegemony and formulated a new Constitution. The 1886 Constitution of Río Negro, which ruled until 1991, was part of the efforts of the elites to create a stable institutional system that allowed them to resolve their problems without using violence and opening space for the government to focus its energy on the development of national wealth (Palacios 1995). This Constitution, which approved an authoritarian and rigid centralistic government, recognized Catholicism and the Spanish language as fundamental aspects of the country's identity, giving power to the Church for the management of a variety of aspects of the national life. While the right to vote was approved for all citizens (excluding women), it was limited in certain occasions to those that owned property or collected annual rent, or were literate (Palacios 1995).

¹¹⁸ In J. Guerrero (1991: 206).

The State's attempt to manage violence did not work. At the end of the 19th century the country was living through the *Guerra de los Mil Días* (War of One Thousand Days), a new bipartisan confrontation that had as one of its outcomes the loss of many lives and the State of Panamá falling into the hands of the United States. During the first two decades of the 20th century, the country experienced an incipient industrialization accompanied by the emergence of a working class, the Socialist (1926) and Communist (1930) Parties, and by the development of land conflicts, among them those led by Quintín Lame, who was fighting against the dissolution of indigenous reservations and the exploitation of indigenous labor (Melo 1995: 75).

In 1930, the Liberals replaced Conservative hegemony. The Liberal governments formulated a series of reforms to face the new economic and social situation, including changes in the Constitution related to land ownership intended to deal with the struggles resulting from the transformation of the country's agrarian structure and land tenure (Law 200 of 1936) (Tirado Mejía 1995: 143, 147). At the beginning of the 1930s, the *ligas campesinas* (peasant leagues) started to gain influence; they questioned the concentration of land property in few hands, resulting from the disintegration of traditional relations of production in the countryside and the particular way in which capitalism developed - privileging the existence of large landownership (Pizarro Leongómez 1992). Conservatives, large landowners, and other sectors of society criticized the implementation of Law 200, halting its implementation in 1938 before it benefitted peasants (Kalmanovitz 1995: 272) or solved the problem of unequal land distribution (that year is cornerstone to explaining the beginning of the "internal armed conflict" in Colombia for some guerrillas and social movements).

In Colombia, *La Violencia* (1946-1958) refers to the period of contemporary history that includes a combination of violence emerging from different conflicts. The agrarian, worker and urban popular movements organized around the proposals of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán were severely

repressed. This violence overlapped with the popular reactions unleashed by Gaitán's assassination the 9th of April, 1948 (Pizarro Leongómez 1992)—known as the *Bogotazo*—and the ongoing-armed confrontation between the two traditional parties at the local level. Therefore, the socio-economic conflict for land was transformed into partisan rivalries, which contributed to the propagation of a factional culture. The violence of this period reached high levels of inhumanity, accompanied by terror, land grabbing, and the conformation of armed actors with different levels of organization: ¹¹⁹ the *chulavita* Police and the *pájaros* ("the birds," paid assassins) linked to the Armed Forces, now under the tutelage of the Conservative Government on one side, and liberal guerrillas and peasant self-defense groups on the other (GMH 2013: 112).

In the midst of *La Violencia* the only military government in the country's history was established, which proposed an amnesty to the liberal guerrillas and the peasants self-defense groups. While the liberal guerrillas agreed to it, the majority of the peasants self-defense groups did not, which created a repressive response from the State that then gave origin to the guerrillas¹²⁰ (GMH 2013: 115). The reasons behind violence in this period were related with both economic and political dynamics. The hegemonic model of the nation-state that the national elites followed was constructed around three foundational axes: territory, language and religion. Spanish and Catholicism, previously imposed during the colonial period, were ratified by the

¹¹⁹ Intellectuals started to look into this situation, acknowledging violence as a specific phenomenon and attribute of Colombia. In 1962 the sociologist Fals Borda, the jurist Eduardo Umaña Luna, and the Monsignor Germán Guzmán published *La Violencia en Colombia*, a critical historical reflection about violence. This is a pioneering work of what later comes to be known as *violentología* (violence studies).

¹²⁰ Colombian guerrillas are very particular in the sense that they emerged before the Cuban Revolution; they did not appear as a nationalist-democratic movement against a dictatorship or as a national liberation movement as was the case with Asia and Africa. The guerrillas were predominantly liberal in the period between 1949 and 1953; communist from period 1953 to 1958; and finally they became an expression of the new left with a different ideology from the Communist Party after the Cuban Revolution (Pizarro Leongómez 1992).

Creoles. The appropriation of land after independence and during the construction of the nation-state was central for the constitution of the new political-administrative unity.

Similar to the colonial period, land tenure became one of the central disputes between hegemonic and subaltern sectors. The unequal, racist and gendered appropriation of territory remains one of the core reasons for structural violence in Colombia. Inasmuch as territory became land, a commodity, at stake was also an ontological dispute that could not merely be resolved with an agrarian reform or a more equitable distribution of land (which implies the reification of the concept of land as commodity, as object) (Escobar 2015; Á. Reyes 2015). The problem of territory has to do with capitalism and modernity.

The appropriation of land as a re-foundation of space was hand in hand with the construction of regions. Some sectors of society established regions such as Antioquia, the Caribbean Coast, the Santanderes, Cauca and Boyacá, generating regional identities, some of the time more apprehensible than the Colombian identity. Before 1920 the nexus among the central, regional and municipal levels was not strong, which made local political dynamics crucial. Key actors of this scenario were the elites, among them the figure of the *cacique*, an intermediary that made possible the nexus between the local and national levels and the quotidian embodiment of politics.

Caciques—political clients of national politics that build a clientele in the local—mobilized feelings of particular party affiliation making people participate in politics. Around them “enlightened” capitalists constructed a dual power structure in which they had the power to influence military support and local decisions thanks to electoral power (Deas 1993). This dynamic of local power is central to understanding Colombia’s structural violence, and territorial disputes among guerrillas, paramilitaries and the State.

La Violencia is the result of the type of society the elites' choose to follow: the Western model of Civilization, the coloniality of power of Colombian elites, and the particular manner in which they developed it. It includes the bipartisan confrontations that took place after Independence and the armed confrontations during the first half of the 20th century (J. Guerrero 1991; Perea 1996).¹²¹ In order to understand the particularities of the Colombian case, J. Guerrero (1991) states that behind the use of violence as a collective resource there exist not only social, but above all cultural and ideological processes that resulted in violence(s) and contra-violence(s). It is necessary, J. Guerrero (1991) argues, to disentangle these acts of violence and understand them as the expression of a deeper and militant rootedness of religious ideas confused with political doctrines. It is to some extent a theocratic and moral cosmology of political behaviors (J. Guerrero 1991: 55). While Perea concludes that during the 1940s the political culture “roots its meanings in an imaginary horizon of religious nature” (Perea 1996: 76), Rojas (2002) states that the divide between Liberals and Conservatives during the 19th century was posed as a moral divide.

In the words of José Eusebio Caro, morality “is the only one and true query. This is the issue that explains the origin of the Conservative and Liberal party. ... [P]arty antagonism was defined in terms of morality (desire) and violence ” (Rojas 2002: 40). The antagonism between the Liberal and the Conservative parties is not based on a real opposition, but in the cultural substratum they share. Both parties embodied, lived and built the same traditional political culture, and participated in the same processes of political meaning production (Perea 1996). The partisan affiliation is defined by the “ancestral” symbols and feelings that the two parties evoke

¹²¹ As J. Guerrero (1991) states, violence during the first half of the 20th century is linked with the civil wars of the 19th century, a product of the formation of political actors—mainly the two parties—at the national, regional and local levels and their disputes for State power. As Daniel Pécaut affirms, the “civil wars of the past century transformed the party system into subcultures ... party identification overwhelmed any other social division, and the state was unable to guarantee the symbolic unity of society” (in Rojas 2002: 20).

as their own legitimacy. The parties normalized a particular identity that has been foundational to the Colombian nation.

Under this logic the entire country was wrapped up in the bipartisan logic underlying the social fabric (*tejido social*), and making people mere instruments of electoral politics (Perea 1996). This type of politics did not cultivate critical subjects but to the contrary paternalistic identities that needed a messiah, and had at its foundation violence and war. As part of this embedded religious character, our political life has been inscribed in the dichotomous logic of good and evil (Perea 1996) that ends in a continuous struggle in which the other is satanized.

In this political logic described by J. Guerrero (1991) and Perea (1996), the *cacique* is fundamental since it receives legitimacy through bipartisan politics (J. Guerrero 1991: 58). Thus, the control of local bureaucracy is essential for the exercise of hegemonic power. At the local level the political parties exercised a power that in some moments exceeded national-scale State power, and substituted its political, administrative, judicial, military and police functions. J. Guerrero (1991) observes the existence of the illegal and the legal in the local, which leads to an “imperfect” institutionalization of processes and a dual development of the system.¹²²

Sánchez and Meertens (1983) assert that *La Violencia* did not end with the beginning of the National Front but instead a new modality and phase emerged (1958-1965), of which the particular and dominant political expression was political banditry (*bandolerismo político*). In some regions the political banditry appeared as an “anarchist and desperate peasant answer” to a series of defeats, disappointments and frustrations forged since the New Deal of López Pumarejo (Sánchez and Meertens 1983: 9). In others the banditry emerged from the ruins of strong and well-structured leftist peasant movements. They generated new modalities of violence: the

¹²² Precisely these logics end in an institutional collapse in Boyacá—the region he studied—that then took to the partial collapse of the Colombian State, Paul Oquist’s thesis. As I mentioned before, it is common to focus on the state’s imperfections when attempting to understand violence in Colombia, something that I argue reproduces coloniality.

revolutionary violence of the contemporary Colombia, formed from the political relations previously established between the dominant classes and the subordinate sectors of society.

This phenomenon is “the result of the changing relationships between the rebels (*alzados en armas*) and the State, political parties and power holders at the local and regional levels” (Sánchez and Meertens 1983: 48). It is a social and political manifestation that has to do with economy, politics and social protest, tolerated by local inhabitants and supported by peasants and *gamonales*. Bandits, belonging to the Liberal and Conservative parties, mobilized local bipartisan identities and led the dispute against the centralization of the growing State (Sánchez and Meertens 1983). Thereby, banditry expresses class and bipartisan interests (Sánchez and Meertens 1983: 60).

The dispute for the State as booty, a competition for the control of the object of desire—that started with Independence—“precipitates aggressiveness” (Rojas 2002: 40), and includes the disappearance of the other. Since this logic questioned the legitimacy of Colombia’s elites, the quarrel for occupying the place and position of the Father (the Spaniards) was not resolved through the elimination of the other (Liberal-Conservative), but through the recognition of their similar economic, cultural and political interests. Thus the National Front (1958-1974) emerged as a type of transition aimed at legitimating both parties as the hegemonic leaders and establishing a pact of “forgive and forget” (Valencia Gutiérrez 2012).

The period of *La Violencia* as well as the trajectories of violence that followed that period need to be understood in the *longue durée*. This implies a broader understanding of the phenomenon of violence and the key actors of its development such as *caciques*, the two traditional parties and the economic elites, who have been the beneficiaries of that violence,¹²³

¹²³ This does not mean that I conceptualize political parties as homogenous and compact collectivities, or that violence is similarly experienced across the entire national territory. As Bolívar (2003) affirms violence expresses diverse modalities of territorial and social articulation between the State and society.

but also the subjugated subjects. Violence was not only reduced to bipartisan margins, but it also included important social conflicts in the periphery that helped to radicalize Colombian politics (Roldán in Bolívar 2003).

Since the project of the Colombian nation-state was embedded in the dominant Western ontology, other “Others” had to be eliminated. Structural violence against historically subjugated subjects remained. Indigenous and black people, as well as women continue to be the objects of physical and symbolic violence, ignored and conceptualized as infantile. This ontological exclusion intermingled with the communist threat, since a new political enemy was needed and configured: the “Left.”

During the first half of the 20th century the *mestizos* consolidated their civilizing project. Bogotá continued to gain prestige as the “South American Athens,” and strengthened centralism and regional rivalries with Antioquia and Caribbean regional projects. *Chicha*—an indigenous traditional beverage—was prohibited, considered an instrument for the degradation of the race, an example of the Eurocentrism and racism at the heart the elites’ nation-building project; it was a project that continued to be patriarchal despite the recognition of women’s citizenship in 1957.

How is it to forget?

*Song of the Indian Who Doesn't
Know His Distant Origin
Branch of a fallen tree I am
That does not know where it fell.
Where could my roots be?
Of which tree am I a branch?
I do not know where I was born,
Nor know who I am;
I do not know where I come from,
Nor know where I am going
(Quiñones in Rojas 2002)*

“**Pedro** was born on October 11th, 1990. He loved to read and watch Tv programs such as Discovery, Animal Planet, History Channel, and the Simpsons. Pedro behaved sometimes as an older youth that preferred a typewriter over a computer. He disliked drinking water in bottles or Coca Cola because he was concerned with the environmental crisis and the dynamics of capitalism. Despite his youth, he was familiar with the nexus

between Coca Cola and violence in Colombia. When Pedro was 10, he started joining a group in defense of animals that called for prohibiting them in circuses, and that looked to banish bullfighting, cockfighting, and the use of animals' skin for clothes. These kinds of collectives are closely related with anarchist groups; Pedro was thus exposed to their ideas and in that process he continually, in consonance with the changes that his mind was experiencing, transformed his look.

During his last year in high school he joined a group that carried out anarchist actions such as deflating the tire of the principal's car and hacked into the School's computers. They called themselves the FFs, which means Fuera Félix (Away with Félix, the school's principal). In one of his assignments, Pedro made a strong critique of the cost of studying in a Jesuit School and questioned the existence of God. He wanted to study philosophy but this was not possible because during the 2005 rally that each year takes place in Bogotá during Labor Day, the 1st of May, Pedro was killed by the *Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios* (ESMAD) (Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron), a special force of the Police created in 1999 with the objective to maintain control of social protest. That year, Pedro was only 15. He had a really strong and close relationship with his grandmother, who he respected for all her knowledge. He is usually seen now in posters, murals, t-shirts, and banners that *Mamoncillo*, his father who is part of the *MOVICE*, and other people, especially youth, have made to remember him.

Álvaro, the father of *Esperanza*, became a militant of the *Partido Comunista* (PC) (Communist Party) when he was studying Economy in the Autónoma University in Bogotá. He was part of the student and popular movements, and was one of the PC's "cuadros políticos" (political cadres). When he was forcibly disappeared, he was working with the *Contraloría Distrital* (District Controller Office), and part of Contraloría's trade union. Álvaro contributed to the creation of the *Contraloría Distrital's* Civil Servants Association and the Trade Union of Public Servants of Bogotá. He was also member of the *Polo Democrático* Party (Democratic Pole) and aide to the Citywoman and Cityman Aida Abella and Mario Upegui, both of them elected as representatives of the Patriotic Union. Álvaro did a masters in Political Science at the Javeriana University. He was forcibly disappeared the 22nd of April, 2008, similar to Jaime Gómez, when he was jogging early in the morning. Álvaro was 51. He was married with Teresa and had two daughters: Esperanza and Alegría. Always on his birthday Álvaro likes to go to the same bakery to pick up an enormous chocolate cake that he shares with Esperanza, Gabriela, and Sonia. Esperanza, a member of *Hijos e Hijas*, misses that, among other things" (Huitaca 2015).

Colombians did not enter the new century with hope. The final years of the 20th century witnessed the permanent degradation of security, and the elusive character of peace. During the first decade of the 21st century, many other countries in Latin America/Abya Yala/Afroamérica experienced a turn to the Left as a result of the active participation of *social movements, societies in movement and movements of society* rooted in the subjugated and neglected subjects, among

them the Indigenous people and poor sectors of society, as in the cases of Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Argentina, Brasil, Chile, Uruguay, Nicaragua, Paraguay and El Salvador. Meanwhile, Colombia had the most right-leaning government under “democratic rule.” The government of Uribe—observed as suspicious by other governments in the region—alienated Colombia from the new global conjuncture after September 11th, 2001 by his staunch alliance with U.S. President Bush’s policies, unleashing diplomatic crises with neighboring countries such as Venezuela and Ecuador.

At the end of the last century the armed struggle was re-evaluated and abandoned by the majority of Latin America, with the exception of Colombia and Perú (Archila and Cote 2009: 84). The FARC-EP during Uribe’s term suffered serious military defeats, while the ELN was not taken seriously by the State although a peace process was established. The Left experienced a process of consolidation after the crisis of the 1990s with the construction of political alliances such as the *Frente Social y Político* (Social and Political Front) in 1999, the *Polo Democrático Independiente* (Democratic Independent Pole) and the *Polo Democrático Alternativo* (Alternative Democratic Pole). Some of these alliances, besides others with Leftist sectors of the Liberal Party, enabled the election of a Leftist mayor in Bogotá in 2003, the second most powerful position in Colombia.

Over the last several years, historically subjugated and neglected subjects, whose demands have been "postponed," have played a central role in Colombia's protests, and in counteracting and making visible and public the country's structural violence. They are also enacting alternative spaces of peace. The women’s, feminist, indigenous and Afro descendent movements have confronted the abuses of the Sovereign and the “invisible hand,” questioning Colombia’s democracy, capitalism, colonialism, imperialism and patriarchy.

During the 1990s, an initial peace movement was configured, demanding the humanization of the conflict, a cease-fire, and a negotiated political solution with the guerrillas. A significant array of peace organizations emerged such as *Red de Iniciativas contra la Guerra y por la Paz*, REDEPAZ (Network of Initiatives against War and for Peace), the *Mandato Ciudadano por la Paz, la Vida y la Libertad* (Citizen Mandate for Peace, Life and Freedom) and the *Asamblea Permanente de la Sociedad Civil por la Paz* (Permanent Assembly of Civil Society for Peace). In this context the *NO MÁS* (NO MORE) campaign was developed, conceived as a protest against war, kidnapping, massacres, forced disappearances and displacement.¹²⁴

In addition, some women/feminist initiatives demanding peace emerged during that decade and the beginning of the 21st century such as *Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres por la Paz* (Women's Pacific Path for Peace) and *Iniciativa de Mujeres Colombianas por la Paz* (Colombian Women for Peace Initiative). The human rights project, *Colombia Nunca Más* (Colombia Never Again), an exercise of historical memory that attempts to document the “crimes against humanity” committed by the State and the paramilitaries in the period of 1968-1998 was created in 1996 (MOVICE 2012). This project was a significant antecedent of the MOVICE, established the 25th of June, 2005.

The MOVICE, an umbrella organization that has 22 chapters in different regions and provinces of the country, is composed of organizations of survivors of State violence; social, political, and juridical organizations that have been victimized and struggle against impunity, searching for historical truth, justice, and integral reparation (*reparación integral*); as well as by organizations that support and accompany the “victims.”¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Due to the increase of kidnapping during the 1990s, the Campaign focused more on that, which for some people contributed to polarizing “the country since it was more oriented against guerrillas” (Zuluaga 2000: 47).

In September 2006, in the II National Meeting of the MOVICE, the eight strategies that became the binnacle of the movement were constructed. These strategies are: a. Legal / law (juridical). b. Truth and historical memory. c. Ethical Commission. d. Non-repetition: legal prohibition of paramilitarism. e. Reparation. f. Struggle against enforced disappearances. g. Struggle against political genocide. h. Organization: strengthening of the MOVICE (In <http://www.movimientodevictimas.org/>).

In contrast to the relatives of the Palace of Justice's Cafeteria, the MOVICE has the organization of victimized subjects and social change amongst its objectives. Although in ASFADDES there are relatives of Leftist activists—this was precisely its origin—in the MOVICE the relation with certain Leftist tendencies is more explicit. The MOVICE combined Leftist objectives of transforming and organizing people—a position that resembles avant-garde ideas—with the demands of the victimized subjects of State and paramilitary violence without making the distinction between these two actors.

“I am an additional member of the Bogotá chapter: Bogotá, Cundinamarca. Here, where the idea is to talk about the problematic of victims [and] the events we have, we try to make certain events into newspapers like the Memory Galery; we do accompaniments, we go to universities, high schools, and different centers where they invite us to speak about what the movement is, its strategies. We rotate being the secretary position ... so that we all learn ... We have lots of workshopes ... about gender ... about the Victims Law, as new leyes and decrees appear ... and [those that lead the workshops] give us three, four pieces of paper so that we can see what the pages say with drawings, charts, and that relate what the Victims Law is in a much smoother, more colloquial language, so that we can reproduce it in other spaces. In the Bogotá chapter, ... we are all people with a maximum educational level of high school; one or another has gone to university ... and there are many peasants ... because ... we have the problematic that this is a site where many people arrive [displaced] from areas outside the capital ... This is what makes up the National Victims Movement and I am part of all this. Oftentimes they say ‘who is going out to paint?’, and so ‘I will!’ I raise my hand to go to paint [and] I have [to go] paint. Normally I do logistical work; I work on security and I am overseeing one event or another, such as the campaign against police brutality” (Mamoncillo 2013).

¹²⁵ In MOVICE (2012):

http://www.movimientodevictimas.org/versionantigua/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=2685&Itemid=322

During the 21st century, the MOVICE has been one of the most preponderant social actors in Colombia. Among its main achievements are re-shaping public debate by locating within it: the existence of State criminality; the dimensions and nature of the paramilitary project; the nexus between paramilitarism and the State; victimized subjects' rights; the asymmetrical treatment of “victims” of the State and paramilitary versus those of the guerrillas; and the almost invisibility of the “victims” of State criminality. All of these are not only the achievements of MOVICE alone, but also the materialization of the struggles and trajectories of ASFADDES, the relatives of the Palace of Justice's Cafeteria, and Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity, among other organizations of victimized subjects.

In the midst of the discussions around the demobilization of paramilitaries, a group of young people coming from the Left and social movements and/or sons and daughters of victimized Leftist activists started to meet to discuss their role as a generation in the country and in that particular conjuncture. In 2005, they made a public moral condemnation of the political candidates that had nexuses with paramilitarism and were running for popular elections in 2006. Following that public veto, they continued meeting and envisioning the dimensions and objectives of the organization, and until they publicly launched the movement *Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity* the 8th of July, 2006, in the context of the II National Meeting of the MOVICE.

They explicitly recollect and build from the legacy of the Left in Colombia and Latin America, yet aim to break with sectarian practices, putting unity over political differences and trying to not repeat the same errors of the Left in advancing its political project.¹²⁶ This heritage is observable in the figures of godfathers and godmothers of the movement. These include intellectuals, politicians, artists, and activists that have accompanied the movement since the

¹²⁶ In the public presentation of the movement they stated that unity is a formula that together with hope “heal our scars” (Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y Contra la Impunidad 2006).

beginning. *Sons and Daughters* was seen as a hope within the spectrum of the Left and also in other sectors of society that began to listen to the histories of violence that this new generation had to face in the context of the post 2005 memory boom.

As they expressed the day of their public presentation: “a new generation is again an opportunity. The daughters and sons of this history consider that our past deserves public discussion in order to clarify it. For that reason, we have decided to work together for memory and against impunity” (Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y Contra la Impunidad 2006). Similar to the MOVICE, they recognized and worked from the struggles of grandmothers, mothers, and sons and daughters of other latitudes, demanding truth, justice, reparation, and memory but from their own perspective (Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y Contra la Impunidad 2006). The movement mainly focuses on memory—performing a different array of memorialistic actions—as well as denouncing impunity and accenting the existence of social impunity and the necessity of eradicating it. This is to say, to eradicate the social allowance of State and paramilitary violence in the country.

Sons and Daughters is especially characterized by new modalities of protest that include art, music, and new languages, which at the same time are inserted into the traditional modalities of the Left such as rallies, discourses, and the idioms associated with the diverse traditions of the Left in the country. Similarly, *Sons and Daughters* gives continuity to the different modalities and repertoires of relatives but always tries to “actualize” them. In that sense, for example, they construct a gallery of pictures in which the pictures of their relatives were in color and smiling—contrary to the pictures of other relatives that are black and white and with serious faces—accompanied by a short narrative supposedly written by their father or mother in the present tense and addressed to their children. This narrative was written by each of the members of *Sons and Daughters* that joined this exercise.

To some extent, due to their generational belonging, *Sons and Daughters* generally questions the “common sense” of the organizations of relatives, victims, social movements, and the Left. Moreover, they envision themselves as critical and committed actors. Consequently, although they emerged in the “victims era,” there have been ongoing debates in the movement in relation to the category of victims and its uses, as well as with the relationship with the MOVICE and other organizations of “victims.” They situate themselves, rather than as victims, as actors of transformation essential to peace building. “We do not accept being reduced to victims that are calling for economic compensations” (Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y Contra la Impunidad 2006).

After developing, for more than two years, different commemorations and public actions around the history of violence against the Left, and about the history and proposals of this political trend, the movement faced a process of organizational burnout that had to do with a profound dissatisfaction with the practices associated with the transitional political moment initiated with Uribe and the paramilitary demobilization that made some of them carefully observe their own discourses and the reproduction of traditional power relationships within the organization that they wanted to challenge.

In this context, the movement decided to concentrate more on the internal organizational dynamic than on external action, a reason for which they formulated a process of strengthening capacities. In 2010, in the middle of a tense internal discussion, *Hescuela: Desaprendiendo para Liberal* (School: Unlearning to Liberate), a process of popular education, was initiated. In 2011, the internal discussion led to a division between two main groups. One maintained the original name, *Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity*—the one I belong to—and the

other spun off as *Hijos e Hijas por la identidad y la justicia, contra el olvido y el silencio* (H.I.J.O.S.)¹²⁷ (Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice, against forgetting and silence).

Besides peace, feminist/women, and human rights' movements, the victims' movement has been a significant actor over the last decade in Colombia raising awareness about violence and victimized subjects and relatives' proposals for building a society rooted in a respect for life and dignity. A relevant role has also been played by indigenous and Afro-descendent movements that have brought discussions related with territory and difference.

All of them, as well as some expressions of the Left—especially those sectors that have been the most targeted by right-wing violence and/or that are historically closer to guerrillas' history—have played an important role in the Forums organized by the Table of Negotiation (the FARC-EP and the State) and in calling for the construction of a peace that truly includes their demands. In this context, subjugated subjects have been central since clearly, the majority of “victims” come from them: women, peasants, and indigenous and Afro descendant people. As part of a long-term history of inequalities and exclusions, three items of the agenda have called the attention of these subjects, as well as to Leftist militants and human rights defenders: land distribution, political participation, and victims' rights.¹²⁸

After more than five hundred years the subjects that have been neglected and subjugated are the ones that are making radical demands and are proposing new types of social

¹²⁷ The division, from my perspective, was the result of political and organizational problems, among them, political differences in relation to the objectives and characteristics of the movement; the incapacity to deal with the different traditions of the Left; the exercise of traditional power relationships, especially patriarchal power struggles (Gómez Correal 2009); the breach of agreements; and errors of procedure that together broke the trust among a significant number of the members and exacerbated political and personal contradictions. These are elements that have contributed to divisions in other social movements, such as feminists (Gómez Correal 2011a). which makes it necessary for social movements to think more critically about them.

¹²⁸ While the guerrillas' vision is rooted in the Marxist class discourse, that of indigenous and Afro descendant people is framed in the experience of colonialism. The peasant' movements share both visions, though with different emphases, contributing also with peasant women's reflections on challenging not only capitalism and colonialism/imperialism but also patriarchy.

arrangements, questioning the foundations of modernity/coloniality in Colombia. Those that have been killed, disappeared and rendered invisible, treated as savages, irrational and enemies, dispossessed of their territories, ontologies, epistemologies and political propositions, are the ones that are contributing to conceptualize peace beyond a liberal notion that looks to maintain *the status quo*.

It is significant that the majority of second-degree victims are women. Their mere presence reveals the consequences of patriarchy, and the performing of a male subjectivity that privileges the identity of the warrior, conceiving other men as the enemy to be eliminated, and women as a booty of war. Other important second-degree victims are the sons and daughters of leftist activists, journalists, human rights defenders and peasants that have been forcibly disappeared and killed. Some of these sons and daughters have questioned their own political roots without abandoning their political legacy, integrating the experiences of other social movements, and broadening and challenging the Marxist discourse.

Now that it finally looks possible to reach an elusive peace in Colombia, an ontological struggle that has to do with the kind of peace and society that Colombians imagine has also become more evident. Under discussion are not only the restitution and/or redistribution of land, but also how we are going to relate with nature, a radical notion of territory, economic and political alternatives, as well as structures of affect (including emotions, care and belongings). A significant space of confluence of Leftist expressions, victims, women, indigenous, black and peasant initiatives that condense the ontological struggle and different conceptions of society is the *Cumbre Agraria* (Agrarian Summit) (Gómez Correal 2015).

In this conjuncture, transition is at stake. Colombia is applying the entire machinery of transitional justice looking to achieve peace. The notion of transition itself is in dispute, as well as the type of transition Colombians want to have. While the hegemonic transition equates peace

with modernity, liberal democracy and neo-extractivism, re-legitimizing the Western model of civilization and the liberal and bourgeoisie nation-state (Gómez Correal 2015; Gómez Correal 2014) some *societies in movement and social movements* are criticizing the foundations of modernity/coloniality without necessarily putting it in those terms, and disputing the *movement that society* is going to make.

The ontological struggle is arising among debates, alliances and conversations. Uribismo is radically opposed to the peace process and to the application of transitional justice, although during Uribe's administration it was used for paramilitaries under similar conditions. The Left and a variety of social movements have been making efforts of coalition in initiatives such as *the Ruta Común por la Paz* (Common Path for Peace) and *Clamor por la Paz* (Cry for Peace), marked by internal disputes that elections imply within the Left and that almost make them privilege the "political" over the "social." It is precisely in the electoral context that the *Frente Amplio por la Paz* (Wide Peace Front), a more partisan peace effort coming from subaltern sectors of society, emerged.

Although important expressions of the peace movement joined *Ruta* and *Clamor*, the absence of a constant presence of women, indigenous and black organizations speaks to the difficulty of establishing dialogue between the Left and historically subjugated subjects, a phenomenon that is due to the historical dismissing of their demands by the Left, and the mistrust that was implanted in these actors that has as one of its consequences the fragmentation of the spectrum of subaltern subjects.

The desire for peace induced the Left to support the Santos administration in a complex *movement* that shows the paradoxes of the use of violence by some segments of the Leftist spectrum. Critical sectors of society supported Santos in the second round of presidential elections mainly for his commitment to signing peace accords with the guerrillas, in spite of his

neoliberal agenda, and with the intention of avoiding the election of the other candidate, Oscar Iván Zuluaga, part of the *Centro Democrático* (Uribe's political party).

“Victims,” emotions, history, and politics

“There are four different questions related with the category of “victims” that I have had during the development of this research. The first one—the most evident for me—has to do with the almost invisibility of the “victims” of State violence, and the asymmetrical treatment that “victims” of the paramilitary received in comparison to the “victims” of the guerrillas. The other questions emerged during fieldwork. When I visited the Cauca for first time, I noticed that in the ACIN the concept and self-denomination of “victims” was diffuse and almost inexistent. The same happened during different conversations with members of PCN, who had difficulty recognizing themselves as “victims;” rather, in the conjuncture of the “*victims boom*” during Uribe's term, they had developed the notion of “historical victims.”

‘We are here ... we conceive of ourselves as historical victims ... We are not victims of this conjuncture; we are victims of the historical process of racism and exclusion that has taken place’ (Antero, PCN 2011).

‘I say that [as] Afro-Colombians, we have been doubly victimized, yes, because in addition to so many of our brothers, our relatives ... that have been physically killed, we have also been ... attacked culturally ... and cultural death is even more painful for us than physical death. When a community is impeded from developing its cultural activities, which are part of its life, that is a cultural death, like prohibiting, for example, that a community can bury its victims, have wakes [and] be able to sing them praises’ (Manuel, PCN 2011).

I have asked myself why, if they have been the subjects of State, paramilitary, and guerrilla violence, they do not recognize themselves as “victims.” The same inquiry jolted me during one of the national meetings of the *Congreso de los Pueblos* (Peoples' Congress) held in Bogotá in April 2013 that had a significant attendance of peasants. Although a great part of the participants were “victims,” this identity was not prominent in spite of the involvement of the MOVICE in the national meeting and the important work that had been done by relatives since the 1980s and victimized subjects since the 1990s. My tentative answer is that because they have been the objects of violence for decades and centuries, that identity did not add much to their struggles; also, contrary to other “victims” such as the Jews, they have not been taken seriously by the modern and Western notion of “victim.” In addition, religion has played a role in the dominant comprehension of victimization, since suffering is observed as something “normal” and almost “necessary” for redemption, and worthy of compensation in the afterlife; this is an internalized vision in many Colombians thanks to the predominance of the Catholic Church.

My third question is truly personal, and has to do with my experience within *Sons and Daughters*, where although emotions and affect are considered essential for the construction of the collective, for some members—especially men—the display of emotions such as sadness, solitude, and depression are seen negatively, and directly

comparable with the stereotyped vision of victims: subjects stuck in suffering and, in consequence, apolitical. This vision is the product of a Leftist emotional habitus as well as the embedded conception that it is not “good” to complain about suffering. My last concern has to do with the limits of the self-recognition of “victim,” something that I will explore in the remaining chapters of the dissertation. The following lines look to contextualize and advance some explanations towards these interrogations” (Huitaca 2015).

The emergence of the category of “victim,” which appeared in the context of the Nazi Holocaust, is closely connected with the way society relates with suffering, and in consequence binds with emotions. Like Redfield and Bornstein (2011) state, there are many cultural differences in which the suffering of the others is conceptualized as well as diverse approaches to it, in which religion plays an important role. The relation with suffering is also historical, as with humanitarianism, the western secular preoccupation for the suffering of others.¹²⁹ Thus, the contemporary assumptions about common human feeling and associated actions are historically and culturally bounded (Redfield and Bornstein 2011). From my perspective, its historical character has to do with both shifts and permanencies in society that must be identified in order to understand the way Colombians relate with “victims.”

The entire History of Colombia has been crossed by emotions. It has been the product of concrete emotional engagements with different *affective events* and people. Moreover, emotions have been a central element of politics but they have been hidden and misrecognized. Emotions

¹²⁹ Redfield and Bornstein (2011) and Laqueur (2009), among others, state that an emotional shift in Western Europe, England, and North America took place during the eighteenth century that contributed to the abolition movement and included the expansion of the category of the “human(e)” to incorporate “those who suffer across what would seem to be unimaginable distances, geographical and cultural, those who are in the old sense already excluded” (Laqueur 2009: 45). The emergence and development of humanitarianism in Europe and North America is tied to religious beliefs, especially Christianity, which played a particular role in the development of both the world of aid and the secular order of institutions that surround it (12). Religion has the task of giving people that experience suffering an explanation about it, as well as to offer immediate relief. In the religious framework, suffering has the possibility of bringing purification, and the transcendence of bodily states (Redfield and Bornstein 2011). The term “humanitarian” dates from the early 19th century, and it was used first to “describe a theological position stressing the humanity of Christ, and subsequently efforts to alleviate suffering or advance the human race in general” (Calhoun in Redfield and Bornstein 2011). Humanitarianism has to do not only with new sensibilities toward the Others, but also with political and economical processes. Haskell (1992) considers that humanitarian reform not only took courage and brought commendable changes but also served the interest of the reformers and was part of that vast bourgeois project that Max Weber called “rationalization” (108).

have also been essential for engaging with history, comprehending our past and present, and relating with the *Other*. Emotions have been mobilized for elections, partisan identities as Deas (1993) shows, and also for constructing the “enemy,” the “US” and the others, as Ahmed (2004a) analyzes.

The misrecognition of the role of emotions in politics is the product of the modern vision that organizes the understanding of the world around a series of dichotomies that sub-value certain subjects, aspects, and dimensions of the social in an effort to leave behind the “barbarity” of society and advance in the process of civilization that is mainly, if not exclusively, associated with reason and carried out through secularism. Thus, to dismiss the role of emotions also implies subordinating women (Spelman 1989 and Jaggar 1996 in Ahmed 2004a: 3), people of color, poor people, the “private” sphere, and practices associated with them for the Western onto-epistemology, such as household care, in its effort to come of age enacting a lineal time that aims to break with everything that is backward.

Therefore, in Abya Yala the Europeans had to make a double effort, first to leave behind their pagan practices, and second, re-structuring as their image and likeness, the “new world.” In that process a concrete *structure of feelings* and *emotional habitus* emerged. Following Raymond Williams (1977), certain “affective elements of consciousness and relationships” that express the connection between feeling and thought, “thought as felt and feeling as thought” (132) are historically produced. This particular structure of feelings creates emotional habitus (Gould 2009) that provides means for interpreting and naming one’s affective states. It is the prevailing ways of feeling and emoting, as well as the embodied, axiomatic understandings and norms about feelings and their expression that are socially constituted. An emotional habitus generates practices that shape affect and it is a critical arena of political struggle (Gould 2009: 40).

The structure of feelings and the particular emotional habitus that it creates changes over time, but it also keeps some historical sediment from the past that in the case of the contemporary Colombia are closely related with the colonial experience. As an exploratory idea that I have to develop more, I want to present some characteristic of a *hegemonic emotional habitus* that have been challenged by subaltern actors, the Left and victimized subjects, and its relation with the notion of “victims.” In specific conjectures, such as the transitional moment Colombia has been living during the 21st century, this habitus is reinforced and/or transformed, something that I will explore in the next two sections of the dissertation. As Gould (2009) states, social movements are sites “for nurturing counter-hegemonic affects, emotions, and norms about emotional display” (41).

The *hegemonic emotional habitus* of the present is product of a patriarchal and colonial society that hierarchized “humans” between men and women, giving priority to men as well as the right to exercise violence over women and subordinate and dominant them. In that process, certain attitudes and behaviors are associated with each of them and hierarchized. Therefore, men are conceived as aggressive and courageous while women are portrayed as weak and associated with crying, care, and guilt. That division is complemented by the construction of a hierarchy between “humans” and non-humans that is tied with the process of racialization that negates the humanity of indigenous and black people, and in consequence any “human” emotional relation with them, which at the same time entails a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate lives (Ahmed 2004a: 191). This situation changed first for indigenous people thanks to the theological debates of the 16th century that recognized their “humanity,” and then for black people due to the antislavery campaigns and the abolition movement of the 18th, both to some

extent the result of shifts in emotional engagements.¹³⁰ Notwithstanding these important transformations, black and indigenous people remained located close to the feminine and the racial inferior.

The humanity of indigenous and black people was recognized through the eyes that see them with the lenses of colonial charity and piety, and the patriarchal lenses of superiority and domination. Both gazes work together and are embedded with religious beliefs that help to reinforce one of the main emotional logics that are behind colonization: the fear and hate for differences, the disgust and contempt for the *Other* since they profess a dissimilar cosmovision. This emotional relation with the colonized concurrently internalizes a feeling of inferiority, disability, fear, resentment, and hate in them that helps to maintain domination. A coloniality of emotions emerges, which has as its foundation patriarchy and its devaluation of the feminine. A concrete type of love and “care”—vertical and not horizontal—is enacted; it is one that dominates the feminine (woman, indigenous, black, child), does not recognize the other as an equivalent, and does not potentiate it as valuable beings. Precisely, colonialism was conceived for some as a form of “care” for the inferior races through a type of “benevolent governance” (Redfield and Bornstein 2011).

However, the hegemonic emotional habitus was not capable of erasing others’ materialization of affect, the emotions and love that emerged from the closest ancestral, cultural, and social bonds within both the colonizers and the colonized. This, among other things, gives rise to the *structure of feelings* of humanitarianism and particular emotional habitus that were not capable of breaking with the already well-interiorized coloniality of emotions.¹³¹

¹³⁰ In relation with abolition, Redfield and Bornstein (2011) recognize a connection to transformations in the wider political economy, and to shifting sensibilities about pain and suffering, among other elements.

¹³¹ The abolition movement is an ancestor to contemporary human rights discourse, political advocacy movements, and humanitarianism; and it “suggest[s] the emergence and spread of a normative moral sentiment about the human

This hegemonic emotional habitus continued after Independence, subordinating women, indigenous, black, and poor people, as well as peasants, and creating a political enemy: the bipartisan political opponent. As Ahmed (2004a) emphasizes, some identities and communities of belonging are created by loving some and hating others. Emotions are central in shaping individual and collective bodies, and it implies “othering” those that are conceived as threat. “The narrative invites the reader to adopt the ‘you’ through working on emotions: becoming this ‘you’ would mean developing a certain rage against these illegitimate others” (Ahmed 2004a: 1).

“Conservatives, we can never hate neither José Hilario Pérez nor Obando as much as we hate President Olaya Herrera. And we will transmit that hate to our children so that some day they will avenge us” (Silvio Villegas in J. Guerrero 1991: p. 214).

Thus, love was extended to the Colombians that were part of the same party—the Liberal or the Conservative—and hate to the political contradictor. At the same time, misogyny and racism were delved, and classism developed. The relationship that emerged between the State and the people under this logic reproduced the feelings of inferiority and disability of certain subjects, forging a patronage relationship in which the notion of citizenship that is interiorized is one of dependence with a Sovereign that does favors, and not with a State that has certain responsibilities with its citizens.

In this context, emotions are exploited in order to maintain clientalistic relations and uncritical loyalty, which has played a part in the creation of subordinated, passionate, and uncritical subjects. The affect that is unleashed is materialized in a passion that repeatedly recreates hate and fear, disgust and contempt for the Others, and that ends up, as it was taught during the colonial period, with the symbolic and/or physical elimination of the Other. The Catholic Church fed the concrete materialization of this expression of the hegemonic emotional

amid the violence of market exchange, emphasizing bodily integrity as well as liberty” (Redfield and Bornstein 2011).

habitus, which reached a peak during *La Violencia* and its killing of each other: the liberal (communist) and the conservative.

Given the consequences that *La Violencia* produced for the Colombian elites, the National Front not only implied a political pact between them, but also an emotional one. Therefore, the emotional habitus was rearranged mainly in relation with the subjects that were the objects of certain emotions, without changing the logic that underpins it. Since the National Front, following the doctrine of the Cold War, a new enemy was created: the communist, the Leftist. In this case, the bourgeoisie and classist dimension of the colonial and patriarchal emotional habitus is emphasized, stressing contempt for the “popular” and feeding the class hate that some sectors of the Left started to express. Domination engenders violence and hate, at the same time that it is produced through them.

As a product of the colonality of emotions, in Colombia there is an observable legitimacy to physically eliminate a political opponent, who through emotions and reason is turned into an enemy, and who in the process loses not only his/her political identity but also his/her humanity. This modern/colonial *hegemonic emotional habitus* has been strengthened through the media, politicians, the Armed Forces, education, and through daily practice. It was not altered through the elaboration of a new Constitution in 1991, the widespread talk of human rights, and the signing of peace accords. This dominant emotional habitus is a product of years of hate that have been incubated, and even legitimated, with great importance, by the Sovereign. Under this emotional habitus Colombians have been taught to see the suffering of certain subjects while dismissing others because some lives are more valuable than others and some Colombians are more human than others.

The consolidation of a patriarchal politics and a State through the ratification of violence, hate, and revenge have been taken to its extreme precisely by a “victim,” President Uribe, whose

father was killed by the guerrillas and who displays in its splendor the *machista* identity, the one that locates war and death over dialogue and life. He is a master of emotions. For his presidential campaign he mobilized the discomfort of Colombians with the failure of the peace process with the FARC-EP, accentuating the rage and hate of citizens toward guerrillas, and presenting himself as a Messiah capable of helping to resolve the problems and restore calm in the country.

Uribe did that by reinvigorating a nationalist discourse. As Ahmed (2004a) asserts, to feel love for the nation is also conceptualized as “to feel injured by these others, who are ‘taking’ what is yours” (1). During his entire government, Uribe emphasized the polarization of the country, exacerbating the demonization of any Leftist initiative, recreating a hierarchy between paramilitary and guerrillas victims, and making the victims of the State invisible. In that way, the then president was looking to maintain the *hegemonic emotional habitus* that recognized the suffering of guerrillas and paramilitary victims in a hierarchical way—paramilitarism was tolerated as a necessary evil—and that almost completely misrecognized those of the State, among other things, because many of them were politically involved. Under this logic, the “skin,” the contact zone, repels any person that is different.¹³² Bodies cannot touch each other; the only possibility is to destroy them politically, symbolically, and/or physically.

The best example of this hegemonic emotional habitus and the dimension of victimized subjects struggles is the two big demonstrations that took place in Colombia and around the world in 2008: one was the 4th of February *against* the FARC-EP, and the other the 6th of March in *homage* of the “victims” of State violence. The first mobilization was called for from the State, although it was presented as a citizen’s initiative. Recent disclosure of documents of the DAS (The Administration's Department of National Security) showed that this State institution economically funded the rally, and that in addition, they put in place the *Operación Estímulo*

¹³² Ahmed (2004b) uses the metaphor of the skin.

(Operation Stimulus) as a strategy to sabotage the other public demonstration, distributing information supposedly signed by the FARC-EP invited to the rally in homage of the “victims” of State criminality. The objective of the Operation was to involve the guerrilla as a main actor of the public demonstration (*Noticias Uno, La Red Independiente* 2015:

<http://noticiasunolaredindependiente.com/2015/02/08/noticias/la-operacion-estimulodel-das/>).

In Colombia, the *hegemonic emotional habitus* has been central for domination and the maintenance of the *status quo* by mobilizing people’s feelings, creating communities of belonging that oppose the Other, negating their humanity and political character, and reinforcing partial accounts of history and reality that invisibilize and negate certain actors, experiences, and suffering. The onto-epistemological undervaluation and misrecognition of emotions has avoided seeing the important role that they play in domination, the part that they can have in liberatory transformation and the dimensions of social suffering. Thus, although to be emotional in politics is seen negatively, there are certain emotions that are associated with masculinity and that are accepted in certain subjects. President Uribe’s aggressiveness and hate towards the FARC-EP has been tolerated and supported by a great proportion of Colombians who also hate, although the majority of them **do not** recognize that they are experiencing that feeling because, among other things, the Christian tradition professes love and compassion towards everyone.

At the same time, another *emotional habitus* has been recreated within the Left and social movements that is related with indignation, solidarity, love of “the people” (*amor al pueblo*), class hatred (*odio de clase*), and the revolutionary imaginary.¹³³ This emotional habitus has been fed by less hierarchical and dominant versions of Christian beliefs, especially those related with

¹³³ This revolutionary imaginary states that people have to do something in order to change his/her life beyond complaining, and that the political militants are willing to offer their lives for the revolution and the people. These ideas some times end up negating any private and public claims about suffering, something that to some extent also has a relation with the Christian notion of the Messiah that takes the form of the elected subject in the Leftist discourse.

Liberation Theology that developed their own conceptions about love and solidarity.¹³⁴ One of the best examples is the notion of *amor eficaz* (effective love), developed by the Priest Camilo Torres (see 2010).

This emotional habitus has been materialized in practice: the armed and civil struggles, and through some discourses such as the framework of human rights—whose trajectory in Colombia I will analyze in the third section of the dissertation—and *creole* versions of humanitarianism. Both emotional habitus—the hegemonic and the Leftist—have impacted the way “victims” are observed by Colombian society. On their own, I think, the victimized subjects and relatives of this research are developing a concrete emotional habitus that is linked with other feelings and emotions more embedded in communitarian forms of social organization such as those displayed by peasants, indigenous, and Afro-descendent people, and closest to those dimensions of the feminine that have been negated by domination and the modern onto-epistemology. These other emotional habitus are contributing to the construction of a particular *structure of feelings*.

As I already mentioned, the concept of “victim” appeared with an association to the suffering of Western people in the context of the Nazi Holocaust. Although blacks, as Fanon suggests (2004), were the object of aberrant practices that produced suffering, they were not conceptualized as victims, and colonialism was not observed as a “Holocaust.” Thus, this particular notion was born as linked with a specific type of subjects that among other things were “innocent” and incapable of defending themselves. This definition of the “victim” is essential to comprehend the engagement of the State and Colombian society with the victimized subjects produced by the Sovereign, that almost always are conceptualized as guilty in part due to their political belongings.

¹³⁴ Jesuits, among other religious grassroots communities, are really important. For future work, it would be interesting to do a conceptual map of these different expressions.

In Colombia, the notion of victims was widespread in the 1990s as the result of the work of relatives—which does not mean that they liked or proposed that category—and human rights organizations, as well as the spreading of humanitarianism in the country (Tate 2007; Aparicio 2012). This humanitarianism was part of what Redfield and Bornstein (2011) call the emergence of reconfigured forms and norms of the sorrows of human experience and efforts to alleviate it that took place in the final decades of the 20th century, and that was translated into the notion of “humanitarian crises.” In the 1990s, an explicit “rivalry” between the victimized subjects of the State and the paramilitary with the guerrillas was cultivated, in contrast to the hegemonic notions of humanitarianism that grounded their work in a universal humanity, turning suffering into an apolitical experience. The notion of victims reached its height during the first term of ex-president Uribe, when it helped to communicate some dimensions of the existing political, cultural, and ontological conflicts with the State and the elites. According to Carlos Rojas (2013) in one of Colombia’s national newspapers, the category of victim appeared 588 times in 1990, but 2,398 times in 2000, and 6,762 in 2010. Legally, the category appeared in 2005 with the Justice and Peace Law (Law 975) that governed the paramilitary demobilization.

The victimized subjects of this research have challenged some of the common stereotypes about “victims,” among them, depending on the particular history, the condition of innocence of the first-degree victimized subject, the passivity of the first and second-degree victims, their political character and association with a suffering that paralyzes, and the conception that justice has to be reached in the afterlife. Similarly, they have demonstrated that they are not vengeful and opposed to peace, an imaginary about victims that is the product of Colombian history and the continual appeal to violence to resolve conflict. Doing this, the subjects of this research are opening a broader conversation about the importance of discussing social suffering beyond the legal framework. I will focus on their experience in the next two sections of the dissertation.

To conclude

One of the central topics of discussion of the current conjuncture is violence, a violence that through daily life and a pervasive historical practice became consubstantial to Colombian society and the formation of the nation-state. Violence's bases are not cultural or natural, but historical. This historicity, linked with the Conquest and the implementation of modernity/coloniality has been performed through the implementation of the Western project of civilization. This project includes a well-interiorized misogyny, racism, classism and Eurocentricism. Social relations, emotions, politics and culture have been infused by the logics that made colonialism possible: the subordination, elimination and control of differences through concrete ideologies, practices, and emotions in which religion and economy have been fundamental. The Spaniards disarticulated and dismembered the diverse collective bodies that were present in Abya Yala when they arrived to the South American continent. They also did the same with individual bodies to punish rebellion and generate fear. This practice of dismemberment was internalized and practiced by the State and paramilitaries, carrying out the elimination of the "Other."

Dismemberment necessarily includes *oblivion*. Dominant power always makes the effort to suppress the memories of resistance and liberation, as well as people's capacity to reinvent and continue. The construction of the nation-state implied forgetting the previous moment of our reality – the colonial period – and its subjugated subjects. Every hegemonic transition since the Conquest has been a constant exercise of *oblivion* not only of resistance but also of the violence exercised against subaltern subjects. Therefore, the majority of those that have employed violence have been "apologized for" by history, repeating again and again similar historical logics. As Rojas states the denial of history makes the linkage between the past and the future impossible, with another effect: the inability of dominated people to heal, which results from

their lack of presence. Healing requires a symbolic presence, and knowing the roots of *our* suffering (Rojas 2002: 43).

Some of the intellectuals that are part of *violentología* (violentology, the studies of violence) and others that study the second half of the last century have explained violence as the result of the constitution of the Colombian state, arguing that the State was weak or non-existent. This argument uncritically reproduces Western dominance, taking the European nation-state as the model we have to follow without questioning the coloniality behind it and the modern project with its implications in Abya Yala, Afroamérica. In that sense, it has been commonplace to understand Colombia's reality as part of an unfinished modernity (*modernidad inconclusa*) that shows a broad gap between modernity and modernization.

To the contrary, I argue that Colombia has one of the types of nation-state that the colonial experience produces, and that a core part of this kind of states is structural violence. Violence is consubstantial to Colombian State's formation not as exceptionality but foundational to the European civilizatory task and modernity (Bauman 1989) Violence is the direct and explicit foundation of the political order, not a rupture or the beginning of a new moment (Perea 1996).

Under this perspective it is urgent to explore how to describe Colombia's reality in relation to the long experience of violence. It requires questioning both the notion of the internal armed conflict¹³⁵ and state violence or state terrorism. Colombia has lived through a **structural violence** that has as its roots political, social, economic, cultural and symbolic exclusion as well as land grabbing.

The notion of the internal armed conflict—used to describe the confrontation between guerrillas and the State—loses the historical background of guerrillas' formation. *A longue durée*

¹³⁵ The critiques of this notion were elaborated with Camilo Álvarez, a member of Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity (Álvarez and Gómez 2013).

historical perspective that integrates the colonial period but also the formation of the Nation-state is fundamental to understand the violence Colombia has been living during the second half of the 20th century and beforehand. Although structural violence changes its manifestation, there is a historically rooted system of domination that makes it possible.

In spite of the fact that the notion recognizes an armed confrontation with the State, it overlooks State violence—a phenomenon that has been consubstantial to the formation of Colombia's Nation-state. Hand in hand with this “oblivion,” there has been an effacement of fundamental actors of Colombia's structural violence as well as their responsibilities; this includes elites, politicians, businessman, the Army Forces, and bipartisanship, among others. Thus, the fact that the State and concrete actors are the main beneficiaries of violence is hidden.

In addition, the armed internal conflict in Colombia is not only armed and internal, but it follows Cold War logics and world power arrangements. While the State has followed the United States' conception of war; the guerrillas have been fed by the Cuban, Maoist and Soviet revolutions. The United States has played an important role in the 20th and 21st centuries.¹³⁶ Finally, the internal armed conflict category excludes other conflicts that go beyond the binomial state-guerrillas, alongside with their actors and demands. Recognizing the plurality of conflicts and actors of Colombia's history allows comprehending the complexity of its reality, and thinking through and enacting the necessary solutions to structural violence. The only possibility of breaking with the war code in which peace is rooted (Foucault 2003) is to face structural violence in its entire complexity. This supposes putting a name to the ideologies and/or systems of domination that generate it.

¹³⁶ Colombia is one of the countries that has received the most “economic aid” from the US government; it ranks third after Israel and Egypt during Pastrana's term. The resources of Plan Colombia have been employed not only for the “war on drugs” but also as part of the State's struggle against guerrillas since the United States recognizes the link between guerrillas and drugs (Borrero Mansilla 2006: 120).

On the other hand, the notion of state violence has to be re-examined. The first responsibility is to name who has controlled the State and who has committed State crimes. The history of Colombia shows that a more formal State violence has been committed by the Armed Forces and other security offices since the 1960s through an *illegal use of the legal monopoly of force*. This violence is directly related to extreme right-wing groups that look to maintain the *status quo* in Colombia, the control of the state apparatus and the economic, social, political and cultural benefits reaped by the elites. Whether directly executed or ordered by them or not, this exercise of violence has been useful to the totality of Colombia's elites.¹³⁷

Victims' actions, demands, and proposals, as well as this historical moment itself, put the nation-state as a form of organizing society at risk. The Colombian state is a criminal one founded not only in violence but also in impunity. Any attempt to build peace requires the demobilization of the State—*its illegal use of the legal monopoly of force*—as well as the dismantling of impunity.

I assert that state criminality has existed since the very beginning of the formation of the nation-state. It deepens and maintains the colonial violence against women, indigenous and black people, continuing its exercise with the subjects that emerge as part of the configuration of the Nation-state such as peasants, Leftists, and other non-hegemonic subjects such as the LGBTQ community.

With this background the possibilities are few. The Colombian state can be re-legitimized in the present conjuncture without radical modifications; rebuilt as some Leftist social movements and parties attempt to conserve some of its controversial characteristics; or re-

¹³⁷ This pervasive and invasive war has not been experienced in the same way by every Colombian. The countryside has been hit harder than the cities, and the subjugated subjects more than the elites. This unequal distribution of violence is not only the result of the unpredictable outcomes of war, but also part of elites' decisions. "A comfortable relationship materialized between the elites and the military. In exchange for relative institutional autonomy, the army served as a retaining wall against not only revolutionaries' but also reformists' challenges to the interests of elite" (Borrero Mansilla 2006: 140).

designed in order to challenge the violence, power dynamics and inequalities that it reinforces and creates. Decolonial and communitarian feminists such as Segato (2011) and Paredes (2010) have sought to rethink the State, while other *societies in movement* have allowed a deepening of the critique of the State and helped to imagine other forms of social and political organization such as the Zapatistas and the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó.

Paredes (2010, 2011), drawing on the Bolivian experience to construct another type of *State*, proposes to destabilize the notion of the State as the place of power and to ask, what is the state of society or in which state does society want to be? More than as an institution, the State is conceptualized as a moment, as the construction of societies, namely, the construction of us. This proposal looks to create a communitarian state of society: the Community of Communities. In addition to critiquing the State, subjugated subjects questioning the ideologies of modernity as a whole.

As Segato (2011) proposes, it is necessary to establish a dialogue between the “positive” aspects of modernity, and the “positive” aspects of *Aldea*. This entails the very possibility of *historical pluralism*, the transformation of living through pluriversality, challenging the universal, the annihilation of differences. This dialogue makes possible a process of decolonization that begins in our bodies and minds, an enterprise that requires decolonization and de-patriarchalization (Paredes 2010).

Pervasive violence in Colombia has led many to believe that modernity is the answer when what is required in the present is to analyze the consequences of the modern/colonial system in Abya Yala (Gómez Correal 2011a). A productive dialogue about modernity that enables liberatory transformation requires questioning: a. the notions of universality and equality; b. the nation-state and democracy (structures that make the following notions possible); c. power relationships and political practice among subaltern subjects; as well as the construction

of identities and subjectivities (Gómez Correal 2011b). The Left and social movements, in my perspective, have not thought enough about the role of subjectivity and power in the permanent re-codification of domination.

522 years ago the Spaniards came to our territory. They exchanged mirrors for “wealth” with the inhabitants of Abya Yala (Melo 1987).¹³⁸ The mirror has become more than an exchange artifact or a delusion in the process through which our minds and souls were conquered and seduced, altering dramatically the perception of ourselves. Colonialism succeeded in transforming people’s perception of themselves and in capturing the political imagination.

Domination and its violence are invasive and pervasive. It takes place in people’s bodies, emotions, and minds, and it also permeates identities and subjectivities. Thus, for example, masculinity is constructed through the practice of violence, a long-term socialization that associates violence and the public sphere with man and creates subjects that found their security in holding a weapon and killing people. Femininity is also constructed through war, either because the majority of the second-degree victims are women, or because some female practices are attached to the figure of the warrior. In diverse regions of the country young women are looking to get engaged or married to warriors, figures of power and protection. A particular female aesthetic has been developed in the midst of the drug war in Colombia associated with plastic surgery and a concrete body: *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* (without boobs there is no paradise).

The *long durée* consequences of modernity/coloniality—besides racism, classism, misogyny, homophobia and the permanent desire to eliminate the Other—are our inability to think beyond modernity. The majority of Colombians, seeing themselves in a mirror, are incapable of observing their profound historical roots not only in terms of phenotype but also of

¹³⁸ See: http://www.jorgeorlandomelo.com/conquista_de_antioquia.htm

politics and onto-epistemologies. Since violence has also been performed in subtle ways, including representation, without any doubt, changes have to happen in both the symbolic (Rojas 2002: xxi) and material dimensions, in representation and the material conditions of life (Gómez Correal 2006).

“[The] conquest ... entailed not only the subjection of the land, but also the intention to control indigenous and African bodies and minds. The land was raped as well as our ancestors’ bodies. Since then, the *Pacha Mama* (the territory) and many of us have been struggling, crying, screaming. We have fought against every injustice that has taken place in the continent. With our struggles ... we are saying to the world that something is wrong with this type of society. All of us that have been born in this hemisphere have a similar past of violence. Our present was produced by that tragic logic. In the unfolding of our history some of us are forced to experience in a more direct way the consequences of a disastrous model of civilization that places us at the center of death. Our relatives’ bodies and our bodies have been the object of suffering. Theirs and our cosmologies, proposals, and projects of society have been continually targeted for extermination. Our ideas have been rendered invisible again and again. Many people have been disappeared, their bodies dismembered and hidden. Have you heard our cries and shouting? Have you seen and felt our struggles? We are here, we are there ... We are rounding the criminals and the murderers, we are imagining and enacting another type of society; we are becoming the continuous possibility of life. We are re-membering, re-organizing the collective body that has been disarticulated. We have to do that from different places throughout the continent, and at any moment, in every instant of our lives. We do that smiling, dancing, taking to the street and talking to each other in micro spaces ... Our struggles have to be understood also in the long-term ... We have been resisting since the Europeans came to Abya Yala. We are ready to continue with our struggle for the time that is necessary until we have justice for the crimes that the State has committed in ... [many] parts of this continent and the world. We want justice ... We are here to look ourselves in the eyes, to see our souls through others, and be capable of identifying the common history, that we, people from Abya Yala share. We are here screaming, talking, dancing, feeling each other, and saying to the world that the crimes and the genocide that took place, and still is taking place ... will not be condemned to impunity ... We remember, we walk, we dream, we are now and here re articulating a potential WE, an ancestral WE, ready to be an option for this present” (Huitaca 2014).¹³⁹

I am a historically subjugated subject, not only because I am a woman from a class working background, but also because when I see myself in the mirror I observe/feel a Creole-mestiza, a dark being with a small and thick body, a *human* not only with European roots but in particular with black and indigenous *rhizomes*. Thus, I am not only Antígona, the second-degree victim that lost her leftist father in the hands of Creon but also Huitaca, a figure of re-existence.

¹³⁹ This piece is part of a speech at the UNC rally in May 2014, organized to commemorate the first year of the genocide conviction against José Efraín Ríos Montt, an ex-Guatemalan dictator.

Colombians require a general understanding of history, framed in the *long durée* that can make sense of regional and local realities, and the particularities of certain subjects. Then, a collective memory and history that sheds light on the truth needs to be developed from below in permanent conversation with “national dynamics” and pedagogies of history and memory. It is of tremendous importance for Colombians to see themselves in the mirror of the past and to see each other and acknowledge that we have been living in war.

Comprehending the past is central to achieving justice and healing, a right that is not only for victims but also for the entire society. Colombia needs to know and remember not only to avoid repeating history—just knowing is not a guarantee—but to understand ourselves, our individual, collective and national trajectories. The process of understanding the past will allow the formation of other subjects, *Nego* subjects, capable of proposing alternatives to the always present-present. We need memory for life that empowers history and justice for life, the very possibility of pluralizing the future, the present and the past, the potential to recognize that H/history—the permanent actualization of reality—is not only made by humans but also by non-humans and non-living beings that assemble each becoming. This becoming.

Like Angelus Novus, they-US—the historically subjugated subjects of re-existence—neither turn their-our backs on the future nor only faces the past. They-we are enacting non-modern temporalities and options for *another* radical type of transformation beyond hegemonic political transitions. We are here, once again, after 552 years, perhaps enacting a Pachakuti, a time of renovation/revolution (Rivera Cusicanqui 1991: 11).¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ This is an Aymará conception of time and transformation, that is accompanied by the notion of *nayrapacha*, a vision of the past as past-future, as a renovation of time-space (Rivera Cusicanqui 1991: 10-11). The same author wrote, “The dismembered indigenous body will re-unite itself—Amaru and Katari did so—and the hour of pachakuti will sound, a time of renovation/revolution” (11).

CHAPTER 3: FROM LOVE: BECOMING WITH OTHERS

*What may it be?*¹⁴¹

What may it be
That they are longing for in the alcoves
that they are whispering in verses and ballads
that they are dealing in the dark of the burrows
that is in the heads, run on the mouths
that they are lightning candles in the alleys
that they are speaking aloud in the bars
that they scream in the markets,
that for sure
is in the nature, may it be
what have not sure, and never will have
what have no repair and will never have
what have no size
What may it be
that lives in the minds of those lovers
that the most delirant poets sing
that the drunk prophets swear
that is in the romarias¹⁴² of the mutilated
that is in the unhappy persons' fantasy
that is in the prostitute's everyday
in the outlaws, in the helpless
in all the ways
What may it be
what have no honesty, and will never have
what have no judgment and will never have
what makes no sense
What may it be
that all the warnings will not avoid
because all the smiles will challenge
because all the bells will sound
because all the anthems will devote
and all the little boys will run away
and all the faiths will meet
and the same Eternal Father,
that has never been there
looking at that hell, will bless
what have no government and will never have
what have no shame and will never have
what have no healthy mind
what it is that happens to me
that rottens me inside

¹⁴¹ This song was composed by Chico Buarque. The translation into English is taken from:
<http://lyricstranslate.com/en/o-que-sera-whay-may-it-be.html#ixzz3SulYGaUG>

¹⁴² It is a type of religious ceremony.

that comes from underneath my skin
and ascend my face and makes me blush
and jump into my eyes betraying me
and push my chest and makes me confess
what there is no way of hide anymore
and what is not right for someone to refuse
and what makes me a beggar, makes me beg
what have no size, and will never have
what have no heal, and never will have
what have no recipe and never will have
What may it be
that happens inside of us and it shouldn't
that disobey us, that is a default
that is like an aguardiente¹⁴³ that not satiate us
like to be sick in a party
that not even 10 god laws will conciliate
not all the potions will relief
not all the spells, all the alchemy
that not even all the saints, may it be
what have no rest and will never have
what don't get tired and will never be
what have no limit
what it is that happens to me
that burns me inside, may that happen to me
that disturbs my sleep, may it happen to me
that all the shivers come agitate
that all the burnings come stir up
that all the sweats comes wet me
that all my nervous feelings are praying
what all my organs are claiming
and a terrible fear makes me implore
what have no shame and will never have
what have no government and will never have
what have not healthy mind.

¹⁴³ Aguardiente is an alcoholic beverage.

Section IV. Caring, Feeling and Relating with Others

“That Tuesday, March 21st, I felt impatient with a strong desire to arrive home soon. Days before I was alone at home, my mother was traveling, and a strange question assaulted me: what would living be like without her? That Tuesday she called me to let me know that my father had not appeared since that morning, when he left his apartment to do his routine exercise in the mountain located in the *Parque Nacional* (National Park), in downtown Bogotá. Anguish overtook me for various minutes. I started thinking about what could have happened, and if he had suffered a heart attack or an accident and we did not help him in time. I was pacing around in my kitchen, making circles and circles, and thinking about what life would be like without him. I called my aunt, and then my uncle-in-law came to my home to keep me company. He suggested that maybe something more linked with politics could have occurred. At that moment I did not consider that, but when I was in the taxi that took me to my father’s apartment, I began to contemplate that possibility. After the search that was in place that night and the next morning, I became conscious that it was a forced disappearance, and I assumed that it would take time to find my father, of course, alive. I did not know from where, I think it was love. I mustered all of my internal instinctual forces to look for him. I experienced a lot of emotions during those days. My love for him accentuated, and I expressed it publicly in rallies, e-mails, and letters. There were nights that I could not sleep. I was worried, I was thinking about how he was, if he was eating, if they beat him, if they were torturing him, and what his reactions could be. Now I think that something inside me, beyond love, also made me move. There were moments and days that I experienced rage: rage with the situation, the Colombian State, certain institutions and officers, the media, and even with my own father. That situation was unfair and I had to struggle. That was what he and my mother taught me. It was what I learned from the social movements I have joined, and from the relatives I had been working with. We have to struggle against the things we consider unjust” (Huitaca 2015).



Figure 4: “Mandala”

First workshop with MOVICE’s Bogotá Chapter, February 13, 2013

[Source: William Oquendo]

This section of the dissertation analyses the role of emotions in the process of politicization of victimized subjects, the construction of victims’ identity and their subjective transformation, as well as the power dynamics that take place between victims and the State and paramilitaries. Identity, subjectivity, emotions, and power are not disconnected elements, but, to the contrary, are intimately related. The division that I am proposing—to address emotions in this chapter and power in the subsequent chapter—is both methodological and epistemological with the intention to make visible how power of domination works, its effects, the manner in which “victims” resist, and the emancipatory power that emerges from their resistance. In the third section of the dissertation, I will focus on liberatory power and try to do, similar to here, a kind of archeology, a dissection that allows us to observe both the real and the virtual.

Emotions are conceptualized in this chapter as a particular materialization of affect that work as judgments, evaluations of the world, and commitments (Oatley 2004). They are forms of explaining and predicting (Beatty 2014), not only reactions, but also actions (Ahmed 2004a: 7) and *embodied* thoughts (M. Rosaldo in Leavitt 1996: 524) that are essential for the construction of the collective and people’s political mobilization. As Gould states (2009), social movements are spaces of sense-making where emotions not only incite and shape, but are also generated by practices of meaning-making (13).

To some extent this section is a presentiment, an exploration of the affect that a violent event unleashes, a way to comprehend the effects of what becomes an *affective event* in first and second-degree victims’ daily life, an exploration of the way they “make meaning in the wake of death, lived in disquietude and fear, and lived with one another” (Chua 2014: 23). Violent deaths “can powerfully alter how people live and live with one another” (Chua 2014: 110), the reason for which it is essential to focus in the quotidian (Das 2008).

This section has been difficult to write. It contains repetitions, ambivalences, questions, analysis, pain, and emotions. Das (2008) claims that the conceptual structures of disciplines (medicine, social science, and law) transform the suffering of people, strip the victims from their voices, and distance the intellectual from the immediacy of the experience. As part of the epistemological and methodological strategy, these chapters are an effort to weave relatives’ experiences of victimization through their own voices. I did life stories with some of them (Camila, Esperanza, Juan Tomás, Mamoncillo, and La Mache), and interviews with others, such as Juana and Betty.

I consider of the utmost importance to avoid losing their voices in this dissertation—although it can occur in parts—not only due to my concern with power relationships in the production of knowledge, but also because I consider that the only way to grasp and understand the

tremendous impacts of violence and the role of emotions in social action is appealing to the subject that experiences it, and to feel those emotions and live through them. I try to explore what is at stake for relatives in everyday life (Lutz and White 1986: 431). In addition, I aim with this type of narrative to capture two key aspects: “its me-focus and its biographical import, the particularity of which makes emotion what it is and accounts for its social repercussions” (Beatty 2014: 556). I think that it is precisely their stories, words, practices, and discourse articulations that can touch you-us (the others) and mobilize our responsibility with their suffering. Finally, it is their right to talk, and our decision to pay or not attention to them, to reciprocate the important and painful *gift* they are offering to us.¹⁴⁴

The two chapters of this section start with ethnographic vignettes that recreate two of five workshops I carried out with MOVICE. In the first chapter I start with a semblance of the relatives’ past; the reconstruction of each of the characters differs according to the moment in which I established the dialogue and other research vicissitudes.¹⁴⁵ Next, I investigate what occurs after the violent episode interrupts the flow of life, and finally how a specific identity emerges from these concrete experiences of victimization. Transversally to these trajectories, I explore the role of emotions in the process of identity formation, politics, power, social action, and subjectivity. In the second chapter, I focus on the power effects of paramilitary and State violence, including some references to guerrilla violence, and on the way “victimized subjects” challenge it. In this chapter, I return again to identity formation and the subjective transformation process, incorporating some

¹⁴⁴ I conceptualize the struggle of relatives and victimized subjects as a gift to society. As Mauss (2000) states, to give a gift is make a present of parts of oneself. With this gift, victimized subjects and relatives are expecting reciprocity from the society. Their claims look to generate an obligation from the State and Colombians, and to work as a form of justice. In addition, gifts “to humans and to the gods also serve the purpose of buying peace between them both” (17), fostering reciprocity. In contrast with Redfield and Bornstein (2011), I emphasize the gift that relatives and victimized subjects are giving to society, and not the “gift” they receive from humanitarianism.

¹⁴⁵ My recorder was not working the day that I was with Betty developing the life story. I realized this later, during our conversation. To face this problem I will use parts of another interview that Liuvoff Morales did with her (Betty 2013), and the book *Vivir sin los Otros* (González Santos 2010), writing based on her story.

reflections about the consequences of this type of violence in the Nation-state's collective body and opening the door to explore the depth of "victimized subjects'" contributions in terms of both the real and the virtual.

In the analysis, I include my own experience using my two alter egos: Huitaca and Antígona. Some of Antígona's interventions are the product of interviews that other people did of me. I tried to not put my experience in the center, but I realize that sometimes it is the best way to communicate the force of emotions (Rosaldo 1989). Moreover, mainly in the second chapter of this section, I incorporate interviews and fieldnotes of my exploratory fieldwork during the summers of 2010 and 2011 in Buenaventura and Santander the Quilichao, as well as the reflections of my visit in May 2013 to the latter. In Buenaventura I did some short interviews with members of *Madres por la Vida*, *Afrodes*, and PCN. I consider it of great importance that my dissertation incorporates parts of the dialogues that I had with Manuel from PCN, Antonia from *Afrodes*, and Candelaria, Eloisa, and Micaela from *Madres por la Vida*.

In May 2013, I traveled to Santander de Quilichao with the intention of starting a collaborative process. I organized a workshop with the collaboration of the ACIN's *Tejido de Comunicaciones* (Fabric of Communication), but the conditions were not appropriate and I felt unprepared to manage such a context. Days before, the guerrilla had attacked the population, and a strong discussion was taking place between the FARC-EP and the ACIN that included the debate around whether the guerrillas' actions were or not crimes against humanity. When I was in the workshop, one of the participants was giving information to someone else by telephone about what we were doing there. I felt insecure but, more than that, I was worried for the people that were part of the meeting. I had international accompaniment and after the visit I could leave and return to Bogotá. But what might happen to the people that live there? To those that are in daily proximity with the victimizer?

At the same time that my worries were real and important, it was also my reaction to a context that I am not familiar with. The Governor of the *Cabildo*, López Adentro, was calling in to participate in the workshop with a megaphone, and the people that helped me arrange the visit were with me without perceiving anything strange. The co-existence with armed actors is part of daily life in many regions in Colombia, and the population has learned, to a certain extent, to manage it, and this includes silence, something that enveloped the space in moments. That day, I faced another reality of my country, a country that is still at war, and that even during war, has exhibited exercises of memory, justice, and resistance, but which are not the same everywhere. I hope to go to Santander the Quilichao and work with indigenous people in the near future because, similar to other victimized subjects, they consider it important to have accompaniment in the process of grieving and healing. As I already mentioned, one particularity of Afro-descendent and Indigenous communities in these two regions is that they have been object of State, paramilitary, *and* guerrilla violence.

This section draws on theoretical accounts of emotions, affect, suffering, and violence. I aim to contribute to the anthropology of social suffering¹⁴⁶ that is attentive to violence everywhere it occurs and that rejects the complicity with violence by opening oneself up to another's pain (Das 2008: 153). This anthropology contributes to making visible what has been rendered invisible by official amnesia and explicit acts whose objective is to make evidence disappear; it is a witness of the descent into the quotidian life through which the "victims" affirm the possibility of life (Das 2008: 167). Although one central question of this section is about grieving and healing, I avoid using work related with trauma that pathologizes and medicalizes people's suffering. I also stay

¹⁴⁶ This concept, proposed by Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock describes "the assemblage of human problems that have their origins and consequences in the devastating injuries that social force can inflict on human experience" (Chua 2014: 104). Suffering is thus conceptualized as "one of the existential grounds of human experience; it is a defining quality, a limiting experience in human conditions. It is also a master subject of our mediatized times" (Kleinman and Kleinman 1996: 1). Suffering is not a universal category, like Kleinman and Kleinman (1996) highlight: it has historical and cultural specificities.

away from social science perspectives that are more concerned with analyzing victims' discourses than in comprehending what violence did in women and men' lives.

In the analysis, I incorporate reflections that are part of my collaborative work with MOVICE's Bogotá Chapter and the minutes of an annual planning meeting of Sons and Daughters-Bogotá that reflect on members' emotional states, personal objectives for being there, reasons for staying, and the role of emotions in their belongings.¹⁴⁷ In the case of MOVICE, the participants were "victims" that have lost relatives, others that have been forcibly displaced, members of the Patriotic Union and the Mothers of Soacha, among others. Regarding the meeting of Sons and Daughters—that is, an organization comprised of not only women and men that have lost a loved one—also present that day were "second-degree victimized subjects," sons and daughters of Leftist and social movement activists, and a new generation of people that have been part of other organizational experiences, as well as others for which this was their first contact with political organizations. This section, as well as the dissertation in its totality, has been "molded by the necessities of the immediacy and the activism" (Das 2008: 147), by essential questions that this current conjuncture suggests for me.

Embodied emotions and relations

February 13th, 2013, *Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo's* conference room. We are on the 25th floor of the Avianca building, in the first workshop with MOVICE's Bogotá Chapter. Before starting the exercises that were proposed for the workshop, we engaged in an intimate ritual that allowed us to gain trust as a group, and prepare our minds, bodies, and hearts to explore how violence was imprinted in our bodies, the emotions we felt for our loved ones and those that we had experienced since we lost them, as well as how those emotions had traveled in our lives. We made a

¹⁴⁷ Although I was part of the organizing committee of that planning meeting, I was not in charge of designing that section. In Sons and Daughters, affect has been always recognized as an essential part of gathering together.

mandala—a spiritual and ritual symbol in Hinduism and Buddhism that represents the Universe—in which we wrote the names of our relatives and the organizations we belong to (MOVICE, UP, *Reiniciar, Movimiento de Víctimas y Sobrevivientes de la UP*, Sons and Daughters), as well as the elements we considered important to plant for the advancement of our struggles: truth, justice, reparation, no impunity, human rights, victims unity, accompaniment, resistance, and collective action. The mandala included not only the color papers on which we wrote, but also flowers, candles, stones, and photographs that were brought by me, Carolina Torres (a psychologist that accompanied me in the exercise), and some of the other participants. Around the mandala circle we took our hands and we asked permission to our loved ones and ourselves to address the questions of the workshop. This ritual unleashed an affect that was with us the entire day.

After presenting the workshop's objectives and agenda, we started with body cartographies of our emotions. First, we explored the emotions that the loved one (relative, friend, or comrade) inspired in us. Then, we described briefly the violent episode that took place as well as the feeling it produced, and the other emotions that have accompanied our journey. We located those emotions in the silhouettes of our bodies that we drew on two pieces of card stock. We helped each other to draw our silhouettes, and in the cases that participants asked for assistance, we found someone among us to support him or her.¹⁴⁸ That day we were remembering, thinking and feeling, having fun, joining the collective and exploring the connections between our emotions and body, as well as the impacts of violence in our lives.

Although each person experiences emotions in different ways and in consequence, particular forms of embodiment, there are common elements. All eleven participants drew pain on their

¹⁴⁸ That day around 15 people participated in the workshop. The majority of them were men although the universe of second-degree victims in Colombia is mainly composed of women. Eleven participants drew silhouettes, eight of them men and the other three women. The majority of the participants were from rural areas, peasants, and one indigenous person: La Mache. Mamoncillo participated that day as well. All of the city-dwellers were from working class backgrounds.

bodies. The second common emotion was impotence (7), followed by rage (6), sadness (5), fear (5), hate (4), emptiness (4), solitude (4), revenge (3), anger (3), force (strength) (3), hope (2), depression (2), indignation (2), and confusion (2). Other emotions, feelings and elements that were named were: love, happiness, dignity, energy, resistance, justice, loss, wound, terror, persecution, without escape, surprise, frustration, disappointment, resentment, craziness, uncertainty, exhaustion, weakness, decay, without force, wearing down (*desgaste*), discouragement, *complejimiento*, boredom, illness, recurrent thoughts, desire to go to other places, cold, support, solidarity, and accompaniment.

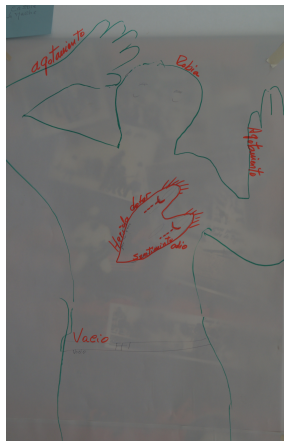


Figure 5: Body Cartography, La Mache

[Source: William Oquendo Rojas]

The main parts in the body that these emotions, feelings, and emotional states were located were the **head**: pain (3), rage (3), deception, anger (2), revenge, *complejimiento*, recurrent thoughts, sadness, love, craziness, surprise, indignation, dignity, and fear (left ear). The **heart**: wound that does not heal, hate (2), pain (4), rage, frustration, *complejimiento*, resentment, sadness (2), boredom, solitude, and force (strength). The **chest area**: dignity, happiness, fear, solitude (2), force, hate (2), revenge (2), love, support (2), solidarity, pain (2), indignation, anger (2), rage, impotence, resistance, emptiness, and terror. **Below the chest area**: fear, paranoia, persecution. In the **abdominal zone**: fear to be tortured, emptiness (2), anger (2), solitude, sadness (2), pain (2),

accompanied, uncertainty, and impotence. In the **entire body**: depression (2), solitude, impotence, sadness and discouragement. **Arms**: revenge, love, solitude, exhaustion, impotence (right and left hand), pain, sadness (left shoulder), solidarity (left hand), support (right hand). **Legs**: confused, loss, weakness, desire to go to other places, love, impotence (left leg), without strength, without options, illness, wearing down (desgaste), fear, solitude, hope (right and left foot), love (left foot), justice (right foot), and energy. **Genitals**: sadness.

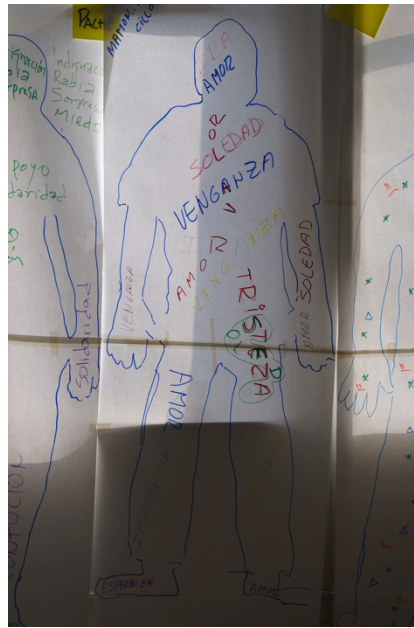


Figure 6: Body Cartography, Mamoncillo

[Source: William Oquendo Rojas]

At noon we took a break, we breathed, rested, and had lunch in a nearby restaurant in downtown Bogotá. After the break we drew the trajectory of our emotions, identifying key moments in the search for our relatives and the concretization of our demands, exploring how our emotions have traveled across time and their role in the struggle. At the end of the workshop we evaluated the work of the entire day. For the participants, the exercises were an important space to rethink collective action, to speak of and figure out the implications of violence in personal life, to express their feelings, and to have a place to deposit grief. It was also the first time that bodies were drawn, which opens the possibility to “embody what we feel and have inside” as well as to know

the body (Bogotá Chapter of Movice 2013). We closed the workshop around the mandala giving thanks to the space for the opportunity to think about our stories, struggles, and ourselves. The ritualistic dimension of the workshop induced some of the participants to remember their indigenous communities. The “spirit” was strengthened and “dead people were with us” (Bogotá Chapter of Movice 2013).

After we finished the workshop, we expended time carrying out a task that aimed to contribute to MOVICE’s Campaign, *Muévete: La Memoria está grabada en la Piel* (Move Yourself: Memory is recorded on the Skin), for the 6th of March, 2013, the annual day in which we honor the State’s and paramilitary’s “victims.” Each of us individually and collectively had to decide what to paint on our skins. On their faces, Mache painted a spiral, Mamoncillo a tear, one of the Mothers of Soacha the ying-yang symbol, and Antígona the H of *Hijos e Hijas (Sons and Daughters)*. Members of the Patriotic Union drew UP on their hands with the colors of the political party: green and yellow. And one member of the Communist Party drew the hammer and sickle. Mamoncillo and Antígona wrote on their arms, making a joint composition: “without forgetting” and “justice is not transitional.” Finally, we, collectively, wrote on our hands M.E.M.O.R.Y.

Body, mind, skin, and heart are articulated. Any of these are separated from each other. All of them give birth to the subject, who is not an isolated individual, but to the contrary, the expression of society. The life stories that follow are the concretization of two types of relationalities: the holistic being and the community.

Everyday women and men

Camila has a strong personality. She is a short woman with black hair that always is busy. If Camila disagrees or dislikes something, she will say it to you without any detours. She always gets to the point. I saw her for the first time in a workshop organized by IMP about victims’ rights and Truth Commissions that was held in 2003. It was one of my first contacts with the problematic of

forced disappearance. In the air that day, there was a tension between the figures of forced disappearance and kidnaping. I remember vividly that for Camila—who is the most publicly recognized member of ASFADDES—it was of the utmost importance to make the difference between one and the other clear, emphasizing that forced disappearance is a violation associated with State and paramilitary criminality, and kidnaping with guerrillas. My impression at that moment was that Camila was an angry person. Years after, through my experience, I comprehended from where her anger originated. During our conversations I was discovering a solidary woman that although strong has an immense sensibility. I saw her cry, avoiding remembrance of sadness episodes despite the fact that relatives that join such organizations are used to giving their testimony. Each of us has parts of our histories that we do not want to remember, or rather, to mention or share. There are memories that we put to rest.

Camila was born in Bogotá. She is 58 years old, and 32 years of her life have been “devoted to the struggle, resistance, and persistence against forced disappearance, impunity, and, of course, for the **recognition** and application of **victims’ rights**” (Camila 2013). Camila married young, at the age of 17, before finished high school. When Orlando, her brother, was forcibly disappeared, she returned to her mother’s home with her two children because she had decided to divorce. She was the eighth of 16 children. When she was 9 or 10 years old, her father died in a car accident, which changed the lives of the entire family. From that moment, her mother alone had to support 13 children.

What made her father really happy, Camila told me, was “to have children.” He was unionized and a member of the *Junta de Acción Comunal, JAC* (Communal Action Board); Camila’s parents were both liberals. Camila’s mother born in Boyacá, where her family experienced the prelude and aftermaths of *La Violencia*. They left the region but when some of her cousins returned to Boyacá, they were killed. The majority of them were “sued for being liberals” (Camila

2013). In that moment, people did not recognize it as a forced displacement, but “it was the massive displacement of people from the rural areas to the city” (Camila 2013).

Camila came from a politicized family, where reading was central. Besides her parents’ party affiliation and her father's communitarian and trade union activities, the husband of one of her sisters was part of the Communist Party, PC. When Camila was a child, she joined some of the social activities of the PC. At that moment, she states, the Communist Youth Union was clandestine. In addition, Camila studied in the public education system, which exposed her to the leftist political ideas of that time. Her brother, Orlando, was involved with the left, specifically with the civilian organizations that support guerrillas’ work in the cities, and also with ASFADDES. Orlando left home on November 14, 1983, to buy some sheets of paper to draw on and he never returned.

“When we realized what was going on ... we immediately began to feel the agony, the uneasiness, my mother said nothing ... the second day came, then the third morning he still hadn’t arrived ... so by the next night we said, ‘this isn’t normal ... there was no means of... no communication, we didn’t know ... phone numbers ... friends’ addresses, we could barely come up with two or three” (Camila 2013).

That day, Camila and her family started a type of “Calvary,” as Juan Tomás describes it, a journey that almost every relative of a person that is forcibly disappeared has experienced.

It is one similar to that which *Juana* lived through. I met her in a similar context as Camila. It was in one of the activities that IMP organized between 2002 and 2005 related with women, peace, and victims’ rights, and I saw her again in 2006. Juana lived during the time of *La Violencia* and the National Front. His father was the object of violence for being a Liberal, which made him displace. Her mother was a school professor, a very strict, religious and conservative woman that liked to read history. From a very young age, Juana read the liberal newspaper to her father, and learned from her mother to collect news, which led her to the creation of a newspaper archive.

Juana, an old woman, as well as Jorge, one of her sons, were *galanistas* when Sergio was forcibly disappeared. At that time she worked in the chain store LEY, in the area of industrial regulations and well being in the workplace. Juana, a white haired *paisa*¹⁴⁹ woman, is an example of a woman that joined the public political space due to violence in Colombia. She is a sensitive, creative, and intelligent person that created the Sirirí Operation, and that had the capacity to understand and respect her son's political convictions in a time in which the Left was considered the "internal enemy." Sergio was part of a young Marxist-leninist movement that collaborated with the EPL guerrilla.

"The day we spoke with Sergio ... because he had made the switch from Christianity to Marxism, [I told him] 'In this house you're not going to start preaching politics' ... [I told him] that I wasn't going to make a fuss, but that he also shouldn't be preaching in the house, that we should take care of each other and respect each other's political differences]" (Juana 2010).

Sirirí Operation was the strategy that Juana created to find her son. The Sirirí is a bird that does not rest until the sparrow hawks return the breed that he captured to the Sirirí. It is a strategy of patience and insistence that she applies with the State, the Armed Forces, and even with God.

"Back in 92 I bought the funeral urn [to bury Sergio] ... So there was the little white urn and so I would go to visit and I began to pray to the Lord the Sirirí Operation... I had to make up my own prayers because the ones I needed didn't exist... By then we knew already that Sergio was [dead]... in the army warehouse... 'Lord,' I said seated in front of the urn, 'I'm not asking you to bring Sergio back to life, I just need to get him out of that army warehouse, because his remains are there in a cardboard box and we all know that it's him... and I'm going to ask you this favor for the rest of my life, even if it's against your will... and after four years of the Sirirí Operation with the Lord... he finally responded with an attitude like 'I can't take it any more from this lady' (laughing)" (Juana 2010).

Fifteen days before Sergio was forcibly disappeared, she dreamed about an armed confrontation that then took place in reality. Similar to the experience of other relatives, Doña Juana had a *presentiment* of what could happen. Dreams have been key in these presentiments.

¹⁴⁹ Paisa is the regional nickname used for the people that are from the Antioquia and the Eje Cafetero (Coffee growing) region.

“I dreamt it before it actually happened. I dreamt we were on a ranch... in a humble little house... and that there was a terrible fire, and that I saw a lot of wounded young men, and that’s when I woke up, and so I asked Sergio where he was off to... ‘It’s that I dreamt this,’ I told him. ‘No, why are you so nervous?... I’m not making any trips in the next few days, I’m not going anywhere’” (Juana 2010).

Sergio had to make a trip that he had not planned to help a member of the EPL that was wounded in a confrontation with the Armed Forces in a ceasefire period during Betancur’s peace process. During that trip, he was taken by the Armed Forces the 3rd of October, 1984, tortured, killed, and forcibly disappeared. After my father was buried, and we saw each other in a panel in we both presented, Juana invited me to have a coffee with her. She shared with me part of her experience, looking to give me advice and also prepared me for the long path that I have to walk in search of justice and truth. She told me about something that she had not previously shared with anyone, a dream different from the one I just mentioned. It was like a type of complicity, a complicity that born from the shared experience. In that level of intimacy she explained me why although she was part of some organizations of victims and maintained polite relationships with some Leftist political parties, she decided to preserve her autonomy and to not belong exclusively to any one organization since political appropriation and disputes could occur.

Betty is also a relative of a forcibly disappeared person who came to be part of the public political sphere in the search of her loved one. Betty was not involved or familiar with any Leftist party, guerrilla, social organization, or social movement; she was a young woman that married Ramiro at the age of 14. By 1985, they already had 4 daughters. Betty attended the same public high school as Ramiro’s sister. Betty and Ramiro started to date soon after they met. Betty, like many other relatives, was rebellious during their childhood and/or adolescence. “I have always been very much critical of everything, really crazy ... a party animal” (Betty 2013).

Ramiro told Betty, one month before the siege of the Justice Palace, that two subversives were imprisoned with the floor plans of the Justice Palace and that security in the building was

reinforced. That 6th of November, 1985, she tried to communicate with him by telephone, but it was impossible. At that moment, the M-19 guerrilla Iván Marino Ospina command was taking the Justice of Palace, followed by its retaking by the Armed Forces. The armed confrontation that lasted 28 hours, although experienced with anguish by Betty, was not comparable to the worry pervading her after the ‘Holocaust’ was over, when she and her family did not have any news about Ramiro. He, as I previously mentioned, was not involved in any political activity when he was forcibly disappeared.

“I turned on the TV, but since the girls were having lunch there, I decided to turn it off and I said, ‘he’ll be fine’... I mean, when a person has no political agenda and he wasn’t of any real importance ... there was no reason to detain him or kill him, he wasn’t of importance to anyone ... I remember very well all the images... I remember the anguish... even if you feel and have faith that nothing is going to happen to your loved one, it’s the anguish of seeing tanks appear, something that no one can forget ... When you remember all that, and then it starts to bring back the memories of everything you saw during those days, you start to feel the **anguish** of those moments, and I’ll always remember that incredible **anguish**, the helplessness of seeing those tanks, of seeing people fleeing, the gunshots, the excessive force that was used... By the next morning the anguish had driven us insane” (Betty 2013).

I came face to face with Betty during a class at the Javeriana University in Bogotá, to which both of us, Erik Arellana, and Hada Luz García (members of Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity), were invited a few months after my father's funeral in 2006 to present our stories to students of the psychology department. While writing this dissertation, I saw Betty in a documentary about the Justice Palace’s juridical process, and what I observed was a worried, sad, and angry young woman that cried of anguish and impotence. The woman that I know now is one that has struggled to be happy. Since her husband was forcibly disappeared by the Armed Forces she joined the efforts of the Relatives of the Justice Palace’s Cafeteria.

Juan Tomás is a Kankuamo indigenous, part of the young Kankuamo indigenous organization and *Sons and Daughters*. He has been an active part of the Kankuamo’s process of cultural recuperation, which seeks to recover the practices, knowledge, and cosmovision of this indigenous society. Since an early age, Juan Tomás has shown certain gifts that allow him to see the

future and interrelate with nature and people beyond western rationality. When he was 8 years old, at midnight on the 26th of November, 1988, a pickup truck entered the indigenous reservation and took a complete family.

“[A family] of the last name Lame, the ones they disappeared, they only brought back two little girls because they were so small... People were saying that they were taken to a ranch of some paramilitary chief, that in that place they abused women, and that they bred alligators there... and that they had thrown women’s bodies to those animals so they would eat them... We grew up with that idea, but we thought that would never happen again. [In] 1996, we moved to a different village within the reservation and we started living in a community, the first community of the indigenous Kankuamo People that’s called Río Seco, [and one day] a paramilitary group comes in, I was really young still, I was around 14 years old... and they came right up to my house. When I woke up... I was wiping my eyes because I thought it was a nightmare or that I was dreaming... they had us closed in... they wouldn’t let us out because they had their guns pointed at us. They were trying to kill my father, tying him up to take him out of the house, and since he resisted they hit him... they left him for dead... beat up on the floor... My mother... she went out and said ‘Well, if you’re going to kill him, you better kill all of us, kill the whole family, kill even the one month old so that no one will have to work, no one will suffer, and when you’ve killed all the children you can kill me, you can kill my husband, and that way none of us with suffer working.’ The commander that was outside... said no, that they should leave us... my father... he was bleeding and they left, but the other homes they went to didn’t have the same luck because the rest of them were taken off and killed in the outskirts of town, some with stones, some shot with rifles, pistols... and I was finished grade school, so we all were left with this incredible trauma... after this I started to have anxiety attacks, I couldn’t sleep or eat. So my father sent me to Valledupar for a few months to see if I could get better. And they stated in the village. I started studying in Valledupar, but the fear stayed with me and when I went back to the village I couldn’t sleep because that image would come back to me, that image of all the tragedy I had gone through that night” (Juan Tomás 2012).

After these two episodes, the Kankuamo and the Lame continue to be object of violence. In 2000 there was another paramilitary incursion that Juan Tomás saw in his dreams days before it happened. The Justice and Peace Law then determined that the Corregidor of the town was a paramilitary commander that pointed out who, according to him, was a guerrilla or thief or not. Under a context of genocide against the Lame and the Kankuamo, Juan Tomás’ father became a military target; although he was part of a list of people to be killed, he had survived due to a series of circumstances that prevented him from staying in his home that night. This massacre made Juan Tomás’ family leave their territory and displace. After the displacement, his father continued to be

the object of persecution in the city, which made them change their home different times. After that, he was sought by paramilitaries and the Army Forces, who worked together in the zone.

His situation more or less improved when the Inter-American Human Rights Commission established precautionary measures in favor of the Kankuamo people. This helped to reduce the assassination of Kankuamos but did not stop them. Juan Tomás' cousin, due to the fact of being lame, was forcibly disappeared in one of these violent incursions, while others relatives were killed. Juan Tomás, a thin and small dark man that projects a profound sadness, is the product of a long-term history of racism in Colombia. Almost since he born, Juan Tomás had to face the proximity of violence, something common in certain rural areas in the country. The first time that I ran into Juan Tomás was in a National Meeting of *Hescuela: Desaprendiendo para Liberar*, a process of popular education of *Sons and Daughters* that took place in César State. During those days we both were having conversations about dead people, dreams, and indigenous cosmovisions.

La Mache as well as Juan Tomás is indigenous. She is Wayuu. Her grandfather, a mestizo, moved from the State of Nariño to Valle del Cauca looking for a better economic situation, and then moved to La Guajira. There, he married a Wayú woman with whom he had a child, Mache's father. Mache worked with the *Oficina de Asuntos Indígenas* (Office of Indigenous Affairs) when she was young, traveling across the country and working with different indigenous communities, among them the Xiona, Uitoto, Inga, Coreguaje, Aruacos, Uiwas, and Kogis. When Mache was in Cesar State, she met the father of her children, Rubén, a mix of the Wiwa and Wayuu people (La Mache 2013). She and her husband lived in la Sierra until the Armed Forces, who knew she was working with the State, advised her to leave the region because of problems on the way.

“I came and warned them, but no one believed me... the Army is coming tearing through the mountains, they're killing people, they're going to kill and drive [us] out of here. They didn't believe me, but I went with the father of my children way up into the mountains” (La Mache 2013).

Her life, as well as Juan Tomás', has been crossed with permanent violence and death. She made reference to violent acts that, due to the way she talks, appear to be part of the daily life in her region. Her husband's family was the object of permanent violence that seems to be provoked by territorial disputes. Paramilitaries and Armed Forces were killing people in the region and taking their land.

“So then they killed one guy, they grabbed him and smashed his head with a hatchet and then they captured another guy... they smashed him up with rocks, just like that, alive... his eyes fell out... they buried him like that. They sure did some awful things!” (La Mache 2013).

La Mache, similar to the other women of this story, is strong and courageous. She gave birth to her first children by herself, only with the company of a German shepherd. Her husband introduced her to the knowledge of Occult Science (*cienia oculta*). Rubén was *Piache*, an indigenous doctor, and invited Mache to join a training with the elders during one Holy Week that included advice from the Mamo and vice versa, as well as knowledges about plants, their properties, and the ways they can be used, including the appropriate rituals.

La Mache and Rubén had four children, two girls and two boys. She decided to leave him because she did not accept the Wayuu law that permits men to have more than one wife. When Majayura was born in 1985, Mache was joined the *Asociación de Mujeres Indígenas, Negras y Campesinas de Colombia*, ANMUCIC (Association of Indigenous, Black, and Campesino Women). ANMUCIC was the object of violent elimination by the paramilitaries. One of its main leaders, Leonora Castaño, who also was part of IMP, had to leave the country. During those years “200 or 500 members [of the organization] were killed” (La Mache 2013). In this organization, La Mache accompanied indigenous women that could not speak Spanish to the doctor and to State offices, and gave them orientation and helped to raise awareness about their rights as indigenous, placing emphasis on their condition as **human beings**. Rubén, her husband, was killed the 13th of June, 2000, and then her father also died.

“[The day that] they killed him ... I had bathed... and I started feeling what I had felt with [my daughter], I started feeling a **desperation**... a **desperation** in my body... an itching and I said ‘My God, what could it be?’ ... [When I called] Riohacha... ‘they killed the father of your children.’ I threw the phone down and ran out screaming like a madwoman... I got there [around] nine nights later... I got skinny, like a sorrow, like a sadness, knowing that my father was also ill [in Caquetá]... two people to mourn in the same month” (La Mache 2013).

After these two losses, in 2001, La Mache had to face the murder of her daughter. Majayura left her home to participate in the Wayuu national games, kissed her mother in the forehead and lips, said good-bye to her brothers, and traveled with the idea to sell *chinchorros* and collect money for her father’s *recordatorios*. La Mache started the “Calvary” to find Majayura, first to find her alive and later, for truth and justice. I encountered Mache, an old, loving lady, in the activities of MOVICE, and we got closer during my fieldwork with Bogotá’s Chapter. As it also happens with other young ladies, La Mache sees Majayura in me, which translates into loving hugs and words that sometimes I do not know how to reciprocate. In La Mache’s corporality is embodied pain, sadness, rage, hate, emptiness, and exhaustion.¹⁵⁰ Rage is located in her head, exhaustion in her arms and emptiness in her abdominal zone: she lost Majayura, who one day was in her belly. She drew in her heart two eyes that are crying. There, she has a scar that hurts, and in the same body part, she experiences deep feelings, among them hate. In her left arm she located the loss and a feeling of weakness.

Mamoncillo and I got to know each other in 2006. We were in one of the local government offices waiting to meet with the Major of Bogotá. Mamoncillo was demanding justice in the case of his son, and I was looking for help in finding my father alive. Mamoncillo, born the 16th of July, 1961, in Boyacá, named after a well-known worldly character, and with a “false” surname because his father was part of the M-19 guerrilla. Mamoncillo was a child when his father, who died years later in a gun accident, left. His father was also part of the Liberal Guerrillas and demobilized with

¹⁵⁰ La Mache, Mamoncillo, and I participated in the workshop that I previously described. Here, I am making reference to what La Mache drew on her body.

Guadalupe Salcedo, one of the main leaders of this guerrilla that was later killed despite the peace accords that he signed. His mother became the head of household, responsible for the three children.

Mamoncillo went to the elementary school in Sotaquirá, State of Boyacá and then to high school, which he almost did not finish due to lack of discipline. Before graduating from high school, he decided to travel to the Caribbean Coast and see the sea for first time in his entire life, then walk to Bogotá and towards the south of the country. Mamoncillo worked in different jobs that did not allow him to rest during the weekend and holidays. When he got a motorcycle he started working as a messenger, a job that permitted him to rest Saturday afternoons, Sundays, and Holidays. He studied design and publicity photography for a while, and then how to sell insurance at the *Instituto Nacional de Seguros* (National Insurance Institute).

Mamoncillo got married the 3th of December, 1989, and then divorced when Pedro was four years old. Pedro was killed the 1st of May, 2005, while he was walking in the demonstration with an organization of animal defenders that were accompanied by anarchist militants.

“Pedro says to me ‘Pa, I’m going to go downtown with some friends to buy books, so the two of us don’t need to go’ ... Pedro goes by the book stand ... he sees the demonstration ... and he joins them ... the police where using indiscriminate force, abusing their authority, they start launching tons of tear gas ... when the police shoot off the gases ... everyone, with the self-preservation instinct, starts running ... Pedro, who suffered from asthma since he was six months old ... is frozen there because he can’t breathe ... when suddenly eight members of the Esmad reach him and club him in the head and practically spill his brains out. He falls unconscious and as he is on the ground they kick him and they break his shoulder blade and ribs ... They call me and tell me that, he’s already at the clinic ... The doctor tells me ‘He’s in bad shape, he needs to be taken to the hospital ... he’s in critical condition’ ... They x-ray his head, he has cranial trauma ... a group of forensic anthropologists that [I found] to investigate the incident ... tell me that it had to have hit him extremely hard... to have broken several bones in his head ... **The blows were just so strong and blunt**” (Mamoncillo 2013).

Mamoncillo had to face another type of violence different than forced disappearance, but that which is also part of the State’s violence, particularly the militarization of society. The ESMAD is the *Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios* (Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron), a special force of the Police created in 1999 with the objective to maintain social protest under control. Mamoncillo and

other people have named this specific manifestation of violence *brutalidad policial* (police brutality), which is armored by a structural impunity that rules Colombia. Mamoncillo, a man with an average body and dark skin, communicates through his eyes both sadness and rage. Since 2005, he is part of MOVICE.

In his body lies a profound love for his son, as well as hate, impotency, solitude, revenge, hope, and fear. He located anger and love in his head, in his chest revenge, solitude, and courage, in his abdominal zone love, revenge, and anger. In his colon sadness and solitude take place. While in one of his arms he embodied revenge, in the other there is solitude and love. The child with whom he held hands in the past is no longer alive, but he now walks with a foot of hope and other of love. In his body Mamoncillo draw the emotions, one connected with the other.

Esperanza and I came together through distance. At that moment, I had just reached Durham to reside for eight months at Duke University while she was experiencing my same history in Bogotá. She awoke the feeling of solidarity in me since our histories were extremely closely tied: we are daughters, our fathers trade unionists that were forcibly disappeared in similar situations. On July 16th, 2008, I wrote a letter to her: *Carta a una Hermana* (Letter to a Sister).

“Esperanza ... I’ve never stopped thinking of you. Since I found out that they had taken your father away, it made me think of how I felt when I found out that my father hadn’t made it home. I thought of those days of **anguish**. Someone told me that you wanted to talk to me because the two cases were similar. And yes, the two cases are similar, especially because of that inexplicable feeling that rests in your heart and mind... Only yesterday I found out how young you are and now your pain pains me even more and I wish I could be there with you, but I can’t... Yesterday when I read the message that described the discovery of your father’s body, I felt a **rage** deep in my **bones**... The road you have started now is long, sad, and difficult, I won’t lie... Let all the things pass through your heart that must, the most difficult emotions; **rage, sadness, hopelessness, memories**” (Antígona 2008).

Esperanza is shy in public spaces, and a loving and cute person. She is small and has beautiful long hair. Esperanza is the youngest of this history, born in 1986 and the only child of her parents. She lived with both of them until she was six years when they divorced. Esperanza and

Álvaro had a close relationship. They shared time during the weekends and her father usually brought her to his political and quotidian spaces: soccer, chess, and meetings. Álvaro, she said, was affective in his own way.

“You learn to read certain mannerisms of theirs as affection ... I remember something, it’s that as a child I like to make photo albums, and he would always buy them for me ... buying the sheets ... That type of things I read as signs of affection from my father ... [he was not] particularly affectionate [like] hugging and kissing and saying [affectionate words]” (Esperanza 2013).

Esperanza lived in front of the neighborhood of my childhood, the Policarpa, until 1992. She was an undisciplined adolescent, which took her to the *Escuela Pedagógica Experimental* (Experimental Pedagogical School) and then to the *Universidad Libre* (Free University) high school, both schools known for their alternative pedagogy. While her aunts are catholic, her uncles, father, and mother are communists. Her mother, with whom Esperanza had a relationship of friendship, died from cancer in 2005. For Esperanza, this episode was tremendously painful. Since that moment she started to live with her father, sister, and father’s wife, experiencing a profound depression. This is a depression that is different than the one produced by her father’s murder, since the latter depends upon the will of others. When her father was forcibly disappeared, she was studying Social Work, and she started to become familiar with *Sons and Daughters*.

Antonia is an Afrodescendent woman from Chocó, but since December 22nd, 1999 she lives in Buenaventura. She is part of AFRODES, an organization of displaced people that work in articulation with PCN. She had to leave Juradó, located in the frontier with Panamá, after one of the guerrillas’ takeovers. She was an activist in her community and participated actively in the construction of the Law 70. When she was forcibly displaced, she was a Councilwoman in Juradó.

“And I had to leave, since ... they were looking for my head on account of ... my working for land tenure, that of Law 70, which was not in their interests because they wanted ... to take control of that territory in order to create their grand guerrilla empire” (Antonia 2011).

Candelaria, Eloisa, and Micaela are part of *Madres por la Vida* (Mothers for Life). While Candelaria's father was forcibly disappeared, Eloisa lost her husband and Micaela her son. All of them are living in Buenaventura, a place where different armed actors are present, making not only the rural areas but also the city a space of territorial dispute. When I was in a car moving from PCN's office to the central market to have lunch, I saw for the first time in my life a militarized neighborhood in which the word AUC was written. Based upon the conversation that I had with them, it was not clear who were the armed actors involved in the human rights violations they experienced. Since it was one of our first encounters, I did not ask about that.

Finally, Carlos joins this weave. He born in 1956 and after a process of blackness conciousness, he renamed himself as *Manuel*. He is part of PCN since 1992, and an active member of the community. Manuel was the first president of the Yurumanguí River ethnic-territorial organization, Aponuri. He participated in the reglamentation of the 55 transitory article that then gave origin to the 70 Law of 1993, and was the first legal representative of the Communitarian Council, from where he achieved the territorial rights of his community. He had been permanently threatened by the paramilitaries, and had lost some of his relatives.

“In particular, I have lost 12 family members to the hands of the paramilitaries. I have escaped seven assassination attempts, you know? In ... 2001, I escaped an an attack where they killed seven relatives: five nieces and nephews, and two cousings” (Manuel 2011).

The personages that join this narration, including myself, are from popular sectors of society or the lower middle class. La Mache and Juan Tomás are from indigenous communities, while Manuel, Antonia, Candelaria, Eloisa and Micaela are Afro-descendants. At the moment of the violent episode/s, they were living in their communities in César, Guajira, Chocó and Valle del Cauca Provinces; the rest of the personages were living in cities: five in Bogotá (Camila, Betty, Mamoncillo, Antígona, and Esperanza) and one, Juana, in Medellín. Those that live in Bogotá at

some point of their trajectories lived in the southern part of the city. The south and the north have class connotations in Bogotá. The north is associated with rich people while the south with the poor.

The majority of first-degree victimized subjects were the object of forced disappearance (Orlando, Sergio, Ramiro, Juan Tomás' cousin and relatives, Majayura, Jaime, Álvaro, and Candelaria's father), with the exception of Pedro and the relatives of Manuel, Eloisa, and Micaela. The majority of the loved ones that are forcibly disappeared or murdered are men, while the relatives are women. Others, such as Antonia have experienced forced displacement as the main consequence of a violent incursion, while for others it is part of a series of human rights violations.

For Betty, Juana, and Mamoncillo this was the first time they engaged in politics beyond voting in elections and being affiliated to one of the two traditional parties. The others (Camila, Mache, Antígona, and Juan Tomás) had joined social and political organizations or were familiar with them because of their relatives trajectories (Esperanza). In the case of Antonia, Candelaria, and Manuel they were involved in communitarian work before they were directly the objects of violence. In the cases of Micaela and Eloisa, it is difficult for me to conclude if they were or not politically involved in the past.

Orlando, Sergio, Jaime, and Álvaro were killed for their Leftist political belongings. Ramiro and Pedro were in “the wrong place in the wrong moment” facing the brutality of the State's armed apparatuses. Juan Tomás' relatives and Majayura were object of a violence where racism, misogyny, and classism overlap with the country's ongoing armed confrontation. In the cases of *Madres por la Vida*, Afrodes, PCN, and the members of ACIN, it is a similar situation, with the particularity that their territory is the object of dispute for the armed actors—including the guerrillas—and violence is also the product of development and capitalism.

Overall these stories represent a microcosm of the experiences of violence in Colombia. Some of these personages—those that are part of the oldest generation—made reference to living

through *La Violencia* (Camila, Juana, Mamoncillo and La Mache). Others are the product of a long-term history of colonialism, and the lived experiences of others are examples of the new configurations of violence after the 1970s.

In the stories of this dissertation and in others that I have listened to and witnessed in my entire life, there are silences. A lot of what is said is also hidden. There are relatives, circumstances, histories, decisions, and pains that cannot be said publicly because violence—the structures that create those events—is still in place. I found murders that are not denounced due to fear, others that you cannot claim because your relative was a guerrilla and was killed in irregular State operations; bodies that have not been found because the State exercises its right to kill without having to render an account since the “victim” was a “rebel” and, in consequence, not innocent; and families’ “political” composition that is difficult to mention because in the same family you could have victims of State’s violence and paramilitarism as well as a member of the paramilitary, or victims of the guerrilla and members of them. There are parts of many of these stories of violence in Colombia that cannot be told in public, silences that corrode the soul and that do not contribute to heal and grieve, partial accounts of what had occurred, and the existence of few intimate spaces where you can express yourself and the complexity of your life experience.

I have also found guilt and the interiorization of violence as something common and/or normal, especially in the countryside. One murder is followed by another, and preceded by many. Some of these silences become pain and suffering, making it more difficult to process, because it is not part of a collectivity. Grief requires the recognition of oneself and others about what happened, as well as healing individually and in company.

“The family members of many [of the disappeared] have one, first there was a denial of what their loved ones were, many of the parents did not choose to share what their children were [militant leftists]. . . one of the members of the Argentine team [of forensic anthropologists] said that in the case of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, one of the biggest motivations to take to the streets despite all the persecution and repression was their **guilt**. [The same has happened in Colombia]. . . the families didn’t identify with the ideas and

militancy of their loved ones... the families hid this, they didn't discuss it. Some in order to protect themselves and others... out of **shame**, not out of **fear**" (La Pola 2013).¹⁵¹

The unthinkable ...

"During those days that we were looking for my *daddy* my daily life completely changed. The second day we lodged the complaint in different State offices and we activated the State's *Mecanismo de Búsqueda Urgente a Personas desaparecidas* (Mechanism of Urgent Search for Disappeared People). We started visiting State and NGO offices looking for help. I went with some members of my family and *Poder Ciudadano* (Citizen Power) to the *Procuraduría* (Prosecutor General's Office), the Ministry of Interior, the Presidential House, the *Defensoría del Pueblo* (Human Rights Ombudsman's Office), among other offices and places. We met with the Attorney General, the DAS, the SIJIN, and the DIJIN, which are in charge of looking for missing people, and I also had interviews on mainstream TV, radio, and press, as well as in social movement media. We organized *plantones* (public demonstrations), rallies, and organized searches. We printed my father's picture and pasted it in different places in the city. During those initial days, I wrote a letter to my father that I circulated on the internet: *Carta al Padre no Kafkiana*. Later, on April 22nd, 2006, I titled another one *Miedo y Rabia* (Fear and Rage):

'Today I write with **rage** and **fear**. It isn't a hateful rage, and it isn't paralyzing fear. It's the fear of indifference, of the complicity of silence, of how violence and violations of human rights have become so ordinary, the fear of how permissive we've become of these facts. It's not a fear that they will kill me for speaking out, it's people's cowardice that enrages me. It's anger at the way our daily routine absorbs us and hearing that they accuse us and we can't do anything about it!' (Antígona 2006).

I received solidarity from friends, relatives, comrades, organizations, NGOs and strangers during that difficult period. The day that my father remains were found, April 23rd, I could

¹⁵¹ Each time that I consider necessary to protect the identity of one of the personages of this story I will use the pseudonym La Pola, which refers to Policarpa Salavarrieta, a heroin of the Independence that was shot during the process of Spain's attempted Reconquest.

not believe it. That Sunday, before I received the Bogotá Mayor's call, I was in my bed with a sign of depression: without any breath or desire to get up. After *Medicina Legal* told ex-Senator Piedad Córdoba that the remains found that morning were my father's, I started to contemplate the possibility that it was him. A profound feeling of displeasure and disgust was located in my stomach. At that moment, my only desire was to throw up. I felt the same after seeing my father's remains in *Medicina Legal*, and I experience that sensation each time that I learn about a human act that reaches the *unthinkable*. I did not cry in this moment, I did not cry the day we buried him. My tears came one after another the day that I took my things out of his apartment. Over the course of 30 minutes, more or less, I was just crying and crying in the taxi" (Huitaca 2015).

More or less in Colombia, we are used to violence. Not every Colombian knows about all the modalities and repertoires of dehumanization, but we know that terrible things have occurred in the country, and that they can happen again and again. What we are not prepared for is to lose a loved one, someone that is close to us, because in addition to the terrible pain that it produces, it also means that war is really close, and that death is hunting us. This kind of event wakes up Colombians, and makes them remember what type of society we are living in. The "dream" is over; reality has started. There are also some for which the dream period never took place, such as the history of Juan Tomás, part of the historically subjugated subjects that also experienced violence due to his race. Both contain tears and crying is a way to face this reality.

"She began weeping for the things she hadn't had time to weep for. The fear began to slip into her pores, fear of sleeping and... waking up without an answer. 'I can't believe you're dead', Betty would say, hugging the girls ... she suddenly felt the horror of being alone to take care of the girls, herself and with the absence of Ramiro" (González Santos 2010: 52).

"So the next day at 8 am my mom called and told me that a tragedy had occurred, that they'd killed one of my second cousins, they'd killed my cousin, they'd killed my godfather, that they had gone after my father, that she was just with my siblings, that it had all been a big tragedy, in this kind of tone (long silence)... 'A great tragedy, we have to leave, I'm already in the street waiting for someone to come by and pick us up, I'm leaving everything behind, **what matters now is our lives**... people are still so full of fear that they haven't even gone to pick up the bodies from where they were left. Everyone is so terrorized, everyone is going to leave town, no one is going to gather any of their things because there's no time'... They didn't bring anything with them, everything was left there... She began a really rough time, coming to the city empty handed is really tough" (Juan Tomás 2012).

"At that moment an Indian woman arrived, it had been about eight days [since my daughter disappeared], more than that... and she says ... 'They're killing the pretty girls.' I said 'Why?' she said, 'In Cuestesita, between here and Cuestesita they killed a few pretty girls'

... Right then the thought of Zuca came to my mind ... The indian woman left... I was left with a **foreboding**, that, like that **desperation**, that **anguish**... I ran over to the police station ... ‘A Young girl was found with long black hair, light skin, indigenous characteristics, no fat, a very nice body.’ ‘Son of a bitch,’ I said, ‘my daughter.’ I said it like that, ‘my daughter’... I was **desperate**, I didn’t know what to do... An unbearable **desperation** ... Three days or so went by... And we finally found transport, because nobody wanted to go ... We made it there. The inspector, who definitely knew, said he didn’t know anything, that I should ask the person who cleaned her up... [the people from there] held a vigil for her, they lighted candles for her... they dressed her... to bury her... and they... they said prayers for her. Then they buried her in a trench. My daughter was there, **but in a casket!** ... [When I found out I wanted to dig her up, they told me] I needed to asked for a permit in Maicao ... More than a month went by... My son unburied her... she was damaged... decomposed... almost two months [for me to be able to bury her] ... That day when they took her away they told me they weren’t going to let me see her. I said ‘why not, if she’s my daughter? You have to let me see her!’ ... So I grabbed a knife and stuck it here and we headed out... When we got to where they were going to bury her ... (pauses and sighs), my son had already wrapped the coffin in a polyethylene bag so it wouldn’t spill so much bloody water. When they were lowering her into the ground, I grabbed on and climbed into the trench, they grabbed me and I yelled ‘Don’t touch me or I’ll stab you!’ I grabbed the knife from out of here and I started to rip the plastic bags, I pulled them aside and opened the lid and I saw her. I **screamed**, Dianita, I screamed (voice breaks into weeping), you know what it’s like to see ... I screamed, I looked at my daughter and said ‘my beautiful daughter, why did it have to be you, instead of her burying me’ I had to bury her, I **cried**... I didn’t want to let them bury her” (La Mache 2013).

“He left with my sister, he left her off in the guard post as soon as he reached the main road to pick her up and from there he went off to the gym... That day he wasn’t going to take long because he had a meeting... He said bye to my sister and hurried on and a friend says that they spoke over the phone... My dad made his way along a large block... and he’s crossing the street when he’s intercepted by a police car. The witness... tells us that a tall young policeman got out and made him get in the car and my dad was just asking why they were detaining him... The policeman was really vulgar, he put him in cuffs and pushed him into the car... they pick him up and that’s the last time he’s seen alive... His friends from work started calling and asking if we knew anything about my dad’s whereabouts, that they were waiting for him... we said, “No, we don’t know anything, we’re getting worried’... My dad’s colleagues were the ones who said we need to go to the district attorney’s office, to put in a missing persons report. And so we were like, “Wait, what do you mean, what’s going on?’ ‘They may have disappeared him’... I felt anguish... I always grew up hearing that they killed people, that they disappeared people, sure, but it was always familiar but somehow distant. But somehow, in that moment I said to myself: ‘They took him away, what are they going to do with him and why?’ It was also a moment of a lot of anguish and uncertainty... Not knowing where he was, not knowing why they took him away, why you have to be running so much... for me it was absurd because it’s that, when you grow up hearing those things but then when it happens to you... [I knew it was a forceful disappearance] but [I was] **afraid**, they took him away, they’re going to kill him, imagine not ever hearing from him again! And now what, where do we look for him? It’s so much **anguish!**... [I felt] **helpless**, unable to do anything! ... But, yeah... it was a terrible feeling, helplessness all of the time, **fear**, **rage**... [When they found his body I felt] so much pain...

He was missing for 85 days. We found the body July 15th, or they tell us he was found on July 15th, but they murdered him... barely a day after [they detained him] ... They found his body on April 24th... in the early morning... a peasant and they reported it... in Ibagué... So they call and the CTI comes and they come without equipment to pick the body up and so they have to improvise a way to get the body out of the dump site” (Esperanza 2013).

For some relatives of Leftist militants, anguish did not begin with the forced disappeared of their loved one, but with the experience of fear, product of their relatives’ clandestine identities, the result of the political configuration of the historical conjuncture that has been marked in Colombia by the State’s power abuses. Something has to be hidden because it is not considered legal for society. In this context, many children of Leftist activists that joined clandestine organizations and guerrillas grow up with fear, silence, the sensation to be camouflaged, and a certain consciousness that to struggle for justice and equity in Colombia was not something safe. Excluded and clandestine subjectivities emerge.

“But when I had figured out that Sergio was mixed up in leftist politics and it seemed likely that they had disappeared him, his Friends came and they picked up everything that was related to Marxism, with the movement and all, they’d left some issues of *Revolución* because they had a license, it wasn’t clandestine ... and the magazine *Unión*... And I said, “Well, shoot, they may well come search the house, but there’s nothing unusual here.’ The book from the university are sold in [bookstores]... Marx and Lenin and whatnot... [Later we figured out that Sergio had been captured on that trip by the Army,] they hung him from the rafters, they tortured him, and then they took him at 8:30 in the morning... across from the school, when they had him tied to a tree, and then they took him out a 6pm in one of the army trucks” (Juana 2010).

“These present emotional situations: **anguish**, **fear** that something would happen to him, but also sitting down with my mother to think about what to do, but also to take on that **anguish** in silence... so that my mother wouldn’t feel more distressed (voice breaks down), and then the anguish of the search, the **uncertainty**, the **rage**... From the moment they detained Orlando in ’81, our lives changed completely, I mean, it was the anxiety that they would come back, that they’re going to take him away... In fact, in May of ’83, exactly two years had gone by since his arrest when they broke into our home. So, all that time it wasn’t only the **anxiety** of being so **distressed**... but also to **feel** the presence of men who were watching us. Orlando started to say to us “They’re following me’... from the moment that he didn’t show up... immediately the next morning my mother told me that something had happened to her brother... We went to the DAS office... and then to F2. And we had already gone to F2 since they had caused so much trouble for Orlando, we were certain that they must be holding him there. But they said, “Well, across the way is station six, why don’t you stop by there. But wait, maybe my commander has some information or can tell you something...’ We remained standing outside and the commander came out. He said,

‘Go to the amphitheater. Have you gone there yet?’ ‘Yes, we already tried there.’ ‘But, try again, maybe he’s there.’ ‘Who knows what he’s up to, since you always come around acting like he’s an innocent lamb.’ (Camila 2013).

When a relative is forcibly disappeared, the family starts looking for them alive. Commonly, it takes a long time to find the relative and there are many stories in Colombia in which relatives have not even found their loved ones, such as with Ramiro and Candelaria’s father. There are other stories— Orlando, Majayura, Jaime, and Álvaro —in which the victim is found dead after a relatively short period of time, while there are other cases in which finding the relative took years, as was the case of Sergio and Antonio and Alfredo Lame. In any case, every relative that decides to look for his/her loved one alive has to face intimidations and the dehumanized treatment by a great number of State officials that relate with these “citizens” not as persons to which they have the obligation to serve but as their “subjects.” The acts of intimidation include direct and indirect threats and illegal surveillance—interceptions of telephones and being followed—that look to generate fear and persuade the relative to not report the crime, establish an investigation or find those responsible for the human rights violations. It is also common to receive treatment from State officials as if the victim and their relatives were guilty, attempting to dissuade the continuation of relatives’ claims. This is the same history for those that are victims of State violence as it was in the case of Pedro.

“I go to a friend’s apartment [after leaving my son at the hospital]... At 3am they call the house phone, a number that even I don’t know. A guy with the last name Cala calls, he identifies himself like a typical officer... He says he’s investigating the incident since there are members of the police involved... [he tells me] to go to the station. It just happens to be near my house... I tell him I’m not going, that I need him to identify himself ... and he says, ‘No, no, come down here and we’ll talk.’ I tell him I’m not going, that they are murderers. I hang up. At 4am they call again... He says the same thing, but in a much more aggressive tone and I tell him I’m not going to any police station. He says: ‘I know you don’t want to go to the station, just go down and answer the door and we’ll talk.’ They had already located the building I was in... [When I get to the hospital] they say, “Sir, not 15 minutes after you left two police officers arrived and wanted to interrogate your son.’ But, how can they interrogate someone who is unconscious? ... He’s a minor... [and] he’s in critical condition in the intensive care unit” (Mamoncillo 2013)

State and paramilitary violence has been supported in Colombia by a structural impunity. That impunity emerges since the first moment the crime is committed, especially with forced disappearances that have been designed to not leave any trace of the crime. This impunity includes the negation of what occurred, the material and intellectual authors, the reasons for the crime, the ineffectiveness of State institutions to look for the person alive, and the pervasive power that paramilitary actors have in the regions. After a person is killed, forcibly disappeared or displaced, the *Calvary* started. In that *Calvary*, the identity of the relative and/or of the victim emerges.

“[The day after the disappearance] we activated the urgent search mechanism, someone made an appointment with Gloria Gomez de ASFADDES, my brother went to the appointment and she told him it was crucial to activate that mechanism... From then on, we started having meeting with different State functionaries... where we were supposed to meeting to look for my father alive, but the attitude of those institutions was to blame my father for what was happening and to insinuate that the reason for his disappearance was related to something else... Once we had met with all the institutions that had anything to do with the Urgent Search Mechanism... and we realized that these institutions were not actually looking for my father... [that] they were not acting in a coordinated manner, because we knew of certain actions by the DAS on the one hand, the district attorney on the other, the vice president’s human rights office on the other, and at the same time they stayed to spread the hypothesis that it might be a self-disappearance. An article came out in the magazine Cambio, we met with the people responsible for that article and they told us that that hypothesis had come from the vice president’s office” (Antígona 2014).

Each of the violent events that take place has unleashed affect, and has affected the lives of relatives, friends, communities, and comrades, as well as the life of the entire country. For some victims, affect, understood as a mediation of reality,¹⁵² has been in play before knowing what had happened to their loved ones or even before the event took place. A sort of pre-sentiment was in play that manifests in different ways: uncomfortable sensations in the body, dreams, inexplicable thoughts and/or palpitations. This circulation of affect goes beyond Western rationality, connects

¹⁵² For Grossberg affect is an expressive mediation, it names a “complex set of mediations/effects that are ... a-signifying (although they can produce signification), non-individualized (although they do produce individualities), non-representational (although they can produce representational forms), and non-conscious (although they produce various forms of consciousness). Affect refers to the “energy” of mediation, a matter of (quantifiable) intensity. Affect operates on multiple planes, through multiple apparatuses, with varied effects” (2010: 193).

the body with emotions and thought, and relates humans beyond linguistic communication and physical presence.¹⁵³

“That was it... when they killed her... Before arriving that night of the 26th, at 7:30pm I started to feel that uneasiness. And I paced, I mean the neighbors were asking me if I was drunk, because I paced, I scratched myself, I went like this... And I say, “Something is going to happen to me.’ Not knowing that [at that moment] they were killing my daughter” (La Mache 2013).

The *affective event* is preceded by *accumulative love*. Love that is born and cultivated within kinship and communal relationships, and that is the result of other emotions that are felt for the loved one before the crime was committed: tenderness (*ternura*), pried, hope, affect, happiness, satisfaction, and complacency. All these emotions are linked with care. During the workshop with Bogotá’s MOVICE Chapter, victimized subjects mentioned the emotions that I already referenced as well as personal-collective states such as dedication, company, unity, support, force, power, and peace (Movice-Bogotá, 2013) that speak to the importance of care and collective power in the construction of ties of belonging. For them, power was created within the social bond. The reference to power here has to do with the capacity to collectively do—as family and community—a power/energy that is the result of caring, protecting, and living together and that is created and creates, at the same time, affect. The emotions that relatives feel for their loved ones are the aspects of affect that get actualized (Massumi 2002).

When a loved one’s life is threatened, relatives worry about them, experience different emotions, and try to do something to resolve the situation. Emotions urge them to act (Oatley 2004: 3), which “incites, shapes, generates practices of meaning-making” (Gould 2009: 13). In that process, at the same time, they go through what Barrington Moore (1989) calls the moral

¹⁵³ “Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world’s apparent intractability” (Seigworth and Gregg 2010: 1).

indignation, product of framing the situation as unfair. Emotions are evaluations, judgments (Oatley 2004; Ahmed 2004a: 195-196; Solomon in Beatty 2014: 556), “an assessment of the circumstances affecting me, it’s also an action in a world made by others: a response” (Beatty 2014: 557), and a *movement*.

Therefore indignation is an emotion that is accompanied by others such as anger, fear, and sadness.¹⁵⁴ In the relatives that are weaving this story, the latter emotions do not prevail, as occurs with others in contexts of violence. From my perspective, it has to do with personal trajectories, subjectivities, contexts, and levels of criticism about Colombian history, aspects that also contribute to the configuration of the new identity. As Beatty (2014) claims, emotions are historical, cultural, and social products but they are first-person experiences. Their particularity has to do with their subjectivity, since emotions gain personal relevance and intensity through individual history. Emotions by themselves do not explain that a relative decides to move, because emotions “might also lead to moving [the] body away from what I feel has caused the pain” (Ahmed 2004b: 29). Thus, in this case, the question is about the role of emotions in specific people’s lives, emotions in a concrete setting, in history-in-person (Holland and Lave 2001).

As I already mentioned, some of these relatives had been previously exposed to political activism, and even those, such as Juana, that were not close to social movements, the Left, or human rights organizations, had some involvement with politics and had developed a critical perspective that helped Juana to understand the forced disappearance of her son as something that was possible but unjust. In other cases, the initial politicization is the result of rebellious personalities or personalities that are outside the norm (such as Juan Tomás). In the stories of Betty and Mamoncillo, that rebellious character contributed to their politicization and the evolution of a

¹⁵⁴ Barrington Moore did not frame it as an emotion. As Ahmed discusses, the Kantian and post-Kantian ethical traditions consider emotions as irrelevant to judgment and justice, as well as unreasonable, and as an obstacle to good judgment (2004a: 195).

critical perspective about Colombian society. In many of these stories, it is possible to identify the cultivation of informed and critical subjects through practices of reading, discussion, and involvement with the community, politics, and social problematics. It helps to avoid the complete disciplining of subjects' collective instincts, emotions, and moral-ethical judgments, contributing to the construction of reluctant subjects open to transformation (Gibson-Graham 2006) that break and challenge the patriarchal-colonial hegemonic emotional habitus in place in Colombia.

Accumulative love together with ties of caring and belonging, made relatives move their bodies in search of their loved ones and justice. Following Spinoza, “emotions shape what bodies can do” (Spinoza 1959: 85 in Ahmed 2004a: 4). Relatives walked the path as *senti-pensante* (feeling-thinking) beings, and at certain moments, were moved by emotions and thoughts they decided to enact. That “election” is ethical (Beauvoir 1981) and becomes a possibility of reaching freedom. Emotions are not only reactions but also actions (Ahmed 2004a: 7), therefore the “decision” does not take place in a concrete moment but in the *movement* of the bodies, in the fluidity of life. It is one of the possible concretizations of the virtual that becomes the real. “Deleuze locates affect in the midst of things and relations (in immanence) and, then, in the complex assemblages that come to compose bodies and worlds simultaneously” (Seigworth and Gregg 2010).

“Well, first, I think that we as family member, those that... founded this organization, there are two things that are key. First, the **love** for our family members, and [second] ... that **stubborn desire for justice**” (Camila 2013).

This path it is not necessarily the same for every relative. In the case of Esperanza and Juan Tomás, they did not get involved in the search for their relatives immediately after their disappearance. Esperanza was in charge of taking care of her sister, and although she was part of some of the initial search activities, she got more involved after her father's remains were found. Juan Tomás had experienced violence almost since he was born, and it was later, when he was

older, that he started to look for his cousins and to demand justice and truth for the violence that other members of his family had experienced.

Each time that a victimized subject narrates what occurred to them and their relatives—not only in these life stories, interviews, and workshops but also in the Forums around the peace process and other public spaces—they not only talk about the “event” but they also introduce their entire life trajectories in the narration, including sometimes information about the context. After the event, victimized subjects comprehend themselves as product of that moment, and the acts of violence help to construct the discourses about themselves. New personal, collective, and historical references guide the comprehension of their lives, which sometimes also incorporate the development of a more critical look of reality. These personal and collective narratives are also shaky at the moment of explaining what occurred and elucidating its rationality; this involves an idealization of the past and of the loved one, although this does not always arise. This type of recounting is the result of an event that dramatically marks “victims” lives and the attempt to make it legible despite the absence of a clear understanding of the event, since there are many elements that remain unknown to the relatives after the *unthinkable* took place.

Finding and constructing new social and affective bonds

*“Thanks to the Chapter,
I have been able to do things that I had not done
because I did not attend university”
(MOVICE-Bogotá 2013).*

In the process of looking for their loved ones, these subjects start to be familiar with the problematic they are facing. They meet people and organizations that have been lived the same situation and start joining these collective processes. In some cases they became a foundational part of the construction of these movements. The people and the organizations that help relatives during their initial process of politicization bring them **solidarity**, something that they are not receiving from the State, society, and/or their families.

“I know found out about the organization Hijos e Hijas in 2008 when my father was disappeared. He had been missing for about 15 days and we were filing charges with different people and places that deal with disappearances... and hoping he would turn up alive... In [the last few] years [I saw] Ivan Cepeda a lot on TV denouncing forced disappearances. So it occurred to me that the person I should talk to was ... Ivan... he put me in contact with some people... he [invited me] to march on May Day... When I arrived he was with people from Hijos e Hijas... I'd never heard of them.... A few days later Yesika Hoyos called me... and she started to tell me that she was also the daughter of a labor organizer that had been murdered, she told me that they wanted to be there for me in this process... she also told me that I needed to think about maybe looking for him in places where I wouldn't find him alive... At the beginning of June they contacted me again, they invited me to a café... each person told me their story... How they had gotten involved in Hijos y Hijas and that asked how I was... what I needed at that time... They told me what... they had been doing in the last two years... [they invited me to the meeting that day]... I was intrigued by what I heard... everyone received me very affectionately, and so then it seemed pretty cool to me and I had the idea that I wanted to continue going, but two weeks later my father's body appeared... The folks from Hijos y Hijas accompanied me at the wake and the burial, and about a month later I started going to their meetings” (Esperanza 2013).

When people start participating in these organizations, they are linked to a broader network of victims and human rights organizations that include other social movements, NGOs, as well as people, activities, practices, places, ideologies, discourses, languages, and points of view which some relatives were not familiar with. At that point, relatives' critical view about society, the State and paramilitarism deepens, constructing and/or developing a discourse around the concrete problematic that affected them. Although Camila, Antígona, Juan Tomás, and Esperanza previously knew, with different levels of specificity, about forced disappearance, the politicization around it takes a different form since now it is directly experienced for them. It is from within State and paramilitary violence that the consciousness about their power and its modalities are created.

“I started looking into all the things that the Police had done, looking for the culprits. I stated to look at archives... looking at how the police was created in Colombia, who started it... how it works... looking for murders by police... and I start finding a ton of cases. I start talking to people that start ... saying to me, ‘Sir... we're with you, I have also suffered violence form the police,’ and I'd ask them, ‘How have you suffered?’ ... I start to find out what the Esmad really is, when it was created... I start going to social organizations that I find out more about... These organizations tell me, ‘We have this information,’ I start reading it... and I start finding all kinds of documents, I start... to make public denunciations, all the things I've done up to this very day” (Mamoncillo 2013).

In the process of politicization, these “citizens” went through a subjective transformation that includes finding new friends, knowledges, and routines, as well as changes in dress, ways of having fun, conceptions about money, and the goals of life. These changes are proportionally more drastic depending upon the previous approach to this world. The politicization of relatives alters the body’s dispositions, habitus, thought, subjectivity, political views, commitments, and ordinariness. Their stories of violence allowed them to be recognized by some segments of society, to be invited to talks, conferences, and to be interviewed. Some of them travel outside the country or across it talking about what had occurred with their relatives and about Colombia’s reality overall. This new identity that is emerging encompasses recognition as spokespersons, which entails the admiration of some people that surround them but also people with whom these relatives have not had any previous contact but that are reached through the media.

This acknowledgment contrasts with the State’s attitude that does not recognize the existence of these specific victims, the human rights violations that were committed, and relatives’ agency and capacity. People’s recognition makes relatives ratify their condition as agents of change, subjects of their own history. Thus, the identity of relative/“victim” is configured in relation with the loved one, the victimizers, other “victims,” human rights organizations, other social movements, and the society in general, both the one that sympathizes with their struggles and those that do not care and/or dismiss and mistreat their demands. Their new identity is constructed in relation with multiple others.

“You started getting recognized... you start feeling braver... when they see you, but... I hardly know that person that that they recognize and say ‘You are [la Mache].’ So, you start to become really recognized by others, not just round Bogota, but in several provinces... And sometimes I don’t even know who this person is. Sometimes I feel embarrassed. But why? Because they’ve talked about me... I know you’re the mother of Majayura ... [That] gives you a lot of strength and you start to leave your fear of speaking out” (La Mache 2013).

This recognition implies a sense of self-esteem that violence and the society in general have broken, mainly for those historical neglected subjects such as women, indigenous, and Afro-descendent people.

“Going there and starting to work with these people is nice, it’s nice because it makes you realize that what you’re doing is worthwhile, that it’s worth it for people to hear other’s stories, that they feel supported in one way or another by these testimonies, or by just being there... Being accompanied by those processes has made me feel like a different person, it’s made me feel useful” (Betty 2013).

This recognition becomes power. Relatives’ power emerges from within their struggle (Zibechi 2007), and they, in the process, discover it. Depending upon the circumstances, relatives’ personalities and class/educational backgrounds, media coverage, and State attention to specific “cases,” some relatives gain more visibility than others, sometimes contributing to the invisibility of others and the creation/deepening of unequal power relationships between them that are the product of structures of domination that are already in place in society.

“...Pedro is [not] the only one... there’s parents who are fighting, the problem is they haven’t gotten the attention, they’re the ones I call the **invisible**... I spoke of the corrupting nature of power, well, being a head of a movement is the same, it’s worrisome because it starts to absorb you in a terrible way (pause) and I start to think I’m all that, but then I start to come back down to earth with certain things I do. So I say to myself, ‘Hang on, that’s not how it is.’” (Mamoncillo 2013).

In these new life’ trayectories “victims” learn an important amount of novel knowledge that is useful for their demands. They learn in practice, in the doing, through their own journey and experience, in organizational meetings and activities, as well as in formal processes of education such as short courses and workshops organized by NGOs, victims’ and human rights’ organizations that focus on victims’ rights to truth, justice and reparation, on human rights, on forced dissappearances, and on Colombia’s history. In all of the organizations that these relatives joined, training has been conceived of as a way to empower victimized subjects and to raise conciousness about the infrigment they suffered. Victimized subjects produce new understandings that come from

their quotidian practice in the search of their loved ones and in demanding justice and truth. From there, rituals, dates, physical and symbolical spaces and activities are created.

“We had to **walk** a lot a places, lots of offices ... and there we started to make **banners** ... The **banner** that I designed, I had it made when I wanted to rebury my daughter. And we kept up the struggle ... going to **marches**, marching on May Day, accompanying the victims when they invited us to go on a tour... When they told us we would have our own **office** that was ... And [we kept] moving forward... doing... the **galleries**, the banners, and [doing] **interviews**” (La Mache 2013).

In cases such as ASFADDES, the Relatives of the Justice Palace’s Cafeteria, and Juana, they were inventing and producing knowledge that for those that later had to experience the same situation was taken for granted.

“... In that period we didn't have anything, there wasn't anyone to tell you: ‘hey, walk, one step forward because you will find something there,’ so it was a challenge. I don't know, I have pain, but I have to invent something for myself to mitigate this pain, but also find answers, so all of this became a necessity ... You also become a self-taught person ... Here you learn so much, Diana, this is a school where you are always constructing ... I would say that it is more difficult but at the same time, I'm not sure how to say it, everything that you construct here fills you with a satisfaction deep inside. ‘Wow, I was able to construct a discourse! ... I was able to write a page!’ ... Here you demand lots from yourself ... this is a school where it isn't only permitted to grow and project towards the future, but it also has permitted us to help others to grow ... So, the early days, well, we had to [learn how to do] the public denunciation, how to write with a machine ... how to understand that tangle of what in that era we called politics ... understand [our relatives]. We had to learn so much about those concepts ... positions ... militancies, the reason for the persecution ... We learned to go constructing the concepts, and from there, from the search, forcing ourselves to learn anthropology was born, but also to be a little bit psychologists ourselves, amongst us women, and we went, as they say, creating from different situations ... a permanent construction of lessons that definitively have made this organization have a considerably strong richness” (Camila 2013).

Juana narrates how something as simple as anthropometrical index cards were not available when she was looking to identify Sergio’s remains; the Colombian State had the technical skills to determine the identity of a corpse but not human remains. She brought that cards from Caracas.

Violence has produced in relatives critical views of society that includes consciousness about inequalities and domination—not only those closely tied to the story of their loved ones—and their quotidian manifestations. The experience of victimization has also meant breaking with some

social traditions and opening relatives' minds and hearts to see what has been rendered invisible.

This disenchantment contributes to the cultivation of the *reluctant subject* and a skepticism for traditional politics.

“Yeah, because I had the idea that... especially the State, that it was for me... the government... the president... that their job was to **take care of us, help us, protect us**, and then to see something like this happen, when I later found out that the military and the paramilitaries were really one and the same. For me that was a huge change” (La Mache 2013).

“I started to have a different perspective [of Colombian reality after what happened with my father] I think I didn't have before, or I wasn't worried about having or understanding... Now I have a sense of what it is to live in an indifferent society, wrapped in a capitalist system that forces everyone to get up for work every day and be preoccupied with getting by, a society that is stuck in the logic of consumption and getting ahead, so that when people deal with this idea in their everyday life... they don't really think beyond, ‘Oh man, it's rough what happens in this country’... most people think that these things happen because there are good people and bad people and that's it, but it doesn't occur to them that there are economic interests behind it, political interests... I think we're an indifference society due to ignorance” (Esperanza 2013).

“Rotten... I knew that [society] was rotten, but I didn't imagine to what extent... now, in the midst of what I'm working on, doing reports, reading books, listening to people, you start to realize that it's rotten and I mean really rotten. To listen when the victims arrive, to hear reports about el Salado, el Chengue, the Mejor Esquina, hearing testimony from paramilitaries, all those things, and knowing that they are true, based on information from those you are close with... You find out that society is in a bad place, [after what happened to me]... I solidified that concept and I went beyond it... Now [for example], I am a complete atheist. Now, I'm of the mind that atheists... believe in something, in being atheist, that's what they believe... [Now] I can feel even more the errors of the Church, the backwardness of just about any church I feel them more strongly. I have gotten more into... indigenous matters” (Mamoncillo 2013).

New “nuclear and extensive families”

“After we buried my father I continued struggling while fear became my company. I joined *Sons and Daughters* the first day the movement was publicly presented on July 2nd, 2006. I met one of their members when I was looking for my father alive. At that moment, I appreciated their interest but I did not feel that I belonged to them because from my perspective my father was still alive. *Sons and Daughters* was one of my main supports in the first months of my father's absence. We started having meetings almost every week. In those meetings, we discussed Colombian reality and our political vision, we had “*tertulias*” (conversation sessions) in which we invited members of others social movements and/or academics to talk about specific topics. We organized commemorations, participation in the activities of the victims' movement and other social movements, and we created committees to develop specific tasks.

Concurrently with that immensely active dynamic, we were thinking about our organizational structure and I was feeling accompanied in my sorrowful loss. Further, meetings and movements' activities overlap with other types of gatherings, such as dinners, parties, informal conversations, and having coffee and beer. During the rest of the year, I was one of the most active members of *Sons and Daughters*, dedicating a great portion of my time to the movement. In the course of those months, it was common to feel sad. I remember that on Father's Day, I cried. I went to the cemetery with my mother and I read a letter to him, which was primarily comprised by lyrics of Serrat's song: *Si la muerte pisa mi huerto* (If death steps in my garden). Then we spent the rest of the day with my mother's family and I could not avoid crying. It was an indescribable sorrow. Rage was with me various times. I had to face the State's force that negates the murder of my father by constructing a hypothesis of an accident that was mentioned even by President Uribe.

From multiple actions of intimidation, I developed states of paranoia and insecurity, but I only became completely conscious of it when I lived alone with a cat during the summer of 2007 in Durham. That cat personified a Lion for me, every possible human threat. The solitude of Durham's streets exacerbated my fears and my loneliness. Each time that I travel to Colombia after the non-conventional exile, I have a combination of feelings that are the product of my memories but also the journey, the *Calvary* that we have to go through in the search of truth and justice" (Huitaca 2015).

Relatives continue to struggle, moving thanks to emotions, desires, and convictions. The profound love they feel for their loved ones is central, but they have also "chosen" to follow a different life project that includes pushing to learn the truth and towards justice, as well as to contribute to changing reality. They are fighting not only for their rights but also, although competition between victims sometimes exists, for a more collective struggle. In this process, to join and help to construct the collective is essential. Here, "emotions work to shape the 'surface' of individual and collective bodies" (Ahmed 2004a: 1). In this path not only new organizations and social movements are created, but also new identities, subjects, and social relations come about. The *cumulative love* feeling for their loved ones is translated to a broader *similar others*.

"[This] is like having a **kid**, when you have a kid you want to protect him, help her grow, strengthen, study. Precisely those of us who created this organization believe that we have to strengthen it because it is worthwhile, because this is a space that gives you the chance to feel supported by others that are in the **same situation**, but it also allows you to find yourself... you put yourself in Diana's shoes, and it's impossible to take them off, it **gets under your skin** and it's then impossible to take them off" (Camila 2013).

“It’s one of those doors that once it’s open will never close... Tomorrow I could have convicted all eight of the Esmad officers that murdered Pedro, even those behind it... the masterminds or financiers... but I’ll never leave behind the campaign against police brutality because Pedro is not the only victim. The first documented case was in 1929, Gonzalo Bravo, 25 years of age, then Uriel Gutierrez (pause) and so goes the list of hundreds of victims... we have to work towards the dissolution of the Esmad in its entirety and against police brutality, for the love of Pedro ... there are no more Pedros, Johnny Silvas, Oscar Salas, Belisario Huetoto, Diego Felipe Becerras, Wilmar Bernal ... Sandra Catalina Velásquez” (Mamoncillo 2013).

“When I began to get involved in finding out what had happened with the family members of those disappeared in [the Palacio de Justicia episode], [Eduardo Umaña] put it into my head: ‘Look, old lady, you’ve got to do something, you have to be different... you have acting talent.’ He saw in me a talent for working with people and having **love** for the people with tough problems that the violence has left in this country... And it seemed so nice to me to discover that side of myself, that I could now accompany other victims, that with my **grief** I could give them hope to struggle on” (Betty in Morales 2013).

They joined these organizations because they found not only solidarity but also a common understanding about life and society and a shared struggle, and they “decided” to remain there because they have created new affective ties and communities of belonging, a new family that accompanied their searches but also that gives them strength to continue with the struggle and with life itself. Collective power is constructed; a power that supports victimized subjects’ struggles and gives them strength, helping to maintain their fight. The solidarity that in the past they received is extended to *similar* others, which helps to expand the victims’ movement. The new bond is experienced as embodied (in the skin) and as the construction of a new body that has its own skin, its borders (Ahmed 2004b). The construction of an **US** becomes not only a life project but it is also embedded in the body.

“[I feel] good, supported [by MOVICE], full of ... strength and a lot of struggle, that strength that makes me want to go out and Yell, and that’s what I’ve always done... for the company and being with many others. The **pain**... the wound is there, but now it is calmer than it was... and now I feel more accompanied ... sure, there are times when I have to **cry**. But now everything is calmer, and being with people, talking, going different places, calms you down, makes you more active... **my roots** are here, here in MOVICE. **My feet, my head, my body**. They’re all here. [When I go out] to walk, my spirit is what I am... I am sewn here” (La Mache 2013).

New roots and origins are founded as well as ties of caring that replace or support familiar ones and develop the role that the State is supposed to have with their citizens. The fact of being part of these organizations helps victims to go through their pain, to advance in one way or another in healing and mourning. Many times I saw, felt, and listened to “victims” saying that for them it was comforting to meet with other “victims” and listen and be listened to by them. Part of the importance of the workshops we had was that they found a space to talk and be heard, to feel significant for another person. Their comrades care for them, something that neither the State nor a great part of society do.

“I continue being part of MOVICE because I’ve found a lot of people with **pain** and who are very brave. I’ve found... warmth... big hearts... new ways of moving forward... It’s a way to channel this pain and continue working in human rights. It’s also a kind of refuge to say ‘I work in the National Victims’ Movement,’ which is well known within and also outside the country... Being there protects me, it’s like being **under a big tree**. [I feel] at home... it’s like having a family... I’ve found a new family that I can **trust**, that I can talk with and with whom I can feel comfortable” (Mamencillo 2013).

“Before, when I was really young, sometimes I felt... that I was different from other people... I went to the river bank to contemplate. Because I see the world differently... I see so much injustice, such inequality and yet others don’t seem to care... but at some point I decided, ‘It’s either me, or I’ll find other people who think and see things like me and we can get to get and start... to try and change that way of seeing things and to change this’... I ... realized that Hijos e Hijas **thought and felt** the same as me... I feel as if they were my brothers, even more than brothers, because the relationship I have with my actual siblings, with my family, isn’t the same as with Hijos e Hijas... **I feel**... as if the same **blood** ran through us... like there’s something that attracts us... in the same ancestral vision of indigenous peoples there’s something, it’s that you’re not alone, that you have to wander and in that wandering you start finding other beings that are like you and in the end you start combining forces to achieve a common end. I feel that that is what Hijos e Hijas is... **a group of feelings**... that come together to create... a different future” (Juan Tomas 2012).

The majority of victimized subjects in victims’ organizations are women. To some extent, violence has meant a transition from the “private” to the “public” sphere for some women in Colombia, helping them to break with some traditional roles and spaces of interaction, while others are maintained. In the new “nuclear and extensive families,” women perform a significant part of the care that is necessary to preserve the organizations and the well being of the members. Their

transition to the public-politic sphere contributes to the recognition of women as social actors, however it has been accompanied by the extension of gender traditional roles, something that is also common in other social movements and organizations. For them, the reproduction of this role implies the expenditure of more energy, contributing to double and triple shifts (as mother or woman in their homes, as activists, and as workers), and at the same time, in some occasions, to unequal power dynamics between genders.

This conceptualization of social movements and organizations as new families is not only part of victimized subjects' perceptions but also of other social movements. In conversation with one of the member of PCN is Buenaventura, he exclaims:

“So... other Friends and I don't define ourselves as militants, yes, we're militants of the PCN... and we're there fighting and we've built a family around the PCN... we have two families which are... your blood relatives and... our political family... We're always there for each other... if it's your birthday... if something different happened, we keep each other company... even sometimes... with economic issues... we have to give each other a hand” (PCN 2011).

Emotions travel, shape and are shaping by the struggles

Emotions shape relatives and their struggles, and also emotions are shaped by them.

Emotions are not static; they are the experience, the “flesh of time” (Ahmed 2004a), and they work together. The *affective event* has unleashed a series of emotions that mark the subject forever. Some of these emotions are always present although their intensity can change depending on the conjunctures, and maybe some others can disappear if the relatives reach their demands and objectives. For one of the participants in the workshop of MOVICE's Bogotá Chapter, the emotions are never going to leave. In the trajectories of emotions that we drew, pain, fear, anger, hate, revenge, impotency, sadness, and emptiness, among others, were described as the emotions that after the event are continually present as well as hope and love.

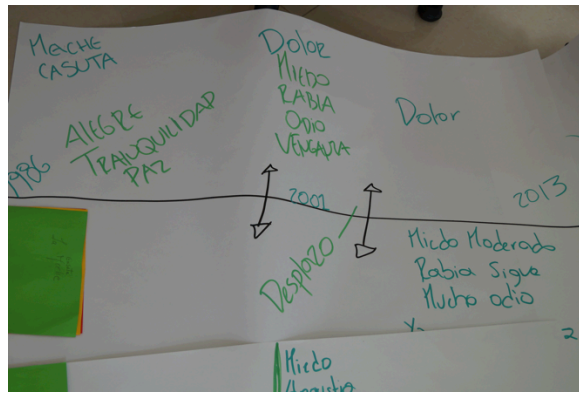


Figure 7: Trajectory of Emotions, La Mache

[Source: William Oquendo Rojas]

“[I feel] **tenderness**... because I see a lot of people, children, and it makes me **sad**, sure, because my daughter was a child. **Love**, love for my children, my relatives, for lots of people. **Rage** because of what happened. **Hate** because I can’t get rid of it, even though they say you can get rid of it... You’re living what’s going on here... so many things that I had never done before in my life. So sometimes it made me **furious** because sometimes I barely have enough to buy a bowl of soup... I say to myself, ‘those bastards.’ They’re the guilty ones. I get filled with **rage**... **I always feel that pain and rage, that hatred**, toward those people who did what they did to us” (La Mache 2013).

“**Impotence**. You feel dominated, subjugated, made invisible, humiliated, persecuted... discriminated against, pointed at” (Juan Tomas 2013).

“I’m pursued by **sadness**, though people may not believe me because they see me joking, doing pranks... I poke fun... let people poke fun at me... I **laugh** at all that... Maybe it’s my way of covering up the immense sadness I feel... My nights are long and very short... short on sleep... long because I think, I stay awake... I can’t sleep... There’s so much **sorrow**... I still feel the absence of Pedro as if it were that first day (pauses)... I keep mourning him like it was the first day... I still remember him just the way he was... for me time has frozen in many ways” (Mamoncillo).

“Right after what happened to Leo, I always thought, ‘Could it be that as time goes by I’ll stop feeling like **crying**?’... (silence) and it’s not that way, I mean, you always have more tears (silence), I think that for your memory it’s as if time hasn’t gone by, but to find the truth and justice, well you start to realize that that isn’t going to happen” (Camila 2013).

Hand in hand with feeling all of these emotions, the perception and experience of time and memory is altered. The absence of the loved one and the obligations of quotidian life reduce time, while impunity extends it. Memory is amplified for relatives and their histories and struggle, whilst it is lessened for other daily and intellectual activities. Relatives become *subjects of memory* that are crossed by melancholia. “Emotions ... show us the time it takes to move, or to move on” (Ahmed

2004a: 202); they talk about the past and the future. Solitude, disunity, anguish, depression, and instability are also constantly felt (MOVICE-Bogotá 2013).

“[Time goes by] faster. Oh yeah... for example time in terms of the rents, [the debts]... from the services... But in terms of the progress of the case of my daughter [and the pain] it passes very slow, for me it goes by very slow” (La Mache 2013).

“I feel that time goes by faster and sometimes I feel like I’ve forgotten a lot. It’s funny, but I hardly remember what I did a few days ago, and since I don’t remember the last few days, it seems like time goes by and I don’t have much sense of what I’ve done the last few months” (Esperanza 2013).

Emotions such as rage, impotence, and pain are intensified during court hearings and the different stages and encounters with the judicial realm. Specific conjunctures also contribute to the intensification of these emotions as well as hopelessness, fear, insecurity, and indignation, such as has occurred with the process of paramilitary demobilization, the Victims and Land Restitution Law, the current peace process with the FARC-EP, and the permanent threats and deaths that arise in the country. Victimized subjects experience a sensation of frustration, disappointment, and defeat due to impunity.

In 2009, after one year of the forced disappearance of Álvaro, *Sons and Daughters* took the streets of the neighborhood in which he lived and was disappeared, starting dialog with people and asking them if they knew about that event, what they thought, and what impunity produced for them. That day, together with GUACHE and DEXPIERTE – artwork collectives – they made a mural where they wrote: “And to you what does impunity produce?” This is a relevant question since impunity raises a lot of emotions (rage, impotency, sadness, hopelessness, deception) in relatives and induces feeling them at a high intensity. This intensity is emphasized with the phrases much, a lot.

What does impunity produce to you?

“**Rage** (laughing), it make me feel such **rage, impotence**, sometimes I **feel like crying**, but in particular I feel a rage when I see what’s happening. Because in addition to society becoming an accomplice, it’s like society almost gets pleasure out of what happens

sometimes. You hear comments, and you say ‘How can people be thinking like that after all that we’ve been through’ (Camila 2013).

“A lot of **rage and a lot of pain**. And a lot of **sorrow** knowing that these things keep happening and no one recognizes it. Everything stands, they’re going to leave it in impunity, that it’s true that they murdered those people, not just my daughter, lots of people, and the State doesn’t want to recognize it, it isn’t going to recognize it... our country is unjust” (La Mache 2013).

“**Impotence, rage**, it’s like, I dunno, it’s like you try to not lose hope, but sometimes you think it’s going to be awfully hard to find out the truth, to find justice that you want to have... it’s very **disheartening**. And besides that... it’s like feeling that many things related to the political climate of the country can determine whether or not that truth or justice ever comes, so that also creates a feeling of **rage**... this political moment with the country in negotiations, trying to do justice... to achieve peace, that can affect whether or not they talk about everything that happened under Uribe’s government... that makes me feel a lot of **anxiousness**” (Esperanza 2013).

“I mean, an incredible disappointment... the impunity... all the silence of the State... the fact that they hide, make invisible what we lived through, make the victims invisible, re-victimize us, because even if they say, ‘Look, if you’re a victim, go register yourself as one,’ but when you go to register, they say, ‘How can you be sure that you’re a victim? What exactly did they do to you? Are you sure that they were going to kill you? And why do you say that?’ (Juan Tomas 2013).

Sadness is intensified when relatives talk publicly about what happened and during commemorations and social, personal, and family days such as birthdays, Christmas, and New Year, among others. Memories trigger the subject many times without any consciousness. Memory is embodied in relatives’ bodies, homes, cities, objects, and quotidianity.

But these emotions not only travel through victimized subjects’ trajectories. The activities that relatives carry out bring them, almost daily, also satisfaction and happiness. To remember the loved ones is also to experience intense love and pride. Sometimes tears and laughter mix, and a profound happiness is followed with an intense sadness or vice versa. Love and hate, happiness and sadness are not opposed but, to the contrary, they are essential to each other for their embodiment and recognition. Victimized subjects are also accompanied by hope, support, and solidarity (MOVICE-Bogotá 2013).

There is another emotion that accompanies victimized subjects: guilt. It takes different forms depending of the story. Some sort of culpability for continuing to live without the others (González Santos 2010: 65) is felt. Guilt emerges because some relatives consider they could do something to avoid the murder, or that he/she is directly responsible of the violent episode, and for taking breaks in the struggle or leaving the country. I believe I only heard the emotion of guilt from women. During the workshop with MOVICE, it did not appear. Maybe guilt comprises part of the emotional habitus and its gender division that assigns it to women following a Christian tradition.¹⁵⁵

Emotions and collective action

Emotions are fundamental for people's initial politicization and for maintaining social movements (Jasper 1998; Elster 2002; Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001; Flam and King 2005; Gould 2009). "Comrades" get to love and need each other. Tenderness, solidarity, and care are central. It is common that members of the organizations care for others' health as well as pay attention to emotional states, economical, and security conditions. There are strategies to take care of the other such as to make company, listen, advise, help with dispatches and actions for advancing the juridical cases, and carrying out commemorations. Sometimes just a hug, a word of support, or someone that allows you to cry is enough to make you feel that the other is someone that cares for him or her. In this process, some friendships are consolidated, and they are in themselves fundamental to maintaining each other in *movement* and in the *movement*.

The fact of joining a similar struggle and achieving some goals makes relatives and other members of the organizations happy. The same emotion is felt after public interventions and other activities, as well as complacency for the collective work that was done. It is usually that after some events and activities are completed, people gather together to "celebrate." When victimized subjects achieve levels of truth and justice, they experience a feeling of pride and satisfaction. "Activists"

¹⁵⁵ This tradition also contributes solidarity and love to the emotional habitus of victimized subjects and relatives.

endure hope for having a shared struggle that aims to transform reality. That feeling is essential for maintaining the movement and implies the recognition of the capacity of agency and power of oneself, the comrades, and the collective. Organizations and social movements turn into places where people feel they can break with what they consider unfair and change the aspects of society they do not like. These are loci of enunciation where *civil rebellion* can occur, and in consequence, they are not only sites of hope but also of utopia, the latter also being essential for maintaining the collective. Here, identities articulate dialogues of change and the reconfiguration of cultural and ontological forms (Satterfield 2002).

The collective endeavor is crossed by passion. You feel it when people are preparing a rally, slogans, and public interventions, and when they are performing their tasks. It is precisely there, in practice, that the US is recreated and strengthened. Activists always join tasks and actions with emotions that are intensified and generate new feelings. Rage, happiness, sadness, love, hate, and hope, among others, come together to unleash affect and mobilize passion. The affective force that is generated in the continual regeneration of the collective, allows relatives and other members to continue entire journeys devoted to the movements' goals.

For some relatives, this struggle becomes their life project. They work everyday almost eight or more hours developing their organizations' activities and the tasks that are necessary to reach truth and justice. Some victimized subjects develop organizational tasks for which they receive payment, that it is not exactly a salary, but works more as an economical contribution that allows them to decrease their time devoted to the capitalist wage labor system and instead dedicate time to the movements. Others have to divide their time between activism and "work," while others have achieved building solid organizations that are funded, allowing some of their members to make a living through it. Some of the "victims" have lost their traditional livelihoods and work due to victimization, which sometimes makes it especially difficult for them to participate in the activities

organized by the movements.¹⁵⁶

Relatives persist in these organizations because they feel recognized as “equals” and someone that counts for society. They admire their similar others and conceive of themselves as an essential part of the construction of the collective. They have given “birth” to political projects: an organization, movement, Chapter, idea, campaign, speech, slogan, and/or picture; in consequence, they feel essential and important. They experience gratitude with others, and among “comrades” “gifts” are reciprocated. Thus, some of them consider the struggle as a type of *obligation* (MOVICE-Bogotá). Their lives’ meaning has become closely linked with movements’ projects. The organization has become a “child,” an essential part of “our lives,” an individual and collective body where “you can find your brothers and the people you want to work with” and trust (Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y Contra la Impunidad 2013). Movements and organizations are “felt” by their members as spaces of trust where they can believe in someone else. To trust, to believe that you are not going to be betrayed—as relatives feel in relation with the State—is fundamental for building a common path and a political horizon. Trust includes the recognition of the other as a partner, which implies a process of self-recognition and the recognition of the other/s, from which ties of “solidarity, fraternity, brotherhood” (Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y Contra la Impunidad 2013), and sisterhood are forged. These ties are essential for maintaining the US together.

To some extent, the person that the relative has lost is relocated, symbolically and physically, within the new ties of caring and belonging. The solitude that is felt with the loss of a relative is counterbalanced by the struggles. Emotions make us act, and in the doing, collectivities are created. “Solitudes, rages, and pain come together to the battle. [Movements and organizations] are the places in which tears become dignified laughter” (Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y Contra la

¹⁵⁶ Whether or not activists should receive economic compensation for their work is a common discussion within social movements and organizations in Colombia. It is possible to observe that in some cases—such as the stories of this dissertation—the struggle becomes the main personal project. Increasingly, activists recognize the importance of dedicating the majority of their time to the organizations in order to achieve their goals.

Impunidad 2013).

New identities, other subjects

*“We are seeds, we are memory,
We are the sun that rises again before impunity”
(Movice)*

The *affective event*, through practice, creates a new identity, and, in consequence, new subjects. Mothers and fathers are reborn from their children; sister and cousin from their brothers and cousins; wives from their husbands; and daughters and sons from their fathers and mothers. The first-degree victimized subject become seeds that are spread out, giving origin to more seeds, and these seeds through their practices—among them memory—to more and more seeds. These new subjects are born from the experience of violence and are shaped by new emotions, commitments, ideologies, struggles, and people. Emotions such as sadness, rage, fear, and hate, among others, accompany the identity construction of second-degree victimized subjects, their subjectivities and lives. Some of these emotions’ work is pervasive, sometimes making relatives feel that they are dying along with their loved ones, and living for them and with them.

These new subjects are subjects of painful memories, although beautiful remembrances accompany them. They are subjects that embody an unpleasant and still alive past that a great portion of society does not want to hear, observe, and feel. Practices of memory are fundamental to the construction of these subjects: “we have to make memory and that means every day” (Juana 2010). These are practices that crop up in intimate, public, individual, and collective spaces.

“I think that we as a family started taking action to preserve his memory as soon as my father disappeared... what we did was to say, ‘Look what happened with Jaime Gomez who was disappeared and ... this has political motives... It was to recall what was happening... I started to preserve the memories in my writing... I think that from there I started recalling my relationship with him... especially in the Carta al Padre no Kafkiana... I think we’re creating memory as soon as we’re demanding that they return him alive, but also when we demand the truth and justice... After my father disappeared... we’ve done a lot of public acts to commemorate him... we published the master’s thesis about my dad, which was a way to remember him... but also... in terms of these concrete theme it dealt with... which was they murder of Gloria Lara. And something wonderful that I... clearly I haven’t been

the only one remembering him... There's a lovely dimension of memory when the Gomez family gets together and I think my father always comes up in the conversations... Memories that aren't always that visible, but things like something my grandma tells us that since he was a kid my father was always very socially conscious or my aunts say ... that he was the oldest and they always had respect and affection for him... that my cousins say that ... they were afraid of my dad because he was gruff, but that they loved him a lot, that he was the uncle that invited them over to study most often, that he had a rich intellectual life... I think I preserve memories every day of my dad... I preserve memories also with things related to the legal process... you always have to preserve memories... of the impunity... of what happened" (Antígona in Shaira 2012).

Their individual and collective identities are constructed from actions and objects that are made quotidian. Relatives have meetings with their lawyers and sometimes with State's case investigator, or other state officials, in order to pressure for the advancement of the juridical cases. From time to time, relatives have to prepare information about their loved ones or to face an exhumation in order to find their remains or to fulfill a court order. Other times, maybe the same day, the second-degree victimized subject has to attend a meeting designed by his/her organization in order for him or her to participate. Or perhaps, she or he has to give a talk in a university or school. Organizations usually have at least one meeting in the week, or maybe every other week to discuss and plan their agendas, objectives, and actions. The Bogotá Chapter has weekly meetings – recently they changed it to be every two weeks - a meeting in which they plan immediate activities and tasks, as well as others that will take place in the coming future. They meet to share and construct knowledge, to advance in organizational discussions, to make decisions, and simply to have a space of finding others similar to them.

Other days, different from the weekly meeting day, relatives get together to develop concrete actions such as organizing the *Galerías de la Memoria* (Galleries of Memory), participation in rallies or activities on dates, such as March 6th (the day for commemorating the State and paramilitary's victims), April 9th (recently declared the National day of victims that was also the day Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was killed in 1948), May 1st (workers' day), November 6th (the siege and counter-siege of the Justice of Palace), and December 10th (the day of human rights).

Some organizations, as in the case of ASFADDES, have an itinerary that includes the accompaniment of victims and the interlocutions with the State.

ASFADDES is particularly important in the reports of forcibly disappeared people, since they are part of the institutional Mechanism of Urgent Searches for Disappeared People established in 2005. In the cases of Álvaro and Jaime, it was almost by ASFADDES where the search of the loved one as a forcibly disappeared person was started. In these quotidian practices and activities, relatives construct, perform, and live “figured worlds” as the result of “situating learning” in “communities of practice” (Holland et al. 1998) around the struggles of the organizations, and the remembrance of the disappeared and the impunity of those who took them. They are drawn into these worlds, and supported in developing the new dispositions and sentiments honored in the worlds.

In relatives’ everyday life, objects have agency. They move around giving sense to the particular process each victim is going through. Some objects become artifacts of the struggle such as banners, pictures,¹⁵⁷ handles, books, postcards, buttons and videos, among others. Loved ones’ belongings (pictures, clothes, backpack, books, glasses, and other objects) are conceptualized as having something from the owner, and in consequence are appreciated as the presence of the absence. A footprint. A reminder.

“The two banners are still in struggle mode... They’re already almost eight years old and they’ve been beat up, one even has some bullet holes from the Police and I still use them. They’ve tried to take them from me many times, but when I made them I was commemorating the 100 day anniversary of the murder of Pedro ... I organized a group of people in the Plaza de Bolivar and I walked from there all the way to the place where he fell, it was my first public act where I was fully involved” (Mamoncillo 2013).

¹⁵⁷ As Sontag (2003) mentions, “when it comes to remembering, the photograph has the deeper bite. Memory freeze-frames; its basic unit is the single image. In an era of information overload, the photograph provides a quick way of apprehending something and a compact form for memorizing it. The photograph is like a quotation, or a maxim or proverb” (22).

In these new “figured worlds” some habits and practices are transformed, and relatives assume senses of themselves as relatives and/or victimized subjects who are activists. They develop new dispositions especially with respect to time. The habitus includes the intractability of time, the impossibility of managing it in times of intense political developments, the impossibility of having control over schedules, beginnings and ends of meetings, and the daily journey. It has as a consequence a change in the time that is spent with others, especially with family and old friends. For some relatives, in fact, it implies taking up some of the loved one’s activist ways that they had previously criticized. Your struggle becomes your life.

A new contentious place of enunciation

A new identity emerges with the rebirth of the subject that is created by dominant power and violence. Many relatives believe that their life stories were divided in two with the violent episode: after and before, and that they will never be the same any more. Something happened, something really changed their lives. In the clashes of power, this new identity – the relative / the “victim” - is not only the product of dominant power but also of the power of resistance. The power of domination produces and creates victims daily that circulate in the hegemonic economy of suffering, but at the same time, some of these “victims,” through their challenge of resistance, break and/or transform the dominant identity and category. The embodiment and the definition of the “victim” in itself is a contentious space of struggle, a struggle that transpires in the body itself. The concept of victim became commonplace only a few years ago as part of the political transitional era. Previously, some of the personages of this chapter: Camila, Juana and Betty recognized themselves as *relatives*.

“In the early years... we identified ourselves by name.. as relatives of the disappeared or of those detained and disappeared. I think at some point, toward the end of the 80s, when they did the first congress for those affected by the dirty war... Even relatives of ASFADDES in the beginning refused to use the term victims, yeah, because we felt like it was somehow showing yourself as totally defenseless, passive... it was like taking away that quality of a

relative who fights for his loved ones, and defends them as leaders, militants, so the condition of victim couldn't be compared to those who live through or are affected by a tragedy... like a natural disaster. [Besides], the mass media uses the term for all types of situations and so we felt like they were trying to take away our status as relatives, with struggle and dignity, with struggle based on feelings but also on justice" (Camila 2013).

For La Mache, Juan Tomás, Mamoncillo, Antígona, and Esperanza, the identity through which society understood them was that of the "victim." This category impacted their identities as well as those of Camila, Betty, and Juana. As a State and dominant category, it is challenge for all of these subjects.

"If there's something we can't get rid of, it's our status as victims, but it's a metamorphosis, yeah, like a butterfly that is born a worm but **ends up being** a butterfly and can't forget that at one time he was a worm and continues identifying as a worm... The same thing happens to us... we're born victims and we can't forget that we're victims, but... just like the worm **becomes** a butterfly, we become human rights workers... we're denouncers of what's happened to us **first hand (embodied)**. So, I don't see myself so much as a victim, but I can't forget that I am a victim. There's a transformation" (Mamoncillo 2013).

I will explore the complexities of this category in the third section of the dissertation.

Partial Conclusions

*"I have arrived at an irrational
hate, from a net vengeance,
to a grand love, yes.
And I have tried to be more just
thinking about [my relative]"
(La Pola).*

"That day of February 2013, in the body cartographies I located emotions such as happiness, fear, sadness, and rage in my silhouette, as well as the states that those emotions developed in myself: pain, paranoia, impotency, depression, uncertainty, solitude, and dignity. Depression was all over my body. Dignity was in my head, while happiness, solitude, and dignity in my heart. Fear and paranoia were located under it, and pain, sadness, uncertainty, rage, and impotency in the center of my abdominal zone. During my one-year fieldwork, I became sick with my colon. Almost two months after I arrived in October 2012, I started feeling very sick and tired. At that point I was feeling that a personal reconstruction was truly difficult and maybe impossible. But what about that

letter that I wrote the 20th of March, 2010, titled: *Y si uno es un vidrio roto?* (What if I am broken glass?)

‘These words woven in a continuous question for Colombia express my feeling of being a broken window, a window that a stone throne by the hands of power, injustice, and violence shatters into pieces, but whose parts are still sewn in Mother Earth ... Dad, yes, sometimes I feel like a broken window, but I’ve found that I can put myself back together again! ... Sure, you tell me that a window never can be put back together after it’s broken, but I think it can, that it is possible, that’s my utopia, my possibility, my desire!’ (Antigona 2010).

I survived my return to Colombia and the year 2012. The year finished without any major novelty until January, when I started going through the exhumation of my father as part of the juridical process. While I have had to endure the slow pace of justice in my country, I continue in my *activist participatory observation fieldwork*, spending too much time in meetings and actions related with the peace process. The 9th of April, 2013—Gaitán’s murder commemoration and the national day of victims—I gave a speech in the *Plaza de Bolívar* (Bolívar Square), the place where the foundation of Bogotá took place, a colonial space, in which an important number of protests come about. That day, I spoke with rage for the disdain, invisibilization, instrumentalization, and co-optation of “victims” in the midst of the peace process and during President Santos’ term. That context has exacerbated many emotions in my body and in other bodies. After days, months, and maybe years of restrained emotions and memories, one year later, in May 2014, during therapy in Colombia, I exclaimed: “I hate them, I hate them.” Love, dignity, and solidarity have not only accompanied my struggle, and neither only fear, solitude, depression, nor rage. Hate has also been with me. Hate is part of our emotional habitus as Colombians, and maybe as humans, but the ethical and political question is: what do you do with it?” (Huitaca 2015).

After the violent episode, relatives have been mobilized by their emotions and thoughts, and in the process of searching and caring for their loved ones they have decided to join a struggle. They went through a process of politicization by which they claim publicly and collectively the rights of their loves ones as well as their own rights. This process includes the development of a new identity shaped by individual trajectories, Colombian history, the particular context in which the “new subject” is born, and society’s culture (including the hegemonic emotional habitus), and with it, the constitution of a new subject. This identity, understood as the most objective component of subjectivity, is a fluid process (D. M. Nelson 2009) of self-understanding crucial for the new subject in comprehending what is going on around him/her and what is necessary to do. Relatives go through a process of consciousness raising that give them another perspective about society, product

of their own journey, dialogues, discussions, practices, and the circulation of discourses that at the same time habilitate action. In this action, power from below and from within the organizations and movements emerge and is fed by emotions and practice, discourses and memory.

This entire becoming is surrounded by affect and emotions. Affect is circulating among bodies and it is unleashed each time that something touches the bodies. Sometimes it takes the form of emotions, in others pre-sentiments, and in many it is the expression of an instinctual force that is inside each subject; in some, this is more domesticated than in others by dominant power, rationality, and the secular society. That affect-instinct makes relatives do and move, escaping to rational choice and to the division of emotions and rationalities, death and life. It compels relatives to challenge fear, depression and solitude, among other feelings.

The emotions that relatives feel in their holistic body work as judgments and action, helping people make sense of their experiences (Lutz and White 1986), compelling them to move, make decisions, and continue in the organizations and movements they have chosen to belong to. In those spaces, they have received moral support and have constructed the notion of US, which implies that they are now subjects, are becoming “conscious” of their surroundings and have identified-constructed the Other (Beauvoir 1981: 23). Through their own experience, relatives recognize the existence of State and paramilitary violence, some of the unequal power relationships that entail that violence, and the actors that are involved in it.

Social movements are spaces of sense making (Gould 2009) where emotions shape and are shaped by the struggle. Relatives reciprocate the care they have been object of, and they take up an “obligation to support the movement” (Bogotá-Movice). The new identity becomes habitus and embodied dispositions (Holland and Lave 2001) that are intimately related with the emotions these new subjects feel. Thus, emotions contribute to the creation of certain subjects. These relatives are

subjects of suffering, memory, resistance, action, persistence, and dignity. They become, in Siriri, Nego-subjects that are part of a new community.¹⁵⁸

For victims of State violence and paramilitarism, the identity of relative emerged due to social suffering inflicted by others on the individual and collective body politics (D. M. Nelson 2009), and due to impunity. The space of authoring (Escobar 2008) is born from that reality, and is fed with the dignity, persistence, and all the emotions that violence and impunity unleashed. This new identity has become a more or less stable identity that is crossed by a wider historical conjuncture that left a deep wound and, in consequence, makes that self-understanding onerous.

The first thing that the body is saying is that it is feeling pain. It is enunciating that the body is establishing a complaint (Das 2008), a legitimate and necessary objection. Wittgenstein asserts that the statement “it hurts” is not a declarative one that looks to describe a mental state. To the contrary, it is a complaint that is not the end of a language game, but its beginning (in Das 2008: 432). Colombia has to listen to victimized subjects’ bodies, which are extremely charged with impotence, rage, sadness, fear, hate, emptiness, solitude, revenge, anger, depression, indignation, and confusion; these bodies answer violence and impunity that unleash states of paranoia, depression, and frustration, etcetera.

These bodies in their entirety are a wound—part of the wounded body politics (D. M. Nelson 2009)—that at the same time are the place of strength, hope, love, happiness, dignity, resistance, solidarity, support, accompaniment, and justice. They are a wound that has many scars, social signs of the injury that needs to heal. “Recovering from injustice cannot be about covering

¹⁵⁸ With the notion of Nego-subjects I am referring to subjects that do not represent the individual, autonomous liberal subject, and that to the contrary, are more bounded in relationality and the collective. I found the idea of Nego in the work of Carolyn Martin Shaw (2014), a North American black feminist that used a critical looking back approach in her study in Africa. In her paper, presented in the invited Session: Decolonial Feminisms / World Anthropologies in the American Anthropological Association Conference, Shaw states that a well-known African feminist uses the notion of negofeminism to allude to feminism that is founded on negotiating with and around obstacles, institutions, and men, and that is also not ego based.

over the injuries, which are effects of that injustice; [they are] signs of an unjust contact between our bodies and others” (Ahmed 2004a: 202) that also expose and acknowledge them.

That wounded collective body in its entirety experiences depression, solitude, impotence, sadness, and discouragement. It has in its **head** pain, rage, fear, anger, sadness, love, and *complejimiento*; feelings of surprise, deception, revenge and indignation, states of craziness and surprise; and it has recurrent thoughts and dignity. Emotions are embodied thoughts, thoughts “felt in flushes, pulses, movements of our livers, minds hearts, stomachs, skin” (M. Rosaldo in Leavitt 1996: 524), that have their own rationality and that are connected with the **heart**. There, the wound that still hurts, that does not heal and cry, is condensed, territorialized. The heart has a scar that produces hate, pain, rage, frustration, resentment, boredom, solitude, and at the same time force (strength). It is like an instinctual force located where love also has a place.

This body in the rest of the **chest area** carries out dignity, resistance, happiness, solidarity, and support that counteracts that deeper feeling of solitude and emptiness due to the absence of the loved one, and that is the product of belonging to social movements and organizations where you feel that someone else is caring for you, while you continue caring for your relative. **Below the chest area and in the chest** this body feels fear, terror, paranoia, and persecution. It works sometimes like a pre-sentiment, an alert that is product of the rational and the non-rational, but it is also a pervasive print that remind the subject that the unthinkable is possible. In the **abdominal zone**, where the uterus and the digestive system is located, you find fear, anger, pain, sadness, uncertainty, and impotence that you cannot digest or that, at least, is so difficult to digest. The uterus feels empty and solitude appears, but it is also the space in which you locate the company you have found.

The **arms**, to which hands are articulated, are the metaphor of solidarity and company (*me dio la mano*; she/he gave me a hand), as well as revenge (*tomar la justicia por la propia mano*;

taking justice into one's own hands) and action (you do things with your hands). There, revenge, love, solitude, exhaustion, impotence, pain, sadness, solidarity, and support are embodied. The **legs** and **feet**, which allow displacing the entire body from one place to the other, are confused, lost, weak, impotent, frightened, without force and option, ill, worn and alone, and at the same time they are charging any body movement with love, hope, justice, and energy.

Here and there, you find love and hate in the body politics (D. M. Nelson 2009) that contains diverse collective bodies, contributing to the creation of the US and the Others, but also the frontier, the limit, the skin of social relations. We “do not love or hate because objects are good or bad, but rather because they seem ‘beneficial’ or ‘harmful’” (Descartes in Ahmed 2004a: 5-6). They “form an impression” whose characteristics depend upon how objects (people) impress upon us (the absence of a loved one and impunity, as in these histories through violence). Thus, “not only do I have an impression of others, but they also leave with an impression; they impress me, and impress upon me” (Ahmed 2004a: 6). It is precisely that impression that makes me align with some people and love them, and—common in Colombia's history—construct the notion of the Others and hate them.

Hate and feelings of revenge surface from violence itself. Some relatives are saying that they hate and that society, especially now in the transition to peace, does not want to listen to that. Hate is part of Colombians' emotional habitus that has contributed to blur and eliminate differences and feed an auto-generative circle of violence. This reality requires that Colombia face that truth and resolve a radical question: what will society do with hate? In their struggles, relatives are shifting the hegemonic emotional habitus privileging love in their action over hate. They are behaving as *sentipensante* beings that locate life in the center instead of death.

“I think that (pause) love ... helps you in those moments ... to calm the rage, all that resentment that you have inside, seeing yourself thwarted in all that you aspired for ... and

... and it helps you to heal that wound ... that you have and that marks you, because that's not easy" (Juan Tomas 2013).

Privileging love, relatives are also focusing on care, recreating a social bond that maintains family and communal ties as well as relationality rather than undoing it, as violence does. It is not a coincidence that members of social movements and organizations use words related with being born, giving birth, and family ties to describe the meaning that for them has been part of the social collectivity. There, they are recreating the primary bonds that connect humans in societies: kinship ties, as well as the power from within community that emerge from those social bonds. These new nuclear (organizations) and extensive families (social movements) are conceptualized by their members as created by choice. This, in terms of the unequal power relationships that are embedded in the traditional notion of family, represents a tremendous possibility for challenging the power of domination and the hegemonic emotional habitus, including the practice of love...

Section V. Seeds Planted in the Heart: Through Life to Death ... Through Death to

Life

“March 13 2013. We are again in the Avianca building for a second workshop that looks to explore the impacts of violence in victimized subjects' lives. In front of Avianca is a small square named Parque Santander. Many of victims' public manifestations move between Bolívar and Santander squares. Both names come from “founding fathers” of Independence that proposed two different approaches to the construction of the Nation-state: federalism and centralism. Downtown Bogotá has a lot of significance for victimized subjects. The Palace of Justice is part of the Bolívar Square, there the relatives of the Palace of Justice's Cafeteria commemorate the siege by the M-19 and the Army's take over each year. You can go from one square to the other—Santander and Bolívar—walking along 7th Avenue. This is one of the main avenues of Bogotá that connects south with north, or more precisely, downtown with the north of the city.

7th Avenue is the street that I have walked most in my entire life. I love downtown Bogotá, I enjoy walking it! It brings me a lot of memories. Each 1st of May that Avenue is taken by thousands of people that demand and propose a more equitable society. I walked that Avenue many times with my father and brother. My brother and I complained between us that walking that street with my father meant to be stopped by many people that wanted to say hi to him. I assume that some of those same people walked with us during the days we were looking for my *daddy* alive. One of those days, during the Theater Festival, we jumped into the inauguration with a big banner that stated: Where is Jaime Enrique Gómez Velásquez? That Saturday, we used white masks, trying to imitate *V of Vendetta*, a movie

that cinemas were showing at the time. Our participation in the inaugurations was impressive. My family, including my father's mother, was walking using the masks. Thousands of people saw the parade, observing that someone in downtown Bogotá, in those beautiful mountains behind them, was forcibly disappeared.

This is the same Avenue in which MOVICE, Sons and Daughters, and AFADDES have exposed their photography galleries. Many pictures of our relatives have been placed in the street for two or more hours, during which some people approach us and ask about what happened. On some occasions, the Memory Gallery is accompanied by short discourses and slogans: *Vivos se los llevaron, vivos que nos los devuelvan!* (They were taken alive, and alive they will be returned!) If you walk north from Bolívar Square you will cross Jiménez Avenue (Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada was the “conqueror” of our territory and founded Bogotá in 1538), immediately to your right you will find Santander Square and the Avianca building. If you continue walking north, you will reach the place where Pedro was brutally murdered, among 18th and 19th Streets, where different stores that sell clothes, shoes, and books are located. In one of the corners, you can now see a commemorative plaque in honor of Pedro. The pavement in front of that corner has become a site of struggle. The 6th of March, 2013, Hijos e Hijas, Movice, H.I.J.O.S, and youth groups drew the name of people that have been killed and forcibly disappeared on that walls: Octavio de Jesús Gallego, Julio Henríquez, Pedro, Jaime Gómez, Álvaro, with the exclamation: They are alive! They/We also painted a mural that states: More than 20000 forcibly disappeared people, with the faces of some of them.

If you continue walking, you will cross 19th Avenue, another important street that connects the west with the east of the city – Bogotá, more or less, is spatially organized as a square, given the Spaniards' urban planning of the settlement -, and after that, to your left, you will find the Plaza de las Nieves. That place has a lot of significance for me. The Empresa de Teléfonos de Bogotá is located in that square, where my father worked for twenty years and gave some speeches. Then, after he was forcibly disappeared, I was also there saying to people that he was not with us and that we were demanding to see him again, alive. *Vivos se los llevaron, vivos que nos los devuelvan!* Now, that square is named after Eduardo Umaña Mendoza, in honor of one of the human rights defenders that worked with the “victims” of the Justice Palace and with ASFADDES, among others relatives; he was killed in 1998. In that square, activities remembering and honoring Pedro have taken place as well.

The 1st of May, 2009, *Sons and Daughters*, in articulation with other organizations, drew the faces of some of our fathers and mothers, as well as other victimized subjects on the walls and floors of 7th Avenue. One of my father's faces was on the Personería building for more than four years! I think it was the one that lasted the longest, maybe due to the strategic place in which it was located: one of the bottom corners of the building. Each time that I saw him I smiled, even the day that I received one of those phone threats that tell me that someone is following me. The last time that I observed his face on that wall was in August 2013, before returning to UNC. That building is located at 7th Avenue with 21st street. Bolívar Square is at 10th street; you cover vivid memories within these eleven streets. After that point, you will find the Jorge Eliécer Gaitán's Theater, and then a variety of important meeting point for the rallies that are organized in Bogotá: the Colpatria Building, the Planetarium and the Bullring, the National Museum, and finally, the National Park, close to where my father was taken. Here you are at 7th Avenue with 36th street.

All these twenty streets have been walked multiple times by the characters of this story, although, of course, by some more than others. In these streets, squares, walls, floors, shops, and buildings we have put our bodies; we have embodied struggles; and we have created and re-created memories. We have talked, cried, shouted, ran, jumped, danced, painted, walked, layed down, and died. We have been there being subjects of power and also subjected by power. That day in the workshop, we were precisely exploring how power subjected us, the tremendous and differential impacts of violence in ourselves” (Huitaca 2015).

Places are riddled with memory. Any geography of the country has something to say about violence. Some of the people I work with have exclaimed: “Si los ríos hablaran” (If rivers could talk) (Movice 2013), “¿Si el Océano Pacífico pudiera hablar [diría] cuánta gente ha sido arrojada y [dejada] allá!” (If the Pacific Ocean could talk, it would tell how many people have been thrown out [and left] there! (Madres por la Vida 2011). They, with these words, are making reference to the impressive amount of bodies that have been thrown away in Colombia’s water due to violence, the majority of them product of enforced disappearances.

Violence is exercised in concrete territorialities, among them the body as a body politics that leaves its footprints: scars, memories, fear, silence, oblivion, and death, and constructed wounded bodies (D. M. Nelson 2009). This chapter is an exploration of the role of State and paramilitary violence as one of the main methodologies-strategies to maintain domination, as the expression of dominant power in the exercise of relational forces (Gómez Correal 2011a) Following Foucault (2003) and Paredes’ (2010) insights, I concentrate on how this dominant power works, on its material operations, looking at it from below, its effects, extremities, and where it becomes capillary.

Through concrete **strategies** such as enforced disappearances and displacement, selective murders, sexual violence, and genocide, the State and paramilitaries’ violence have generated **terror**, using it as one of the main **technologies** of social control and a way to establish and maintain hegemony (Taussig 1987). In this process the Sovereign exercises his power to kill some people while allowing others to remain alive in certain (precarious) conditions, perpetuating and extending

the geography of violence, the *tempopolitics* and *biogeopolitics* (Gómez Correal 2011a) that determines which lives matter and which do not.¹⁵⁹ First, I concentrate on the way power is exercised by the State and paramilitaries as contributing to domination, focusing mainly on the **power effects**. Second, I focus on the way victimized subjects resist it, and finally, I describe some of the results of this clash of power, returning to the question of identity and subjectivity.

I decided to focus on the effects of the power exercised by the State and the paramilitary as a way to understand the complexity of the process of victimization, looking to comprehend not only the intricacy of “political” violence but also how this violence is an expression of the *structural violence* (which includes cultural, political, economical, social, ontological, and epistemological violence over specific subjects) that gave birth to this specific Nation-state, the particularities of the constitution of the Nation-state and the modern project in Colombia. Similarly, I observe the effects of this specific power comprehending the State as a mobil effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities (Foucault 2007: 96) produced by a variety of actors and social relations.

At the same time, I explore the way relatives and victimized subjects descend into the ordinary (Das 2008) and learn to live with bad surroundings (Finnström 2008) as a concretization of the power of resistance, an existential “effort to cope with the difficult situation ... in order to be able to govern it” (6). The descriptions that follow are at the same time an ethical commitment to make visible the suffering of people as a way to acknowledge the implications that it has not only for individuals but for the entire body politics—the individual, collective and national body—(D. M. Nelson 1999), and the challenges that this complexity entails for peace building.

In this chapter I follow the trajectories of the “lived and existential realism” of victimized subjects, that is to say experiences of suffering that are “always tied to history and the wider world”

¹⁵⁹ I define these two concepts as the impacts of power/domination in racialized, gendered, and classed bodies localized in specific geographic contexts (biogeopolitics), performer in daily life with the intention to control people’s sense and experience of time (tempopolitics).

in the midst of the everyday intricacy of war (Finnström 2008: 7-8). These trajectories are telling us that something is wrong, that “the whole thing is out of hand, that the entire apparatus of the culture cannot cope with the menace any more” (Finnström 2008: 14).¹⁶⁰

Power of domination

The disruption of daily life

“My life changed completely... our life (including my mother’s) ended the day they took Orlando away and other beings were born... Before then, what did I do? I lived in terms of ... my children... and at that time, what was my purpose in life? To work and start studying again... My mother would say: ‘they took my life away’ ... I stopped working since we started all this effort [to search] ... and we’ve not gotten involved in Asfaddes” (Camila 2013).

“[With what happened to my son, my life made] ... a 180 degree change. Oof! Sadness, loneliness, depression, boredom... Now I ride my bike differently, I don’t have long telephone conversations and don’t bother to pay phone bills... Those fights over... him being vegetarian and me being a carnivore. [His absence] has created a lot of things, a lot” (Mamoncillo 2013).

The subjects of this story die with their relatives’ death or enforced disappearance, and new subjects are re-born. A different identity is formed and the subject joins a novel process of becoming. One of the first power effects of domination is the disruption of daily life, and with it, the creation, in some cases, of a certain type of subject of suffering whose life projects takes another direction. Violence robs daily life of time with loved ones, negating the minimum quotidian conditions of being happy: the possibility of intimate relations within relatives, friends, organizations, and communities, as well as the concretization of personal desires, yearnings, and necessities.

“... Isabel was her father’s Little Darling... she’s the only one who recalled with precision Ramiro’s face, the games in the living room, the dragging across the rug, and even the tender kiss that her father gave her on the cheek that night of December 5th before going to sleep” (González Santos 2010: 13)

¹⁶⁰ I am borrowing the definition that Finnström (2008) uses to understand the concept of living with bad surroundings, the way the Acholi people of northern Uganda understand their experience in the context of the civil war between the Lord’s Resistance Army and armed groups fighting the Ugandan government. This concept is not an absolute opposite to bad surroundings or the idealization of the past. I will return to this idea in the final chapter of the dissertation.

Violence even interrupts discussions, problems, and unresolved tensions between relatives that could not be addressed. This contributes to the feeling of guilt and, at the same time, makes grieving and healing more difficult. These new subjects that experience suffering, feel the power effects in their bodies. Some of the emotions that are experienced deteriorate the quality of life, producing illness and health problems. It is common that in the process of searching for their loved ones and their own rights, relatives and other victimized subjects forget their bodies, neglecting self-care. Eating disorders appear and victimized subjects' bodies go through a process of transformation that can mean both weight gain and/or loss, changing their physical appearance.

“Sometimes you can really neglect... yourself... That’s one of my goals, to start having consciousness of my obligation to take care of myself, my own health” (Camila 2013).

Some of the most common health problems have to do with depression and stress that affect the entirety of the holistic body: the malfunctioning of the digestive system generating colon’s problems, and the impact of the chest area and the uterus. It is common to hear that first-degree victim mothers get uterus or breast cancer, fathers having heart attacks, and other victims experiencing breathing problems (Juana 2010, Camila 2013).

“I have fibromyalgia ... I’ve heard tell that that’s a really tough problem to deal with because of stress, anxiety, painful episodes, all that accumulates here and becomes a health problem... Stress made me... have thyroid issues... our breathing always affects all of us... because depression oppresses and compresses and I, just like all relatives, get depressed. There are days I wake up totally depressed, and what’s worse, I have to go out and do things with that depression... An alternative physician said once that that’s worse than any cancer, I mean, that you’re not able to say on a day when your depressed that you have no reason to hide it, because that’s worse, or that I’m sad, but I have to put on a mask and laugh or go to a meeting” (Camila 2013).

“You destroy yourself, because I think that the suffering and obsessive thoughts [don’t let you sleep] well... I start thinking about lots of things... That... wears you out... the suffering ruins you... I’ve had asthma... I feel exhaustion in my legs... When I think, cry, that wears me out” (La Mache 2013).

“I start to feel more pain, I start sleeping less... My sleep... is interrupted a lot... my sleep map [changed], mine had a fairly violent disorder... There’s certain things that wake me up: anguish, fears... On May Day, two weeks beforehand I start to sleep a lot less, two hours,

two hours, one hour, or no sleep at all. And the same thing after May Day” (Mamoncillo 2013).

Fear interrupts daily life. It works not only as a power effect of violence but also as a technique of domination. Fear is each time more blurred in society, invading all types of social relations and actions. Some victimized subjects fear of being dehumanized, namely of experiencing torture and being murder while others have interiorized a fear that prevents them from talking about politics. The Panopticon is in place, a police society (*sociedad policiva*) that has been interiorized in individual and collective bodies (Foucault 1995). While the majority of society does not know exactly how they are *observed*, some victimized subjects quickly realize it. They have learned to identify when they are followed and overheard. This dissemination of fear contributes to entrench some cultures of clandestinity, already in place, and developing others. Some “victims” have to assume anonymity in the places they arrive to, others decide not to talk about their past in order to continue with other aspects of their lives, while others learn to circumvent the surveillance. Fear becomes a technique of social control, an internal “dispositive” of power that also generates states of paranoia, spreading *power as a war*.

“I am very afraid of the way I could possibly end up dying” (La Pola).

“Back then I was a very laid back, chill person... but once all this started occurring, I began to have tremors, stomachaches, sometimes diarrhea... Paranoia... hasn't gone away and unfortunately it isn't actually paranoia, it was real. Each time I say, “That motorcycle is following me,” and after checking the license number, I find out that it was people from the Sijín or the Dijín, from the Dipol, or the Sipol... (I've felt] fear... seeing [my loved one die]... I was so afraid for him... I was also afraid when they shot at me three times, although it was afterward. I staid still, they went by like this (pause), I kept walking calmly, I opened the door, locked myself in my room, I wiped myself down with a white towel... I rubbed myself like this all over and didn't see any blood on the towel. Then I sat down and I started, I started to shake because I was afraid... I was terrified that time they detained me and they didn't hit me, but they tortured me psychologically. As I was locked in the cell they were yelling, ‘this time for real you're gonna pay for it, goddamit,’ and they opened the cell door and... someone called them back... and then they came back in with a bucket of water and acted like they were going to throw it on me when they were called back again... ‘You got lucky this time,’ and they'd go back out... They'd talk aloud outside the cell door, ‘So, what are we gonna do to this s.o.b. When I got out, I was in pain, my whole body hurt as if they had been hitting me all that time that they were outside the door... Ah! [Fear causes] a

lot of feelings: hate, vengeance, fright... and reflection... ‘Why did I get involved in this shit?!’ (laughter) (La Pola).

Relatives are exposed to techniques of terror that aim not only to produce fear but also to make them feel and think that they are not rational, that they have lost their minds. In dirty wars, Nordstrom states, the armed actors, including the State, “use the construction of terror and the absurd as a mechanism for gaining and maintaining socio-political control over a population” (in Finnström 2008: 13). The type of intimidation that is used, which falls within the “unthinkable,” works toward making victims perceive themselves as crazy. Fear looks to paralyze subjects, their agency and their capacity to struggle and transform society. It, as well as the overall situation of victimization, makes them realize the giant against whom they are fighting, or, better said, the powerful giant that is attacking them. This generates fear and anxiety; while at the same time the “giant” is naked itself.

“Having to face so many forces, so many interests, I mean, you feel like you’re standing alone in front of a giant saying, ‘Hey, explain why’ or ‘this is your fault’ ” (Juan Tomás 2013).

“But the problem isn’t just Creonte, it’s his whole project. A project that is based on something incompatible with human liberty: Democratic Security. A Security that disappears, murders, sprays people with bullets to create false positives and pardon criminals. A project based on the pretension, still not achieved, to change all State institutions, to change the governing model, to formalize a dictatorship cloaked in democracy and based on popular opinion that doesn’t actually express an opinion, but simply repeats. A project that doesn’t consider its citizens as thinking beings, that doesn’t promote their critical thinking, but rather their potential to incriminate others” (Antígona, Y Si uno es un Vidrio Roto, March 20 2010).

“It’s an unequal battle. It’s different if we’re fighting fist to fist and hitting each other hard, ok, fine, he’s well trained and I’m not, he’s 6 foot and I’m 5’8... But this is a different battle where it’s three against one, where you don’t know what can happen, with all the stories you hear; they’re going to cut you up, rape you, stab you, electrocute you, throw gas on you and light you on fire, disappear you. That’s the worst... that **uncertainty**” (Mamoncillo 2013).

Some victims get used to fear to the extent that it seems to disappear, but that is not entirely accurate at least you have a conscious process. It is only experiencing fear that we know what it is to not have it. Tranquility and fear work in a dialectical way like many other emotions, feelings, and

human states that are not dichotomous but to the contrary are relational; they are dualisms that are not opposed but complementary.

“Well, I’m not sure how long it took to get used to them following us... Well [I do feel] fearful, yeah, 24 hours a day every day, I think that turns into paranoia. But I think I haven’t gotten to the point where I lose control, no, I think I’ve been fairly restrained with ... [the many things that make me fearful]” (Camila 2013).

Uncertainties create fear, too. There is a connection between fear, paranoia, and pre-sentiments that sometimes is difficult to differentiate.

“He said to me, ‘You seem nervous because you’re looking around,’ and I said, ‘Yeah, I don’t know why but I’ve been feeling nervous for a while. I feel something and I can’t ignore my intuition.’ So I told him, ‘Let’s get out of here... I feel something funny’” (Mamoncillo 2013).

The power effects of domination include changes in economic and life projects such as work and study, and in romance. The economy is commonly the first aspect that is affected, mainly in poor and middle sectors of society.

“One of the first changes was... the fact of ... living alone... [My parents] had always provided for me until what happened to my dad. I was 22. [I had to] learn to provide for myself... and to deal with major changes in my emotional side... [I get] really strong cycles of depression... and sometimes they’re things that make you furious because there’s no explanation, so I can be fine one minute and then change the next... It’s very physical, too... as soon as I wake up... I feel sadness and it’s like a feeling of being disoriented... I don’t feel like doing anything, I just stay in bed, I cry a lot... without explanation... I can even be laughing and then start crying... It was my dad’s birthday this weekend, and then I realize and [I get it]... I think that the body has a memory... There was a tradition for his birthday, each of us bought him a gift... we would go to get him a cake. He would pick it out” (Esperanza 2013).

“I worked in the mayor’s office in Bogota, in the Office of Women and Gender, and... I had to leave my job for a month and two days, I mean, [during that time] I didn’t show up to work because every day I was looking ... doing things to try to find my dad... [Also], when my dad was disappeared, my work on my master’s thesis was suspended for quite a while, I finished taking classes... in fall of 2005 and I didn’t finish graduating until fall 2009, when I had already started my PhD” (Antígona 2012).

For some relatives of this story, both men and women have been difficult to find a partner that understands their struggles and dedication to those struggles. It becomes even more difficult for women when they have also to face a machista culture.

“He didn’t really get all the damage I felt and said, “Ah, it’s better to forget and not cry, I don’t know why you wear yourself out so much.’... **He never undertood emotionally the level of damage.** He never liked me much, because you know, out there they’re all comrades, but inside the house they’re typical macho guys that tell you, ‘Oh, get over it,

why don't you focus on raising children like the rest of the women, cook, take care of the clothing'... I preferred, I mean, I split up with him... I didn't look for another partner... Besides I hardly have time... When? When?... I don't want a husband, what's the point? So he can not even understand that you don't want to be shut up in the house for a week?" (La Pola).

"The second partner I had... sees all the hate I have inside me, sees the campaign I started, sees the work I start doing 24 hours a day and one day he tells me that [I should choose between the struggle] for [my relative] or [the relationship]... straight up. I said, "My struggle. I love you so much, I won't forget you, but if you make me choose between the love between the two of us and my love for [my relative], I choose [the latter]. Since then, I haven't allowed anyone to put me back in that dilemma... my way of life, very accelerated, watching my back, staying in different places, makes it hard to maintain a, let's say, normal relationship with another person... [In this sense] you lose privacy sometimes... [also]... [I have to] be constantly changing plans as a matter of security" (La Pola).

"[After losing a loved one] you [end up] in a state of vulnerability that ends up impacting your decisions... In my case, I feel that, based on that context, I decided... to get married, which meant to have to make up for many absences in the marriage and with your partner, but apparently didn't get resolved from there and so, even though I got married, we separated four months later and I think that has to do not only with my past related to the disappearance, but... it's related to the fact that... I've become much more careful about the kind of person that I can form a relationship with and the kind I can't... What kind of person wants to be with someone who has a past like yours that has real-life repercussions? That, literally, happened to me... someone... who says that it's hard to be with you when you have a past of persecution, when you dedicate your life to this struggle" (La Pola 2012).

The gender system is also impacted as part of the power effects of the structural violence that the country has lived through. Gender relationships as well as families are transformed, sometimes intensifying their patriarchal character, and in others altering the dichotomous division between public/private, political/apolitical, reason/emotion, and economical provider/caring person. The majority of first-degree victims that have been killed as part of the structural violence are men, and women are disproportionately the ones that have clamored for their relatives' rights and played a central role in the political-public space and economical maintenance of their families. Although many women work in Colombia (almost every women of this story worked before the violent episode, with the exception of Betty and Esperanza), violence operates a transcendental change in the sense that women become the main or only supporter of their households. As I already

explained, it is also the loss of a relative or being the object of direct violence that make some women in the country join the political-public space for the first time in their lives.

“When the things happened to my husband, I couldn’t leave everything behind and run away, as much as I may have wanted to, I’d never worked before in my life and I started working in a cafeteria, preparing food... I had never work before he disappeared... Now my daughters say to me, ‘I think our dad was really sexist and if you were with him now, you’d be stuck here in the house with the grandkids and you wouldn’t do anything like your doing now’... Maybe... He thought he should just let me be with my little girls” (Betty In Morales 2013).

They killed my husband back in ’87... I still don’t cry because I got married really young with this guy, Gerardo Francisco Becerra... and I was totally dependent on him economically. When he died, I always say, ‘My life and my past are divided in two.’ From there you have the transition to the Eloisa that you see today. From there, I had to watch my children cry out of hunger, to see them suffering... I had to be mother and father and there’s no class to teach you how to be a good mother. I had to... be the economic, moral and ethical support of the family. Fortunately, God has been my strength... In his teenage years, I didn’t know how to guide my son or how to support my daughter” (Eloisa, Madres por la Vida 2011).

“I came here with my whole family. I’m a single mother. At the time, I had three children, two grandchildren and I got [to Buenaventura] with my children, working hard, but thank the Lord I’ve been able to support them; now my children are all professionals and we’ve been here, living and fighting for others who want... someone to work on their behalf” (Antonia, Afrodes 2011).

State and paramilitary violence put in place a central **technique** of dominant power: the *control of time*. Bourdieu (1977) states that body, language, and time are privileged objects of social control. “Through bodily and linguistic discipline (which often entails a temporal discipline), objective structures are incorporated into the body and the “choices” constituting a certain relation to the world are internalized in the form of durable patterning not accessible to consciousness nor even, in part, amenable to will” (662). Since domination is reified by practice, it is temporally structured, “intrinsically defined by its *tempo*” (Bourdieu 1977: 8).

Thus, time plays a central role in the context of violence in Colombia. The perpetrators play with time as a way to gain and/or sustain power. The fact of waiting before releasing someone, or not knowing if the family member is alive or dead, or finding their remains and burying them

implies control of victimized subjects' time as well as changes in its experience, as I have already shown. The same occurs when a relative is murdered or someone is raped or forcibly displaced. The violent event takes the control that victimized subjects had of their lives' time – which is never complete since other structures of domination and relationships of power are in place.

Foucault (1979) and (Bourdieu 1980) have indicated that the body is an object of a social discipline. Likewise, particular methods are used to regulate time. This implies a temporal distribution of “collective and individual activities and the appropriate rhythm with which to perform them” (Bourdieu 1980: 75). This control of time is expressed in diverse ways in the stories of the victimized subjects. First, some of them devote almost the entirety of their time to their struggles. Second, their life is at stake, making the duration of lives dependent, in great proportion, on others. Third, victimized subjects do not have always control over their time since many actions and dispatches depend on others (meetings with lawyers, attorneys, State officials, people that can give you information or help you, other victimized subjects that you have to accompany to make the denouncements, interviews, and trips). And fourth, achieving demands such as justice, truth, and reparation are contingent upon the will of the State and victimizers, and usually, as happens in Colombia, it can take years and years. Relatives are obligated to wait. To wait is a mundane and small space of social disciplining that the State uses and that usually creates subordinated subjects perpetuating citizens' suffering (Auyero 2014).

Frequently, time turns into something that is unmanageable and that affects rest, sleep, and love. A concrete *tempopolitics* is enacted, that represents the existence of a power that can cut your strings as if you were a puppet, a human without agency, a power that looks to construct docile bodies and thus to discipline the subject (Foucault 1995). As we have discussed with (Leyva 2013), domination, including capitalism, makes people not only work to reproduce their lives and the lives of others, but also to struggle against a system that in many occasions deprives you of the time

necessary for other activities that are essential for constructing a dignified life. This control of time even has consequences for the enjoyment of happiness, including emotional states that certain exercises of domination, such as terror, want to banish. In front of the disruption of daily life, happiness is subsumed potentially forever in some victimized subjects' lives, running contrary to the official discourse that Colombia is the happiest country in the world.

Is happiness a goal in your life?

“[Happiness was my goal] between '89 and the year 2005 (pause) and then no more. 1989 is the year Pedro was born and 2005 is when they killed him. I had 15 years and 202 days of happiness, but not any more. I have occasional moments of happy smiles, good times... but they're... very sporadic. But happiness? That died on May 6th 2005... I'm not afraid to say it... I don't love life... I once said that without Pedro, the sun doesn't warm me, sugar doesn't sweeten my coffee, salt doesn't season food, so I no longer really care about living... without Pedro ... it's not the same... so, what am I doing here? Well, sure, I have a job working with youth... for the truth... for human rights. Sure, I do this... but, am I fulfilled? Not at all. [The death of] Pedro ... created a violent **emptiness**. I've always said that they killed Pedro's body and my head, and what I do now is what Pedro would be doing... if they'd let him live, if they hadn't killed him” (Mamoncillo 2013).

“I don't believe in happiness anymore (laughs)... Sure, [I've had] moments of joy, and this field of work has brought us joy... when we achieve a goal that seemed hard, when we find someone, when we get a perpetrator convicted, a murderer, when people... have gotten past it... have studied. Sure, you have moments of joy, at least with my children... I dunno, I haven't thought about what happiness could be with all this that I have” (Camila 2013).

“I've always said, 'my happiness was truncated' ... I think that one of the ways [to face that]... is to make fun of situations, to laugh about things that happen... But if I ask, 'someday will I recover that joy,' well I don't know yet...” (Juan Tomás 2013).

*Expropriating and undermining the self: bodies, belongings and land*¹⁶¹

*"My family is still
stranded at sea
as we continue
looking for that father"
(Candelaria, Madres por la Vida 2011).*

¹⁶¹ I use the notion of expropriate to refer to the action of taking someone's land, money, or possessions but also to take something that does not belong to you and use it for yourself (Macmillan English Dictionary). From my perspective, State and paramilitary violence expropriates the subject of his/herself through the construction of docile and disciplined subjects, undermining and using the self for their benefit.

In first and second-degree victims, the body is the territory of political control, where domination is at stake, the place of power relationships, where ideological struggles materialize. The body, as the concretization of the self, is where domination can be possible. It is the “symbolic



Figure 8: Graffiti

“Neither the land nor women are territories of conquest”

and material locus for the creation of identities and the deployment of power struggles” (Aretxaga 2001: 38). The body of the first-degree victim, the political contradictor, or the citizen that is turned into a means for establishing terror, is subjected to dehumanization. Terror is turned into something usual, working as a meaning and culture making process (Taussig 1987). Thus, torture is another *mechanism* of power through which a subjects’ body is broken, burned, cut, hit, and electrocuted. The following quote is the testimony of a woman student who was tortured as part of the retaking of the Justice of Palace by the Armed Forces. She was released due to being a relative of an important politician.

““Can you hear the voices? Do you hear the screaming? Those are from the people that do not want to cooperate’ ... They handcuffed me to the side of the bed and continued with the interrogation, the same as the Vase House or in the van: ‘where did you change?’ One was lying on me pretty hard and moving. He asked for a vest to tie around my face, so that when he kills me it wouldn’t spread ... when he was lying the vest around my face he asked for scissors. I asked him not to cut my hair ... not to cut it (cry). My God!” (Yolanda Santodomingo in Gisbon and Salazar 2011).

“Oh man, Edgar (from the Colectivo 82) was tortured terribly... they destroyed him, ripped him up through torture, and it was Yanine Díaz himself, so they say... We found Orlando’s body tortured, destroyed, they’d burned him, broken his bones. They’d burned his testicles, his heels... At that time, the bodies they found without ID, you had two days maximum,

otherwise they dumped them, without any commitment or responsibility to investigate, nothing! He was identified as NN and they already had him set aside with another body to throw into a mass grave... At first, Lucho and I didn't recognize him... they'd hit him, his face was all torn up... his nose and all this part here was broken. But besides that it just looks different, you know, the body, the swelling, the burns, they burned him with electricity... When you're looking at someone- you had this experience, I would imagine... you're always thinking that you're not going to find a cadaver, you never want to find a cadaver, so the first impression when we saw him was, no, that's not him... And, yeah, that was it. And then they told us, 'You have to pay.' 'What?' 'Yeah, you have to pay to pick up a body' (Camila 2013).

Torture is the beginning of a process of dehumanization that looks to defeat the "enemy;" she/he has to confess, betraying "comrades" as well as convictions and struggles. It can be a step that leads to the final disappearance of the body and the subject, working as a mechanism of terror in which the body is fractured and disarticulated, breaking the relationality of the holistic body, the dignity of the person and his/her relation with the rest of society. Torture is the disfiguring and transformation of a body that is considered disposable into an unrecognizable object. Difference is blurred; it does not have a space to exist. At the same time, it works as a punitive example for the community, as the proof of what can happen if you challenge the power relations and the structures of domination that are in place.

"Although he was subjected to a lot of torture, the peasants that witnessed it said that he didn't say anything, because you have to imagine what it's like to endure torture from 5 am, but what happened on the other farm where they killed him and he didn't tell on anyone, he always tried to protect his people" (Juana, n.d.).

"Sergio was taken past the school at 8:30 in the morning and they had him tied to a tree until 6 pm [when] they took him off in an army truck" (Juana 2010).

Turning into an object, the subject of that tortured body completely loses their rights. In this objectification of subjects not only *the rights* of daily life are ruined, but also those of the "after life." Ramiro wanted to be buried on the banks of the river and "that the sand would caress me one more time" (González Santos 2010: 56) Jaime desired to be cremated rather than buried, as has occurred since his body became evidence. When the remains of a forcibly disappeared person are

not found, the rights to a dignified death and burial are negated, breaking with ancient rituals that recreates community and the *sacred* value of life and death.

“You never, never lose hope of being able to find him. Every morning you ask yourself, ‘Is he eating breakfast right now? Did he already eat? Is he alive? Are they taking care of him? Where is he? Why? What... caused him this? Is it my fault?’ (Candelaria, *Madres por la Vida* 2011).

For some relatives it is fundamental to find the remains in order to “close a cycle” and for the dignification of his/her loved one, while for others it means the death of hope, and even, for a minimum number of relatives it is not central due to their consciousness of the difficulty of finding them, and prefer to focus their energies and expectations in other aspects of their struggles.

“To me the fact to find the body is not a way of mitigating ... the pain. The pain doesn’t change, it just gets sharper. And I think that... in some ways, when you find it, I mean, if you don’t find it, you still have the **hope** that you might find him alive. But when you find him dead, you lose that hope... Death leads you to kill that **hope** and... it leaves you with all the questions: what happened? Who did it? Why? Where were they holding him? Why did they torture him? Who tortured him?... I don’t think finding the tortured body mitigates the pain... of the loss... Sure, if you don’t find it, the only real question is: where is he? ... In our case, although we found the body, we never found any answers” (Camila 2013).

The crime of forced disappearances looks to not leave any trace. The intention is to disappear the subject, their struggles, and the crime. The objective is accomplished through the blindness of society. *Indifference and apathy* are power effects of terror. “Colombian society has still not seen them ... the disappeared continue to be invisible for the large portion of this society” (Camila 2013).

It is common that under the enforced order of the paramilitaries, neither those that are forcibly disappeared nor anyone that was murdered under their power may be buried.

“It’s rough because, before, we would lose loved ones and we had rituals... to hold wakes, burials, and we at least had that memory, if we sang *alabados* for him all night, songs... from our region... Now we can’t hold wakes for our dead. And if we bury them it’s with extreme caution, with a fear that they could come and kill us right there, they could grab us in the cemetery itself. So we are left totally traumatized... a life-long trauma” (Antonia, *Afroses* 2011).

Rape works as a **strategy**, a methodology of power, as another expression of violence that objectifies bodies (of women, primarily but not exclusively) and turns those bodies into spoils of war. This performs patriarchal power that authorizes the use of symbolic and physical violence

towards women. Like (Aretxaga 2001) shows in her analysis of the strip searches in Northern Ireland, in Colombia, the “use” of women’s bodies in the midst of the war is more than an instrumental utilization of a sexualized body, it is related with structural relations of power that include other dimensions of domination such as race and class.

“When they were about to kill [Majayura], first... it wasn’t just one guy, there were several... When they picked up my daughter... she was screaming... [They were raping her]. [Someone that heard and saw] said that when one was done, the next one went at it, not inside, just right there. And she was screaming and ... she passed out. And she was saying, ‘don’t kill me, don’t kill me. Mom! Mom!’ Oh man, that hurts... [Later, when we were going to bury her] I broke [the bag she was wrapped in], I ripped it wide open. She was all swollen... They cut her, all this part they cut her, they broke her hands... Those sons of bitches, they broke her hands” (La Mache 2013).

When La Mache is recounting her daughter’s history, she said that the rumors were that the ladies who were raped and killed were prostitutes, while other people “justified” it as a crime of passion. The gender dimension of this *event* is in both the violent act and people’s interpretation that usually consider that women provoke sexual assault. Majayura’s body was an object of torture and was marked, cutting her, as a territory of ownership. His hands, maybe the only instrument to fight back, were rendered. In addition, Majayura is an indigenous woman that belongs to a culture in which women are sacred for the community. To attack her and other women implies an assault on the entire community, to spread fear, and control mobility.

As many feminists have shown, rape is a strategy of war (Theidon 2007) that contributes to establish hierarchies of power between armed groups and the population, as well as within the armed forces (Theidon 2007: 472). Sexual assault is perpetuated thanks to the silence it produces since the victimized subjects, product of their cultural context, usually feel guilty, as if they provoked the act. La Mache is breaking this silence talking publicly about what occurred to Majayura, and by means of her “thick description,” as women in other context of violence do (Theidon 2007), is providing a narrative that talks about the complexity of war in her region.

Meanwhile, in Buenaventura, over the past year and as a part of the paramilitary “demobilization,” femicides, violence against women that includes sexual assault and forced disappearances, have become more common, combining a violence that are due to both gender and race positionalities. Contrary to common assumptions, victimized women have more to say about war that goes beyond the solely gendered and sexual dimensions of violence to the extent that in a context such as this one, their experience is talking about “enduring forms of inequality” (Theidon 2007: 474) tied with an embedded racism.

In this case, this concrete expression of femicide is the result of the degradation of violence, in which the strategies and techniques of the different armed actors—mainly the paramilitaries and the Armed Forces—are deepened, reaching dramatic consequences. Buenaventura is living a territorial dispute between the Rastrojos and the Urabeños, two criminal gangs that emerged as part of the paramilitary demobilization and drug trafficking. These gangs are employing paramilitary techniques of violence, among them dismemberment, as well as a paramilitary and State methodology: enforced disappearances. The latter is mainly done with the intention of erasing any evidence and in order to avoid prosecution.¹⁶²

“What we’re observing... is that the supposed demobilization, the [paramilitary] reengineering that occurred [is affecting us]. Those that worked for the paramilitaries are now forming part of public forces... with that program... of the network of informers. The demobilized ones, from the paramilitaries and the insurgency alike... become part of the Army itself, in the infantry and the navy, and from there they operate... In the trips I’ve made around the river, in the stretch from here to Yurumanguí, the infantry has intercepted me to search my boat and at their base, I’ve seen people who were paramilitaries before, I met them when they were paramilitaries, or people who were militiamen of... the guerillas... Common crime, as we call it, has more to do with how the police operate here in Buenaventura. There’s guys here who steal and then share with the police” (Manuel, PCN 2011).

¹⁶² When murders decrease, forced disappearances increase, and vice versa. In 2006, 408 murders and 42 forced disappearances are registered. In 2008, murders decrease to 206 and forced disappearances reach 182 (in *Semana* [2015]: <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/buenaventura-se-le-salio-de-las-manos-del-gobierno/419906-3>).

“Just imagine that just so far this year (until June) ... up to last Friday, a week ago, there have been 118 people disappeared right here in Buenaventura” (Antonia, Afrodes 2011).

“[Women] are recruited by them, and those that resist are killed. Other women [are killed by them] due to envy of their husbands... I don't know what's going on. Last year, we had a lot of protests [against violence] against women... because they've killed a lot of female functionaries... We take over the streets with 10,000 women to protest against the death of that girl, or some other women that they've violently killed as well. So, I don't know... if it's that men's blood cells have gone wacky, I don't know... Just a week ago they killed a girl around my neighborhood ... and the way they killed her was horrible, horrible, horrible... A lot of gang rapes where they grab these girls and kidnap them, they rape them, and then they kill them, they disappear them” (Antonia 2011).

The body experiences a transformation in the process of being subjected to violence. First, it is an alive body that is tortured and stripped of any trace of humanity and it becomes a body without life, without identity or subjectivity, and having changed into a corpse that is considered to lack agency. One of the main objectives of enforced disappearances is turning the person into a NN (no name). Some of them, after being killed are placed in a section of cemeteries that is strictly reserved for people that are found without any identification document and whose names have not been identified.

When a body gets to a State institution like the Legal Medicine office or the scientific [forensic] world, it's just a body, I mean, a body stripped of its identity, and that forms part of those dichotomies, but also forms part of the dichotomy of life-death. Jaime Gómez arrives there as an object, not a subject, and arrives dead, so any 'respect' that he might receive in life is gone, because he's now just an inanimate object that has lost part of his social value” (Antígona 2014).

When the body of a first-degree victim is overturned, not only his/her body is the object of violence. Relatives' bodies are invaded with fear, paranoia, stress, depression, weakness, and emptiness since the first moment the violence occurs, and they also feel the pain of their loved one. Relatives and loved ones bodies are connected one with another. Embodied empathy is created as an effect of the *affective event* that is at the same time feeling with others that have lived similar situations.

“Really rough... first they killed my husband, which was rough, but I hung on... But when they killed my daughter, that was really rough, because a husband is a husband, a child is a

child. That pain gets all the way to your soul... to our **bodies**, to our... **insides**, all the pain you feel... I feel pain and my whole body aches, it hurts when I remember all those things they did to my daughter” (La Mache 2013).

“Pedro was really a softie when it came to pain. And to think all the pain he went through! The first time I met the forensic doctors, because I wanted them to explain all about the blows, the cranial trauma and the force that is needed to break a skull and all that, and they start to describe it, I got a headache that lasted me a week. As if I had received a blow (pause), but I needed to know that... When [other victims] tell me things, I say, ‘I know what that’s like, because I’ve lived it and felt it and seen it... I know how it feels” (Mamoncillo 2013).

“Most of all I think it caused me a lot of pain to know they had tortured him so much, I think that really made an impression on me... At that moment, they were bringing back my father’s body... he told me, ‘Look, they’re coming this way with the body, they found it decomposed, so obviously you can’t see it for a certain time’... I locked myself inside, I screamed, I cried... In the burial I was calmer. During the wake and the burial I didn’t cry... I think the only moment where I cried was when they put him in the coffin” (Esperanza 2013).

One of the main power effects of violence and its technique of terror has to do with people’s subjectivity. Violence creates certain dispositions that are internalized in the body through memory and incorporated in the form of bodily schemes. Dispositions are truly embedded, internalized “in the form of bodily postures and stances, ways of standing, sitting, looking, speaking, or walking” (Bourdieu 1977: 15). During years, decades, and centuries of pervasive violence, a concrete *habitus*—almost unnoticeable—was produced and is enacted in the quotidian in Colombia. This *habitus*, the daily and habitual things people do with their body (Mauss 1973), is an embodied structure (Bourdieu 1977) that has been internalized in different degrees depending upon the proximity or distance with the mechanisms, strategies, and techniques of power.

As an outcome of history, this habitus produces individual and collective practices as well as schemes of perception, thought, and action that at the same time are the product of the structure, contributing permanently to structure it (Bourdieu 1980: 53). This is translated in the Colombian context to practices such as always observing the surroundings in a state of alert while walking; avoiding talking about politics in certain places, with certain people, or forever altogether;

observing “others” in a disparaging way; feeling threatened and betrayed by the closest people; moving in some places only at certain hours. This habitus has affected a diverse array of social relations, breaking some collectivities, rupturing certain affects and confidences, and producing a particular body politics.

Impunity

*“Look doctor, I’m sorry,
but what you have failed to understand
is that this is a history of a political nature
in which the State is involved.
When are you going to understand
that the mechanisms of impunity
opérate in the opposite direction
from the law of gravity”
(Juana 2010)*

*“I have struggle so much that
I haven’t done anything”
(MOVICE-Bogotá 2013)*

“July 27th, 2008. The trials for the Palace of Justice siege’s forcibly disappeared people has begun. Outside, there are two different groups of people. Some are supporting Colonel Plazas Vegas while the others are accompanying the relatives of the Cafeteria’s forcibly disappeared people. The first group is claiming that the Colonel is innocent, carrying a banner with the picture of Pope Juan Pablo II giving Plazas Vegas communion, including a phrase that declares: ‘Colonel, God is with you.’ Among the second group of people are members of *Sons and Daughters*, who have accompanied the relatives of the Palace of Justice for years along with the *Comisión Interclerecial de Justicia y Paz* (Intereclesiastical Peace and Justice Commission). They are close to the orange banner/letters of the organization that states: SIN OLVIDO (Without Forgetting).

Sons and Daughters has a *batucada* (drum circle), and they are singing against impunity, asking justice, and at the same time remembering. Inside, the Colonel is saying that he must be judged by the Military Penal Justice court, and that he considers himself a hero. ‘No, I am not interested in delaying the process, I want the truth to come out. I need to remind you that in 1985 ... the crime of forced disappearance didn’t exist, therefore no Colombian could commit it. You can’t change the rules of the game years afterwards.’ Some of the relatives of the forcibly disappeared people are in the audience. One of them, Héctor Beltrán, says: ‘the pain one feels to be face to face with the protagonist, so to speak, of the disappearances, of the tortures, is immense. The hatred (rancor), it makes my blood boil (medulla) to see him there, a meter away and I can’t say anything to them’¹⁶³ (Huitaca 2015).

¹⁶³ This is a reconstruction based on the book *Vivir sin los otros* (Living without the others) (González Santos 2010: 19), and the documentary *La Toma*, directed by Angus Gisbon and Miguel Salazar (2011).

Although President Betancourt established the first investigation for the events that took place in the Justice of Palace six months after the siege occurred, the relatives of the Cafeteria have had to wait more than twenty years to have any sort of justice. It is still neither complete nor moderately decent. The Tribunal condemns Plazas Vega for the forced disappearance of the guerrilla Irma Franco and the worker of the Cafeteria Carlos Rodríguez, but the rest of the crimes remain in impunity. These two histories have evolved thanks to the visual evidence that exists in which is possible to see Irma Franco and Carlos Rodríguez alive leaving the Justice of Palace under the custody of the Armed Forces. Ramiro has neither appeared in any visual evidence nor has his body been found.

The Truth Commission that was established in 1996 concludes that the 11 men and woman of the Cafeteria are disappeared people (Betty 2013). By 2008, the state was declared responsible for their enforced disappearance and in the 1990s some relatives were paid indemnifications. Recently, in December 2014, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights condemned the Colombian State for its responsibility in the enforced disappearances of the eleven people and the Magistrado Carlos Horacio Urán, as well as the tortures used during the re-taking of the Palace. This is the fifteenth condemnation that the State has received from the Inter-American Court (*El Tiempo* 2014).

Impunity is both a power effect of terror and a mechanism of power. It has been enacted through different strategies that operate in a variety of ways as a deliberate political technology for the creation of particular subjects – both victimized subjects that get politicized or that decide not to struggle - and social orders. First, it looks to intimidate relatives with the objective of deactivating them and making it more difficult for them to reach their goals, especially those related with finding their loved ones, justice, and truth.

“I’ve been detained arbitrarily 25 times by the National Police, during several of which I’ve been tortured, clubbed. I’ve had four assassination attempts. I had a cultural center that was

called *Salmon Cultural* and they raided it. The search warrant said that I'm a FARC cell, that I make explosives and distribute arms. I've been exiled twice. And they call me all the time, threatening me, saying things like, "Piece of shit! Son of a bitch! Stop saying bad things about us. You're gonna die!" (Mamoncillo 2013).

Second, there is an intrinsic ineffectiveness and negligence of State institutions that is combined with an excessive and malfunctioning bureaucracy that makes it more difficult to advance in the "juridical cases."

"[The records] were lost... [in] Maicao... they wrote down my testimony... [They said] there was nothing, they **disappeared** it. But I had a copy and the [attorney], and the district attorney had copies... Everything remains in impunity and why? So they don't punish their military men, the murderers, the paramilitaries; that's what the State's goal is, to **hide** all of these crimes" (La Mache 2013).

That ineffectiveness and negligence also has to do with the slow and precarious modernization process of the judicial branch that has resulted in the loss of many investigations and evidence that directly contributes to impunity. As Camila (2013) recounts, the Procuraduría (Prosecutor General's Office) burned some of the cases "because for them it was "a dead archive." Other cases have not advanced because no one responsible or suspects have been identified, and in consequence, these are considered "blind cases." Then, when the Fiscalía (Attorney General's Office) was created, there was not a correct transition between "the accused and criminal instruction with the Attorney General's Office" (Camila 2013). The Attorney General's Office—created after the 1991 Constitution—is the State office in charge of investigating any crime.

In addition to the creation of the Fiscalía, the juridical branch has experienced other changes in recent years, among them the creation of a new system. "Juridical cases" such as Pedro, Álvaro, and Jaime are part of the new accusatory system created in 2005. In this system, there are not "official" cases until at least the material authors and the reasons for the crime are established. Thus, in the stories of Álvaro and Jaime, there are not formal cases, which also mean that neither Álvaro, Jaime nor Esperanza or Antígona are "victims," and in consequence, they do not have the right to know the truth or to achieve justice.

As a result of the prolonged structural violence of the country, the General Attorney's Office has many cases, which has become an excuse for the slow pace of investigation that does not work for every "type of victim" in the same way. Third, impunity operates through an asymmetrical treatment of the different "types of victims." More cases of guerrilla actions are prosecuted than State human rights violations. This asymmetry materializes from the very moment a State or paramilitary victim is "produced." The asymmetry operates by establishing rewards (more for rich people and less for others, and none for the more invisible men and women); finding human remains; carrying out forensic exams and recollecting evidence; and taking testimonies, among other actions that tend to hide the reality of what happened.

Impunity is in place due to a constant attitude of omission on the part of State's institutions, its officials, bureaucracies, and governors, as well as deliberative actions that they as people and institutions permanently perform 'looking to uncover' the truth. This responsibility for action and omission include irregular removal of corpses (carried out by members of the State that are prohibited from such a task when the forced disappearance is suspected to be tied to State actors, or remains that are not collected, or inappropriate collecting and/or loss of evidence) that works toward losing important information. In this way, the State, throughout its different institutions, practices, and personnel, make the experience of violence of the subjects victimized by the State as non-existent. It has worked a little differently for the experience of "victims" of paramilitarism, whose histories have been recognized but that still remain illegible in some occasions.

Fourth, the control of time implies the loss of much important and transcendental evidence. All the life stories of this ethnography show how much time it has taken to find the loved ones, find the truth, and reach justice. The State's time does not correspond, to any extent, with relatives' feelings and suffering. There are cases in which justice—through State's apparatuses—will never be reached; bodies that have not been found; and truths that will remain incomplete. In the majority of

the cases, it is the active role of the relatives, the *Siriris* and their persistence over time, which contributes to finding the loved ones, discovering of the truth, and reaching some sort of justice.

Consequently, it is common that each “case” goes through an incredible amount of State investigators that interrupts even the slow pace of advancing the investigations. In Jaime’s story, there have been seven different State investigators; when they have take over the “case,” each of them has looked to start from the beginning and some make any new significant steps towards the resolution of the crimes. Pedro’s story has had eleven State investigators assigned to it and had been in military court, without leading to any prosecution. Five, impunity works through abstract national sentences that do not contribute to identifying and/or prosecuting the material, and much less the intellectual, culprits. Even with international sentences from the Inter-American system, the State rarely advances in the application of justice.

Juana, after 12 years, found the remains of her son, and after 4428 days, had the chance to bury Sergio. Since 1984, she has continually been the object of intimidations. After the expedition of the OAS Resolution in 1988 that condemned the State for the human rights abuses committed with Sergio—the first such sentencing that Colombia received—his family was an object of judicial framing. The Police raided her home, “finding” drugs. Juana, thus, was taken to the Buen Pastor Jail and sentenced to 25 years, on accusations of being a terrorist, a subversive, and the head of the narco-guerrilla in Antioquia (in Emanuelsson 2009). She was released days later, while her other son, Mauricio, an active member of ASFADDES, had to leave the country due to threats. In 1991, Juana also to had leave Colombia because of intimidations. She traveled to Venezuela to carry out an internship in Human Rights, receiving training in Forensic Sciences.

Five of the most involved military officers in the detention, torture, and enforced disappearance of Sergio were decorated and promoted, while four were sent abroad and others were transferred to different Army units in the country. Soldiers that have decided to denounce or gave

testimony have been assassinated. In September 2013, the Consejo de Estado (State Council) condemned the Army for the crime, and asked the authorities to investigate the case and enact special procedures to recover the memory of Sergio, a “victim of a serious human rights violation” (Quevedo Hernández 2015). In the present, the Consejo de Estado is preparing a document for the International Criminal Court that identifies some of the most serious war crimes and crimes against humanity in which the State has a responsibility for action or omission. Among these crimes are the cases of Sergio and the Palace of Justice. Notwithstanding this important step, Juana considers that the crime remains in “total impunity” since nobody has been prosecuted yet (Juana 2015).

In Orlando’s story, the three people that were identified as involved in the crime were not persecuted despite evidence that State institutions such as the F2 were involved.

“My mother ... always said it: ‘They’ll never pay for their crimes’ ... she told Umaña, ‘Doctor, we’re never going to be able to make those bastards pay’ ... The hearings about Leo ... did her a lot of harm because the only person that had arrested ... was really cynical and laughed in our faces, so they we’re hearing where there was no dignity for the victim... I started to look for information with a friend ... trying to help with the investigation, but in the end it was pointless ... I remember that Lucho and I ran all over the place, talking with everyone, gathering information, and it had no effect ... the jury wasn’t interested in ... really investigating, much less punishing” (Camila 2013).

Impunity is structural to Colombia’s State, and has been interiorized as the norm. Citizens do not expect anything different from the juridical system; to find justice without fighting for it is a sort of unexpected event when it comes to State’s violence. In the case of paramilitary violence, the juridical processes frequently re-victimize first and second-degree victims. In many occasions, during the application of the Justice and Peace Law—which legislated over the paramilitaries’ demobilization—victimizers treated “victims” badly, and the responsibility of locating the evidence fell to victims. The Justice and Peace Law as well as military courts have given preferential treatment to the victimizer, to the detriment of “victims” dignity. During the paramilitary demobilization process, paramilitaries could recount whatever they wanted, contributing to the truth

that they decided was worth of being said and that which least affected them, since sentences depended on their confessions.

In contrast, with respect to State criminality, much of the information that relatives collect in order to contribute to the juridical process is not even included or taken seriously by the offices that have the obligation to investigate the crimes. Information that has the potential to add to the clarification of what occurred is mistaken or ignored, sometimes making relatives and "victims" appear to be liars and fanciful, an image that lawyers and society also sometimes perpetuate, discrediting the knowledge production capacity of relatives.

Therefore, a sixth strategy that maintains impunity consists in applying an asymmetrical treatment to victims-victimizers, privileging the latter. It includes protecting—as we can observe in many of these stories—the criminals. In the context of the paramilitary demobilization, some cases have been spoiled due to the extradition of the paramilitary chiefs to the United States, which looks to be a self-protection measure by ex-president Uribe, who had direct connections with the paramilitaries that might have been revealed in the application of the Justice and Peace Law.

In addition, the widespread and interiorized fear—another strategy of impunity—prevents some witnesses from contributing to the establishment of the truth.

“The only witness we could get didn’t want to testify and was lost due to fear... she got really afraid... [In 2008] we were looking for witnesses and [the investigation] didn’t advance much. In 2009... based on the version of the first witness we were able to find some videos... that suggest that [the police car] was following [my dad], videos that for me and those who have seen them are very telling, but for the district attorney, no, they’re not proof. So we started filing requests with the police to get answers about the patrols that went out that day and the officers. And they refused to answer, the answer was just that they were doing an internal investigation... We went to various entities that are supposed to investigate and Reiniciar- which is the corporation that was handling the case- determined that [in Colombia, judicial] funds were running out... so we took the case to the [Interamerican] Comission [for Human Rights, CIDH]... [in 2012] the [CIDH] responded... that they would take on the case... [As part of their normal procedures] [they requested] an explanation from the State. The State responded that there was no proof to [implicate him]... in the murder of my dad, and that there was no solid proof against the police... We’re certain [that those responsible] are the police... as first hand actors... and we believe that the intellectual authors of this are involved in the government of Alvaro Uribe” (Esperanza 2013).

Human rights organizations that accompany relatives, and the relatives themselves, have turned to the international system to pursue justice. When the national legal channels are exhausted and State offices do not give an appropriate answer about the human rights violations, the case can be presented to the Inter-American System, first to the Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and then to the Court on Human Rights. It is a long process that involves the study of the cases by the IACHR, who first ask the Colombian State for their insights on the situation and then present a conclusion that can be prolonged depending upon the State's answer and petitions. In recent years, the budget of the Commission has been reduced, diminishing its capacity to pressure States on violations, which has represented a significant delay in addressing the cases.¹⁶⁴ If the IACHR considers it pertinent, the case can be then presented to the higher Inter-American Court.

Almost every story of this narration has gone through the Inter-American system (Ramiro as part of the Justice of Palace's case, Sergio, Jaime, and Álvaro). It is perceived by the relatives as a path through which it can be possible to reach some sort of justice since the Inter-American System works as a police actor that obligates the State to meet its duties, and at the same time, this procedure more or less helps to "move" the "juridical cases" within the national system. Although the Inter-American System works within the complex logic of colonial and imperial human rights discourse, it also works as a strategic space that has allowed relatives and humans rights organizations to advance in their demands.

In addition to this undoubtedly complicated scenario, the advancement of the cases also depends upon the swings of the lawyers. Some of them are in charge of many cases, which makes it difficult to focus on or advance in any one particular case; also, sometimes these lawyers change

¹⁶⁴ The importance and efficiency of the system has been diminished as the result of political confrontations within the region that have reduced its strength, slowing the process down and affecting the development of some juridical cases. In the present, this instance is conceived by some relatives as the only possibility within the current conjunction towards advancement in the discovery and establishment of the truth and enactment of justice, since victims' rights are being negotiated by the FARC-EP and the State as part of the peace process. I will return to this point in the next section of the dissertation.

jobs, have had to go into exile, or are murdered, such as the case of Eduardo Umaña (1998). Not only lawyers, but also human rights defenders and other figures have been assassinated, as a way to affect the development of the cases and to hide the role of denounced State and paramilitary crimes, as in the case of Héctor Abad Gómez in 1987, a well known doctor and president of the Comité Permanente de Derechos Humanos (Permanent Human Rights Committee) in Antioquia, who accompanied Juana in the initial moments of Sergio's enforced disappearance.

Impunity is deliberately maintained by the State by means of its bureaucracies, institutions, personnel, and governors; it is not mainly the result of an insufficiently modernized State, although this reality contributes to it. State violence is characterized by a permanent denial of justice in which bureaucracy, the inexperience of the State investigators handling these cases, and the overwhelming number of them, contributes to avoid discovery of the truth and persecuting those responsible. But State violence is also constituted by the direct involvement of State institutions, officials, and political figures. Impunity is the will of the Sovereign, represented by each State official that avoids advancing in the fulfillment of justice. In the case of Pedro, for example, first the investigation was conducted by a State official that did not have power of judgment, the Viceprocuradora General de la Nación (Vice-Secretary General's Office of the Nation); although it established that the National Police was responsible and ordered the destitution and disqualification of the two officials that were in charge the day of the murder of the ESMAD, the case had to be reviewed a second time, by the Procurador General de la Nación (Prosecutor General of the Nation), a representative of the ultra-right in Colombia.

The Procurador (Prosecutor General), Alejandro Ordoñez, determined that the constitutional rights of the policemen were violated because they were not personally notified about the decision, despite the fact that through different manners people tried to contact them but the police averted

contact. He also stated that the ESMAD did not use force that day, bypassing all the evidence that existed showing the disproportionate use of violence that they used (Mamoncillo 2013).

At stake in every juridical process, in State strategies and victimized subjects' demands, is truth. In Colombia, the State has done whatever possible to negate its responsibility in human rights abuses and the reasons behind them. The Palace of Justice case is tremendously instructive of this battle for truth and, in consequence, for memory. In 2012, a book titled *Plazas Vega is innocent* was published, although he was condemned for the crimes of forced disappearances. In a full-page invitation in one of the national newspapers, *El Tiempo*, the organizers of the book presentation invited Colombians to the event, stating: “Whomever considers that it is urgent to know and spread the truth in Colombia today is cordially invited to this event” (*El Tiempo* 2012)

There is also a web page that publishes information around the supposed innocence of the Colonel named *I believe in Plazas* (<http://yocroenplazas.co/>). It quotes one of the phrases Plazas Vegas delivered during the Army's retaking of the Justice of Palace: “mantener la democracia maestro” [my job is] to maintain our democracy man” (2015). At the bottom of the web page you can find the logo of the Democratic Center Party and the picture of Álvaro Uribe Vélez. This battle for truth takes place through asymmetries of power—including economic power—that are materialized in unequal access to justice and media coverage. For any of the victimized subjects of this story, it is difficult to have the opportunity to publish a paid advertisement in the news.

One of the power effects of impunity, and in consequence of State and paramilitary violence, has to do with the feelings it awakens. It is a mix of impotency, hopelessness, and rage that makes relatives feel that their dedication has been unsuccessful, defeated, and guilty due the poor advancement of the juridical processes. It looks to deprive relatives of their agency. It deprives the struggles of their significance and their force for “victims” as individuals as well as for the entire society.

“It’s been useless, useless... so many people that have devoted our lives to this, because we’ve gotten old trying to get justice, trying to find out the truth” (La Pola).

Furthermore, impunity does not contribute to healing and mourning because to heal and mourn, relatives need to reach their demands: finding their loved ones, justice, and truth, as well as the recognition of what they have lived through by the State and society. Juan Tomás has had to live a long and painful process of finding and then identifying the remains of his cousins. I remember the day that we were in a public demonstration in front of the Attorney General’s Office and Juan Tomás was there with a tremendous sadness, impotency, and hopelessness because although he had news of a possible place in which one of his cousins' bodies could be found, he had had to go through a bureaucratic protocol that made him and his family wait for more than one year to be able to exhume and then identify him.

“[My relatives’ cases] are now unified, because there’s a version circulating that accepts the cases... so now it goes to Bogotá, but we don’t know how long that will last. [We have a lot of hurdles]... First, we don’t have an attorney, a lot of [lost information]... because they weren’t able to ask, because they just give you a sheet with three questions and when those questions get to the district attorney, she molds them based on what she wants to here and not... what you want to know [about the paramilitaries that are testifying]... And I mean, my father was sought out by the military commander in Valledupar... they wanted to make a false positive out of him. They didn’t find him, so they burned his ranch. I mean, that question, that alliance, because there was an alliance, because the commanders have said: ‘We work with the military’, I mean... the Army captured people and turned them over to be executed, or the paramilitaries went and said, ‘Hey, you should go over to this place,’ and the Army would go and clear out and then they would go in. So, those questions were left there in limbo” (Juan Tomás 2013).

In victimized subjects, a struggle is in play demanding public recognition of the *unthinkable* (the violent event), the suffering, the reasons and logic behind the crimes, and the political subjects that emerge from that reality: the relative/the victimized subject. The intention of impunity is to hide the truth, the reasons and logic of State and paramilitary violence, as well as protect the responsible—mainly the masterminds of the crimes—and the State as an institution. Society and the media contribute to impunity as well, which has made some victimized subjects focus on process of consciousness raising and struggling, as Sons and Daughters proposes, against social impunity.

Exiles: time in place, place in time

As I illustrated in the first section of this dissertation, violence in Colombia is directly related with territory since the time of the Conquest. The Nation-state was predicated upon a rearrangement of land distribution, deepening the European conception of territory as commodity. That process concentrated land in few hands, those of the local and national elites, to the detriment of women, Afro-descendent and indigenous people. For both guerrillas and paramilitaries, the armed confrontation has included the goal of controlling territory. More directly, the paramilitary expansion is related with the appropriation of land for megaprojects, agroindustry, infrastructure, and drug trafficking. In this dynamic, *forced displacement* is both a **strategy** and an effect of violence that take place for the armed confrontation of different actors, land grabbing, and intimidation.



Figure 9: “Territory”

Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity and Dexpierte, People’s Congress 2011

[Source: Dexpierte]

Behind forced displacement there is a political economy and ecology that not only creates certain subjects but also specific economic and territorial arrangements that resemble one of the basic mechanisms of modernity/coloniality: the “conquest” of land. This notion and enactment of territory contrasts with the visions of peasants, indigenous, and Afro-descendent people that understand it as

more than a property and as an effective appropriation of cultural, economic, ritual, social, agro and ecologic practices (Escobar 2014). Particularly, the PCN defines it as a “collective space, composed for the necessary and indispensable space where men and women, youth and adults, create and re-create their lives” (PCN in Escobar 2014: 88).

As part of this strategy of forced displacement, some relatives have to leave their homes as a result of bullying, which aims to persuade them against carrying out their struggles, learning about what occurred and who are the responsible of the crimes, and achieving justice. In October 2013 some members of *Sons and Daughters* as well as HIJOS Guatemala and Perú visited a fishing settlement located in the midst of a swamp on the Caribbean Coast, close to the legendary Aracataca, the birthplace of García Márquez, and the inspiration for *One Hundred years of Solitude*. Some of the inhabitants, the majority men—with the exception of the women that were cooking—told the visitors that in 2000 there was a massacre in which members of the community were killed by paramilitaries accusing them of being guerrilla collaborators. The massacre was followed by the forced displacement of at least 250 families (*El Tiempo* 2010).

After that visit, where somehow we were capable of listening to the water, we had a conversation with some of the people that accompanied them and they told us that the community was the object of violence because of their strategic location. This explanation contrasted with the one the inhabitants gave to us, exemplifying the difficulty to grasp the reasons and complexities of war by the people that directly experienced it. After similar acts of terror like this one, a significant number of people were forcibly displaced. This is the case of many of the people I have worked with in the MOVICE’s Bogotá chapter, who have had to leave their rural settlements and move to intermediate or big cities.

With forced displacement, victimized subjects not only lose their land but the territory in itself, which means the concrete relationships that they establish daily in that concrete space-time.

Relationships that are not only set up with other humans but also with animals, objects, dead people, mountains, rivers, and spirits. To move forcibly from your place of origin and/or life undoes relationality with your roots: nature, “*paisanos*” (countryman), and dead people.

“We had water sources... We had no need to treat the water, they were sources where we just went to the Banks and we had clean water where you could see the rocks and everything... There was no need to purify or put anything in the water... We would go to the river and fish. We went to the backyard and... we cut plantains, we harvested cassava... and potatoes... We had all that, we... produced it, we grew it and we had no reason to go hungry. We might not have a dime, but we had the food we grew ourselves. So, that’s the greatest gift that God can give humans. And from one day to the other, we had to leave it all behind... come to the city, to a concrete mountain to suffer, that’s awful. With our children... that cry out from hunger, that get sick... that’s really rough” (Antonia, Afrodes 2011).

“Displaced people,” new subjects born as part of Colombia’s structural violence, have to face a difficult and painful process of adaptation to the city.¹⁶⁵ They grapple with other dynamics of the quotidian such as food, entertainment, and personal relationships. Moreover, they have to confront stigmatization (Movice-Bogotá), and have to deal with a precarious economic situation, being compelled to secure what they – the majority – already had in their regions of origin: food and housing. As they express, the quality of life is reduced, and the type of life stability that they previously had is altered. One of the participants in the workshop mentioned that due to the weather he developed Parkinson's disease, and other illnesses were mentioned as well. Displaced people experienced tiredness, exhaustion, and feelings of constant fatigue that are expressions of depression (MOVICE-Chapter Bogotá) located, for some, in their legs. Sometimes they feel as if they do not want to walk anymore.

“We did not endure hunger before” was a common phrase that I heard during my work with Movice’s Bogotá chapter.¹⁶⁶ Forced displacement deepens economic inequalities in one of the most

¹⁶⁵ The problematic of displaced people was recognized by the State in the 1990s; previously, these kind of violent events were not recognized as a specific problem with human rights connotations (Aparicio 2012: 133). As Aparicio illustrates, the State connected the attention to internally displaced people with the protection of victims of natural disasters, making invisible the political character of this problematic (133).

unequal countries of Latin America. In the new locations, “displaced people” have to find and adapt to new job conditions, including the worker–boss relationship. The economy and the living wage change, which strengthens invasive capitalism by reproducing cheap labor and neoliberal dynamics. In the territories from where they were stripped, it is now possible to find luxurious housing complexes, hotels, oil palm plantations, and megaprojects.

The hegemonic notion of development and capitalism are not only reinforced due to forced displacement, but they are cornerstones in the production of these new subjects. The political economy of the Colombian conflict produces “victims.” This is the case of concrete regions in Colombia, where mainly peasants, indigenous, and Afro-descendent people are located. The current situation of Buenaventura calls the attention to the correlation that places experiencing high-levels of violence are also the sites where large public and harbor-building projects have been constructed or are planned (*Semana* 2015: <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/buenaventura-se-le-salio-de-las-manos-del-gobierno/419906-3>).

“Our community organizations and councils have fallen victims of a process of stigmatization by the State... For no more reason other than that... our communities have come out against development policies that are emitted from the national government and that are implemented in the provinces, they’ve accused us of everything, of being subversives, of being against development... They’ve seen us as an obstacle to the development model that they want to implement in the Pacific región, and labeling us as subversives [is a pretext] to get us off the land” (Manuel, PCN 2011).

Beyond this painful journey that these Colombians – individually and collectively - have to experience, another power effect of domination –that at the same time is a mechanism of power - is to *destroy difference*: the plurality of social arrangements, ways of being, relations between people, and with nature. The relations that are established among diverse elements of the real in peasants, indigenous, and Afro-descendent worlds are more rooted in the collective than they are in the city.

¹⁶⁶ Part of this expression is the product of certain “idealization” of the past, but it is also the evidence of the existence of a war that produces a particular destruction in social relations and the ways people relate with their closest environments. This claim should be understood also as the evidence of a structural violence that it is constantly in a process of degradation, and whose effects are progressive.

In cities, displaced people have to confront a “modern” space characterized by individualism and a more accelerated way of life that feels like a corrosive indifference. “In the countryside all of us are family” (MOVICE-Bogotá 2013).

“Out there, people help each other out, if you are lacking, they give, for example, rural people, those who knew me and knew I was alone... they gave me a goat, or some cassava, or some plantains, cheese, eggs, fish, and so I didn’t go hungry... It wasn’t that I had any money, but I had a decent way of life... I lived a lovely life because, for example, my grandkids ran free through the country, with clean air, plenty of water, firewood... [we were] poor but with abundance and unity” (La Mache 2013).

Some of the displaced people, who can be both first and second-degree victimized subjects, get used to the new places, which is without a doubt an example of resistance. Some of them in this process, mainly young people, do not want to return to the countryside, which in fact deprives current and future generations the opportunity to live there. Forced displacement is an internal exile that is itself killing the possibility of other types of planetarios, beings more open to *radical difference*: Difference that recognizes animals, objects, cyborgs, plants, mountains, and other elements of reality as important, valuable, and necessary, as relational ontologies do (and some intellectuals recognize, among them being Haraway 2008; Escobar 2014; De la Cadena 2010; Blaser 2010).

The majority of the displaced people that I worked with in Bogotá’s MOVICE chapter were leaders in their regions. When they had to move, they lost their leadership role in that region and, although the majority of them continue to be political subjects in new places, their leadership has to confront other logics such as different ways of enacting politics and new languages that make their activism more difficult. Their capacity as leaders is deprived of their inherent force as a result of being pulled out from the dynamics and surroundings that gave origin to it. Moreover, leadership is impacted by the condition of “victim,” which makes displaced people focus on the new identity, displacing others that are part of their lives. Although their past potentiates the new political identity, it dramatically changes the subjectivity’s geography.

On the other hand, there are some relatives and victimized subjects that have to leave Colombia due to intimidation. This exile works similar to internal displacement in the sense that it aims to undo family, political, and friendship relations and looks to paralyze the action of the political subject. One of the particularities of this specific exile is that it means the expulsion from the *fatherland* community, and implies to some extent the end of their citizenship rights. Exile is experienced as uprooting; identity's connections with territory, community and the nation-state body politics (D. M. Nelson 1999) are put at risk, and with it, in itself, the subject.

“I had to leave in January (pause) of 2009, that was because of the raid... and the next day an attempt on my life. That made people worry about me and they got me out of the country quickly, and I went to Brazil. I had a terrible time... I was there alone, abandoned, afloat... Oof! I felt a terrible loneliness, some strong desires to kill myself. Even though I had been dealing with loneliness, but over there it was different. Really different. Then, later, I said, ‘ok, I have to take this calmly and figure out what to do’ ” (Mamoncillo 2013).

“I always refused to accept a formal exile, because that would mean that I had to go five years without visiting Colombia¹⁶⁷... Having to leave the country has several effects... you're leaving the things you love... your family... your Friends. Living in exile is really rough, there are moments of loneliness, a lot of sadness, I think it's hard to really feel at home outside of your home country. For me, it's been really tough to not be physically present as part of Hijos e Hijas, although I've tried, for example visiting [the country] frequently and I've also been really connected ... through Skype, through the internet... but it's not ideal... [The same has happened with] my other organizations in the women's movement” (Antigona in Rivera 2012).

Time and space are two central dimensions through which human life is enacted and constructed. Domination works toward mastering it. The control of space (land and body) points to *restricting mobility*, while it breaks the relationship with the own body, practicing a *biogeopolitics*, another technology of dominant power. Places are charged with meanings that acquire an emotional and sometimes rational significance (Bachelard and Said in Díaz, Gómez Correal, and Pedraza 2007). State and paramilitary violence restrict mobility alongside space, creating certain visible and

¹⁶⁷ Exile has been a common practice in Latin America that works as an institutionalized mechanism of political exclusion and control of the public spheres that has been carried out by the State since the constitution of the Nation-state (Roniger 2014)..Citizens that are at risk can make use of the figures of refuge or asylum, which implies that another Nation-state receives them as part of humanitarian measures that includes the “prohibition” to come back to the place of origin for a concrete period of time that usually ranges between 5 and 7 years. Failure to follow this rule can have as a consequence the loss of the new citizen conditions, and to remain “unprotected” by the State that welcomes the exiled.

invisible borders that determine where you can walk or not and where/which your communities of belonging are. The fact that in the first workshop the participants located feelings and emotional states in their legs and arms has to do in part with these restricted mobilities and the specific relationships that it generates with space. In Buenaventura and nearby areas, since 1997, people's movements have been controlled and restricted by the armed actors and the State's Armed Forces.

“Before '96, we were just fine... we played... we travelled around all these rivers without problems, without restrictions... Now, for people to travel along the rivers from or to here, it's a complex process. There are restrictions by the State... enforced by the Armada Nacional... where all the boats have to follow certain procedures... [Before], I could buy my motor, make my canoe and... I was off... Here in the Pacific region almost everyone travels by river or sea... But since there are armed groups around now, the authorities tell us that the gas [and the food] that we're carrying must be to supply the guerrillas or to make cocaine... The communities are in a critical situation... [These restrictions] make you feel like a **stranger in your own territory**” (Antero, PCN 2011).

“With the pretext of pursuing subversives, the Navy infantry installs its *piraña* boats in the mouths of our rivers, interferes with our people's fishing activities... logging, agriculture. They exhaustively control the movement of food along the river... In the Yurumanguí River Basin, there were more than 5,000 of us living together, and not everyone can travel to Buenaventura, so if you travel by boat, that boat is going to be carrying two or three tons of foodstuffs... but the Navy infantry inspects and accuses you of supplying the... guerrillas, and in that way they make the work and movement of our communities impossible” (Manuel 2011).

“The neighborhoods are really dangerous, there was a turf war here between two groups... Someone from this... area can't cross over to the other area... Before, they shot at each other and the dead bodies were left and their comrades buried them. Not now, now they're disappearing. We don't know... where the dead bodies end up” (Antonia, Afrodes 2001).

Breaking down relationality

“The last moment that I saw my father alive was the day before he was forcibly disappeared. We had a family lunch. We were celebrating one of my aunts' birthdays. We walked together for a few blocks before saying good-bye. His arm was on my shoulder. When I said adios I did not think that it would be the last time that I would observe him talking, smiling, and walking. The next time I met him was in the morgue. What to say! A geography of terror: his remains disarticulated on two or three different tables. Only one month and what we found!: a skull, a dismembered body in different states of decomposition, some parts just bones, others with soft tissue and small animals eating him. His keys, clothes, watch, boots, and money were located on one of the tables, traces of his negated humanity for whomever killed him and gave the order. After navigating the bureaucracy of death I took a seat to tell

relatives and friends that were with us: ‘yes, it is my father.’ Bones and spirits talk” (Huitaca 2015).

Every act of dehumanization that is produced by State violence and paramilitarism **breaks relationality**: the existent relations among the individual, relatives, friends, comrades, compatriots, peers, with territory and nature, and within families, organizations, movements, communities, political parties, and society. The relatives that are part of this narrative are not the only ones that are impacted, but almost the entire family and the political processes to which the victimized subjects belong to. One of the power effects of violence is to **dismember collective bodies politics** and to **undo relationality**. In certain places practices of solidarity are fractured due to fear—a technology of terror—that is established. Relations among particular people are weakened since, in times of war, it is not possible to talk with and trust everybody (Bogotá-MOVICE). During the era of neoliberal globalization this logic is carried to extremes in Colombia. Although victimized subjects in the midst of violence have been capable of constructing other relations and collectivities, I want to focus in this section in the relationships that structural violence has undone in order to understand the impacts of State and paramilitary violence in the constitution of *the body politics*.

“It was a drastic, brutal change... family ties were broken first. Disunity... some left for Venezuela, others went out to other ranches and didn’t come by the house any more. It made them a bit scared... The social tissue was broken that kept us all united... They stopped visiting me... or if so... [they did it] with a certain fear” (La Mache 2013).

It is not only the individual and his/her body what is under attack but collective bodies as a whole. The violence against the Left has meant the extermination of a great part of a generation, and with it part of their thoughts, knowledge, practices, and proposals of another possible society. Terror and its immediate result, fear, have disarticulated collective political processes while dramatically damaging others, including women, peasant, indigenous, and Afro-Colombians’ organizational and communitarian dynamics. What is under attack is power from below, power of resistance and emancipation, the power that is born from the collective.

“A lot of people from the organization stopped carrying out their normal activities, the assemblies, normal meetings, out of fear of the paramilitaries that were on the river. All those activities, which in their time strengthened the organization... had to stop being carried out” (Manuel, PCN 2011).

“Sons and Daughters emerged in the midst of the history of extermination of our fathers and mothers, and with them the attempt to disappear social and political struggles that have sought to build the country on the basis of different left-wing projects” (Hijos e Hijas 2012).

In attacking subjects’ agency, the mere possibility to organize, resist, and propose an alternative society, State and paramilitary violence produces the “enemy.” For an important segment of society, these are victimized subjects that become “outsiders,” no normal, untouchables, the “others” that are dangerous, as if they incarnate the filth of violence.

“We relatives... I think some people look on us with pity. Others look on us with a mix of fear, and like, hey, I don’t want to get involved because this is unpleasant... I mean, I’m aware that they have this problema but I’m afraid of getting my hands dirty, as if this were contagious... [Society] has also justified disappearances all the time... For many years now, since they started to use the word disappeared [the first thing people think is] well, what was the kid involved in? Bad company! So that means that somehow it’s justified, and in addition, it puts the disappeared in a position of ... guilty until proven innocent... and... they condemn him... and of course society involves a certain comfort... Even here at our events there are people who have come up and looked around at our faces and say, ‘Hmm, what are these people mixed up in? So many of them, could they all really be guerrillas? That’s always present, they make you think that the victims were guerrillas or terrorists or that they were up to something” (Camila 2013).

After decades and centuries of pervasive violence, society has interiorized the fear of difference, which has justified violence and/or impunity against this constructed enemy and trapped it in political polarization. For some sectors of society, first and second-degree victims are “subversives.” It has been well interiorized that those who fight against the *status quo* are people that can be “legally” exterminated and in themselves are “illegal,” outside the norm. Minds, hearts, and instincts have been disciplined. This contributes to the existent hierarchy of “victims” in the country between the guerrilla’s victims vs. those of the paramilitary and State. These attitudes and perceptions are profoundly rooted in Colombia’s society, and can take place within the own families of the first-degree victims.

“For [my sisters, becoming part of a victims’ organization] was like I had become a subversive, just like any other... Because not all relatives feel the same way... not all react the same, so... we spent a lot of time distanced from each other because... I don’t see it that way... They’ve never understood that [the victims] were just young people who gained a certain awareness and decided to work for a different type of dreams” (La Pola).

“A lot of people in my family think I’m a guerrilla... that I’m a terrorist. I have an aunt that’s a die-hard supporter of Uribe, for her I must pee blue... One day, knowing that she was such an Uribe supporter, I ran into her (pause). She has money, she’s of high social status, and she starts complaining about the economic situation in her strata, and knowing that she was an Uribe supporter, I maintain the necessary respect and I say, ‘Auntie, the thing is that certain decrees that the president has made have made economic transformations that affect all of us... to gain power...’ I explained to her, simply, without offending anyone, and she grabs me and hits me in the chest like this and says, ‘So you guerrillas are thinking of...!’ If she had said that in the street, they could have killed me!” (La Pola).

At stake is always the good name of the “victim,” who goes through a process of stigmatization that qualifies him/her as a guerrilla, and in consequence, guilty and a legitimate object of dehumanizing practices. Juan Tomás’s relative, an example of an extrajudicial killing, has been presented before society by the media as a member of the guerrilla: “A fallen commander of the 59th Front of the FARC in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta,” a representation that has not changed after the truth of this systematic act was established. His relatives have had to face the judgment and exclusion of society: ‘they killed [him] because he was a guerrilla.’

The quotidian and political polarization of the country is the direct result of armed actors’ actions (including the guerrillas and the State) that divide the population between supporters and enemies, contributing to ruining the relationships that make the construction of communities and organizations in the local possible. “Who is not with me is my enemy,” is a phrase that circulates in Colombia to explain that reality.

“They’ve always stigmatized us, in fact when we would visit my sister, my aunt... they’d say, ‘don’t go to town because they killed this other guy because he was a guerrilla. If you all go there... You’re guerrillas!’ ... Lots of things like that caused distance with our family, divided us... ruined our lives. In those moments... you feel a terrible frustration” (Juan Tomás 2013).

This is a state of intolerance both towards the political other as well as a tolerance of particular violence; many Colombians consider that paramilitarism was a necessary harm.

Therefore, struggling for truth and justice—i.e. mainly against the State’s violence (even more than against paramilitarism)—is conceived as an act outside reason.

“‘You should get a job! Pull yourselves up by the bootstraps. If you go around with those banners, doing crazy things, that’s stupid!... Put the dead in the ground, and that’s the end of it.’ That... is the kind of thing people have said to me. ‘What’s the point of all this? So she died, what can you do?’” (La Mache 2013).

“Most people [think] I’m crazy. Well, some think I’m crazy, others that I’m a terrorist, that’s 90% of people. The other 10%, the few, that I’m doing human rights work... Around here they think you’re weird... [People say] ‘How many years ago did they kill his son, and here he is still talking about his son, stirring up trouble about his son?’ They see me as an **oddball**, something abnormal. What they don’t understand is that I’m not abnormal, what happened is what is abnormal... Normal is to react the way I’m reacting... but society is so messed up that they’ve made the abnormal normal... For those of us who maintain memory and... who talk about the truth before even talking about justice or reparations, they see us as abnormal and ... crazy. And honestly, you have to be pretty crazy, yeah, in the midst of so much uneasiness, so much complacency, so much terrorism, if you can still be able to get up and keep moving forward, you have to be crazy. You have to be really rational to keep going. At this point, I’d say that you have to have a lot of love to keep moving forward... that’s what I have, love, **I have an insane love for my son**” (Mamoncillo 2013).

This condition of madness is not only an external imposed conception in victims, but also a self-perception of relatives. Among relatives, it is common to hear phrases such as: “I am crazy!” “Do you think that I am crazy?” “We are crazy!” And yes, maybe it is the truth. In a diverse array of societies, including the West, the mad have been historically associated with stupidity and wisdom; he/she is “slave to their instincts and a spectator of their own conduct” (Klein 1981). Before the constitution of the modern world, craziness was considered a mirror of reality that allowed observing reality more deeply; this turned reality, which mad people interpreted (Zijderveld 1937) and revealed, upside down.

As Juan Tomás said before, he felt himself to be outside the “norm.” Behind this notion of madness is a consciousness of the complexity of the violent event; the “craziness” of the dehumanization process that took place; the consequences that it unleashes in relatives, friends, and

comrades' lives; the enormous consequences for health, life trajectories, and daily life; and the “inexplicable” stubbornness of continuing with the struggle. This is a stubbornness born from an instinctual force, the capacity to do—the power of “I can”—that was not domesticated and eradicated in these subjects, which has a lot to do with an internal and external fight for dignity. This conception of craziness has to do with the power and preeminence of emotions, which society—as well as some relatives—considers to drive relatives.

“Oh yeah, for sure... I'm totally passionate, nothing rational, and I can say that that is what has helped me through all this madness, all those emotions that I feel when I see... certain things... If it weren't for those emotions, I wouldn't have been able to save people, I wouldn't... have gotten so involved in this... The insanity I have has led me to do a lot of things” (Mamoncillo 2013).

In addition to keeping citizens one against each other, another power effect of violence is that it *creates and deepens family and social conflicts* that previously existed. In some families, it makes more conflicts and ideological differences clear and evident that sometimes, but not always, lead to insuperable divisions. The microphysics of power is surrounding us, constructing us, and in this context, it becomes power as a war, creating some bodies while disarticulating others. In society, it shows the profound exclusions that constitute the Colombian society, exacerbating class, racial, and gender divisions.

During our meetings in MOVICE's Bogotá Chapter, various times I heard a deep complaint: society discriminates against us because we are displaced people. This occurs mainly because city-dwellers do not want to observe Colombian reality, and displaced people bring with them a bigger picture of the nation: a country with peasants, people from the countryside, towns and small cities, “poor people,” and non-white Colombians. Displaced people interrupt, in the case of Bogotá and other main cities, the “white-mestizo” landscape of the city. When these subjects are observed, they are seen, felt, and perceived through hegemonic internal eyes and the patriarchal-colonial emotional habitus that displays pity and, at the same time, disgust and discomfort. This attitude ultimately

deprives displaced people of their human character: they are conceived as a *bicho*, something strange, outside the normal, like an animal. This is a concrete expression of the coloniality of power and its consubstantial dehumanization of the Other(s).

“Even since I arrived [in Bogota, it has been] really tough, humiliations, uncaring people, people looking at you mean, the distrust... because you’re a displaced person... I felt even sadder to see... that distrust, that people would set down their phone or their wallet and they’d suddenly come running up to grab it and take it with them... To see people making ugly faces at you... gestures... as if to say... you’re worthless... to sneer at me... to not respect me!... And you cry... I’m not saying you have to feel sorry for me, but at least don’t shame me, don’t abuse me... the most horrible thing they can do is to make faces as if to say that you’re a **freak**” (La Mache 2013).

Thus, the power effects of State and paramilitary - as well as guerrilla - violence *fractures, dismembers the collective*. State violence and its acquiescence with paramilitarism, has especially affected the sense of belonging to the nation-state body politics.

Power of resistance

Recreating relationality

“For us,
our family members that die,
spiritually continue being
part of the family”
(Manuel, PCN 2011)

“My voice that is crying out,
my dream that remains whole
and know that I will only die if you give up
because she or he who dies struggling
lives in each comrade”¹⁶⁸

State and paramilitary violence looks to undo relationality, fracturing the collective body. Relatives and victimized subjects face this strategy by recreating new communities of belonging and imaginaries of broader collectivities, as well as strengthening their already existent organizations, movements, and communitarian processes, as is the case with some indigenous and

¹⁶⁸ This is a common slogan in the Left. Spanish version: “Mi voz la que está gritando, mi sueño el que sigue entero y sepan que sólo muero si ustedes van aflojando porque el que murió peleando vive en cada compañero.”

Afro-descendent communities. Their pain allows them to see and feel others' pain, which helps to enact solidarity with multiple others with whom relatives and victimized subjects were not familiar before. Doing this, some relatives—not all—challenge the common “victimologia” logic that only accents paradigmatic cases, creating and/or reinforcing inequalities between victims, some of which were in place before the violent act as a result of the modern/colonial system.

“We’ve got to constantly be with MOVICE yelling... letting people at home and abroad know who we are... what we do... and why we’re here in MOVICE, on behalf of the victims, not just for my daughter, but for all the victims that walk beside us” (La Mache 2013).

“At one point I made t-shirts, a mandala, with some flowers here... with [my son’s] face (pause), and a lot of people liked it and I handed more out... I also made ones for other cases and I would put in big letters: Johnny Silva, Oscar Salas... and when I talked with people, I would say... ‘There are many others cases,’ and people didn’t pay attention... One day I wrote something that said... Where are the invisible ones, the invisible victims? Where are the people without a voice, that aren’t given a voice, that they don’t interview. People who are shy, people who have been threatened and can’t speak up... One time I said, ‘No, I should... start talking more about others and not so much about [my son’s]... so [I said], ‘We have to have equality here.’ If they don’t speak out for their loved ones, I will, I’ll speak for them... [Besides] to just talk about Pedro would go against his values” (Mamoncillo 2014).

Resistance, the struggle, also is enacted in dimensions that are not recognized as politics, such as emotions, dreams, rituals, the afterlife, the “unconscious,” and humor. In front of the fear that violence instills in communities and the terrible prohibition of burying their loved ones, altering millenarian rituals,¹⁶⁹ Afro-descendent people and other victimized subjects are finding ways to overcome this impossibility of maintaining kinship, societal, and communal ties within the people that are alive and those that now are part of the afterlife, a micropolitics that counteracts the macropolitics of death. Although State violence and paramilitarism profane life and death, victimized subjects insist upon the sacred character of both. In Colombia, death has been a

¹⁶⁹ Rites, among them burying loved ones, are of tremendous importance for societies. Following Turner (1967), this is a life-crisis ritual transcendental in the physical and/or social development of an individual. It helps mark the transition from one phase of life to another. It is not only an individual process but also a collective one, involving changes in the relationships of all of the people connected through different ties. “Whatever society we live in we are all related to one another; our own ‘big moments’ are ‘big moments’ for others as well” (7).

collective occasion that nurtures people's belonging to specific relational communities. It “can be a mode of enhancing or building life” (Chua 2014: 113).

“[In the gatherings after the burial], the [people] that were there helped us cook... people try to pitch in. Why? Because they [will get something] out of it, the spirit will be with you. In Indian traditions, that’s how it is, and you’ll receive a sort of protection, lots of things from her spirit... 500 people went [to the wake]... Up there, when you go to a wake you have... to take your blanket... you take your hammock, your cup, your silverware and your plate so that you don’t make work for others, you wash your own dishes, and so on, and your cup for chicha” (La Mache 2013).

“In the Pacific region, mourning is collective... whenever someone dies... there are collective mourning processes... Because of the complexity of the war... in many cases people can’t mourn their dead because it has been prohibited... Prohibited to bury them, to weep for them... In the Pacific region... when paramilitarism was at its peak, that’s how it was... They killed someone and simply said, ‘You can’t bury them’. They let bodies rot there or they threw them in the river... It was a very painful thing for us... death has its ritual... Especially in the rural areas, where there are just little villages... death is a huge event... and we weren’t accustomed... to that type of collective, massive and such frequent deaths” (PNC 2011).

“In a lot of organizations... depending on their organizing power, they were able to resist... The community met and demanded the bodies of their dead. In other communities where they didn’t have enough organizing power, they just had to withdraw and weep on their own” (Manuel, PCN 2011).

“We pick up our victims... those who they disappeared, [we bury them] symbolically, and those that are killed... we hold vigils on our own lands. That way, we’re maintaining culture... our culture. We meet, we get together and we go to the place, we hold the vigil for the dead... one person makes tea, another makes coffee, and at the same time, the nine days that the [vigil] lasts, we keep the family company. Also, sometimes we have no coffin, so we raise money... some go out with plates to beg, others visit different organizations to see if they can help us with the burial, because we know that those who have just lost a loved one, at that moment, they aren’t thinking, they’re suffering, so some of us mourn, while others make sure the kids go to school... make the meals, to see what gifts we can give that person, because we can’t abandon them. And besides that, if they need some help with their health, because you never know what pain... what fainting spells they might have, so there you have specific issues... All of us work together in order to build something big together. When... we do a burial... afterward, we still have to make sure that the family left behind is stable. Sometimes we spend a lot, because sometimes it takes three or four months, and during that time, we have to accompany them, saying, ‘We’re here for you... you’re not alone... here’s a pound of rice.’ So, that strategy works for us to make sure that the person at least feels accompanied and knows that she has sisters. Sometimes we even have to accompany [the families] of the victimizer... you have to help them, you know why? Because... the victimizer is always haunted by the victim... and what happens? A lot of times it’s also a poor woman, a woman who also is suffering, so we have to help her too” (Eloisa, Madres por la Vida, 2011).

“Lord [God] ... the only thing I’m asking is to get him out of the [army warehouse], which is no place for a person’s remains to be. I mean, they have him in custody even now that he’s dead ... We should save him and hold a ceremony, as any human deserves. And I’m going to ask you for this all my life, though it may be against your will” (Juana 2010).

In these micropolitics practices, care for others is a methodology of resistance as well as the recognition of the victimized subjects as human, of their pain and importance for society. Society is possible thanks to the construction of relations that connect each of us in diverse ways, and that include the relationship with dead loved ones. That relationship maintains them alive in one way or another. This permanent presence of the death, even in “secular” societies, is intensified in a context of violence, due to the traumatic loss of relatives, friends, and comrades, but also for the presence of other ontologies such as Indigenous and Afro-descendants (including Santería), and different currents of Catholicism/Christianism and Spiritism that are examples of hybridization and syncretism. For the relatives of these narrations, their loved ones remain alive beyond physical presence and, consequently, some of them maintain dialogues and communication with them.

Juana: Well, I talk with [Sergio], but here the (laughing) conversation is more concrete...

Iris: She still nags him, I have to tell her, ‘please, don’t be nagging Sergio.’

Diana: Why do you nag him? (laughing)

Iris: She nags him!

Juana: Well, because sometimes when I go ... I always take him with me to all the events ... And sometimes we’re going to go somewhere complicated, and so I tell him, ‘Sergio, please, you have to come with me because you got me into this mess, and you can’t leave me all alone (laughing) (Juana and Iris 2010).¹⁷⁰

“The dead are part of the family, part of the community, they’re always present... always present. And we just saw this at the assembly... where people are yelling slogans based on those who have died” (PCN 2011).

“When I go to bed... I pray to God and ask him, ‘Dear Lord, please let me speak to him, grant me that,’ ... and I say to [my husband], ‘Oh, look Gerardo... tomorrow I’m off to work, I’m leaving your children here, please watch over them. Your children are growing up, help them for me, guide them for me’... I have the firm conviction that, wherever he is, despite the fact that I buried him, he’s going to keep... helping me with the children... I’m taking care of them here on Earth, but he’s taking care of them... spiritually” (Eloisa, Madres por la Vida 2011).

¹⁷⁰ Iris is the youngest daughter of Juana, who was present during the interview.

“I talk to her. I have her banner [in my bedroom]... I lay it out like this in my bed... I tell her, ‘Good morning, daughter, how did you sleep? How have you been, honey? I love you and I miss you so much, my girl,’ ... When I’m at home, I talk to her all the time, ‘Oh, honey, I love you so much, you’ve left such a hole in my heart, I tell her, and I start to cry... For us [as indigenous people] the [relationship with our dead] doesn’t change, they’re still there, with their spirit that remains alive for us... [She], in my mind, is still alive. [Among the Wayuu], people say that the person is dead, but we say that they went away because they remain in our hearts, they stay alive” (La Mache 2013).

“For us, death is a natural thing, it’s not something we’re afraid of. Our ancestors walk with us, they walk ahead, and we walk behind. They light our way. Sometimes, when troubles come, I can see my grandmother telling me that I have to be strong, that I have to have strength because a difficult situation is coming or something is going to happen at home and I have to be strong, that I’m not alone, because they are always with me, and that... [I] always see [her] in my dreams” (Juan Tomás 2012).

“[I grew up] in a family where the women instill you with a catholicism that says that there is life after death, that there’s a god waiting for you in heaven, and a father that says that you are just a material thing and that’s it, you stop existing and bye-bye, no more life for you... When you lose family members in such a [violent] way, you’re left with a strange energetic connection. You can feel them. I have felt them... something must happen with the energy that forms us. Some trace of you must be left in the places that you frequented” (Esperanza 2013).

The dead have agency, they make “some difference to a state of affairs” (Latour 2005: 52), helping to maintain – in a different way – the relation that violence aims to break, even in those that believe in the death of the dead. In different context, among them those that have experienced political violence, it is possible to observe this agency (Ferrandiz 2006; Kwon 2008). Dead people have their own “complex social, political and cultural after lives” (Ferrandiz 2006: 7).

“Death is death, the end of everything. There’s no reincarnation, other worlds, cosmic level, none of that stuff, but something that does go on after death is the love of the memory of those who have passed on, but I know that after being six feet under, there’s nothing more, that’s the end. Biologically, chemically it’s the decomposition of material, something that way alive and then, poof, that’s it... Yeah, I have that duality that maybe his thoughts float through space, maybe because of the memories, maybe because I’m dreaming, but I know Lazarus had just one that was the only one who stood up and that’s it, but the dead are dead and that’s the end of their problems... [Pedro] isn’t gone, he’s still my son... sometimes I feel the bed moving and I feel like Pedro is sending me a message... Now [Pedro and I] have less arguments, less fights, now we agree on everything... there’s still the same or more love for him... I remember him well. On many occasions, i do so with sadness since he’s not here... There are questions from Young guys that get to me and I say, ‘There’s another little rascal like Pedro, asking questions just to get to me” (Mamoncillo 2013).

“We are, we continue to be tight... I feel that [my brothers] are with me wherever I go” (Camila 2013).

Dead people help to resolve the anguishes of the present such as finding jobs or resolving certain problems, and protecting relatives' lives, including those that are struggling and who are not. Overall, the society considers that the dead are powerful agents. Beyond relatives, certain people ask for favors from the first-degree victims, employing different types of rituals, including prayers, spells, and “burials.”

“Back in 2001, I escaped an attack where they killed seven of my family members, five nephews and two cousins. And after their deaths, every day I feel more strength to fight for my community's rights... That's a historical indicator that my ancestors, my grandparents have told me about: every person in the family who dies, their spirit reaches other family members and continues to strengthen them to defend the rights of our people” (Manuel, PCN 2011).

“The day I forget my son will be the day I shut my eyes forever, because I have him right here, he walks beside me, I talk to him, I say, ‘Jeffrey, protect me.’ When I go out with my sisters, I ask God to protect us and Jeffrey” (Micaela, Madres por la Vida 2011).

“[My father] taught me to value our forbears, our ancestors. So I always channel him through the horizon and I ask him, ‘Send me your spirit... the gods, your ancestors... so they can walk with me... [And I ask him] to give me the right advice, to be my guide and... walk with me.’ I know that on that road, I take solid steps because he comes... with me” (Candelaria, Madres por la Vida 2011).

“[My dad] told me, ‘Candelaria, bet on the number 71, but the other way around [on Sunday]... I awoke immediately and I couldn't remember if Sunday was the 18th, so I went and looked at the calendar and Sunday was the 18th! ... I got up and took the risk... There was a neighbor that I really cared for, and so I told her, ‘Bet on the number 17 today, do it, do it,’ and oh my goodness, I won \$250 dollars!’ (Candelaria, Madres por la Vida 2011).

“‘Daughter, help me to make sure nothing happens to me, take care of me.’ These are my words to her. ‘Daughter, take care of your little sister who is in la Guajira, I commend her to you.’ [Majayura has special powers] to help me in many things, like situations where I've been in a bind and I ask her for help, and I ask the spirits, the spirit of her father, and things turn out alright for me” (La Mache 2013).

The dead can have enough power to make the victimizer confess and kill himself or herself. There are certain rituals between killers that avoid the power effects of the dead. Additionally, within Indigenous, Afro-descendent, and peasants communities, other rituals are enacted with the

intention to enhance the power of the dead. Further away, dead people remain alive in their relatives' struggles since many of them consider that to some degree their "new life project" is a continuation of their loved one's work. Collective identities are also formed thanks to our relation with the dead (Das 2008: 257). It is more common in the stories of the loved ones that have been part of the Left and social movements, but also in others, like Pedro. In that way, first-degree-victims' demands are kept alive and, in some cases, are deepening and broadening other aspects that can contribute to emancipatory renewed struggle. For some relatives, loved ones are conceptualized as seeds that were planted in relatives' hearts, as one member of Sons and Daughters stated. I will address this in the next section of the dissertation.

“And since the moment they took him away I’ve been here, picking up the loose ends that Orlando left behind... For that reason, we as a family were among the few at that time that understood the reality of forced disappearances, and without having lived it first hand, we became aware through Orlando of what was going on” (Camila 2013).

“They killed Pedro’s body, but not his thinking, and they killed my thinking, but not my body. So that became a symbiosis where the two of us unite. I’ve lent my body or my mind to work with Pedro ... Everything revolves around him... my work revolves around him... [I seek] the truth, unity, horizontalism, anarchy... The thing is that the mass media teach us that anarchism is chaos and anarchism is not chaos, it’s horizontalism, it’s all of us sitting at the same table, in the same bed, or all of us sitting on out bu... on the ground, that’s anarchism... [I got interested in anarchism] because of Pedro ... because of his studies and certain events I went to with him and after his murder he, his friends, the people they were around, black flags, I started looking more into it, I started surrounding myself with them and I started learning from them and reading” (Mamoncillo 2013).

Dead people that had a political trajectory continue fighting; they have the power to mobilize not only relatives but other members of society, especially their comrades. They move around cities, countries, and the world through objects, videos, speeches, murals, songs, and their relatives and victims' organizations and movements' demands. They give sense to a variety of struggles, not only or mainly to those related with truth and justice, but to the construction of a different society. They join the ontological struggle, making visible other aspects of the real: the beyond.

The micropolitics/resistance of death is also a way to explain and make sense of what happened and the way relatives experience the events and their outcomes. This is difficult in a country in which barbarity has reached the *unthinkable*, where the State is not contributing to learning the truth, and where there are not enough widespread pedagogical narratives that allow comprehension of the logic behind State and paramilitary actions. Thereby, we can find “explanations” that range from the religious and the spiritual, to the cosmological, metaphysical, and materialistic that also include, but not primarily, a denial of the lost.

Juana: “[Doing] the inventory [of pain that day] and when I had been crying so much, and I started to see that, sure, it’s really rough, but, as my mom would say, that’s part of Christ’s invitation: the ways of God are mysterious! You always ask, why me? Why did this happen to me?... What Sergio went through out there was a true station of the cross, they tortured him, they tied him to a tree... everything they did... those soldiers had taken off his boots, his watch... Remember in the story of the Lord the moment where they strip off his clothing? Sergio went through the stations of the cross out there.”

Iris: “When you come to know it, to know what Christ’s agony is like, [you know] that without agony there is no resurrection” (Juana 2010).

“Death is death, the end of everything. There’s no reincarnation, other worlds, cosmic level, none of that stuff, but something that does go on after death is the love of the memory of those who have passed on, but I know that after being six feet under, there’s nothing more, that’s the end. Biologically, chemically it’s the decomposition of material, something that was alive and then, poof, that’s it” (Mamoncillo 2013).

“I have a whole big mixture of what I do and don’t believe... I do have a recurring thought that when I die, I will see them... that [they’ll be there] to welcome me” (Esperanza 2013).

The power of dreaming

“Dreams have been my company. I have had a crazy amount of dreams since my father was forcibly disappeared. The Sunday after March 21st I saw him in a really weak state. He told me that theater and puppets were important, and then he hugged me. I read it as a sign that he was in a bad condition. Dreams continued to occur during the time he was disappeared and I lived them as our way of communicating. After my father was buried, that night, a terrible cold woke me up. Immediately after I incorporated, I remember my dream. It was a type of warning. I cannot recall every dream now, but I know that I have seen my father many times during the time I was sleeping. He has expressed things to me, and I have shared with him some of my thoughts and preoccupations, and even, I have fought with him. In one of my recent dreams, during October 2013, my conscious and my unconscious were having a conversation. In the conversation, my unconscious answered the question of my conscious: ‘you/me, are feeling physically sick because of the way your father was killed’” (Huitaca 2015).

“There are days in which I desperately ask myself why they killed you. Why am I living with this intense pain? ... In those instances, I fill myself with this profound, heart rendering, disconcerting pain; a pain that taste like rage in my lips when I try to verbalize it My mouth becomes to water when I think of you with life, it tears me apart when I return to that Tuesday in which they carried you away ... Father, I miss you. At times I can't even cry ... A year has gone by and we don't know anything about those who murdered you. For us, those of us who have remained while those take you away, patience seems to be an obligation. Obligated to wait a bit more, like this, I tell you once again that I miss you, I long for you, I remember you, and I draw you in my dreams ... That at least keeps being mine: the dreams!!!” (Antígona 2007, March 19th).

For some relatives, dreams have been cornerstone during the time their relatives were forcibly disappeared and/or killed and afterwards. It is an expression of the intimate relation that has been forged between relatives, friends, and comrades, the non-conscious and non-rational dimension of human relationality that is still preserved from domination. Dreams work as a form of maintaining relatives connected beyond the afterlife, breaking the dichotomy of death and life. Moreover, there are some moments in which it is difficult to establish the frontier between dreams, reality, and the metaphysical or spiritual.

“I've... dreamed... about her... and I see her and she says, ‘Mom, I'm happy, mom, I'm with you, I didn't leave you alone... I'm far away but I won't forget you' ... Just about every month or every two months [I dream about her]... [During the wake], around the ninth night... I lay down on a mattress we had on the ground. I lay down and fell asleep... She came and lay down by me and said, ‘Mom, don't think I'm about to leave you alone' ... and I asked her, ‘Honey, what did they do to you?’ ‘Oh, many things, many things!’ but laughing. And then I woke up and I looked around and I cried even more, I screamed... I couldn't speak” (La Mache 2013).

“I saw my father during the time that he was missing. I never found out if it was a dream, if I actually saw him or not. We were at a march... that some labor organizers were organizing from Cali, demanding the right to organize... and also denouncing the death of one of their comrades... we joined them in Palmira and asked if we could also denounce what happened to my dad... we were marching... for two weeks... [That] weekend [we were in Ibagué and]... it was Fathers' Day... I couldn't sleep... so I turned on the TV and after a while I fell asleep, and I don't know if I was asleep or half asleep, but I suddenly felt a radiant light... and when I looked back toward the door, my dad was standing there. And I sat there staring at him, and I felt like I squeezed my eyes shut and I said to myself, ‘If I'm seeing him, it's because he's dead'... I wasn't afraid. That was the first thought I had... I saw him just the way he looked when he left that morning, and they found my dad later in Ibagué” (Esperanza 2013).

Dreams play an important role in the intimate process of acceptance of the loss and they are key in the “closure” of some moments in the mourning process. In Colombia, certain popular knowledge circulates in relation with dreams. In that sense, the performativity of dreams not only has to do with the manifestation of the non-rational and the unconscious, but also with their interpretations that involve both emotions and rationality. Some of the next dreams are example of how the disappeared and/or dead communicate with their relatives.

“[In the dream Diosa] was working on a farm where they were holding the workers in the cafeteria [of the Palace of Justice]. When they got to the corridor of the farm house, Diosa started serving them lunch. From one moment to the next, the images started disappearing, except that of her daughter, who remained there with her back all muddy, her face purple and her feet bloody. The girl sat down in the middle of the patio on a rock, took a bone out of the soup and started peeling off the meat with a knife. She was eating quickly because she had to leave soon. When she finished, she stood up and ran off. Diosa cried, ‘My God! They’re mistreating them.’ For Liliana’s mother, the dreams were always signs warning her about the status of her daughter. Later, she dreamed about a little river with totally clear water that passed through a hollow with a lot of eucalyptus and blue trees. Diosa was headed down the hill, accompanied by Liliana and her other son, when they began to hear the sound of a music box coming from the ridge across the way. In the midst of thing melody, her eldest daughter appeared. That day she was more beautiful than ever in a pink dress that went down to her ankles and she was making braids in her hair. When she saw her mother she cried out with joy, ‘They let me go, mom! They let me go! Diosa turned back to sit on the bed and before the image of Christ on the wall she said, ‘Lord, may she rest in peace!’ (González 2010: 67-68).

“I sometimes lay down and cried and cried... and one time he came to me... in a dream. I was half asleep when I saw him... coming and I yelled ‘Ay!’ in the middle of the dream, I see him coming and yell ‘Ay!’ Jeffrey hasn’t come back, but when I see him, ‘Ay! He comes my son... here comes Jeffrey! But I see... and I say, ‘Oh no! The canoe is empty. Where’s Jeffrey?’ And I see the canoe coming up to the dock by the house and I say, ‘Jeffrey? ... Ay! Jeffrey! Jeffrey!’ But I start to feel... anguish... when I see that he appears like that, the way he was coming laying down and he sits up and I see him in... the clothes we buried him in: white t-shirt all soaked and he’s looking at me... with this sadness, and so I say, ‘Ay! Jeffrey, Jeffrey!’ and run to grab him and he makes this movement... but then... I reacted and it woke me up and I was crying. So, the next day I tell my [family] and they say, ‘Oh, mom, you’re crying so much over him, he’s sending you a sign that you shouldn’t cry for him because he’s ok and your making him miserable... It must be that the canoe you saw was really the coffin... the box they buried him in and he say down in it and he’s soaked because of all your tears’” (Micaela, *Madres por la Vida* 2011).

“That was the last dream I had about Sergio, the one where I was watching TV on a big screen, the first one we got, the black and white one, and I was watching it when Sergio appeared... just the way he looks in this photo, identical, handkerchief, his hand in the air,

and he slipped through the fence in the garden... [and he came by and waved goodbye to me]... He must be at peace wherever he is, because he said goodbye as if to say, don't worry.' So I'm ok, because he came by smiling to say goodbye" (Juana 2010).

This was the dream that Juana shared with me in Bogotá a day that she invited me to have a coffee. It took place after Sergio was buried, one night while she was doing an "inventory" of all the things she had to go through. As has occurred in other cases, amidst the circulation of knowledge of popular media, dreams assist in resolving crimes.

"There are anthropologists that don't believe in dreams... they think that... like it has no... like those are old wives tales, but others do believe... The second time Sergio was exhumed, because in the first burial we couldn't find his skull, so we had to go back and look for his skull, the first time we dug him up, there was a tree up on the mountain... it was... as steep hill and it had its roots... out of the ground like a nest... When we came down, we were on our way back in the bus and Iris says, "Ay, mom, there was a tree up there,' and I said, 'Yeah, I felt drawn to that tree,' and Iris says, 'me too.' But then I was dealing with the second exhumation [and everyone was saying] that it was impossible [that the skull was there]... when one night Iris told me, 'I dreamed... that his skull was rolling down the mountain and stopped at that tree'... She cried out in her sleep... So we went there at 7am, and by 1pm we hadn't found anything, I mean we found other remains, but not his skull. So, I had said that I was going back down, and several others went back down to eat lunch, but Iris and I stayed and the soldiers, the forensic specialist started to ask Iris exactly what she had dreamed, but he really believed in that sort of premonitions and dreams. Iris was describing it to him. And so I told him, 'Look, doctor, let me tell you something: I'm not climbing down this mountain until... you check in the roots of this tree'... He starting telling me again about the vertebrae and whatnot... and that the tree was higher up than the main site... so the place to look was further down because of the rain, the animals, and all... and the normal thing, due to gravity, is that it would roll downhill... And in one of those moments of divine inspiration that I get, I said, 'I'm sorry doctor, but I don't think you understand that this is a political case, where the State is involved. When will you understand that the mechanisms of impunity operate in contrary to the laws of gravity and you have to look for bodies uphill and upriver, and I'm not leaving until we check up there'... All of a sudden, Iris cries out, cries out like this, and I looked over at the doctor with a handful of roots... And the skull was right there in the roots of the tree!" (Juana 2010).

In indigenous and Afro-descendent communities, dreams are a way to comprehend reality, to connect the past with the present and the future. They break the lineal conception of time. A key characteristic of dreams is anticipation of the future; in that sense, they are closely related with intuitions and pre-sentiments. Especially among the Wayuu, dreams are of great importance.

“Dreams have always been a form of revealing what is going to happen. So I went to church [after what I had dreamt]. My mother belonged to a Pentecostal church. I told the pastor, ‘They’re going to kill my dad.’ ‘Take it easy, don’t worry, we’ll pray so that nothing happens to him.’ So, I was any a really nervous state, because the dreams were real to me, but I wasn’t sure what to do... My dad says that that day... around 5pm, he decided to return to town. On the way to the Hurtado River, at the Guatapuri River, he got a flat tire. Then, 15 minutes later a piece of the car broke off, and then they fixed it for him and by then it was 7 at night, and again something went wrong with the car, and he said, ‘I don’t know what’s going on, but I’m not staying here.’ And he went back to Valledupar... The next day, at about 8am, my mother called and told me that there had been a tragedy” (Juan Tomás 2012).

At the same time, dreams bring sad memories of the loss, but they also have the potency to play a part in healing.

“I dream a lot about him... I dunno, I sense that there’s something he wants to tell me. He’s protected me all this time, and I think he must be wanting to tell me something with all this stuff that’s happening. I’ve had some really sad, sad dreams (pause) and you could say, really hard ones. I wake up crying, crying, crying, wiping my eyes, I go like this to myself and it seems like I’m crying rivers... I see him in terrible anguish... and I can’t do anything to help... So I get this incredible desperation. I can be in a bad spot for several days. But then I’ve had other dreams about him that are really nice, beautiful... I had one that I’ll never... forget. He must have been about four or five years old and he was in kindergarden, and I went to pick him up earlier than usual. The teacher told me, ‘Good thing you came early: look at him! He’s being trouble. He doesn’t want to eat or study and he’s just giggling and bugging the other kids... You see what he’s like?... and I picked him up and he put his feet here, on my hips, and he hugged my neck... I told him, ‘Look, kiddo, behave yourself. Can’t you see they’re trying to teach you all this stuff and you’re causing trouble!’ And he laughed and kept causing trouble... and he seemed so happy laughing, so happy that he made me laugh, too, and I said, ‘Ok, teacher, I’m going to take him home,’ and she said, ‘No, no, he has to finish this period,’ ‘No, I’m taking him with me right now,’ and [Pedro] was saying, ‘That’s my dad, that’s my dad, let’s go!’ And we left and I told him, ‘Look, kiddo, there going to get mad at me because of you!’ But we were so happy, making jokes and I thought, ‘Aw, what they hell, let them chew both of us out... that’s why I love you, that’s why I love spending time with you, you understand me.’ And we were happy and laughing, and everything was like a joke to us. We laughed like idiots, we saw someone walking by and... we laughed... When he hugged me around here and held on here, oh, man, it was amazing. I have that dream, I remember it because I need to sometimes. There are critical momentos where that dream helps me to lower my stress” (Mamoncillo 2013).

More partial conclusions *in movement*: Unexpected power effects

*“When you’re out in the streets
And shouting slogans
That makes you feel stronger,
More fearless”
(La Mache 2013).*

*“We are rivers of memory
Hungering for justice”
(Hijos and Hijas 2011)*

“The power of domination produces poison but at the same time its antidote. State criminality and paramilitarism not only kill men and women, but also confidence in the State. The fatherland is questioned, the belonging of a common family directed by men. With violence, fathers have been killed physically and symbolically in Colombia, the Sovereign has cheated some of his citizens and has gobbled others. Colombia is a country of absent fathers. Fathers that go to war, others that for their involvement in politics are not with their children, others that have been murdered, forcibly disappeared, others for which that possibility was negated or they negated that possibility for themselves, becoming in abandoning fathers. Colombia is a patriarchal society that has always tried to suffocate women’s potentiality. Creonte is a tyrant that let some live and let some die and killed others. The others of Creonte have different sexes, genders, classes, ethnicities, and ideologies. They are dispensable, enemies, inferior. Creonte is obsessed with “power;” he holds it as a treasure, as booty. That “power” that others also want to hold, runs in society and pervades different organizations and relations. The clash of powers is everywhere, the power of resistance is there and of emancipation here, ubiquitously and hidden. Thousands of Antigonas have struggled with Creonte and in that struggle they give him a new existence, even within his own agony” (Huitaca 2015).

“I still haven’t been able to assimilate. Why? Because, who was our father for us? He was our friend, our counselor... he showed us how to act... the one who in December, made sure all his kids were there, when birthdays came around, that hug... Now, I don’t have that fatherly guidance (pause). Now, we... all that dynamic is gone for us, each one of us have gone our separate ways... So from there, I decided I’m going to work... to... speak for the voiceless, to be the voice of those who cannot say, ‘Here I am,’ of those that are incapable of getting politically engaged, that can’t speak out” (Candelaria, Madres por la Vida 2011).

The Post-independence Colombia has been the scenario of a battle for holding the power of the State. This has mainly been the use of power for domination, made possible through the exercise of power as a war, the coloniality of power, patriarchal and governmental power, and biopower. Despite the force, contumace, and ravages of this use of power, its objective has not been completely achieved. Domination has not been absolutized in Colombia due to, among other things, the existence of subjugated subjects capable of resistance and change. One of these subjects has been the relatives-victimized subjects whose capacity goes beyond the rationality of modernity. Nelson (1999) points out that “neither the state nor transnational capital is a monolithic power that always gets what it wants; ... power works in multiply territorialized interstitial places” (40).

Domination is both reified and challenged daily through concrete practices and symbolic dimensions. Specific relationships of power that are expressed in the kinds of powers I have described in this chapter, give materiality to domination or change it. Thus, in the quotidian, relatives-victimized subjects have enacted the power of resistance, expressed in the power I-can, a power within collectivities and from below, and the power-caring-affect-life. This use of power has the capacity to regenerate the collective and the social bonds that make it possible, among other things because it is playing in terrains that have been undervalued for western rationality.

Resistance takes places in subjectivities and identities, in emotions, dreams, and care, in the realm of the death and the sacred, involving cornerstone aspects of the formations of societies and reality that have been always there, but that have been made invisible for modernity, although domination know that they are central. For that reason, what is at stake in the current conjuncture, among many other things, is an ontological struggle, which I will discuss in the next section.

In the clash of power that has been unleashed in Colombia through violence in micro and macro expressions—the individual and the collective—unexpected effects of power unfold. The affect that is produced when bodies are touched, as (Grossberg 2010) expresses, is unpredictable. The violent events, an “accumulation of death,” may be morally and socially productive (Chua 2014: 114) since not only people make war, but also war make them (Nelson 2009: xiii).

State and paramilitary violences have had the intention of maintaining certain actors of the society in power (State power): national and local elites that generally are represented by mestizo upper or middle class heterosexual men; but in so doing, the State has lost its credibility for certain subjects, spreading a deeper critique and distrust of what it represents. The State is conceptualized as a type of gobbling machine that “eats” their subjects, breaking the strong or weak ties it may have with its citizens with its violence. The social ties, the consensus, the social pact that allow for its existence is under attack. As Das analyzes, it is difficult to listen to what Antigona has to say

because she is communicating something really painful for society: that the very social order is criminal (Das 2008: 222), that the State kills (Gómez Correal 2013b).

“It was really rough for me, and I’ve said it and stand by that... The disappearance of Sergio hurt me so much, especially to know that it was... the State, and the savagery that they unleashed on him, because it was savagery, it was hate” (Juana 2010).

“My mother would say that [the struggle] wasn’t going to get us anywhere, because she was very aware that... it was a systemic problem... in those days she wouldn’t say the State... She would say, ‘Honey, nothing is going to happen, we’re not going to gain anything. The system stole him from us and it’s not going to return him to us. And we’re not going to bring him back, because he’s dead’” (Camila 2013).

In this procedure, the very patriarchal foundations of the State are at risk. The myth of the State as the protective father is in the process of being dismantled. Amidst violence, victims, mainly those produced by the State and the paramilitaries, feel vulnerable, defenseless, and sad “because the State reduces them to poor people” (Movice-Bogotá 2013); notwithstanding, the classist character of this institution is more and more clear for some Colombians than for others.

Among these unexpected results of affect, emotions continue playing an important role. As explained in the previous chapter, victimized subjects experience an incredible amount of emotions that are the product of the violent event and its consequences. Emotions such as fear, hate, rage, sadness, and hopelessness, among others, are intentionally produced with the objective of paralyzing the subjects and restraining their agency. Facing this situation, the characters of this story enhance strategies that challenge the power effects of those emotions, performing a micropolitics and micro-resistance that are fundamental for continuing to struggle. For example, despite feeling fear and the way it becomes pervasive for some victimized subjects, they find individual and collective ways to face it and do not let it paralyze them.

The consciousness of having fear – which necessarily implies experiencing it – induces some people to be more cautious and pay attention to instincts. In many cases, the affect that fear unleashed is transformed into an internal force to continue fighting. In the terrain of power, not

everything is under complete control. In the experience of victimized subjects we can observe the performativity of affect: its outcomes are not controllable by power.

“I healed my fear in the Buen Pastor... [being there] helped to heal my fear and brought out the courage to bring out my dignity and all that” (Juana 2010).

“I’ve had a lot of faith, and I’ve had to come up with my own prayers and things in certain cases, and so I said, ‘Lord, if I’m going to prison, at least take away my fear, I don’t want to put up with it, I don’t want to keep feeling this panic’ ” (Juana in Gutiérrez).

“You could say that the fear that I have [turns into] strength to **speak out**” (Mamoncillo 2013).

“Today, they’re investigating us... On my way here, that’s why I was delayed... ten times two guys were going around and I noticed they weren’t from [my neighborhood]. So, I stayed neutral, keeping my posture, because they thought I was going to take off in the car. I stayed parked there for a half an hour... looking straight at them... and they turned around to look at me and I looked at them... They... noticed that I [had identified them]... I had already told other people to keep a lookout for whoever was wandering around... They’re on our heels... We’re always looking out for one another... [because] there’s reason to be fearful” (Candelaria, Madres por la Vida 2011).

In order to confront the fear and any other real threats, relatives learn to take care of themselves, developing security strategies that, in great proportion, involve the members of their families, friends, the organizations they belong to, as well as international organizations of accompaniment and State security measures. The last one is usually not very effective.

“As the saying goes, ‘you have to be afraid, but not live in fear’... I’ve dealt with fear [in different ways]... So I feel like I’ve managed to tame that fear. I see [odd] people and I don’t look back at them. If I notice that they’re watching me... I act like a nutcase, a goofball... When I see a dark corner, I avoid it... [When I don’t want to go out alone] I call [someone]... [And] if I realize I’m afraid, I don’t go out” (La Pola).

In spite of the significant strength that impunity has in Colombia and the amount of obstacles that victimized subjects have to face, they continue pursuing justice and memory leaning in love. Love is not only the concretization of affect, but at the same time becomes new affect that has the power to unleash new practices. Impunity also generates affect that is concretized in resistance.

“I keep fighting, and I do it for love of Pedro and I do it because it’s my only option, I do it as a form of love for Pedro and to stop the impunity... My dear mother always says that he that drinks gets drunk, he that gambles loses, and he that gets involved in politics must accept the consequences... I decided to search for truth and to defend human rights in spite of it all... I haven’t lost hope of ending that impunity (pauses) because I know it can be done. That impunity is ... also my motivator that makes me go out and work every day, to search for the truth” (Mamoncillo 2013).

Performing their power, relatives are privileging love over hate, which contributes to enhance the power of resistance and liberation in its different expressions, and to recreate collectivities of life. Doing that, they themselves play a part in their experiences of healing and mourning. The supremacy of hate, anger, and desires for revenge in the subject do not contribute to maintaining the circle of violence rather than to mourning and healing. To really challenge domination, it is necessary to enact a politics of emancipatory love. Violence works as a testimony against life. It entails the expropriation of the “I” (Das 2008: 155, 159) and the “WE.” As Das points out, the I—and the WE, from my perspective—are reconstructed by these victimized subjects, making the quotidian habitable.

“I was a suicidal being... There were moments where I had a gun to my head and I myself told the person to shoot, I made this motion with my hand telling him to shoot... I got to the point of wanting to burn myself alive... and I’d written them a letter telling them to try feeling what it’s like to carry the burden of [a loved one]... the way I’ve felt, to try feeling what it’s like to lose a child, a father, a brother, an uncle, a nephew, a relative, to try feeling what I’ve felt... [That emotion and ideas became] this house [the CAPS]... The rest came about talking with the young folk, and it was an exchange with a little kid that opened my eyes. A kid the age of [my loved one]... told me that the answer wasn’t in murder. I was taken aback. I said, ‘Yeah, you’re telling me what I was thinking of doing. How did you know?’ That was when the lightbulb went on, at that moment” (La Pola 2013).

“You say to yourself, ‘What good does it do me to hate?’ ... I’ve always said, I mean, our ancestors have always said, ‘The law of nature is a just thing, I mean, the law of nature has always given each person what belonged to them in the moment it belonged to them.’ So, to take justice into your own hands doesn’t make sense, because in that case the victim turns into the victimizer... I believe that... love... helps you in time to calm the rage, all that resentment that you feel inside for seeing all your aspirations thwarted... and it helps you heal that wound that you have and that has made a mark on you” (Juan Tomas 2013).

Although happiness as a project does not make sense for some victimized subjects, it is also part of the struggle and a central component for emancipation. To fight for happiness does not mean

that victims cannot be sad. Recognizing sadness, depression, and weakness is an important element of resistance because by recognizing it, the person understands the complexity of his/her experience, making it a little more manageable. “If pain is one way the state acts on the body, then finding pleasure where we can is a form of resistance ... It is a counter-counterinsurgency hermeneutic” (Nelson 2009: xxx) and action.

“I walk along, and sometimes I stop. I stop and think. I stop and listen to myself from inside. I stop and feel, and by letting myself feel, I grasp at the possibility of being happy, because the struggle against domination is also crisscrossed by the search for happiness” (Antígona, Seis años en el corazón, March 20th, 2012).

“If [part of my goal is to be happy]... my main goal is to keep struggling. [As part of] my life’s project, I would like to have my own home... Getting ahead doesn’t [mean] having money, but having a decent home to work and eat in, to be at ease with my children and maybe with my partner... I don’t want to get burned out, I’d like to stay the same... to have strength in my legs, to have good hands for everything, to contribute to MOVICE... to accompany others, to tell the stories to a lot of people... make documentaries” (La Mache 2013).

“I do [have happy moments when I’m] with friends... in a place in nature, a river... my joy is always to be in nature, I mean, where I can be in contact with nature, with animals and everything, because that brings me a lot of people, a lot of joy” (Juan Tomás 2013).

Relatives-victimized subjects’ resistance is everywhere, making visible what violence and domination want to render invisible: first, the State as a powerful armed actor that kills and reproduces inequalities; second, the way humans are turned into non-existent subjects, into objects without identity - the NN (no name) -; third, the struggles of the Left and social movements; four, other ways of inhabiting the world; and five, their own pain and suffering, not as a “desire to live in the past ... but a ... way of laying claim to the future” (Nelson 1999: 12). In this battle for making visible the invisible, memory is cornerstone not solely as a demand, but as the very content of victimized subjects’ struggles. In the unfolding of their power, relatives-victimized subjects and the organizations they belong to make fun of dominant power, touching the *taboo*.¹⁷¹ “Laughing at the

¹⁷¹ It is taboo in the sense that it is prohibited to touch it (Radcliffe-Brown 1972: 153) since it is invested with a sacred power that can be dangerous and/or impure.

ox Apís is to convert the sacred animal into a vulgar bull” (Herzen in Bajtin 1974: 87). As Jorge de Burgos—the main character of the novel *Name of the Rose*—says: “laughing the mischevious one implicitly says: ‘*Deus non est*’” (Eco 1985: 163).

“I think that there are two ways of facing [this violence]: one is agressiveness, and the other, humor, like irony, mocking, which sometimes is more offensive, or rather it hurts more, because they might walk all over you, but what they expect is for you to react with rage. But if you respond with dark humor, with a certain irony and mocking, I think it bothers them even more, it must be more awkward, it’s more capable of throwing them off. Laughter is also a way to relax, to give yourself the luxury of laughing. For example, at the Buen Pastor they told me, ‘Ms. Lalinde, do you want to work?’ and I would say, ‘No, sorry, but I’m kind of on vacation. We’ll see what happens’... That drove them crazy! The normal thing would have been for me to be crying, considering all that I was dealing with... [When they would ask me] ‘What are you doing here?’ I would act all serious and say, ‘I’m charged of terrorism and subversion.’ And that would make them crack up because who could imagine that little dead fly being capable of terrorism and subversion?” (Juana in Gutiérrez).

Sons and Daughters, making fun of the common reality that in Colombia dead people can vote, presented a guerrilla man from the M-19 movement that had died in an accident as a candidate for mayor in the local elections in Santa Marta, on the Caribbean Coast. The use of a sarcastic, acid humor is common among some relatives, especially Sons and Daughters, that allows their members to laugh at what violence has produced in their lives, a humor that not everybody understands as an example of a micro-resistance (De Certau 1996) to dominant power. The comic has the potentiality to undress reality, and turn topsy-turvy what has been become truth for “common sense,” making it available for critique and questioning (Gómez Correal 2002). It is also a ritual space of catharsis, and a symbolic space of resistance.

In the clash of dominant power and power of resistance, emancipation is at stake. The power of domination also reacts to the advances of resistance. Violence changes its modalities, some techniques are more intensified, and the realm beyond physical elimination is privileged. Thus, the strength of relatives is captured in the notion of victim and their demands are translated to a new language codified in the idiom of human rights. Therefore, victimized subjects turn the State around, either because they critique it, or because their demands are directed towards it. In each

breath of a victimized subject that engages in dialogue with the State, lays their possibility of remaining alive. The hegemonic category of "victims" is the best way to capture part of the force, the affect, the power of relatives and victimized subjects, mainly when they are fighting for recognition and visibility. A complicated junction appears in a concrete conjuncture: the transition to peace.

In addition, the power of domination plants its poison in the entire society, including social movements, victims' movements and organizations, and the Left. Traditional, dominant exercises of power take place, that reproduce patriarchy in "nuclear and extensive families." Some men play the role of the traditional father that at the same time cares, protects and gives love, and, through emotions, controls the affects that circulate in the organizations, thus reproducing the power of domination. The pervasive violence that Colombia has been through has created their work. Power as a war is everywhere, at times preventing the force of the power of resistance and emancipation. In some organizations and movements, everyone is against almost everyone. It is no secret that for the Left it has been tremendously difficult to forge alliances, among many things because each group, tendency, ideology, wants to be the true leader of the revolution, the vanguard, the elected. Similar to the 19th century wars between liberals and conservatives, the Left has fought amongst itself to portend who is the best to lead a communist or socialist project in the country. In so doing, they reproduce the coloniality of power, negating race and gender differences and inequalities, and the dream of truly bringing modernity – a Marxist modernity - to the country.

In the "world of the subalterns" there are some subjects that are moving through unconditional affects that prevent them from being critical with some of their comrades, although they are extremely critical of others that unleash power as a war. Still, it is necessary to find middle ground in which people can "love" but also be critical without breaking affective relations.

Although feminists are an excellent example of re-framing the personal as political, there is still much work to do around the politics of the personal (Gómez Correal 2011a).

While domination has not been completely reached, neither has emancipation. The power of domination and violence (its main technology) has tremendously devastated the social fabric of Colombia, to the very idea that different groups can live together in the world (Das 2008: 219). In a context in which the current present and the coming future open big questions, many of the organizations I have been working with, face serious challenges, and some are relatively weaker than others. These are times of uncertainties, and are potentially times of operating an escape, a materialization of the virtual dimension of emancipation.

CHAPTER 4: THE BELLY: TOWARD A RE-BIRTH

Section VI. Emancipatory struggles for a non-hegemonic transition

“November 15th, 2012. I am again in Bolívar Square for the *Common Social Forum for Peace* organized by the *Common Social Path for Peace*, a convergence of different political and social organizations that get together to support the peace process, demand the participation of different sectors of society, build a movement to dialogue about peace, and contribute to the creation of a society without inequalities and violence, among other objectives (Ruta Social Común por la Paz 2013). *Sons and Daughters* and the MOVICE are contributing to this Forum, in addition to an oral intervention, with an activity that looks to talk with average Colombians about how to construct peace and how they define it. The main inquiry was around the definition of peace.



Figure 10: “How to build peace?”
Simon Bolívar Square, November 15, 2012

[Source: Diana Marcela Gómez Correa]

'What is peace for you? Do you know that a new peace process with the FARC-EP was established? What do you think about that? What is peace for you? How do you think that we can build peace? You can write or draw, or if you prefer you can tell me and I will write it for you.'

This interpolation about the way Colombians conceptualize peace was not an innocent one, but intimately embedded within the controversial topic of peace, and the contentious character of its very definition. President Santos announced the 4th of September, 2012, the initiation of a peace process with the FARC-EP, after the failure of the prior negotiation during ex-president Pastrana's term ten years ago. Since September 2012, the majority of the 'figured worlds' of the Left and social movements have rotated around the peace process that Santos' administration initiated. By some social movements and sectors of the Left, it was perceived as a new possibility for ending the 'internal armed conflict' through political negotiation, materializing the demands of a diverse array of peace initiatives and social movements, and opening the door for a real political possibility for the wider spectrum of the Left, including the guerrillas. For other organizations, it meant the opportunity to have a different context for constructing a more equitable society, in which political alternatives are not threatened by the dynamics of the armed confrontation and a means toward avoiding more deaths.

For victims of State and paramilitary criminality, the peace process opened a crucial question: what will happen with the crimes and human right violations that the State has committed, those of the paramilitaries, and those that remain unpunished? The peace process constitutes a challenge for these victimized subjects, especially for the victims of State violence, who have to figure out their place in the negotiation between the State and the FARC-EP, and how to articulate their demands and trajectories in this new scenario. In this context, in the National Meeting of MOVICE that took place in September 2012, the peace process was one of the main topics of discussion, as well as in the bi-monthly meetings that are held in Bogotá. Moreover, new meetings were organized in a context that was expected to some extent, but for which there was not enough preparation. Conjunctures always require *social movements* and a *society in movement* thinking, deliberating, planning, and producing knowledge.

Sons and Daughters in Bogotá held a meeting to contemplate the new scenario and write a press release that presented the bottom lines that the peace process must discuss: the rights to justice and truth, guarantees of political participation for the different sectors of the opposition, the distribution of land and the respect of territory, and the country's economic model, among other considerations, such as the importance of the participation of society and victims, and the shortcomings of transitional justice (Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y Contra la Impunidad 2012a). The organizations of forcibly disappeared people demanded, among others, the inclusion of the problematic of enforced disappearance and means for finding the bodies of the disappeared. Also, MOVICE, with other organizations of human rights defenders and victimized subjects, including ASFADDES and *Sons and Daughters*, elaborated a document with proposals that addressed the rights of victimized subjects of State violence. This document was publicly presented March 6th, 2013, on the National Day of Tribute to victims of paramilitary and State violence in the Jorge Eliécer Gaitán auditorium. That day, the two people responsible for writing the document, the Jesuit Priest Javier Giraldo and the lawyer and human right defender Federico Andreu, one of the

founders and main figures of the MOVICE, Iván Cepeda, at that moment an elected member of Congress, and Franklin Castañeda and me as spokespersons of MOVICE, presented the document and its significance. I was in charge of presenting a summary of the proposal, focusing on the demands prioritized among the more than twenty that were elaborated. In this intervention, as in others, I exclaimed that ‘victims are not a “topic of the negotiation agenda” but political subjects.’ After that presentation, the members of the MOVICE that had traveled from different parts of the country took to the streets of downtown Bogotá to interact with passers by and positioned their proposals and demands. *Sons and Daughters* had the Batucada and we were dancing and singing, delivering slogans; other collectives were making a mural and they invited members of the MOVICE and people in the street to use paint in the demonstration; *Luz de Luna*, an artist collective, was doing a performance about enforced disappearances; and a group of people, among them lawyers of the *Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo*, were delivering a petition to block approval of the *Fuero Penal Militar* (Law on Military Criminal Jurisdiction).

Each month during my fieldwork in 2012, 2013, and 2014, I attended a substantial number of meetings organized by *Sons and Daughters*, MOVICE, Common Social Path for Peace, and other organizations with the intention of facing the challenges of the peace process and having an active role in the peace negotiation. In these meetings, it was common to conduct contextual analyses, as well as reflections about the possible paths that the negotiation could take, the place of victimized subjects and their demands, as well as the role of social movements, organizations, and NGOs, and interpretations about transitional justice and human rights. As I described in the first section, I also participated in some of the Forums organized by the Table of Negotiation and the Congress’ Peace Commission intended to collect proposals of a diverse array of social actors with the objective of including them in the peace negotiation process.

The notion of transitional justice has been used previously in Colombia. Yet, in this context, it has taken a prominent role to the extent that it started to circulate with more frequency, getting incorporated into the quotidian language of “civil society,” politicians, the State, and the media. During my fieldwork, I perceived a certain *enchantment with transitional justice*, which I was problematizing all the time. In a trip that I did during October 2012 to Argentina, we discussed with two other members of *Sons and Daughters*, Juan and Leyla, the implications of the hegemonic discourse of peace, and what can happen with social actors such as us that, at that moment, had a critical notion of transitional justice and the way the peace process was conceptualized.

In Colombia, “common” people do not necessarily know what transitional justice is, but an important proportion of the society agrees with having a transition to peace. Among certain social movements and Leftists actors, there is an acceptance of this discourse and the model it proposes, without major critiques. Undoubtedly, many Colombians want to experience a transition, but the main questions for me are: What are the ideological and political foundations of the transitional justice framework and the consequences of using it? What is the transition that we want? How do we conceptualize it? Moreover, what does peace mean? How can peace be achieved? In which direction do we want peace and transition to take us? And what can be the more meaningful contributions that relatives and victimized subjects can make in Colombia amid this conjuncture and for the construction of a country in

“peace?” Precisely, these are some inquires that inspire me to write this section of the dissertation” (Huitaca 2015).

The fieldwork that gives origin to this dissertation has revolved around “transition.” Some of the organizations I worked with—the *MOVICE* and *Sons and Daughters*—emerged in the process of paramilitary demobilization, in which victimized subjects’ rights were at stake, as well as the interpretation of past and present, and the definition of the country’s future. The State under Uribe’s term framed this political dispute under the international law framework of transitional justice, which made that model of transition suspicious for important segments of victimized subjects, human rights defenders, intellectuals, and Leftist and liberal politicians.

Notwithstanding that attitude, the present moment is understood by some of those actors and others, including the State, but especially now under President Santos, as a moment of *transition* in which the country will move from war to peace, from “savagery” to “civilization,” from an incomplete modernity to a real one, from conflict to post-conflict, from a “false” to a “real” democracy, and from hate to love. Like many other historical conjunctures (Independence, National Front, 1991 Constitution, and the paramilitary demobilization), this moment is a place of dispute that has to do with how we conceive of, desire, and imagine social arrangements, politics, and economics. This is a scenario that puts the organization of society and the foundational agreements that will organize it under debate. At stake is a dispute over the true meaning of peace, transition, and social transformation, as well as their possible contents and directions.

The current conjuncture is organized through a series of frameworks that circulate in the entire society, and are used not only by hegemonic sectors but also by counter-hegemonic ones. Peace and transitional justice, the two main discursive devices of the present—one cannot exist without the other—, entail not only practices but also concrete mechanisms, laws, institutions, and languages that have been incorporated into life institutions, social movements, organizations, and subjects, permeating the quotidian and shaping “common sense.” This widespread use of that which

makes invisible the invisibility of the visible (Foucault 1993), avoids a critical approach to these frameworks, making peace and transitional justice almost inevitable lenses through which to understand reality. The same happens with human rights talk, a discourse that although it has been appropriated and re-signified by subaltern sectors in Colombia in its introduction to the local from the global, it has gained certain stability that makes it not only difficult but almost impossible to question.

This final section of the dissertation has the intention of understanding the current conjuncture, some of the disputes it entails from its own unfolding and the contributions of victimized subjects. Therefore, throughout the three chapters, I identify the main *gifts* that victimized subjects are offering not only to the current conjuncture but also to the organization of Colombian society and to human rights talk and transitional justice. The goal of the first two chapters is to national and internationally situate the proposals and demands of victimized subjects, exploring how the transnational frameworks of human rights and transitional justice have circulated, been appropriated, and/or challenged in Colombia, and to comprehend how reality is constructed through these contentious appropriations and clashes of power. As Tsing (2005) analyzes, the encounter of the global with the local produces “friction” that leads to new arrangements of power and culture that can result in the consolidation of hegemony and/or resistance.

In the first chapter, I will briefly discuss some of the main characteristics of human rights and their relation with modern onto-epistemology, as well as the way they have circulated, how they have been appropriated by organizations of relatives, the Left, social movements, and human rights organizations, and what have been the main demands of the subjects and organizations that I am working with. Finally, I will situate the emergence of the category of victim. In the second chapter, I develop a brief genealogy of transitional justice, exploring its relation with human rights and international law, its historical development, the way it has materialized in Colombia and its

relations with victimized subjects proposals. In addition, I analyze the relation between transitional justice and modernity/coloniality, and how it resembles the coloniality of power through the silences and impositions it entails and the horizons of possibility that it habilitates.

Lastly, the third chapter discusses the way victimized subjects conceptualize peace, and how they contribute, beyond the now stabilized discourse of truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of not repetition, to rethink the way society is organized. Discussing first memory and healing, I try to make visible some of the logics, visions, and conceptions that underlie the *social assemblages* that victimized subjects are proposing. These *social assemblages* are the product of victimized subjects experience and a *creole* Colombia, both the result of the colonial/modern system.

Overall, focusing on the experience of victimization, which opens the door to recognize and enact other worlds, this section presents some of the aspects that the practice of sociology of emergencies and absences (B. de S. Santos 2006) allows us to see. Victimized subjects trajectories are the product of telluric movements in Colombia, micro seismic displacements that contain three seismic layers: the modern/colonial hegemonic project, emancipatory movements, and decolonial processes. From my point of view, victimized subjects' contributions go beyond their explicit proposals and struggles, and contain not only a moral, ethical, or political dimension, but also an ontological deepness that has the possibility to play a part in the construction of other societies.

Thus, I try to observe, as B. de S. Santos (2006) proposes, what have been rendered as non-existent: women, indigenous, Afro-descendent, and peasant contributions; and to reflect on the possibility of plural and concrete, utopic and realistic futures that are constructed from activities of care. Some of these social assemblages are in a state of latency while others, especially those enacted by peasants, indigenous, and Afro-descendent people, are more concrete, although they have been altered by violence.

Following Escobar (2008, 2010b, 2013, 2014)—who collectively with Blaser (2010) and De la Cadena (2010) has worked on the notion of relational ontologies—ontology is conceptualized as those premises that define what truly exists and how they are related among them. Ontology is the background that defines the logic of life and how the relations between multiple others are constructed. It supposes a concrete epistemology and practices that create “real worlds,” and manifests in histories (or narratives) that makes it easier to comprehend the premises about what kind of entities and relations make the world (Escobar 2013: 20). Political ontology has two dimensions.

The first is the processes that create the entities that constitute particular worlds, and the second is the field of study that investigates these creations and the negotiations and conflicts between different ontologies (Blaser 2009 in Escobar 2013). Political ontology entails a concrete political ontological practice that includes a “political dimension of the ontology” and “an ontological dimension of politics” (Escobar 2013: 20). That is to say that each ontology creates a particular way to see and make politics, and that political conflicts, such as the one we are living in Colombia in the current moment, refer to ontological premises as well.

Escobar (2013, 2014) differentiates between a modern, dualistic ontology, and a relational one. The first one separates nature and culture, mind and body, Us and the Others, death and life, emotions and reason, understanding the world through a series of divided, separated categories and lenses that split reality in two opposed parts that are hierarchized. In this process, only one of these parts is valued and privileged while the other is depreciated, which results in the inability to comprehend the multiple components and relations that constitutes reality and the way they work together.

This ontology has a dominant, hegemonic expression that Escobar (2014) describes as one that conceptualizes the world as inhabited by “individuals” that manipulate “objects” and circulate

in self-constituted and self-regulated “markets.” Thus, for this hegemonic modern ontology humans are self-sufficient subjects living in a world composed of objects that are also self-sufficient and that humans can manipulate freely (58-59).

Contrary to this dualistic hegemonic ontology, there is a relational ontology that organizes life and the world differently, and that follows a communal logic (Escobar 2014: 51). This relational ontology has territory as one of its central components (Escobar 2008; De la Cadena 2010; Blaser 2010), and it conceives of the biophysical, human, and supernatural worlds as closely intermingled through linkages of continuity (Escobar 2014: 58). In this ontology the elements of the world are made by entities that do not pre-exist the relationships that constituted them. As Escobar (2014) states, drawing on Buddhist thought, nothing exists by itself; everything inter-exists.

The experience of these research subjects moves between a non-hegemonic dualistic ontology and a relational ontology. The non-hegemonic dualistic syncretic/modern ontology is the product of *creolization*, of the hybridization and syncretism that the encounter between the western, indigenous, and black ontologies has produced since the conquest. This ontology, I hypothesize, is also the result of the European pagan cosmologies that the Middle Ages and modernity tried to overcome with the imposition of both Christian beliefs and secularism, a different conception of society that is recreated in Marxist, socialist and communist thought, and modern critical perspectives.

I visualize the production of Colombia’s reality as the result of power disputes between the three seismic layers and their respective ontologies. The modern/colonial hegemonic project corresponds with the modern hegemonic dualistic ontology; the emancipatory movements with the non-hegemonic dualistic syncretic/modern ontology; and the decolonial processes with relational ontologies. With this classification, I am not saying that indigenous and black cosmologies have not been influenced by the modern world, or vice versa (see Rivera Cusicanqui 2012), but that in

the dispute of power, between resistance and domination, both the Western and Abya Yala/Afro-America's onto-epistemologies make a great effort to preserve and/or impose their own conceptions about the world. Part of their survival, in the case of indigenous and black people, as well as its hegemony in the case of the Europeans, depends on them.

Before discussing the first topic of this section, human rights, I want to highlight two specificities of this research. One, my intellectual concern for a particular manifestation of modern dichotomies and modernity/coloniality in Colombia emerges not as an abstract critique to modernity and/or an idealization of indigenous and Afro-descendent people, but as a result of my experience of victimization that is quite similar to others. Second, I engage with different trends of critical thought that question modernity and that invite me to take seriously their “radicality.” This means that I truly consider of tremendous importance the different elements (dreams, dead people, emotions, etc.) that victimized subjects are bringing to the discussion for the construction of a Colombia in “peace” and the existence of the pluriverse.

Human Rights: a secular device of modernity/coloniality



Figure 11: *“Peace is a right and a duty of obligatory fulfillment”*
Bogotá’s Mayor’s office, April 9, 2013

[Source: Diana Marcela Gómez Correal]

“When I arrived in Colombia in September 2012, I attended one of the national meetings that the MOVICE organizes each semester to plan its work. While I saw people that I had previously met around the enforced disappearance and murder of my father, I also got to know new people. At some point, I do not remember clearly how, one of the discussions turned to how to organize our work in the regions and who could be the spokespersons for a concrete activity of the movement. That day, one of the “victims” from the Pacific region took the floor and said in an upset voice that they, “the victims,” can talk for themselves and that they are tired of Bogotá’s and the human rights organizations’ tutelage.

At that point I remember something that Esperanza had told me by chat: that in one of MOVICE Bogotá’s meetings someone invited her to participate in an activity with an international organization and instructed her to “only” give her testimony, while the rest of the people, the lawyers and human rights activists, could present the “political” analysis. She expressed that she, the “victim,” is a political subject that not only gives testimony but that also has a “political” opinion and analysis on her own. Having that memory in mind, that day in the national meeting, almost instinctively, I asked to speak and quite nervously, I said that the MOVICE has to avoid replicating the vanguard position of the traditional Left, and to the contrary, has to make an effort to build collectively and in a horizontal manner with “victims.” After that intervention, I realized that maybe it was not the most strategic beginning of my return and “fieldwork,” but I was at peace thinking that at least I was honest in trying to contribute to the MOVICE’s dynamics and that, in addition, it was my “right” to express my opinion being a member of the organization.

As I already recounted, in this context many other meetings were organized by diverse organizations and movements in the midst of the initial stage of the peace talks. In those first months I started to feel similar to the woman from the Pacific, drowned to some extent in those discussions. I have experienced that sensation mainly for three reasons. The first one is that in that context what appeared most important for some human rights organizations, social movements, public political figures, and the Left, as well as for the State and the guerrilla, was to sign peace agreements even if that meant “negotiating” victimized subjects’ rights. It was common during some discussions and activities that victimized subjects were not present, or that lawyers, human rights activists, and/or politicians filtered their voices, speaking on behalf and/or for them.

Symptomatic of this was the 9th of April, the national day in homage of “victims.” In Bolívar Square, at the moment of the public intervention, the MOVICE did not have a space to talk, although finally we intervened. During the first months of my fieldwork, I sometimes had the impression that bringing the existence of the victimized subjects that the State has produced was not well received by some organizations since it implied that talking about these “victims” and their rights necessarily induced conversation about victimized subjects by the guerrillas.

The second reason is that while this occurred in social movements and organizations, the State and the media were trying to equate all the victimized subjects imposing a discourse of reconciliation and that the FARC-EP was negating that it had produced victims. At the same time, the armed actors were turned into victims, thus the State was saying that the Armed Forces were victims and the guerrilla was claiming the same category for its combatants. My inconformity was not the recognition of guerrillas’ victims and their suffering, but that by

doing that operation, the media and the State were erasing the political character of victimization and the differential nature, responsibilities, reasons, strategies, and actions of the “victimizers” as well as the particularities of the victimized subjects. Categories are not neutral. They are operations of power with material, real consequences.

The last reason is that for many other members of *Sons and Daughters*, I am not a “victim” given that my father’s murder has not been sufficiently investigated; what occurred with him is still not legally moderately clear. The same happens in Esperanza’s history. Both situations are the product of the way the State and State criminality work, the manner in which impunity structures reality, and discourses such as human rights and transitional justice circulate and are employed. The State has not only the power to produce “victims” but also to play an important part in giving or denying their “social” existence and those “victims” voices. I realized that when, among other moments, I participated—together with sons and daughters of Leftist activists killed by the State and/or the paramilitaries, some of whom are part of H.I.J.O.S—in the special issue on victims by one of the main magazines in Colombia, *Revista Semana*. In that report my “social status” as “victim” was liminal:

‘Diana Gómez, daughter of Jaime Gómez, aide of Piedad Córdoba, who appeared dead in the National Park in Bogotá the 21st of March, 2006. His family affirms that he was killed. Medicina Legal said that it was an accident’ (*Semana* 2013).

This *Revista Semana* special issue was an effort to bring about a public discussion on the experience of “victims” in order to contribute to the current peace process and reconciliation. In addition to devoting a great amount of space to statistics and the achievements of the State’s Victims and Land Restitution Law, an emphasis on suffering that depoliticized victimized subjects was the particular hallmark of this report. When they were taking our photographs, some of us suggested choosing a picture in which we were smiling a bit, but the picture that was published was one of seriousness, accompanied on the magazine cover by a picture of a weeping woman with deep sorrow. Here victims are portrayed as beings of suffering but deprived of their political character. Since those days, I have asked myself: Can the victimized subject speak? Which “victims” are hearable and why? Can society listen to the deepness of what many of us have to say? Part of the answers to these questions have to be found in the role of human rights talk and the manner in which they are appropriated and circulated, plus their effects” (Huitaca 2015).

Human rights have circulated with different purposes and outcomes after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that ethically and politically sanctioned the two world wars and the Holocaust. They have been appropriated as a legal instrument that “protect[s] frail individuals from powerful state and societal institutions,” as part of nation-building projects to centralize state authority (Wilson 2001: 224) for the benefit of powerful individuals, collectivities, and nations, and for political and ideological purposes.

Human rights are an intrinsic part of the legality of “the modern apparatus,” an expression of the onward march of legal domination that subordinates the lifeworld of social agents to the formation and the consolidation of the nation-state, and legal and bureaucratic apparatuses. As Wilson (2001) expresses, rights transform political problems into technical ones and thereby remove them from the reach of parliamentary legislation, contributing to the construction of certain subjectivities, narrowing “citizens,” and squeezing them into the allowable categories of legal positivism, among them the notion of *victim*. “The instrumental rationality of law and rights systematically transforms the lifeworld, rather than being a sensitive device for listening to subjectivity on its own terms” (Wilson 2001: 225).

Human rights are a second-modernity framework that among other things, are concerned with people suffering as human beings and not as citizens (Asad 2003), defining what it is to be “human” and what treatment they should receive. This modern framework is directly linked with the constitution of the nation-state as a concrete way to organize society, capitalism and the notion of homo oeconomicus (Esteva 1998: 121),¹⁷² and secularism,¹⁷³ the preeminence of Man over God’s command and the customs of history (Arendt 1994b). As Arendt points out, the declaration of the Rights of Man at the end of the eighteenth century was a turning point in history in which “Man appeared as the only sovereign in matters of law as the people was proclaimed the only sovereign in matters of government” (1994: 278-288). Thus, its materialization implies the idea of the individual as a political subject (a citizen), the existence of a political society, and a concrete conception of justice.

¹⁷² The modern state is inherently a capitalist form of economy and governance (Harvey 2001).

¹⁷³ Following Redfield and Bornstein, humanitarianism is tied to this modern discourse and usually assumes a more secular focus on the frame of global politics guided by the idea of human equality and “tandem with efforts to spread democracy” (2011: 15).

The International Declaration of Human Rights seems to assume a direct convergence of “the rule of law” with social justice. Human rights claims emphasize the political end of political economy in legal form if not its always-specific content (Redfield and Bornstein 2011). The language of rights is fundamentally legalistic and philosophical; justice defines the well being (Redfield and Bornstein 2011) of the people. For Asad (2003), the rule called law in effect usurps the entire universe of moral discourse (138).

Secularism is a political doctrine that arose in modern Euro-America that separates religious from secular institutions in government, detaching the individual right to (religious) belief from the authority of the state. The doctrine of secularism was intended as an answer to the idea that individual sovereignty should be recognized and protected in a sovereign state (Asad 2003: 134). According to the modern stance, the human being is a sovereign, self-owning agent—essentially suspicious of others—that is located under the control of the Sovereign. This creates a concrete subject: the liberal individual, and a specific relationship, a pact, in which the “citizen” accepts the political obligations of being part of the State, and the Sovereign the task/power to protect its citizens, developing a paternalistic protection from the top that rather than providing real care, exercises the privilege of the *pater familias*, who has the total control of the “entire family.” The state monopolizes the use of violent force and care so as to end humans’ war of all against all, or “every man, against every man” (Hobbes 1991: 88).

Human rights contain a series of characteristics and paradoxes that are a direct expression of the onto-epistemic of modernity. First, human rights play a part in the dissemination of the secular project of modernity’s “liberating” society “from social, spiritual, and religious forces” (Arendt 1994: 287), as well as contributing to enact new imperatives and concepts of “religion,” “ethics,” and “politics.” Similarly, human rights play a part in performing the secular attitudes toward the human body, the structures of the senses, law, practices, and doctrines that define the human,

generating new conceptualizations about nature, the sacred and the profane, which implies a rethinking of the supernatural (Asad 2003). This, among other things, donates to the sub-estimation of the role of emotions in social life, politics, and the production of knowledge; the split between body and mind; and a disconnection with death.

“Secularism is not simply an intellectual answer to a question about enduring social peace and toleration. It is an enactment by which a political medium (representation of citizenship) redefines and transcends particular and differentiating practices of the self that are articulated through class, gender, and religion” (Asad 2003: 5). Secularism is also closely connected with the “rise of a system of capitalist nation-states,” each with a collective personality and with different power.

Second, it reinforces the division between the public and the private sphere. Asad (2003) considers that when “the secularist ideological order separating public politics from private belief is seen to crumble, the new terrain is occupied by a discourse of human rights that can be taken as either sacred or profane” (155). Sacredness in the modern secular state is attributed not to real living persons but precisely to “the human” conceptualized abstractly, or imagined in a state of nature (143). This conception of sacredness ends up desacralizing the living and the dead of concrete political contradictors and the less than human or non humans—that is to say, certain women, black and indigenous people, and the poor—as we observed in the previous chapters.

Third, as Arendt suggests, “man had hardly appeared as a completely emancipated, insolated being who carried his dignity within himself without reference to some larger encompassing order, when he disappeared again into a member of a people” (1994: 288). Although the Rights of Man—present in both the French and American Revolutions—are inalienable (independent of all governments), “it turned out that the moment human beings lacked their own government and had

to fall back upon their minimum rights, no authority was left to protect them and no institution was willing to guarantee them” (288).

Notwithstanding that the inalienable rights that human rights protect are related to a state of nature in which the State should not be required, human rights law has no meaning independent of the judicial institutions that belong to individual nation-states and the remedies that these institutions supply. Since human rights depend on national rights (rights that constitute, protect, and punish one as the citizen of a nation-state), individuals need to be part of a sovereign state in order to be considered humans (Arendt 1994b). As a result, citizenship is the equivalence of humanity, contributing to the creation of the *human* as a liberal “autonomous” individual, and giving an immensely important power to the State, to the extent that it can coerce its own citizens. “In defending its citizens’ human rights it is only the state that can legally threaten to punish violators” (Asad 2003: 135). While “caring” for its citizens, the State also secures its own power and exercises the privilege over life. It has the power to decide who lives and how, and who has to die.

For Agamben (2000), political power finds itself on the separation of a sphere of naked life from the context of the forms of life. This context generates the conditions for life itself. Following Hobbes, life in the state of nature is defined only by its being unconditionally exposed to a death threat, and political life is the life exposed to a threat that now rests exclusively in the hands of the Sovereign. State power is based on naked life, “which is kept safe and protected only to the degree to which it submits itself to the sovereign’s (or the law’s) right of life and death” (5). Thus, the person and/or the collectives—the political, social, and ontological contradictors/opponents—that do not submit to the Sovereign will not be protected under the nation-state. It gives the State the power to kill its citizens—directly or indirectly—without having to respond in any way.

Since the experience of “coming of age” and the exercise of citizenships and rights are constrained by the nation-state, in Colombia both the humanity and citizenship of women,

indigenous, Afro-descendent and poor people have been explicitly negated for an extensive period of time after Independence through the negation of the right to vote. Then, the humanity and condition of citizenship have been implicitly negated through violence not only for the historically subordinated subjects but also for the political contradictor. Therefore, not only has naked life been under attack, but also the contexts of the forms of life, which guarantee life in itself (Agamben 2000).

Fourth, human rights presuppose a neutrality of rights, based upon, among other things, its supposedly universal character that works as an imperial spread of modernity/coloniality. As feminists have argued, neither the State nor the law is “neutral” because not every citizen has the same insertion in society (Fraser 1997) and law is not divorced from politics or culture (Okello 2010: 276). On that account, equality is not outside in a natural state since the “natural” state of the current world configuration is a complex cartography of inequalities linked with gender, class, race, and geographical origins. Human rights are the expression of a concrete onto-epistemology mediated by a patriarchal and ethnocentric vision that defines the *human* basically as male, white, and owner. International law was created in “a context where large portions of humanity were entirely excluded from contributing” (Okello 2010: 276); in that sense, its universal character is imposed and false.

Human rights were conceptualized to be intrinsic to all persons irrespective of their “cultural” make up (Asad 2003), but there are a variety of conceptions of the person, the human, society, culture, and justice. At the same time that the discourse of human rights reproduces the notion of an abstract human being, a universal one, it also entails prescription (Herskovits in Goodale 2006: 1). “There is an unresolved tension here between the moral invocation of ‘universal humanity’ and the power of the state to identify, apply, and maintain law” (Asad 2003: 138).

Esteva (1998) highlights how the discourse of human rights misrecognizes other conceptions about the human, justice, and morality, universalizing the western perspective and its lifestyle. This author emphasizes the abstract impersonality and neutrality of human rights, which establishes a global morality that goes against the pluriverse, radical pluralism, and autonomy. Therefore, human rights are part of those discourses of modernity that are intrinsically linked with the imposition of a modern/colonial project, mainly, as we will observe with transitional justice, drawing on liberalism.

Human rights were created with the idea to protect certain populations that have been the object of systematic violence. As Redfield and Bornstein (2011) state, secular humanitarianism resonates with salvational narratives of rescue and defines a new population: needy victims.¹⁷⁴ For Arendt, the meaning of human rights acquired a new connotation: “they became the standard slogan of the protectors of the underprivileged, a kind of additional law, a right of exception necessary for those who had nothing better to fall back upon” (Arendt 1994: 289). This establishes a specific relationship of power that in many occasions has reinforced the patriarchal, imperial, colonial, and class-biased character of human rights, which also works as a modern mechanism to redeem cultures. Esteva points out that “under the benign banner of human rights, indigenous and other non-modern communities offer unprecedented forms of oppression, of suffering and power abuses” (1998: 114) since some global actors exercise power of domination using the argument that rights belong inalienably to man in a state of nature (Asad 2003).

While the framework of human rights allows western modernity (mainly in its liberal version), and its type of organization (the nation-state) to become a dominant project, transitional justice—as part of this genealogy of the rule of law—allows liberalism, democracy, and capitalism to become hegemonic almost across the entire world. Therefore, international law “represents a

¹⁷⁴ While human rights institutions are largely grounded in law to further legal claims, responsibility, and accountability, humanitarianism is more about the ethical and moral imperative to bring relief to those suffering and to save lives (Ticktin 2006) and emphasizing the physical and psychological condition of suffering people (Redfield and Bornstein 2011).

view of the world that is culturally and temporally bounded” (Okello 2010: 276):
modernity/coloniality.

Hence, modernity (in the terms of this dissertation the second or enlightened modernity) turns into a series of interlinked projects that certain people in power seek to achieve, institutionalizing some principles such as constitutionalism, moral autonomy, democracy, human rights, civil equality, industry, consumerism, freedom of the market, and secularism (Asad 2003). This goal includes experiences that constitute “disenchantment,” a direct access to reality distant from myths, magic, and the sacred, including distinctive sensibilities, aesthetics, and moralities.

Through this brief exposition, we can observe how human rights are directly linked to central foundations of the modern world such as the individual, economy, the real, and science (Escobar 2014), as well as to a concrete way to organize society (nation-state) and certain principles (equality), mechanisms (democracy and law) and institutions that rule society and define what is to be a human. Human rights are part of the modern/colonial system’s effort of leaving behind “barbarity,” performing a lineal notion of time that works through the rationality of law. Through phallogocentrism—“the foundation of the modern operation that disqualify other worlds” (Escobar 2014: 111)—social suffering is translated into “rights,” misrecognizing the profound critiques that victimized subjects are making to society.

In Friction

“It is the voice the victims that must be there [in the peace process] ... We are ... the movements, social organizations, of peasants, of indigenous, of afro peoples [that must be listened to], that is the voice that must have priority ... All those voices together ... have to be there to achieve that accord and that reconciliation, because we have been the ones ... living and sticking our necks out. Not the government, they have always been in the city and escorted around in their armored cars ... they do not even know ... what it is like to not each for an entire day when you have to flee in the hills ... The organizations [and] victims are the ones that have to [be there] in that process and that is the voice that must be heard” (Juan Tomás 2013).



Figure 12: People's Congress Demonstration, April 2013

[Source: Diana Marcela Gómez Correal]

Human rights have been a contentious discourse and practice in Colombia. This global framework has been in friction not only with local necessities, but also with hegemonic visions about the human, the person, society, and politics. Following Tsing (2005), the global discourse of human rights produce productive *frictions* in the local thanks to the encounter with differences (3), but it also has its limits. The human rights framework has been an important discourse of enunciation for the Left, social movements, and organizations of relatives and victimized subjects, contributing to these actors' "figured worlds." It has also become a space of struggle for the State and even for the guerrilla.

In Colombia, human "rights frameworks were the latest of a series of 'traveling theories,' such as different strains of Communist ideologies and the international circulation of cultural production that have flowed throughout Latin America" (Hale 1999 in Tate 2007: 73). State abuses and the new modalities of violence that appeared during the 1960s were translated by the Left and social organizations into the language of human rights violations in Colombia. Organizations such as *Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos* (CSPP) (1973) (Committee of Solidarity with

Political Prisoners) and the *Comité Permanente para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos* (CPDH) (1979) (Permanent Committee for the Defense of Human Rights) emerged in the 1970s, making *denuncias* (public denunciations)—mainly of the State’s violence—part of their political repertoire.

Militants of the Left and social movements as well as intellectuals have joined efforts to document specific violent events, recognized as cases of human rights violations, with the intention of denouncing them and calling the attention of the national and international community. Part of these *denuncias* was the publication in 1974 by the CSPP of the *Libro Negro de la represión* (Black Book of Repression), which denounces the tortures, enforced disappearances, displacements, and massacres that happened during the National Front (1958-1974) (Aparicio 2012: 107). This new practice was consolidated at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, thus in 1977 the CSPP sent the first international urgent action to Amnesty International, and Amnesty made its first visit at the end of that decade when Omaira Montoya was disappeared (Tate 2007: 81).

Although the talk of human rights was gaining significance, this was not appropriated in an uncritical way. For some Leftists sectors, human rights were a bourgeoisie concept, linked with private property and the U.S. military’s neocolonial expansionist intentions in the region (Tate 2007: 102). This approach contributed to the development of a critical conception about human rights and justice in Latin America that was also linked with reflections and conceptual elaborations in other latitudes. For example, the 1976 Universal Declaration of People’s Rights, known as the Algerian Declaration, signed by non-governmental representatives and that emphasized *collective* rights and autonomy, was taught in human rights workshops during the 1980s in Colombia (Tate 2007: 103).

As part of this alternative framework that conceptualized rights as collective, the *Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos* (TPP) or *Tribunal de Opinión* (People's Permanent Tribunals or Opinion Tribunal) was created and held for the first time in 1979. This Tribunal used the global

juridical instruments to ethically judge and it pronounced on any type of international crime, but especially those against peace and humanity, infractions to the fundamental rights of people and minorities, and serious and systematic violations of human rights and freedom of individual (Estatutos del Tribunal de los Pueblos 1979 in F. Giraldo 2014) The TPP has been convened in Colombia in both 1989 and 2008, the latter as part of the efforts of MOVICE and other organizations for a “real” materialization of victimized subjects’ rights, including victims of the State, amidst the paramilitary demobilization.

The People’s Permanent Tribunal has its origins in the Russell Tribunal, created in 1966 to denounce the atrocities that the United States committed during the Vietnam War. The second section of the Russell Tribunal was held between 1974 and 1976, and focused on the repression exercised by Latin-American dictatorships (Aparicio 2012: 103), making a significant emphasis on the right to justice. The TPP was cornerstone for spreading the adoption of International Law in Latin America, specifically human rights, becoming a central tool for NGOs to counteract the impunity of serious violations that authoritarian and dictatorship governments had legitimated (Giraldo 2014). The TPP was also important in calling the attention of different offices of the United Nations to the impunity problematic.

In this context, in 1978 the first *Encuentro Nacional por los Derechos Humanos en Colombia* (National Meeting for Human Rights in Colombia) was held in Colombia, which analyzed the human rights violations committed under the application of the National Security Status under president Turbay (1978-1982). Similar to other Latin America realities, in Colombia human rights initially circulated with an emphasis on the conditions of political prisoners. It is in this context of embryonic appropriation of the framework that the enforced disappearances started to be denounced.

In 1983, *ASFADDES* was created to demand the return of their loved ones alive.¹⁷⁵ When *the relatives of the Palace of Justice's Cafeteria* were forcibly disappeared, this problematic was visible within the Left, social movements, and human rights defenders. Thus, the collective case was accompanied by well-known lawyers such as Eduardo Umaña, ASFADDES, and some of the human rights organizations that existed at that time. The relatives of the Cafeteria brought the exercise of enforced disappearances into discussion, not only in relation to the humanity of Leftist activists, but also in the cases of “common people,” not politically involved.

Relatives' first demands turned around knowing where their relatives were and what had happened to them, and then, in the face of the State's involvement and indifference, they started to request truth and justice. Later, facing the impossibility of reaching justice, the organizations of relatives, not only in Colombia but also in the Southern Cone and Central America, had made an important accent on knowing what occurred in order to avoid new crimes, putting truth and memory, and different forms of reparation, at the center.

The origin of human rights organizations in Colombia is directly linked with Leftist ideology, struggles, and commitments, and in some cases included sympathy “to revolutionary struggles at home and abroad,” as well as the conceptualization of the violence “employed by the Colombian guerrillas as the legitimate expression of the ‘right to rebellion’ and collective defense” (Tate 2007: 73). Thus, human rights activism “was not simply a response to political violence but was profoundly shaped by the political culture inherited from this legacy of radical activism” (Tate 2007: 73). In the case of relatives this is quite different since some of them were not linked to the Leftist political spectrum, although some of them were or became close to the Left.

¹⁷⁵ During its existence, ASFADDES has demanded the creation of laws and State mechanisms that recognize the existence of the problematic, look for the disappeared person before he/she is killed, avoid the permanent occurrence of enforced disappearances, and punish those responsible.

In the mid-1980s, it is possible to identify in Colombia a “weak network” of human rights institutions (Tate 2007). Forums, conferences, meetings, popular education workshops, and discussion around human rights were organized throughout the country to the extent that, as Archila (2003) demonstrates, human rights became an important concern for social movements and were included as an important component of their political repertoire. The *Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular* (CINEP) (Research and Popular Education Center) played a particularly important role documenting human rights abuses, particularly in rural areas, and supporting the development of local human rights groups, contributing to the human right world with a Jesuit perspective.

As Tate (2007) shows, the human rights network was strengthened by a significant boom of human rights committees at the local level at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, which was the result of consciousness-raising and participatory education carried out by the CSPP, CINEP, and the Permanent Committee (Tate 2007: 89-90). Due to the political character of all these committees, research centers, and organizations, ideological discussions and divisions between them were common.¹⁷⁶

The emergence of “new subjects”

The 1990s are especially important because the concept of “victims” started to circulate with more and more force and the problematic of enforced displacement was recognized (Aparicio 2012). This phenomena was accompanied by the presence of different international organizations, among them Doctors without Borders, and others responsible for providing humanitarian aid and supporting peace keeping, nation building, conflict resolution, and political advocacy. These operations “involve the production of knowledge and the categorization of violence, making suffering socially legible in particular ways in order to generate specific kinds of social obligations”

¹⁷⁶ However, the majority of them recognized the state as the “enemy” and the “primary source of political violence” (Tate 2007: 104); they wanted to take state power, in that way reproducing the validity of the modern/colonial system.

(Tate 2007: 65) with diverse outcomes.

Tate (2007) identifies the creation of the *Comisión de Investigación de los Sucesos de Trujillo*, which crafted a narrative using the human rights framework to establish the accountability of State agents, as a central event in Colombia's human rights history. This Commission was created in 1995, and addressed the "continued massacre" that took place in Trujillo between 1988 and 1994, a time when 107 murders occurred with State personnel's direct involvement, and that by 1995 were in total impunity (Aparicio 2012: 97). The Inter-American Commission of Human Rights recommended the creation of a commission constituted by diverse State delegates, the *Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz* (Inter-ecclesiastical Justice and Peace Commission), and **representatives of victims**.

An important result of the Commission was the creation of the Law 288, which ensures the compensation of victims in cases where the Inter American Human Rights Commission finds the government responsible. At the same time, the Trujillo Commission generated changes in the State, including the military, fostering the creation of human rights offices and programs and a slow shift in the political culture of NGOs as they moved toward closer cooperation with state agencies (Tate 2007: 63).

Thus, human rights—that first entered to the country through the Left, relatives, social movements, popular education, and religious organizations—started to be institutionalized by the State, intensifying a political struggle as well as an onto-epistemic one. In the face of the important work of diverse organizations in Colombia, including relatives, religious, and human rights organizations, the Armed Forces began to employ the same language, and the State started incorporating it through institutions, particular bureaucracies, laws, and officials. Tate (2007) states that in Colombia institutional "and historical shifts were instrumental in making the use of the human rights framework possible" (55), among them the new Constitution (1991).

During this time, the different organizations that worked with the framework of human rights achieved garnering the attention of the international community, and later, in the 1990s, of the Colombian State under President Samper (1994-1998), who recognized the human rights problem while still “clarifying” that “it was not his fault” (Tate 2007: 61). Samper asked for forgiveness on January 31, 1995, for the Trujillo massacre, joined the new repertoire of the emerging transitional justice. This presidential period was essential for the opening of new channels and opportunities for the implementation of peace initiatives and human rights (Aparicio 2012: 127).

Like I described in the first section of the dissertation, during the 1990s, different peace initiatives, including the creation of organizations and movements, were developed, to the extent that it was declared the “decade of peace.” Aparicio (2012) highlights that during these years some regions were declared neutral zones and different actions of civil, cultural, religious, and artistic resistance—as well as strikes, rallies, public demonstrations, and seminars—came about. At the same time that public policies were elaborated and military campaigns such as the Operación Génesis were developed, a novel civil society emerged around peace and “victims.” During this decade, the differences became clear between some expressions of the peace movement that focus on guerrilla violence and those that stress State and paramilitary violence. This “confrontation” continued over the years and was exacerbated during President Uribe.

At the end of the 1990s, Colombia’s reality was read as experiencing a “humanitarian crisis,” a new frame for a long-running internal conflict (Tate 2007), product of the circulation of the discourse of human rights and a series of international institutions and actors. Despite the importance of human rights for making the violence in Colombia visible, especially that produced by the State, during the 1990s their limits became more evident, especially in relation with the application of justice to high-ranking military officers involved in human rights violations. In the

case of the Trujillo Massacre, high-level officials were not judged, as had been common with other human rights violations, showing that impunity is consubstantial to the Colombian State, and that being structural, it is maintained in the long-term.

Notwithstanding this reality, the “faith” in human rights was not lost. Human rights were important for making the State’s violence visible. In Colombia, human rights were “used to explain and resolve a specific kind of ... violence: violence perpetrated by the state against the left” (Tate 2007: 73). In addition, this framework was central during the 1970s, 1980s, and the first half of the 1990s for achieving the demands of diverse social movements, formulating in “legal” terms the situation of forcibly disappeared people and other victimized subjects, and protecting in some occasions the life of activists, politicians, and “civil society.” On the other hand, human rights talk has contributed to demarcate the political scenario between some expressions of the Left and social movements with the State.

This is clear in the case of the *Movement of State Crimes, MOVICE*, and the *Proyecto Colombia Nunca Más* (PCNM) (Project Colombia Never Again). The Movement of State Crimes emerged as the product of the accumulation of a diverse array of struggles. Among them, the trajectories of organizations of human rights and victimized subjects of State and paramilitary violence were central. A main antecedent of the MOVICE was the Project Colombia Never Again (PCNA), which emerged in April 1995 with the objectives of “making a contribution to the struggle against impunity for crimes against humanity that took place in Colombia between 1968 and 1998 starting from historical memory” (MOVICE 2012).

Goals included ensuring “clarification of the past (facts), safeguarding of memory, overcoming impunity through the sanction of those responsible, and reparation of what was destroyed” (PCNM in F. Giraldo 2014). As F. Giraldo (2014) expresses, the PCNM aimed to go beyond the rights to justice and truth, giving to social and political changes a moral meaning

capable of generating transformation in concrete situations. In that sense, the Never Again Project was also envisioned as a space for action, social organization and mobilization, thereby one of its explicit objectives was the creation of a “movement of victims of State crimes.”¹⁷⁷

In order to achieve these objectives and to contribute to a more complex comprehension of what was going on in Colombia, within the *Never Again Project* some own concepts and/or conceptualizations were developed. These included state criminality, structural impunity, crimes against humanity, and historical truth that were not merely reproducing the transitional justice language, a recent discourse at that time, but condensing the demands of relatives, victimized subjects, and human rights organizations in Colombia and Latin America, and at the same time creating a particular reading of international law. For instance, the category of crimes against humanity is conceptualized as a crime that is only committed by the State. For these organizations—similar to the rest of Latin America—the State was understood as responsible for human rights violations due to both direct action or omission, since it was in charge of protecting its citizens and their human rights.

Colombia Nunca Más, beyond clamoring for justice for the crimes committed, recognizes history—the recounting of the past—as a battlefield that revolves around what happened and as a scenario of dispute about truth. It is that vision about memory that spread the necessity of memory during the 1990s, and then converted it into a privileged site of struggle during Uribe’s term, contributing to the *boom of memory*. This boom was fed both first by the subalterns and then by the State. As an important particularity of the Colombian case, the *Project Colombia Never Again* was developing an exercise of historical memory during the formal existence of the “internal conflict,”

¹⁷⁷ The Never Again Project was created by 17 organizations of human rights, relatives, and religious groups, as well as social movements that had the goal of making State and paramilitary violence visible. ASFADDES as well as the Colectivo de Abogados “José Alvear Restrepo,” the Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz, Fundación Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos (CSPP), Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (CPDH), among others, were part of it (PCNM in F. Giraldo 2014).

and not as in other countries of Latin America, i.e. after signing peace accords or having a formal transition to democracy from dictatorship.

As F. Giraldo (2014) mentions, the *Colombian Project Never Again* explicitly decided to follow the paradigm of human rights as the foundation for the political, juridical, and social process. This occurred thanks to the global legitimacy of the framework, the availability of tools that allowed understanding and resolving armed conflicts, and because it permitted making the attacks of the State and the paramilitary against life and freedom visible (Giraldo 2014).

Amidst the negotiation between the FARC-EP and Pastrana's government (1998-2002), different spaces were created that contributed to the creation of the MOVICE. Among them was a Workshop Seminar about Impunity in 2000. In this workshop, the "participation of victims" in the process of returning to formal democracies and in the negotiation amidst internal armed conflict was discussed. For first time during a peace process in Colombia, the "victims" were considered essential actors by some sectors of society.

I think that this concern is part of the important role that relatives and victimized subjects have played; an incipient circulation of the transitional justice discourse; the knowledge about what had occurred in Latin America with the Central American and Southern Cone experiences; the ubiquitousness of humanitarianism in Colombia; the development of a wider spectrum of peace initiatives; and the concern of some sectors of the Left—mainly those close to the FARC-EP and ELN traditions—with the role that "victims" of State and paramilitary crime could play in a negotiation with the guerrillas.

After the failure of the peace process with the FARC-EP in 2002, facing a "negotiation" process with the paramilitaries, and the formulation of the legal framework for their demobilization, two key events were held in 2004 as the prelude of MOVICE's creation on June 25th, 2005: the First National Meetings of Victims of Crimes Against Humanity and Human Rights Violations; and

the *Voces del Mundo por Colombia* (World Voices for Colombia Meeting).

The MOVICE was created as a strategy to confront the impunity that the paramilitary demobilization entailed since its formulation. Thus, the movement focused on the struggle against impunity in the crimes and human rights violations committed by the State and its “military and paramilitary structures, and other expressions of State terrorism; the political solution through dialogue to the ‘internal armed conflict;’ the rights to historical truth, justice, and integral reparation; the recognition of victims as political subjects; and guarantees of non-repetition, among other demands” (MOVICE 2005). Drawing on the experiences of other countries, the MOVICE was anticipating a scenario of forgiveness and forgetting, and thus the qualification of victimized subjects was a core part of its work.

As part of this same context, *Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity* was created in 2006. *Hijos e Hijas* also emphasized the struggle against impunity, as well as memory, having as one of its central objectives to make visible the violence exercised against the Left and their diverse political projects. For *Hijos e Hijas*, as well as for the other organizations of relatives and victimized subjects, it was essential to dispute the official version of history that rendered invisible State criminality and the “victims” it produced.

Possibilities, limits and challenges

“I joined *Sons and Daughters* because I found ... people in which I encountered ... the same suffering that we had been suffering from, that had not found justice, and that it was a means of making ourselves more visible before society, before the world, in other words ... to make this reality visible that they did not ... want to see because we had been hidden” (Juan Tomás 2013).



Figure 13: "Solidarity with the Mothers of Soacha Human Rights Committee, Washington DC"

9th of April 2013, Downtown Bogotá

[Source: Diana Marcela Gómez Correal]

"[Pedro' case] has generated a total condemnation and a visibilization of police brutality ... Among students ... is where it has echoed the most and in certain women's groups ... Pedro would tell me when he was young: 'dad, no one will remember me when I die,' 'why do you say that [son]? ... 'Because I am N.N. [No Name] ...' That about the N.N. made me laugh and [seeing] how they have remembered him!" (Mamoncillo 2013).

"Majayura has generated "a lot of visibilization ... a lot of accompaniment ... She has been ... recognized around the world ... [Talking about her] is part of [speaking about] everything that is going on ... It is part of the denunciation of ... all this is happening in Colombia" (La Mache 2013).

Human rights are "a type of politically consequential normative framework that is constituted through social practice" (Goodale 2006: 4). Although human rights are the product of dominant powers and the western onto-epistemology, in the Colombian case it has served not only imperial and colonial power but has also been employed as a way to resist and raise international awareness. In that process human rights have opened up new possibilities for struggles (Tsing 2005) in the country. The Left, organizations of relatives, and different social movements were the first to use the human rights framework, before the State.

Movements and organizations such as *ASFADDES*, *the Relatives of the Justice of Palace's cafeteria people*, *MOVICE*, *Sons and Daughters*, *Mothers for Life*, *AFRODES* and *PCN* have tried to establish a dialogue with the State and Colombia at large by means of concrete proposals and demands, *denuncias*, mobilizations, public demonstrations, gallery pictures, commemorations, conversations in universities and schools, and national and international meetings and through the media. These conversations, product of their experience, are communicated through memory and a *sentipensante* discourse (rational and emotional) that has also been influenced by the human rights framework.

They have used human rights talk in order to make their histories “intelligible” to the State and demand its attention and action as well as to claim the *human status* of their loved ones. They have employed it also as the result of a discourse that is now almost interiorized and difficult to question, and that is inscribed within the political dispute between the Left and the Right. Both human rights and transitional justice are the idioms that “modern” societies *must* speak in order to discuss, make visible, and address existential questions.

Thus, thru their actions, which include but are not limited to human rights, relatives and victimized subjects are producing knowledge that defines on their own terms what is to be a human, what the ethics and morality of the society should be and how it should be organized. In consequence, these subjects are not only making claims in favor of their relatives or themselves, but for the entire society. In so doing, they are contributing in diverse ways to Colombia, and even, to the human rights talk and the configuration of the current world challenging for example, the idea of the liberal and autonomous individual. Relatives and victimized subjects are clamoring for the rights of a member of the society that at the same time belongs to a family, organization, movement and/or party and that only gets meaning as *human* in his/her articulation with the rest of the community.

One of the main contributions of relatives and victimized subjects is that they are making visible the invisibility of the visible, following Foucault's expression, including violence in general and State and paramilitary violence in particular, questioning the use of violence itself. To achieve this, the effort that for many years all the organizations have made to locate their experience in the public debate has been crucial, with the intention of rendering visible the existence of "victims" produced by the State and the asymmetrical treatment that they have received by society and media.

At the center, they have situated both first and second-degree victimized subjects as political subjects, thus helping to break with the common sense stereotype about "victims" that are conceived as weak, revengeful, lacking political vision, stuck in suffering, and only useful for giving testimony, as well as the first-degree victimized subject as guilty, in the cases of State and paramilitary violence. Claiming a political status, they are reevaluating the kind of citizens that domination produces: docile people that relate with the State as servants asking favors and not requesting dignified treatment. At the same time, they are recovering the identity and political character of their loved ones, reminding society that those who were killed and forcibly disappeared were persons that in some cases have a different political project than those ruling the country.

Throughout their dialogues, victimized subjects and relatives are calling attention to the human degradation that Colombians have experienced,¹⁷⁸ insisting that society *observe, say, and do something*, to do not abet the degradation. From there comes some of these organizations' foregrounding the struggle against impunity and social impunity. On their own, relatives and victimized subjects cry the following questions: a. on the social bond, they ask: what is it that really ties us together if people do not care about what happens to the other? b. On the way conflict is processed: is it correct to torture and physically and symbolically disappear the *different*, the

¹⁷⁸ Afro-descendent and Indigenous people, among them the ACIN, PCN, ONIC, and the Kankuamo and Wayuu, have done the same for years by means of their resistance, and prior to the boom of human rights, transitional justice, and memory taking place in the country.

political contradictor, the *non-mestizo*, and the feminine? c. On the manner in which society is currently configured: why should we be under the tutelage of a Sovereign that kill his citizens?

The subjects of this research are showing that the current notion of humanity is not applicable to everyone, that there are different types of Colombians (citizens and humans) and levels of humanness crossed by class and political affiliations, as well as by geographical origins, gender, and race. In addition, relatives and victimized subjects are proposing to locate some elements that they consider essential for living together in the center of social arrangements: justice, truth, and memory; moreover, in order to construct a different *state of society*, a society in peace, they are suggesting the dignification of the people that have been dehumanized and expelled from the Colombian community.

When these discussions enter the cultural, political, and social repertory of any society, they widen the notions and orders that rule it, contributing to re-design social arrangements, and heightening the necessity of radicalizing the democracy and of a deeper restructuration of the State. However, these subjects are making ethical and moral claims that look to go further, to destabilize and end the current dominance, internalization, and acceptance of violence and barbarity as a way to deal with the multiple *Others*, putting life in the center. But it is difficult to listen to all this complexity through the human rights or transitional justice frameworks because the life and depth of these proposals are lost by using that language that corresponds to a specific onto-epistemology and it simply translates them into law discourse.

As Wilson states, legal ideology is a form of domination in the Weberian sense, embedded in historically constituted relations of social inequality. Law is an ideological system through which power has historically been mediated and exercised (Wilson 2001: 5). In that context it is difficult to hear victimized subjects' radical demands and proposals because these subjects are profoundly

challenging—albeit not necessarily consciously, thus the importance of the sociology of emergence and absences—the onto-epistemology that gives origin to the empire of law.

Like Asad (2003) asserts, human rights law is a mode of converting and regulating people, making them at once freer and more governable in this world (157). Thus, we can observe how in Colombia despite the fact that it has been more contested than in other contexts, human rights has become almost the language of the country to the extent that in the present-day it is employed the majority of the time without questioning its genealogy, the ideology that behind it, and the consequences that both produce for political struggles. These inquiries are of great importance for movements such as the MOVICE, which is not only comprised of victimized subjects but also of human rights organizations, whose emphasis on the legal framework can mean a significant weakness for the emancipatory goals of the movement.

Human rights “talk has become the language of pragmatic political compromise rather than the language of principle and accountability” (Wilson 2001: 228), something even more evident in the current transitional conjuncture in Colombia. As a fruit of power, human rights talk is a framework difficult to decouple from its modern/colonial heritage. It can be a means, but it cannot become an end, because in that process, the power from below—including the potency that relatives and victimized subjects’ demands and proposals have—is decoupled from its liberating dimension, leaving only the power of resistance, and generating the risk of reproducing the coloniality of power and other powers of domination. As Lorde (2007) states, we cannot liberate using the master’s tools because, among other things, I believe, it resembles the society that the dominant envisions.

This is precisely the main challenge that the present conjuncture creates for the *subjects of the digna rabia* (dignified rage), who have been capable of contesting the political project of Uribeismo and the type of transition that he proposed: the triumph of the extreme Right and their project of society. These subjects have achieved this in part using the human rights talk, but the

current transitional conjuncture and the transitional justice framework illustrate the limits of the fetishism of law and the modern onto-epistemology, given their constraints to the emancipatory, decolonial, and liberatory struggles.

Section VII. The Enchantment of Transitional Justice: We will Always be Imperfect Copies of the Original



Figure 14: “Justice is not transitional”
First workshop with Movice’s Bogotá chapter, February 13, 2013
[Source: William Oquendo Rojas and Diana Marcela Gómez Correal]

“When I entered the Initiative of Colombian Women for Peace (IMP) at the end of 2002, I had to get used to a language that I was not familiar with. We had to learn what International Humanitarian Law (IHL) was and its relationship with human rights. Then, we started to become familiar with transitional justice, although without frequently mentioning the concept. Thus, we organized national and international meetings to discuss the experiences of other countries in conflict resolution, and we acquired knowledge about truth commissions and alternatives to achieve justice such as the *gacaca* courts. IMP was not the only women’s/feminist movement that was working on these topics; rather, it was part of other organizations that were envisioning how to build peace after signed peace agreements with the guerrillas. Women’s/feminist organizations focused on the gender dimension of these processes, looking to learn from other experiences on how to make the human rights violations against women intelligible and the specific way in which women experienced violence in the ‘midst of an internal armed conflict.’

For other people that were part of IMP, this was not completely a new language. They previously were part of other women’s, peace, and human rights organizations, and social movements and, in consequence, they were used to human rights talk with different levels of appropriation. Women’s and feminist movements were particularly rooted in demanding women’s rights in order to be recognized as humans and citizens with equal rights to men. Other social movements, such as the indigenous and Afro-descendants, turned to rights talk in the 1991 Constitution conjuncture. Suddenly, after 9/11, the scenario changed in Colombia, and an unexpected negotiation process with the paramilitaries was established. A great portion of the political opposition and critical sectors of society opposed and/or criticized it. For IMP, this was a difficult context.

After a difficult and complex internal discussion, the Initiative decided to influence the paramilitary demobilization in order to achieve IMP's objectives.¹⁷⁹ The accumulated knowledge of a diverse array of actors that were previously familiar in one way or another with human rights talk was put at the service of achieving women's rights in that demobilization process. Undoubtedly, some things were attained with the interlocution, such as visibility and acknowledgement of the particular ways women experienced the war; changes in some of the judicial procedures in order to recognize violence against women; and the empowering of some leaders. However, it was also controversial to participate in a governmental initiative led by a president closely related with the paramilitary that in 2007, after two years of its implementation, was giving proof of impunity and the rearrangements of the paramilitary phenomena.¹⁸⁰

Some years later, a similar human rights and transitional justice talk circulated with intensity among social movements, organizations, and NGO's, but on this occasion, as a product of the peace negotiation process between Santos' administration and the FARC-EP. During my fieldwork in the years 2012, 2013, and 2014, I continued learning new vocabulary, notions and implications of these frameworks, as well as the strategic use that some actors, including the State, gives to them. I participated in a variety of meetings that proposed truth commissions and justice models capable of addressing the particular necessities of victims of State and paramilitary violence in Colombia. On many occasions I heard debates over whether the guerrillas have or not committed crimes against humanity or war crimes, and their nature as a belligerent actor that rebels against an unfair system (Field notes 2013). The same argument was used to avoid any kind of prosecution for the paramilitaries, although such reasoning did not make sense in that case because the latter were an actor that directly worked with the State and not against it.

In this particular context, many things were at play, such as the political character of the guerrillas, the right to rebellion, the State's responsibility to guarantee human rights, the specific characteristics of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and who in fact has committed them in the country. Overall, these discussions were of tremendous importance since not only victimized subjects' rights depend upon them, but also the kind of justice that is going to be applied in Colombia to the guerrillas and State personnel that have been involved in human rights violations, as well as the possibility of peace accords themselves. In all the discussions that have taken place during these almost three years since the peace process began, international law, including human rights talk and transitional justice, has been employed in a variety of forms by a diverse group of social actors. The same occurred during the paramilitary demobilization.

¹⁷⁹ IMP's political objectives were the direct participation of women in peace negotiation processes with armed actors, the decrease of war's impacts on women and children, and the respect of the IHL by the armed actors (Iniciativa de Mujeres Colombianas por la Paz (IMP) 2004b).

¹⁸⁰ This discussion led to the majority of the IMP to deem withdraw from the Reparation and Reconciliation National Commission (CNRR) necessary, in which the most visible spokesperson of the Initiative was appointed by the President as one of the five representatives of civil society. The spokesperson, as well as other sectors of IMP, did not consider it appropriate to leave the space, which concluded with the exclusion of the majority that did not agree to be part of the CNRR any longer.

Even *Sons and Daughters*, one of the organizations that had a critical view of the application of transitional justice during the peace process, has both criticized and employed this language strategically. For instance, Federico Giraldo, a member of the movement, states that the emergence of the transitional and post-conflict discourse has implied both that those that have questioned this framework are marginalizing themselves from the conversation, or that they have to speak from the meanings, symbols, and intentions that this framework defines (2014). Thus, during October 2014, Esperanza and I were doing a speaking tour in the United States visiting Congressional Offices, the U.S. Department of State, organizations, communities, NGO's, media, and universities, including the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We were calling attention to the importance of the peace process and the necessity to achieve peace agreements, but at the same time presenting our worries about having a transition that does not address the structural causes of violence and impunity, especially in the cases of State violence.

In one of those meetings, we “discovered” that the U.S. Department of State has a special office to advise the application of transitional justice in Colombia; we learned that although they value direct conversations with “victims,” as well as becoming familiar with their demands and proposals, the application of transitional justice will not allow for knowing the truth of every murder, enforced disappearance, human rights violation, and least of all for applying justice for each “victim.” The solution that they “advise” Colombia to implement is to focus on paradigmatic cases, something that many organizations, among them *Sons and Daughters*, have criticized because, among other things, it constructs and/or deepens hierarchies among victimized subjects, misrecognizes the political character of State and paramilitary violence, and does not account for what has happened in our country.

Esperanza and I asked ourselves the question that Juan, Leyla and I, and others members of the organization, have asked many times: what place are we going to occupy in the new geography of the ‘civil society’ that is being built under the discourse of transitional justice? Months later, I met with some of the people that had listened to our interventions in October in New York, and we analyzed the latest developments in the peace process. During the conversation, I said that I might sound pessimistic, but that was my perspective about the negotiation. One of them said: ‘yes, people mentioned that you are pessimistic.’ I relayed that to Esperanza, who exclaimed: ‘people do not want to listen to what we have to say in this context!’ Then I told myself: ‘I am not pessimistic, I am realistic’” (Huitaca 2015).

This chapter has the objective of nationally and internationally situating the use of the transitional justice framework through which the current peace process and Colombia’s reality are framed. First, I describe some of the main characteristics of President Santos’ (2010-2018) program, the manner in which peace is conceptualized and articulated in a broader political project, and the use of transitional justice in that precise conjuncture. Second, I develop a brief genealogy of transitional justice, exploring its relation with human rights and international law, and identify three different moments: a. The emergence of the framework as a product of central notions and

categories developed after the Nazi “Holocaust” and the transition to democracy and post-conflict in Latin America—especially in the Southern Cone and Central America—during the 1980s and the 1990s. b. The institutionalization and universalization of the framework through the application of international tribunals and in diverse regions such as Latin America, Africa and Asia in the 1990s. c. The deepening of global governance led by the United States in the midst of the War on Terror era and the enforcement of the International Criminal Court. Third, I contrast the way the hegemonic conception and application of transitional justice—including by Colombian governments—conceptualize “victims” rights (truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition) with the manner relatives and victimized subjects envisioned them, and the challenges that this framework entails for victimized subjects. Throughout the chapter I also analyze the relation between transitional justice and modernity/coloniality, and how it resembles the coloniality of power through the silences and impositions it entails and the horizons of possibility that habilitates.

The local: Transition to Peace in Colombia

People say that it has become common in State cocktail parties and receptions for waiters to enliven the gatherings by singing. On one of those occasions, waiters sang not Colombian music but instead Opera, the Spanish melody “Granada,” and songs of Frank Sinatra. In this new “cultural” expression of the elite, Colombian music—popular music—does not have a place because the melodies that are selected are part of what are usually classified as “high culture” in the country. This “high culture” is the one that comes from the colonizers of the past and the present. It resembles, according to people close to the government, the taste of the current First Lady who, as other people have also said, makes racist comments here and there when she is performing her role as the wife of the President.

The First Lady's cultural taste is not far from the political, social, cultural, and economic preferences of President Santos (2010-2018), who represents the traditional elites and, more specifically, the capital city's elite, which have always dreamed of being Europeans and white, that is to say, completely modern. Therefore, their political, cultural, social, economical, and onto-epistemic references are situated in the hegemonic north, re-editing the foundational pillars upon which the imaginary of the Colombian nation-state was founded in the 19th and 20th centuries. His political style reflects it. He behaves as a diplomat, which resembles rhetorical figures and social imaginaries that considered Bogotá as the South American Athens and Colombia as the country in which Spanish is best spoken. Juan Manuel Santos is descended from the elites that promoted the whitening of the nation, prohibiting, among other things, *chicha*—a traditional indigenous beverage—arguing that it contributed to race degradation.

Beginning with his first acceptance speech (2010-2014), Santos has transmitted the idea of a government that through achieving peace will be able to move in lineal time toward a complete modernity by means of progress and development. In his inauguration speech, the 8th of August 2010, president Santos stated:

“Many countries throughout history have overcome intense eras of violence, **underdevelopment**, conflict, and today they are examples of **progress** and social justice. Colombians: this is our turn! Now it is our time. Tomorrow is calling at the door, and among all of us we are going to open it and run through the path of prosperity. Because the time of **truth** has arrived. The hour to grasp our **destiny** has arrived. The time to **bury hatreds** has arrived. The hour to plant **concord** has arrived. The hour to erect—together, as it should be—a country filled with pride and a dignified country for our children has arrived. Compatriots: **Colombia's time has come!**” (Santos, inauguration speech, 2010).¹⁸¹

Although he does not mention explicitly a contrast with Uribe's administration, behind his discourse and performativity is a repositioning of the traditional elites in the country against local elites, such as the one Uribe is from, the latter more directly and explicitly related and involved with

¹⁸¹ The bold in President Santos' discourses is mine. The capitals are part of the original documents.

violence and corruption, and characterized by a more controversial and aggressive relationship with political opponents (both national and international).

Santos' first governmental plan for the period 2010-2014 was configured around three central aspects:¹⁸² 1. The Locomotives of Development; 2. The Victims and Land Restitution Law; and 3. Peace. These three axes were interrelated and were the main foundations for a consolidation of Santos' elitist modern/colonial project in Colombia. While the latter two depended explicitly on transitional justice, the first one was contingent on it in an implicit manner since, to a large extent, it relies on transitional justice for its consolidation. The implementation of the hegemonic transition looks to create the conditions for the application of the most recent expression of the capitalist model in Colombia—neo-extractivism and agro-industries—which deepens the logic of the modern western developmental model. The Locomotives of Development, a nineteenth-century image (Escobar 2013b), are integrated by the *wagons* of infrastructure, agriculture, housing, mining, and innovation, hence articulating with the capitalist economic and developmental model that exploits natural resources for international consumption. These Locomotives are thought of as the way to reach progress.

“Together, the government and the private sector, businesses and workers, we are going to propel the five locomotives that will make our **economy** take off, towards a specific destination: that of **peace** and **prosperity** ... With the countryside, infrastructure, housing, mining, and innovation we will put the **train of progress and prosperity** on its track, so that the wagons of industry, commerce, and services—the biggest generators of

¹⁸² Santos was re-elected for a second term: 2014-2018. My analysis mainly focuses on the first period, although I will include information about the second. Santos' re-election was possible thanks to the support of oppositional political sectors, including almost the entire spectrum of the Left and social movements, that considered it important to vote for him in order to give continuity to the peace process and to avoid electing the candidate of the Democratic Center, Uribe's party. Uribe and his party have been against the peace process since its beginning, using similar arguments to those that social movements, victims, intellectuals, and the Left employed to oppose the manner in which the paramilitary demobilization was envisioned, i.e. that it would lead to impunity without respecting “victims'” rights. As usual, Uribe negated the political character of the guerrillas, and his critiques of the peace negotiation process resemble a complete contradiction, since the model that is going to be applied after signing these peace agreements is the same that he used for the paramilitaries: transitional justice. In his second term, the main axes of Santos' governmental plan are: peace, development, and education. As many actors have denounced, the National Plan of Development goes against the notion of peace that a great majority of social movements envision—peace with social justice—by deepening the current model of development that focuses on the exploitation of natural resources (Uribe 2015; Márquez Mina 2015).

employment—move ... To overcome the **backlog** of decades, we will be decisive in the planning and executing of large infrastructure projects that the country needs, and we will demand the tidiness and fulfillment of their contraction and **development**” (Santos, inauguration speech, 2010).

On the other hand, the Victims and Land Restitution Law (1448), passed in 2011, looked to fulfill the rights of the “victims of the internal armed conflict,” emphasizing economic reparations and land to the detriment of the rights to truth and justice and a more holistic notion of reparation. The Law was supposed to be constructed collectively, but while some organizations were consulted, their ideas were not included and their participation was instrumentalized. “The content and the implementation of the Law have failed to recognize the victims as political subjects and satisfy their demands. In addition, it does not correspond with the international standard of human rights” (MOVICE 2012a).

The Law has presented problems since its beginning, including its definition of the universe of “victims.” The criteria that have been used to define it are temporal and in relation to the character of the victimizer and the involvement of the “victim” in the dynamics of the armed conflict. These leave out a significant number of victimized subjects, among them the “victims” of State criminality and “Criminal Gangs (BACRIM).” Therefore, the “victims” *produced* before the 1st of January 1985 are not included and only those that have been *produced* after 1991 have the right to land restitution. It means that individual “victims” or “victims” of massive forced displacement before 1991 are not included.

The only “victimizers” that were recognized in the initial formulation are those that are active armed actors in the “internal armed conflict,” which leaves out State personnel and the new paramilitary structures that have been formed since the paramilitary demobilization, now called “Criminal Gangs (BACRIM)” by the State. Finally, the Law does not recognize a “guerrilla” as a victim, although some of them have been tortured and killed outside combat, thus violating International Humanitarian Law; this also excludes a great amount of people who have been the

object of human rights violations because of their supposed or real involvement with the guerrillas. The Law was a demand of some movements and organizations of “victims,” other critical sectors of society, and liberal congressional groups (*bancadas*), but after being approved by the State and given the way it was formulated, the Law has been contested by victims and human rights organizations, NGOs, and politicians, which has led to some changes, such as the inclusion in 2012 of victims of State violence (Cepeda 2015).

In spite of the fact that the Law is centered on land restitution, the land that has been returned to their original owners is less than what the President promised. Further, displaced people’s returns have not taken place in conditions of security since there are still armed actors in the territories, and different land claimant leaders have been assassinated. For researchers such as Uprimmy and Sánchez, the Law has been conceived as a tool for agrarian development and the free trade of goods, which requires legal property titles in order to have enough incentives for the investment and accumulation of wealth, and thus to leave behind any suspicions of the land being acquired through land grabbing (in Martínez Cortés 2013: 15-16).

In a rally of support for the Victims and Land Restitution Law, the President stated: “In Colombia there is land for everyone. Colombia is a country with a great amount of land, half of the country still needs **development**, and we all fit in” (J. M. Santos 2011). The Law is part of governmental efforts to bring “progress” to the country through a concrete economic and developmental model that follows the orientation of the World Bank, among other multilateral institutions, that are “recommending” the “flexibilization” of the land market for “more productive activities and efficient users” (MOVICE 2012a). For example, the Law stipulates that if the land of displaced people is currently being put to productive use, it will be granted to the current users, rather than being returned to the families or communities from whom it was stolen under the notion of *contrato de uso* (the use contract). This means that the “traditional” ways to relate with territory

are again at risk of disappearing, making large plantation agriculture and neo-extractivism the only possibilities, and converting peasants, indigenous and Afro-descendent people into wage laborers of national and multinationals companies.

As for the third part, the peace process with the FARC-EP that intends to finish the “internal conflict” plays a central role in the political horizon of the current government. Its discursive apparatus positions it as a way to achieve civilization and being capable as a country to advance in a completed development. In his acceptance speech in 2010, Presidents Santos said: “**PEACE CANNOT DIVIDE US. To look for peace is an imperative for any civilized society ... WORKING TOGETHER –Colombians– we can build a more equitable country, more modern and secure ... A COUNTRY IN PEACE!**” (J. M. Santos 2010).

As we can observe, these three aspects—the Locomotives of Development, “victims,” and peace—are intimately interrelated. The political, economic, social, and cultural project of the current government depends on them. It is of great importance to pay attention to the centrality of the economic dimension in the three axes of President Santos’ governmental plan during his first term (2010-2014), as well as to the type of society he is proposing. This is a type of country that contrasts with the society that a diverse array of social actors are imagining in this conjuncture, which depends on, to a certain extent, different onto-epistemologies and locations within modernity/coloniality.

According to the International Crisis Group (2013), an NGO that works to “prevent and resolve deadly conflict,” “the ascendancy of transitional justice measures in Colombia reflects an international context in which transitional justice is increasingly seen as an integral part of a broader agenda to promote *the rule of law and democracy in post-conflict and post-authoritarian* states; and in which domestic regimes that promote impunity for serious international crimes are now (at least theoretically) matters of international concern” (6-7). Although transitional justice is supposed

to be a general model that has to be filled with content depending on the specific context, the way it works is standardizing notions of justice and others related with victims' claims, as we can observe in the Colombian case.

Based on Colombian reality and in conversation with other contexts, I have observed that transitional justice (Gómez Correal 2014; Gómez Correal 2015) has certain particular characteristics that I consider of paramount importance to take into account in order to understand how it works, but also what to do if the intention is to achieve and construct a peace that transforms the violent reality the country has in the present. First, transitional justice is conceptualized as the *tool* that will allow advancing towards a democratic “normality,” which implicitly suggests that societies that apply this justice are not normal, “barbaric,” and that democracy—specifically liberal democracy—should/must be the goal. The same occurs with the economy, since this framework is accompanied by a specific political economy that reinforces capitalism as the only possible option. Transitional justice works as a mechanism that looks to re-legitimize the State in those contexts where it has been directly involved in the exercise of violence and/or has been incapable of fulfill its tasks. This entire conception about democracy, capitalism, and the State resembles a linear notion of time that assumes that it is imperative to break with the past, achieve a certain kind of truth, and enact a memory that permits advancing toward the future, leaving intact the nation-state as a way to organize society, and thus modernity in one of its manifestations: liberalism.

Second, under this framework, justice is opposed to peace since it has been concluded that the right of justice is an impediment to peace, a conception that obligates the use of an alternative model to the ordinary criminal justice system. This implies that justice—one of the main Gordian knots of modernity/coloniality—has to lower its standards to the minimum, fostering impunity. Even though “victims” and their demands are supposedly cornerstone to this model, in the majority of cases their “rights” are not fulfilled. Third, this framework has a great capacity to coopt subaltern

proposals and articulate them into hegemonic discourses, as I will try to demonstrate in the following sections.¹⁸³

Fourth, transitional justice, similar to other discourses and practices, creates and/or reinforces certain moralities, subjectivities, and emotional habitus, generalizing the notion of victims and the most pervasive and “negative” stereotypes associated with it. Fifth, the national and international structural causes that generate the “states of exception” (Agambem 1988) in the Nation-states are not addressed; and some of them even are not mentioned, re-editing colonial and imperial governance. Shaw and Waldorf (2010) state that the transitional justice current phase—they are writing in 2010—is characterized by “disconnections between international legal norms and local priorities and practices” (3). Thus, solutions end up being universalized, and discourses, practices, and alternative visions are at risk of being coopted and re-codified in the hegemonic language. The current logic of transitional justice in Colombia, observed in detail, allows seeing the deeper relation that it has with modernity/coloniality: the imposition of the Western model of civilization under the tutelage of the hegemonic north, especially the United States.

The global: A Brief Genealogy of Transitional Justice

*“Ignoring the ideological dimension
of transitional justice
is the quickest route
to entrenching legal fetishism”
(Wilson 2001: 29).*

Any genealogy of transitional justice has to take into account not only the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also the context that made it possible: the end of the two world wars, and the “Holocaust.” As F. Giraldo (2014) emphasizes, it is after the II War World that the truth

¹⁸³ Uprimmy and Saffón (in F. Giraldo 2014) consider that two different uses of transitional justice exist: manipulative and emancipatory. The former works through the symbolic effect of the transition that departs from victims’ rights, but it does so in a political context that strips it from its juridical content in order to mask and legitimate impunity as well as perpetuate unequal power relationships between victims and victimizers. The latter looks to struggle against impunity through a “real application of victims’ rights” with the objective of transforming the asymmetrical power relationships.



Figure 15: “Justice is not transitional / Not Forgetting”
First workshop with Movice’s Bogotá chapter, February 13, 2013

[Source: William Oquendo Rojas]

about the past, the duty of memory, and the obligation to apply justice became a priority in governmental agendas. This interest is embedded with the modern perspective about time and history that assumes that it is possible to leave the past behind and walk toward progress, learning from the “errors” of the past. This vision did not question the profound link that there is between violence and the modern project (Bauman 1989), and in consequence left intact the hegemonic project of Western civilization: liberalism and capitalism. The post-Hitler “historical fever” is also product of a deep ethnocentrism that values the lives and suffering of Europeans, in contrast with its relation with the colonies, as Fanon (2004) denounces.

It is during the post-Holocaust that important concepts such as “crime against humanity” appeared,¹⁸⁴ and that models for truth and justice were constructed along with a significant amount of human rights international jurisprudence. In relation to truth, the legal and social condemnation of the Nazi’s actions focused on the importance of testimony, memory, the victims, the witnesses, and the survivors as essential to confront the “horrors” of humanity. In terms of justice, the Nuremberg trials situated International Law over State law with the capacity to place criminal responsibility on individuals in the case of international and intra-state armed conflicts (Giraldo

¹⁸⁴ This concept was tied to the category of war crimes with the intention of achieving a solid legal condemnation, and both concepts were considered imprescriptible.

2014), which later on opened the door to the *ad hoc* tribunals created in the 1990s and the International Criminal Court in 1998.

This model of justice gives priority to punitive justice and voices the obligation of the States to investigate and sanction human rights violations under potential international intervention. Notwithstanding, in spite of the fact that the charge of crimes against humanity was used for the first time during the Nuremberg Trials, this model of justice already postulated “in the name of common humanity, the limitless character of justice” (Hazan 2010: 52). The International Law that emerged from this specific conjuncture identified the modern State as the main violator of collective rights and its personnel as the biggest offenders of International Humanitarian Law. As Orozco Abad (2009) states, after the end of the War World II, the idea that the State was innocent, as the Leviathan described it, changed. This transformation obligated the recognition of the State’s presumed guilt, its obligation to guarantee human rights, and the achievement of peace (Giraldo 2014), as well as the pressing need for the rule of Law.

A second important moment of this genealogy is the transition from dictatorships to democracies in the Southern Cone in Latin America that took place during the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. In this context, the mechanisms for “applying justice” were national tribunals that prioritized electoral processes and the construction of peace (F. Giraldo 2014) from the top down strengthening and globally spreading democracy and the nation-state. In these countries the transition was led by democratic governments that, despite promising to enact justice and deal with a past of horror, privileged—in order to avoid a hostile reaction of the victimizers (mainly the military chiefs)—amnesties and pardons, i.e., harmony with the victimizer (F. Giraldo 2014). In the case of Central America, during the 1980s and the 1990s peace negotiations processes took place between the State and the guerrillas in countries such as Guatemala and Nicaragua that also included amnesties, pardon, and oblivion for both actors of the

armed confrontation—although different types of uncovering the truth were proposed—following the same reasoning: the priority of transitioning to and/or consolidating democracy, to enter the post-conflict stage.

In these concrete applications, the apparatus of justice gained legitimacy although justice was not applied, promoting at the same time a process of state building. “The legitimacy of constitutionalism depends in turn upon the legitimacy and the capacity of the criminal justice system to deliver swift justice,” and the reaffirmation of the rule of law becomes central to “the consolidation of state power as defined by a monopoly over the means of violence” (Wilson 2001: 17-21).

It is in this context that reconciliation as a version of justice enters the transitional justice scenario “to inhabit the vacuum of impunity left by amnesty laws” (Wilson 2001: 30). Interestingly, in those scenarios in which pardon and amnesties were proposed as a way to forgive and forget, neither of those occurred. This is the case of Colombia, but also of Guatemala and Argentina. In the Guatemalan case, in 2013 the ex-dictator José Efraín Ríos Montt received a conviction for genocide against indigenous people; and in Argentina, under the presidency of Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner and Nestor Kirchner, State officials have received convictions for human rights violations that occurred during the dictatorships. Both scenarios of justice have been the product of the struggle of relatives and human rights organizations that among other things claim that they do not forget or forgive (H.I.J.O.S. Argentina 2010; H.I.J.O.S. Guatemala 2012, 2013).

In Colombia, this model of amnesty, pardon, and oblivion was used for the demobilization of some guerrillas at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. These processes did not include the victimized subjects of any of the two actors, the State and the guerrillas, let alone a discussion about State violence, even though ASFADDES brought the reality of forcibly

disappeared people by the Armed Forces to the talks that were held in Caracas (Camila 2015).¹⁸⁵

They helped to foster State violence and impunity, as well as “hate” against the guerrillas and their misrecognition by some citizens as invalid political actors in the democratic arena.

Although only recently the notion of transitional justice has been commonly employed in Colombia, its principles were consolidated in the late 1980s, when dictatorships in Latin America fell and the “end of the Cold War brought independent states in eastern Europe” (Weinstein, Fletcher, and Vinck 2010: 32). In 1988, the Aspen Institute conference titled “State Crimes: Punishment or Pardon” was held to consider the “moral, political and jurisprudential issues that arise when a government that has engaged in gross violations of human rights is succeeded by a regime more inclined to respect those rights” (Henkin in Weinstein, Fletcher, and Vinck 2010: 33).

This conference—led by a liberal think tank created in 1950¹⁸⁶—addressed questions related with the moral duty to punish human rights violations **and/or** to foster national reconciliation; the international responsibilities of States to prosecute wrongdoers; the State’s duties to investigate and publicize the truth of what happened; and “the extent of political discretion new regimes could exercise legitimately to address the past, taking into account the political, social, and economic vulnerabilities that threaten emerging democracies” (Aspen Institute Papers in Weinstein, Fletcher, and Vinck 2010: 33).

Transitional justice is part of a paradigm of transition developed by a “few American political scientists in the mid-1980s,” and celebrated by the Reagan administration as “the

¹⁸⁵ These talks took place in 1991 between the FARC-EP and the government of César Gaviria without any signed peace agreement.

¹⁸⁶ This institute, the Aspen Institute, is a “nonprofit organization, nonpartisan and non ideological” that is based in Washington D.C. To date, it has develop more than 20 policy programs, among them on economy, development, human rights, medicine, and justice. In the policy program called The Justice and Society Program, it “convenes leaders to affect national and international policy regarding human rights, international law, transitional justice and post-conflict multilateral peacekeeping operations.” Some of their areas of influence are Africa, Central America, India and the Middle East. Condoleezza Rice is one of its board members (The Aspen Institute, see <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/about/mission>).

worldwide democratic revolution” of the time (Hazan 2010: 50). The collapse of communist regimes at the end of that decade “established the paradigm of transition and marks the triumph of political and economic liberalism” (50), deepening and extending the hegemony of one of the expressions of the Enlightenment modernity.

At the same time in Europe, after the end of the Cold War—the “defeat” of communism and socialism—and the “threat of irredentist nationalism” some intellectuals coming from different political traditions such as Habermas, Kristeva, and Ignatieff promoted human rights and a “return” to the Enlightenment project that included the “establishment of constitutionalist states based upon the rule of law” (Wilson 2001: 1). These intellectuals advocated for the construction of a nation not as it previously was, constituted on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, or religion, but founded on a “community of equal, rights-bearing citizens, united in patriotic attachment to a shared set of political practices and values” (Ignatieff in Wilson 2001: 1). Thus, human rights became central in the post Cold War era, working as the antithesis of nationalist modes of nation building (Wilson 2001: 1), reinforcing their universal character and deepening global governance in the era of neoliberalism.

In Colombia, this “new” historical trend is expressed in the new Constitution of 1991, which worked as the legal mechanism that guarantees peace agreements, the transition to peace, and the new “political pact” in spite of the permanence of other guerrillas groups. The Constitution was a way to “modernize” and “strengthen” democracy in the country and its legal system through the materialization of constitutionalism and the rule of law. In that way, Colombia followed global transformations and the liberal model of society for which the incorporation of international human rights laws into a national constitution was essential as an example of democracy, freedom, and the creation of a new social contract with citizens. In this historical “transition,” human rights talk

“become a dominant form of ideological legitimization” for Colombia’s neoliberal “nation-building project” (Wilson 2001: 4) as part of the widespread globalization of human rights talk.¹⁸⁷

This transition worked—although not primarily—as a way to legitimize the Colombian elite’s democratic project in which nation-building, as Wilson (2001) argues, is not an end in itself but as a way to engender the necessary pre-conditions for governance. In that sense, the conception of a more plural nation, a “rainbow nation”—the expression of the neoliberal ideology of multiculturalism—becomes a precondition to legitimize state institutions and institutional centralization (Wilson 2001: 4). Although this was a period of deepening the neoliberal principle of the State’s non-interventionism through a decentralization policy, this current transition in Colombia looks to preserve the centralization of some core functions of the State, among others the monopoly of force, the application of justice, and the control over territory.

The institutionalization and universalization of transitional justice

Transitional justice, since its initial development has worked to legitimize and expand the western model of civilization, mainly in its liberal version. First, following the Nazi regime, some justice and memory procedures were proposed to get out of the “impasse” that Hitler created. Then, specific mechanisms were established in the Latin American Southern Cone to transit from dictatorships to democracy and in Central America, in the 1990s, for leaving behind the armed conflicts. In the three cases, State abuses were at stake, first as the Nazi’s deviation and the second and third as the result of State confrontation with the Left and/or guerrillas.

In the 1990s, transitional justice turned into the privileged mechanism to legally and “definitively” defeat the Cold War enemy (the communist) throughout international tribunals, positioning the United States as the hegemonic power and creating a new global enemy: terrorists. At the same time, during this decade it was used as a way to “leave behind” the pervasive

¹⁸⁷ For Wilson (2001), this is a time in which human rights dominates “political and economic life more than at any other point in history” (223).

consequences of colonialism and the evident weaknesses of the modern project. Therefore, transitional justice became a tool for spreading global/local liberal governance not only through the “domestication” of relatives, victimized subjects, human rights defenders, and social movements’ demands (the “civil society”), but also through the defeat of its political contradictor: the Left (the Other of the “political society”).

The victory of liberalism was well represented through George H.W. Bush’s discourse, titled: “Toward a New World Order” on the 11th of September, 1990. This optimism for the liberal model was accompanied by the development of multilateralism, the rising power of NGOs, and the short-lived renewal of the United Nations (Hazan 2010: 50). In this context, transitional justice was institutionalized in universities as a new discipline, and fed on experiences of democratic transitions conducted in Latin America, South Africa, and Central and Eastern Europe. The message was clear with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the “end of history” (Fukuyama 1992): the only possible model to follow was liberal western modernity, especially the version incarnated in the United States, a country that was at the height of its power (Hazan 2010: 50) in the 1990s.

Thus, to some extent the transition from dictatorships and internal armed conflicts to democracy in Latin America was part of the performance of a “soft power” by the United States to “influence” other states by the seduction and attraction to the American model rather than by the brutal imposition of its own order (Hazan 2010). In that way, the great influence that the United States had in the past in different countries of the region supporting States’ efforts to deal with the “internal enemy” through military training—including instruction on how to torture through the School of the Americas¹⁸⁸—and other counterinsurgency methods, were maintained but now by means of the “soft power” that promotes democracy. During the 1990s, across almost the entire

¹⁸⁸ The School of the Americas was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) in 2001.

continent, the perceived main enemies of civilization, communism and socialism, had been banished, with the exception of Colombia, Peru, and Cuba.

“Promoting democracy does more than foster our ideals. It advances our interests because we know that the larger the pool of democracies, the better off we, and the entire community of nations, will be. Democracies **create free markets that offer economic opportunity, make for more reliable trading partners** and are far less likely to wage war on one another” (The White House 1996 in Hazan 2010: 51).

As we can observe, the development of international law has been directly affected by politics. Whereas after the Nuremberg Trials international law was blocked by the Cold War, it is only after the fall of the Berlin Wall that **crimes against humanity** become a central topic in international relations. After the Cold War, an important array of institutions, including national truth commission and international criminal tribunals, were established to investigate mass violations of international humanitarian law. “In the narrow window of opportunity that existed in the 1990s, an international consensus emerged regarding the need to try war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of genocide in the international criminal tribunals” (Wilson 2011: viii).

This phase of transitional justice initiated in the early 1990s with the inclusion of the Balkans and Rwanda, and the creation of the *ad hoc* criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda in 1993 and 1994, the subsequent courts of Sierra Leone and East Timor, and the creation of the International Criminal Court in 2002 (Weinstein, Fletcher, and Vinck 2010: 34). These tribunals were also the product of a “moral ... international consensus ... to prosecute serious violations” (Weinstein, Fletcher, and Vinck 2010: 34) that followed some of the principles used to judge Nazi actions and that entailed a shift toward prosecution, in contrast with the Latin America experience. This specificity should to be contextualized in the United States’ struggle for universalizing liberalism/capitalism, the attempt to definitively defeat its Cold War enemy, and consolidate its hegemony.

Hazan (2010) asserts that the use of the concept crimes against humanity helps to legitimize the construction of a globalized world and participates at the same time in the elaboration of a global judicial order that benefits some countries more than others. In this context the United States played a relevant role “defeating” its Cold War enemy and consolidating its hegemony through the application of transitional justice. Precisely, the courts in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Cambodia were possible due to the United States’ economic support, criminalizing the enemy, and placing this country on the side of “good.” Therefore, the notion of crimes against humanity set new political and judicial boundaries between “civilization” and “barbarity,” helping in the ideological construction of the new post-Cold War enemy. This again transforms the adversary into a criminal, allowing, in the name of protecting humanity, interventions beyond state boundaries (Hazan 2010).

On the other hand, during the second phase, transitional justice was used to face the pervasive consequences of colonialism. This is the case of South Africa, whose transitional experience has been exported as an example of a successful case. Dimensions such as truth-telling, healing, nation-building, and history writing that are central in the current discussions in Colombia were integrated into the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Human rights codified restorative justice as African justice (Wilson 2001: 11), which justified amnesty, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The latter mainly translated into an amnesty law (Richard A. Wilson 2001). In the South African case, the State connected rights and reconciliation to nation building through an appeal to Africanist ideas of unity and community, expressing the new “culture of rights” in a popular idiom that commensurates African values with international human rights law.

It is important to notice that a great majority of the countries in which transitional justice has been applied have gone through colonialism. This is the case of Northern Ireland in Europe; Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and East Timor in Asia; Burundi, South Africa, Mozambique, and Sierra

Leona in Africa; and Argentina, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, and Guatemala in Latin America. In the majority of these contexts, “soft” justice was applied, contrasting with a more punitive justice of the international tribunals in cases of trials against communist authorities. In this way, transitional justice works as a manner to impose the Law and the western model of civilization by other means, without questioning the role of colonialism in the development of the contemporary violence, as well as the neo-imperialistic and neo-colonial character of the imposition of the liberal “tool kit” for resolving the “problem.” Again, western modernity, in its liberal version, is applied worldly to resolve economic and political exclusions, gender discrimination, and ethnic, religious, and linguistic divisions (Arthur 2011: 2), without recognizing its incapacity to appropriately deal with differences and inequalities.

As Wilson (2001) mentions, since the 1990s nearly all transitions from authoritarian rule have adopted the languages of human rights and the political model of constitutionalism. In this development, transitional justice became the solution to massive or systematic violations of human rights that looked to recognized *victims*, to prevent the recurrence of abuses (Arthur 2011), and draw away from a *barbarian* past (Valencia 2007: 9). Globally, transitional justice has focused on “first generation” human rights, civil and political rights, and on serious crimes such as massive or systematic extrajudicial killing—including enforced disappearances—, arbitrary detention, rape, and torture (Arthur 2011: 1), many of them perpetuated by the State in different geographies.

Thus, transitional justice became a “global and normalized” discourse (Teitel in Shaw and Waldorf 2010: vii) that universalizes the way in which internal conflicts should be resolved, choosing “best practices” that can be exported throughout (Teitel in Shaw and Waldorf 2010: viii). This is the case of Truth Commissions, the *gacaca* courts of post-genocide Rwanda, and reconciliation rituals of northern Uganda. Thus, a useful worldly “toolkit” has been created (Shaw

and Waldorf 2010: 3) that privileges retributive justice.¹⁸⁹ Transitional justice includes measures such as “prosecutions, especially for those most responsible for grave human rights violations; truth telling that publicly recognizes the abuse, often in the form of an official commission; massive reparations programs that provide a mix of material and symbolic benefits to victims, including official apologies; memorialization projects that educate the public and also provide a space for mourning; and reform of abusive institutions, most often security forces such as the police and military” (Arthur 2011: 1).

This framework of political transitions toward democracy or “true” democracy confine survivors, relatives, and victimized subjects’ demands to the realm and language of law, losing the subversive dimension of their proposals, and working as a way to domesticate and maintain them under State control. The language we identify today as transitional justice started to circulate in Colombia at the beginning of the 1980s, product of relatives’ demands and the work of human rights organizations. Then, it subsequently expanded in the 1990s and it is intensified during the 21st century thanks to the consolidation of relatives’ and human rights organizations as well as the emergence of a peace movement, and the new political conjuncture that the demobilization of the paramilitaries created.

Therefore, what we know today as transitional justice (victims’ rights) did not emerge from the State or international governance, but was born first within organizations of relatives in

¹⁸⁹ By 1995, when Neil Kritz—transitional justice expert who currently works at the United States Institute of Peace and Quartet office in Jerusalem—published his work on transitional justice, the term “had unquestionably entered the lexicon of international law and relations” (Weinstein, Fletcher, and Vinck 2010: 33). In Kritz’s book, an important question revolves around sanctions, analyzing whether to prosecute, whom to prosecute, legal barriers to prosecutions, their political feasibility, alternatives to criminal sanctions, and how to respond to “victims.” In addition, the tension between universal claims of human rights and the rule of law with the demands of specific contexts was recognized (Weinstein, Fletcher, and Vinck 2010: 34) without advancing significantly towards changing it. The context of transition to democracies during the 1980s and 1990s across the globe located how to consolidate peace at the center of discussion. Under the political transitional discourse, peace has been equated with liberal democracy and capitalism, supporting the idea that peace and justice in the specific conjuncture of the political transition are antitheses. Consequently, that dichotomous point of view privileged amnesties and retributive, rather than restorative, justice (R. Shaw 2010) contributing to impunity.

Colombia and previously in other countries of Latin America, although later, victimized subjects' demands were translated into legal language, and then coopted and instrumentalized.¹⁹⁰ This is the case of the organizations such as the *Mothers of May Square* in Argentina that were created in 1977 claiming not only the return of their sons and daughters alive, but also the re-establishment of democracy, justice, and truth. Their demands of justice were faced with “full-stop” and “due obedience” laws that intended to discontinue prosecution and turn the page, leaving the past behind. In relation to their memory demands, even within a State policy that proposed learning the truth through diverse mechanisms, such as the National Commission about Disappeared People (CONADEP), it fomented forgetting of the dictatorship's atrocities in order to make the transition to democracy possible.

It is precisely in the construction of all these measures that transitional justice translates the following into law: the demands for memory/truth, justice, and the ethical proclamation of “never again” that a diverse array of subjects across the world, but especially in Latin America, have been demanding since the 1970s in contexts of dictatorships, state and paramilitary violence. That appropriation gave birth to the notion of victims' rights: the rights to truth, justice, reparation, and non-repetition.

The deepening of global governance: the United States, the War on Terror, and the

ICC¹⁹¹

In 2000, the Ford Foundation created the Center for Transitional Justice, the first international organization with the objective of supporting the application of transitional justice in

¹⁹⁰ The concept “transitional justice” was not used in Latin America at the moment of the political transitions of the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, in a meeting in October 2013 held in Bogotá, member of HIJOS Guatemala and Peru stated that they were not familiar with that notion. This reinforces the idea that it was a framework that appropriated victimized subjects' demands, translating them in a particular way into the language of law, and spread them internationally. While it escapes the scope of this dissertation, it would be important to analyze the relation of these relatives and victimized subjects' demands with the Holocaust experience. Both trajectories share an onto-epistemic matrix: modernity/coloniality, for which memory and justice are essential.

¹⁹¹ International Criminal Court.

“societies emerging from repressive rule or armed conflict, as well as in established democracies where historical injustices or systemic abuse remain unresolved” (in Weinstein, Fletcher, and Vinck 2010: 34). Although historical injustices or systemic abuses are still present in societies of the hegemonic western north, transitional justice is not usually applied in those geographies. The main places of intervention of transitional justice are those where socialism and communism were significant, and those that have a colonial history that ended in the 19th or 20th century, and that have been conceptualized as backward.

Transitional justice is a system for regulating violence; is it not an exception but, to the contrary, the product of its time, “of an ideological vision and philosophy of history” that has been also used for the U.S war on terror after September 11th, 2001 (Hazan 2010: 49). Some of the mechanisms of transitional justice could not be possible during the Cold War; such is the case of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission or the International Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia. South Africa was “one of the many places of confrontation between East and West, preventing any peaceful transition during the Cold War. ... The Soviet Union would have vetoed the establishment of any international criminal tribunal in its sphere of influence during the bipolar era” (Hazan 2010: 49). Likewise, the International Criminal Court (ICC) would not be possible after 9/11, 2001 (Hazan 2010).

It is precisely in this context that the paramilitary demobilization process was carried out in Colombia under a government that adapted the discourse of the war on terror to the national context under the premise of Democratic Security, declaring a war against terrorism and spreading the United States’ new discourse. During Uribe’s term, the terrorist has been incarnated in guerrillas, human rights defenders, and the political opposition. The process of paramilitary demobilization, as the major chiefs of the paramilitaries expressed to some members of IMP in a meeting that I

participated in—held in Ralito on August 18th, 2004—the transitional justice mechanisms for the paramilitary demobilization were advised by Harvard University (IMP 2004a).

Thus, the hegemonic universalized premises of transitional justice were used for the first time in Colombian history during the negotiation with the paramilitaries under the supervision of the OEA and with the full support of the United States. At that moment, Colombia was of great strategic importance for the U.S. within the region due to the Turn to the Left in Latin America, which was perceived as a threat to the United States' power in its “backyard” and in the entire globe since Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, and Bolivia, among other countries, generated alliances with Russia, China, and Iran, among others, fostering independence from the United States.

Colombia, under President Uribe, became the best ally of the United States in South America, triggering conflicts—with Venezuela and Ecuador, especially—and combating the proposal of a Bolivarian Project that coincided with some of the premises of the remaining guerrillas in Colombia, especially the FARC-EP. As Hazan (2010) points out, the “alliances with repressive regimes is from now on [after 9/11] interpreted as a strategic necessity in the name of the global war for the ‘defense of freedom’” (57). In the era of the war on terror, there is an obsession with security and a return to an intransigent conception of sovereignty (Hazan 2010: 56) that is observable in Colombia within Uribe's discourse, conflicts with neighboring countries, and the reinforcement of the United States' imperialism. For example, even though the U.S. signed the ICC treaty under the Clinton administration, the U.S. has failed to ratify it, thus protecting its sovereignty while it intervenes in many other countries.

Under the new “terror” logic, the same author states, transitional justice is becoming decoupled from the encompassing vision of moral and political progress that prevailed “between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the fall of the twin towers in New York” (Hazan 2010: 8). Therefore, the axioms of transitional justice have been used to fit strategic goals, and the world has transitioned

after 9/11 from multilateralism to unilateralism, and from soft to hard power, marginalizing humanitarian law. Although for Hazan (2010) the war against terror puts into question the centrality of law, and violence appears as an essential agent in the protection of “civilization,” I argue that transitional justice is in essence, at least in Colombia and other parts of Latin America such as Guatemala and Peru, the continuation of domination under the combination of violence *and* law.

In the Colombian case, the first formal and explicit application of transitional justice took place under president Uribe’s term (2002-2006) for the demobilization of the paramilitaries. Transitional justice was used to describe the country as a post-conflict society, thus negating the very existence of the “internal armed conflict” and depriving the guerrillas of their political character. The main legal mechanism created for that process was the Alternative Sentencing Project (*Proyecto de Alternatividad Penal*) that looked to achieve peace with the paramilitaries without any prosecution. This project was rejected by important sectors of society, among them “victims” of paramilitary and State violence; it was reformulated, leading to the resultant Justice and Peace Law. This Law, after the initial debate that it generated, has remained controversial. The Justice and Peace Law—a rhetorical game of words—included “victims” and their rights, becoming the first time that the law recognizes victims as a legal subject (Carlos Rojas 2013).

Since the process of paramilitary demobilization, an “increasingly dense network of laws and institutions and a wealth of experience” (International Crisis Group 2013: 3) have been produced in Colombia. As part of that dense network, the State created in 2005 the National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation (2005-2011), CNRR, in charge of the following: guaranteeing the participation of “victims” in the judicial process and the materialization of their rights; following up and verifying the process of paramilitary re-incorporation into society with the objective of assuring their complete demobilization as well as the role of the local state institutions; recommending criteria for reparation; coordinating the activities of the Regional Commission for

property restitution; proposing national activities for reconciliation capable of avoiding the re-emergence of violence that could disturb national peace; and elaborating a public report to explain the reasons for the emergence and evolution of illegal armed actors, among others.

The Commission was integrated by different State officials: one person designated by the vice-president as the director of the CNRR, Eduardo Pizarro León Gómez; five representatives of civil society—among them the director of the IMP, Patricia Buriticá—and two representatives of the organizations of victims. Within the CNRR, a Group of Historical Memory was established to be in charge of the public report to explain the existence of illegal armed actors. This Group has produced 24 reports following the logic of emblematic cases and thematic studies, as well as its final report in 2013: *Stop Now! Colombia: Memories of war and dignity* (GMH 2013)

In 2011, the CNRR was dissolved but the Group of Historical Memory remained as a part of the National Center of Historical Memory, giving proof of the importance that the engagement with the past has for the State in a political transition as well as for different sectors of society.¹⁹² As part of this application of transitional justice in Colombia other legal mechanism have been created such as the Demobilization Law (Law 1424 of 2010), the Reform of the Peace and Justice Law (Law 1592 of 2012), and the Victims and Land Restitution Law (2011).

Then, in the current peace negotiation process transitional justice is again used as the

¹⁹² In Colombia, between 1958 and 2006 around fourteen spaces that recount violent events of the past have been created as part of governmental, human rights organizations, social movements, and/or academic initiatives. This is the case of the National Research Commission of the Causes and Current situations of violence in the National Territory (La Comisión Nacional Investigadora de las Causas y Situaciones Presentes de la violencia en el Territorio Nacional) (1958); The Study Commission on Violence (La Comisión de Estudios sobre la Violencia) (1987); The People's Permanent Tribunal (El Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos) that published the report *Proceso a la impunidad de crímenes de lesa humanidad* (1989); The Commission for Overcoming Violence (La Comisión para la Superación de la violencia) (1991); The Commission for Investigating the Violent Events of Trujillo (La Comisión de investigación de los Sucesos Violentos de Trujillo) (1994); the Colombian Project Never Again (1995); The Commission in Search of Truth about Events in Barrancabermeja (la Comisión para la Búsqueda de la Verdad en los Eventos de Barrancabermeja) (1998); the Ethical Commission of MOVICE (2006); The Truth Commission of the Palace of Justice Case (La Comisión de la verdad de los hechos del Palacio de Justicia) (2005); the Historical Commission Group (2005) and finally the Historical Commission of the Conflict and its Victims (2014) created due to the petition of the FARC-EP and as a part of an agreement in the current peace negotiation process between the government and the FARC-EP.

framework for negotiating with the guerrillas (the terrorists according to Uribe's terms), but now under a new global moment: the enforcement of the ICC. As Shaw and Waldorf (2010) notice, the "latest phase of transitional justice is marked not only by a fascination with locality, but also by a return to Nuremberg's international norms against impunity and a UN prohibition against granting amnesties for war crimes" (4) that affects the countries that signed and ratified the ICC treaty. This represents one of the main difficulties of the application of transitional justice in the current conjuncture in Colombia. Consequently, the peace negotiation process with the FARC-EP faces challenges that the process of paramilitary demobilization did not because of, among other things, the ICC treaty. Colombia is part of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court "which has jurisdiction over genocide and crimes against humanity from 2002 and over war crimes from 2009" (International Crisis Group 201: 7). Under international law, crimes against humanity as well as war crimes are not subject to amnesty; in addition, the Constitutional Court in Colombia voiced the need to respect victims' rights to justice in 2013.

It is not a merely coincidence that the paramilitary demobilization took place during Uribe's term along with the application of the ICC clause in relation to war crimes, as well as the failure and/or negation of carrying out peace processes with the guerrillas during the Uribe's administration. At the same time, the complexities of the current peace process, given the required enforcement of the entire ICC mandate in Colombia, is also to a certain extent the result of the FARC-EP, ELN, and EPL's continued insistence in the armed struggle within a Latin America without guerrillas and in a globalized world in which liberalism and the United States were strengthening their hegemony.

Applying transitional justice as a "magic formula" has given birth to two different legal mechanisms: the Legal Framework for Peace (2012) and the Law on Military Criminal Jurisdiction. These two have been created under president Santos and have been developed as legal devices to facilitate the peace process. The first one works as a juridical tool that will regulate the type of

transitional justice that is going to be applied in the country, initially giving the impression that both the guerillas and the military would be sanctioned equally and minimally for human rights violations. However, it came to light that the government was in fact developing the Law on Military Criminal Jurisdiction, which provided protection solely for the military. Thus, both the Legal Framework for Peace and the Law on Military Criminal Jurisdiction have been objects of controversy in the country.

Transitional justice is one of the best examples of a neoliberal globalization led by the United States. It “marks both the passage toward democracy of certain states and a new organization of the world under American leadership” (Hazan 2010: 54) reconfiguring the politics of the world. Transitional justice is playing a central role in limiting state powers, undermining the foundation of national sovereignty (Hazan 2010: 55) of certain countries, and reinforcing the imperial character of others. Thus, for example, international nongovernmental organizations and donors are gaining great relevance in the definition of transitional justice. What is or not negotiable is determined in part by the perceived legitimacy of international actors supporting them. For instance, while reparations are recommended for Holocaust survivors and other victims of the Nazis (Okello 2010: 279), other programs are not supported.

The transitional dispute: between the radicalism and domestication of victimized

subjects' rights

“During January 2013 we developed with the MOVICE two workshops that had the objectives of discussing the final proposals that the MOVICE consolidated in the document *Propuestas Mínimas Sobre Verdad, Justicia, Reparación y Garantías de No Repetición* (Movimiento de Víctimas y Movimiento de Derechos Humanos de Colombia 2006),¹⁹³ as well as to prepare the participants of the Bogotá chapter for the different forums, congresses, symposiums, and other national and international meetings that could take place around the peace process and victimized subjects' rights. In those two sections, we collectively explored the meaning that the “rights to truth, justice, reparation, and the guarantees of non-repetition” have for the participants and the reasons for demanding them.

¹⁹³ Basic Proposals about Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Guarantees of No Repetition.

Some central ideas that stood out had to do with the fact that none of these rights can work individually; to the contrary, their materialization depends of achieving them together. During these two days, our own ideas and concepts emerged such as a *true truth* to refer to a truth that it is not merely some actors' versions of the past but one that contributes to the clarification of what occurred and that is the result of the dialogue between diverse voices, including victimized subjects. In relation with "reparation," the participants considered that there are some things that can be reparable such as material goods but others that are not, such as loved ones, suffering, the experience we went through together with the enforced displacement, and the break down of the social fabric. Thus, we came up with the idea of naming reparation as ***the State and victimizers' obligation to indemnify and a duty to repair.***

In particular, this dialogue about "reparation" has made it increasingly imperative and common for victimizers to ask for forgiveness and apologies. Meanwhile, discussing the right to non-repetition, the participants emphasized that it should include real changes in the structural conditions that have generated State criminality. Finally, justice remains one of the central demands of the victimized subjects, but they commented that to achieve it is almost a utopia" (Huitaca 2015).

The current global dominant narrative states that there are some countries in which things are not working in the correct manner (the Western hegemonic way), and it is thus necessary to intervene (direct or indirectly).¹⁹⁴ Colombia is one such nation-state that is not yet the *exact copy of the original model*. The profound historical reasons that produce the "imperfections" of the countries in which transitional justice has been or has to be applied are never discussed when this model is proposed as the device through which the impasses of war and violence will be resolved. The "common sense" does not reflect the history of imperialism and colonialism that have impacted those countries, thus ignoring the long-term history that gives origin to that violence, and the way those colonial and imperial relations are re-enacted.

In the application and universalization of transitional justice, survivors, relatives, and victimized subjects' demands are coopted by global governance and the State, translating moral and ethical claims into the language of law, stripping them of their political and ontological depth, and leaving intact the model of society that they are putting under debate. The struggles for memory, truth, justice, never again, and dignity are articulated in a way that the transformative capacity that

¹⁹⁴ In recent years Syria and Venezuela are good examples, among others.

they entail is at the service of the liberal expression of western modernity, reproducing its redemptive vision and notion of history (R. Shaw and Waldorf 2010). I aim in the next lines to explore how it works locally-globally.

Justice ... but not any kind of justice

“We were raised with the idea of **punishment** for the guilty. Because we believe that justice is punishment, and of course that it doesn’t happen again. But justice is also the recognition of the action, of the damage ... And of course we also cannot forget that justice shouldn’t be isolated, but rather it must be accompanied by the truth ... [In this way,] impunity is not guaranteeing justice, not guaranteeing the truth, denial is part of impunity, impunity is not punishing, not sanctioning, and not sanctioning according to all the damage they’ve caused us” (Camila 2013).

“[Justice is] that they get **punished!** But a real punishment, a **just punishment**, not just two or three years ... That’s why there’s so much violence, so many problems in our country, because there’s no punishment, because if there were real, just punishments there wouldn’t be so much killing in Colombia” (La Mache 2013).

“All I’m asking for is **real, real justice** ... what the constitution says ... How many years do you get for murdering someone, especially if that person is protected as a minor? 40 years ... I didn’t make that up, and all I want is for them to ... enforce that ... I’m just saying that they should enforce the laws that they made up themselves, that’s were justice is ... Don’t make more laws, just enforce the ones that already exist!” (Mamoncillo 2013).

“That they punish those responsible, not so much **those who physically did it** ... They were just following orders, but behind them are the intellectuals who have a general interest, I don’t know which, economic, political, territorial ... If that is made public, if they restore the reputations of the victims ... that fell there ... and if the State publicly asks for forgiveness ... [If they ask for] forgiveness from indigenous people ... for having tried to exterminate us, for humiliating us, for stigmatizing us ... for scorning us” (Juan Tomás 2013).

These visions about justice contrast with the way it has been materialized during the paramilitary demobilization, and the different forms it can take in the current peace negotiation process. The first law that was proposed for the paramilitary demobilization used the figure of the right to rebellion, and the notion of political crime. This categorization did not flourish thanks to, among other things, the pressure of different victims, movements, intellectuals, politicians, and lawyers that argued that the paramilitaries did not struggle against the State but, conversely,

committed a diverse array of crimes with the direct support of the State or as a result of its omission.

When victimized subjects of State and paramilitary violence are claiming justice they are demanding that a moral and ethical sanction be carried out by the State and society to both the perpetrators and the masterminds that truly corresponds with the damage caused. They insist in the necessity to uncover the architects, and even to sanction them more severely than the material authors. Victimized subjects and relatives' conception of justice tends to be punitive, demanding the application of *real justice*, the one that the Nation-state proposes to them through the empire of law and constitutionalism but that has not translated into practice. In addition, their conception of justice looks to uncover those who have supported State violence and paramilitarism, and for that reason, among others, truth is essential for them and integral to justice.

During the paramilitary demobilization, transitional justice worked by assigning sentences to a few paramilitaries, whose length depended upon their confession but were capped at the maximum of eight years. That incarceration period is not perceived as enough for an important number of victimized subjects and human rights organizations. This reduction of years was "traded" for their commitment to contribute to clarify what occurred and reparation to the "victims." Notwithstanding, although by February 2003, 4,787 persons were registered (including 550 demobilized guerrillas), through the Justice and Peace Law and eight years of the paramilitary demobilization, only fourteen paramilitaries have received sentences. "The rest are in prison or in different stages of the juridical process, or remain free" (International Crisis Group 2013: 4). In addition, facing a possible disclosure of information by the paramilitaries that could have affected then President Uribe, the main paramilitary leaders were extradited to the United States in May 2008 without having significantly contributed to truth and Colombians' broader understanding of what happened.

In the current conjuncture, the topic of justice is even more complex and it is one of the main challenges that the current peace process is facing because in this case it is not only the “illegal” armed actors who have to render account but also—for first time in Colombia history—the State. This makes that the hegemonic use of transitional justice gains even more importance in the present. In this context, different proposals have been formulated, beyond the governmental ones, and those depend on the closeness and sympathy with both armed actors (the State and the guerrillas), and with political and class interests.

Some victims of guerrillas and the State consider necessary that both victimizers go to jail, and others only aspire that their victimizers do prison time. Within the latter group, some think that the application of sentences has to be differential depending on the character of the armed actor. As a result of a “political realism” of the State’s incapacity to guarantee justice and/or the complexity of the current moment, as well as a result of their own conceptions of justice, some victimized subjects of the guerrillas and the State do not equate justice with jail.

Human rights organizations have at least two different proposals: first, the granting of differential amnesties and pardons for the State and the guerrillas that depend on the recognition of the right to rebellion and the figure of political crime for the guerrillas. And second, a differential application of justice for crimes against humanity, genocide, and serious human rights violations, which means that both actors have to go to jail. In this initiative, the differential responsibility has to do with the State’s task of protecting its citizens, and in consequence the sentences for State officials should be greater. In this proposal, guerrillas can receive amnesty and pardon for ordinary and political crimes.

On the other hand, the FARC-EP is proposing a mixed tribunal—national and international—but favoring the role of UNASUR (The Union of South American Nations). The national tribunal will judge the State, and the international tribunal judge the guerrilla, but without

prison sentences. The FARC-EP states that they do not consider it fair to be judged by the Colombian State when the application of justice is not symmetrical for all the armed actors in the country and the State is not an impartial actor but rather another member of the confrontation that has committed human rights violations.



Figure 16: “The Law on Military Criminal Jurisdiction/Ready for Peace? / Did they catch you with your pants down?”

[Source: *Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity*, and Kinorama, 2013]

For its part, the State has proposed the *Fuero Militar Penal* (the Law on Military Criminal Jurisdiction). This Law aimed to create the category of “legitimate target” which meant that any civilian could be considered a military target so long as the military deemed them a threat. This law has tried to give a re-birth to military criminal courts, which could contribute, as in the past, to further human rights violations, rather than justice. Although the Supreme Court for procedural irregularities did not approve this law, another law that seeks to legally defend national and international Armed Forces’ members was passed. These strategies show that the State is making an effort to protect the members of the military, forgetting the status of the guerrillas as rebels, and the state’s duty to protect citizens.

Finally, the political elite of the country is proposing transitional justice for everyone. Recently, ex-president César Gaviria (2015) presented that formula in an article published in one of the national newspapers, which includes not only the armed actors but also businessmen and

politicians, a proposal that was well received by Alvaro Uribe and the Democratic Center, but criticized by lawyers, intellectuals, Leftist politicians, and victimized subjects. This initiative is from my point of view an example of the transaction of justice from above, between the warriors and the national elites that transitional justice in itself entails. I think that the State has been willing to accept this proposal but it is at a crossroads due to the enforcement of the ICC.

In practice, transitional justice is not merely a type of an alternative justice, but a model of a specific transition that ends up negating that “right.” Justice—taking historical and cultural specific forms—is a foundational element of societal life that has been one of the Gordian knots of the modern/colonial system of domination in spite of the great development that has been produced around it precisely because the State is one of the main offenders. For that reason, transitional justice cannot deal with the injustices that were born with modernity/coloniality and that remain present. Transitional justice does not deal with structural violence (Arthur 2011: 10) related with patriarchy, racism, class, and colonialism. For example, as I showed with the Victims and Land Restitution Law, this law does not address the “land problem” in an appropriate way.

According to a transitional justice perspective, the solution is to supposedly move from one imperfect state within the hegemonic liberal modernity, to another of fidelity with the *original model*. To go from one stage to the other, justice has to “lower” its standards; it is the price “we all,” the “Colombians,” have to pay for achieving peace and reaching a real modernity. If it does not do that, then we are no longer speaking of transitions in the liberal sense but of breaking points, structural transformations, decolonization of society, and/or revolutions, the latter an especially dirty word for liberalism, and what it wants to prevent.

What is clearly revealed by accentuating justice in the transitional model—which is called *transitional justice*, no less—is that facing, condemning, and eradicating the injustices and “internal” conflicts that have been generated around the world imply thinking about more severe

transformations to the model of society than those that have been “proposed” under this model. It is not only going to affect Colombia—a country that has been sustained in a diversity of injustices to the extent that they are consubstantial to its formation—but also world geopolitical arrangements, since the injustices that make part of these “deviated” Nation-states are the product of a particular—hierarchical—interrelation with the hegemonic global north.

Like Campbell states “the trauma of law is that it cannot represent justice. The trauma of justice is its juridical impossibility ... In this sense, justice remains the event yet to come” (Campbell in Weinstein, Fletcher, and Vinck 2010: 37). It is not a mere coincidence that in the countries in which transitional justice has been applied the “legal institutions suffer from a profound lack of confidence in their fairness and capability to administer justice” (Weinstein, Fletcher, and Vinck 2010: 46), as I have shown is the case of Colombia, and that it is in part the result of the colonial experience.

South Africa is an example of how in the face of this structural impossibility to guarantee justice, transitional justice proposes other mechanisms rather than prosecution. In this case, as in other in Latin American cases, the solution ends up being a truth commission.¹⁹⁵ The South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) gave amnesty for political crimes under the condition that the perpetrator recounted the events in which he/she was involved as well as to compensate victims. In this model, justice is traded for truth, and supposedly “local” ways to resolve conflict are privileged.¹⁹⁶ The paramilitary demobilization in Colombia basically followed this model. The Justice and Peace Law sentences depended upon the truth that the paramilitaries were willing to share, and as I already mentioned, they were also in charge of the economic reparation to victimized subjects with the goods that were achieved during the illegal activity.

¹⁹⁵ In Guatemala, Argentina, and Perú were also created truth commissions with their own specificities.

¹⁹⁶ Thus, the TRC has been presented as a mechanism consistent “with cultural values (Ubuntu) that prioritize social harmony and reconciliation over retribution” (Weinstein, Fletcher, and Vinck 2010: 35), which are valuable to be imitated around the world.

What some of the victimized subjects of this research are asking is: How can this society move toward peace and more equitable social arrangements if there is not a moral and ethical condemnation of the atrocities that have been committed? Justice is supposedly the mechanism for moral and ethical censure, but at this point what is evident is that justice needs to be re-conceptualized in the country in a way that can respond to the sense of justice of the majority of victimized subjects (those produced by the guerrillas, paramilitaries, and the State), and the society in general, and that at the same time could be capable of generating life.



Figure 17: “What is justice for you?”

[Source: *Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity*]

In 2011, as part of the local campaigns that *Sons and Daughters* did within *Hescuela: Desaprendiendo para Liberar* (Unlearning to Liberate), in the Bogotá campaign’s public presentation about enforced disappearance we asked the people that attended what justice meant for them. The answers were written down on a big piece of cloth that reaffirmed the necessity to re-think the concept. During the two workshops in January 2013 with Bogotá’s MOVICE chapter, we defined justice as:

“A mechanism that should give to each person what they deserve, guaranteeing equality. It is also a social agreement of how we treat each other that allows the dignity of every person to be materialized. Justice works as a censorship of the breach of those social agreements, and has the role to prevent that whatever occurred from happening again. Justice also should help to clarify what took place in the past” (MOVICE-Bogotá 2013).

Victimized subjects’ perspectives on justice include dismantling impunity and the unequal access that they have to justice depending on the victimizers and their class/ethnic/gender

conditions; it also involves condemning those responsible for the crimes, taking into account their social position and responsibility to Colombians, in the case of State and paramilitary criminality. *Sons and Daughters* considers, for instance, that State criminality should receive sentences in accordance with the role and rank of the State officials that were involved.

Organizations such as the MOVICE, ASFADDES, and *Sons and Daughters* have elaborated a document with proposals that have the intention of guaranteeing the rights of the victimized subjects of State and paramilitary violence and that include, among others: the elimination of special tribunals/jurisdictions that avoid judgment on crimes against humanity, genocide, war crimes, and human rights violations; the rights violations previously mentioned should be tried through the creation of a specialized penal jurisdiction comprised of Special Tables in the Supreme Court of Justice, Judicial District High Courts, and Specialized Jurists across the national territory; and re-opening penal investigations that have been archived or barred by statute of limitations, in which the dignity of Colombians has been breached (Movimiento de Víctimas y Movimiento de Derechos Humanos de Colombia 2006: 19-20). Also, in the International Gathering of Victims of State Crimes that took place April 24th to 26th, 2014, in Bogotá, the proposal of an International Justice Tribunal for Peace was presented.

Many of these proposals are maximalist, and some of the victimized subjects are conscious of the difficulty of achieving them in a complex context such as the one Colombia is living in the present. However, they continue calling for justice on their own terms as an ethical and moral claim, as an uncomfortable voice—a *gift*—that the society should to listen to—receive and reciprocate—at some point. The State's negation of the right to justice has induced victimized subjects to develop other form(s) of justice. This reality makes it more urgent to think more deeply about other local/domestic forms of justice beyond the State, even if this institution remains essential for many victimized subjects.

Following Nietzsche's reflection on history, it becomes imperative to talk about *justice for life* (Gómez Correal 2012a). This justice, from my perspective, implies an ethics of care, as well as the recognition of differences and our different common belongings (humanity, the community, the nation) to the extent that we are creatures who share some qualities and have the need and the ethical obligation to live together in the same place since we are all interconnected and need each other for living. Justice requires the diverse communities that inhabit identical spaces to acknowledge others as beings with the *entitlement* to plurality. This entails taking real responsibility for the other/others, placing life at the center. Therefore, justice has to include public condemnation of both the crimes and the perpetrators. This means that social impunity must also—as *Sons and Daughters* insists—be addressed as part of peace building.

This *justice for life*, in addition to addressing impunity and social impunity—both the result of a politics of reciprocity and acknowledgement of the interconnection between all the citizens—materializes a redistributive justice and a justice of recognition (Fraser 1997). That is to say, justice at the levels of cultural and symbolic representation, and in the materiality of daily life: recognition of differences and elimination of economic and symbolic inequalities. This necessarily means that the political imaginary that bonds Colombians as part of the same community has to change, and that it has to impact the current social, cultural, economic, and political arrangements.

It is urgent in Colombia to re-conceptualize justice but not in order to maintain the *status quo* and inequalities. Doing the latter will mean more violence, in a more degraded way. Justice should work as a social, moral, and ethical censure of the atrocities that have taken place in Colombia, something that in the case of State and paramilitary violence has not occurred. Moreover, it also has to censure any violent act, discrimination, exclusion, and subordination. But this *justice for life* cannot be rhetorical. It has to go beyond the Nation-state's rhetoric, the empire of law and legal fetishism, and it has to be interiorized and *practiced* in daily life.

Colombia needs a new culture of relations, duties, and responsibilities that begins with the recognition of the interconnection and the necessity that we have for each other. This will permit valuing life and the “humanness” of every person of the multiple US. State justice to some extent can try to “re-establish” the negation that its violence entails for victimized subjects’ belonging within the citizenry, but it has failed in “re-establishing” the human dimension of these subjects. This is, I think, one of the main impossibilities of a justice exclusively tied to laws, to legal fetishism.

Truth ... but not for breaking with the past

“The night before my father was buried I wrote a speech that I read in the City Council, where his funeral took place. What to say! I was experiencing many feelings and at the same time I realized that I started joining the universe of Colombia’s ‘victims.’ I listened many times, months and years before, the words memory and truth not only coming from victimized subjects or activists, but also from academia, literature, and common people. I included in my speech Milan Kundera’s idea that ‘the struggle of the people against power, is the struggle of memory against forgetting’ and a quotation that I read during a class about violence and violentology that I took during my masters in history.

‘Is there no way in Colombia where
instead of killing its children, it makes them live with dignity?
If Colombia cannot respond to this question,
then I prophesize a tragedy: “Revenge” will rise again,
and the land will again be stained in blood, pain and tears’
(Gonzalo Arango, poem placed on the tomb of ‘Captain Revenge,’ 1964).¹⁹⁷

In this speech, truth was one of my central demands, and remains the most important, but as I wrote in other writings I want an *effective truth*, one capable of impacting reality. Similarly, I share MOVICE’s Bogotá Chapter’s idea of a *true truth*, one that gives an account of what really has happened in the country. That day, Bogotá chapter members also said that truth is unquestionably relevant for healing, something that from my perspective requires to reflect on what to do in the cases where truth never materializes in reality” (Huitaca 2015).

“The truth is knowing **what happened, who did it, why they did it, who gave the order, who is responsible**. Because our experience has led us to conclude that the person who gives the order is not the same person who carries it out. And in the case of State crimes, there are people very high up that are involved, because they were the intellectual authors” (Camila 2013).

¹⁹⁷ “Captain Revenge” refers to “Capitán Desquite,” a man that took up arms following the La Violencia period in Colombia to defend his people from other armed actors.

“**Where they buried him**, in what place ... having them say everything they did. Having the right to know where your child or loved one is, to have the blessing of being able to dig them up and give them a Christian burial” (La Mache 2013).

“Most of [society] thinks that the truth will just do us more harm, that we will become vengeful ... But I think that **the truth is like fire, it burns but also heals**. Fire cauterizes wounds, they burn a lot (pause). And **I do want to know the whole truth**, not everyone wants to know the whole truth, but I do. I want to know everything step by step, everything that has to do with Pedro. I think that that truth will allow me (pause) ... greater freedom and less weight on my shoulders... **Without the truth we can't take the next step** ... Without the truth there's no justice or it's a false justice because **the true truth** hasn't come out ... You have to look at ... who benefits, who wins, who it's convenient for, that's the truth I want” (Mamoncillo 2013).



Figure 18: “*Truth, Justice, Integral Reparation*”

[Source: MOVICE]

Relatives and victimized subjects in Colombia and in other contexts of State violence and internal armed conflicts have demanded to know the truth, since what happened with their loved ones was not clear for them and/or there existed a deliberate attitude to hide and negate what occurred in order to maintain the *status quo*. This demand for truth has the objective of unmasking the victimizers, dignifying the “victims,” and avoiding that similar events take place in the future. This vision that knowing the truth has the power to prevent acts of horror is similar to the one that prosecuted the Jewish Holocaust, but also significantly differs with it.

Relatives and victimized subjects want to know the *true truth* with the intention that that truth can lead to change. In this sense, it contrasts with the modern understanding that considers it possible to break with the past only by acknowledging the events that occurred. This is the vision that transitional justice imposes about truth and the past, serving the interests of the victimizers—specifically the State, in many contexts—contradicting the deep radicalism of the victimized subjects and relatives’ demands and proposals.

In the world of global governance, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (1995-2001) of South Africa has been sold as a successful formula.¹⁹⁸ The task of the TRC was to “construct a revised national history and ... write into being a new ‘collective memory’” (Wilson 2001: 14) capable of giving birth to a new nation. One of the central roles of transitional justice is to administer memory and the past. Thus, transitional justice is used to legitimize the model of the nation-state, incentivizing specific memories and omissions, among them the State and elites’ involvement in violence, the dynamics and implications of the Cold War, colonial history, and the rebellious capacity of the subalterns, and thus the necessity of more than *truth for the sake of truth*.

In order that truth can be capable of changing the past and not to reaffirm it, it is necessary that truth work articulately with justice, as relatives and victimized subjects have proposed. Notwithstanding, in the standard format of transitional justice the power of the truth commission is symbolic, without contributing to prosecution, decoupling the demands of victimized subjects and making them lose their power. Conscious of this weakness, MOVICE has proposed since 2005—when it was created in the context of the paramilitary demobilization—a Truth Commission that can play a part in prosecution (MOVICE 2013). In contrast, for example, the Historical Memory

¹⁹⁸ The TRC worked as an “archetypal transitional statutory body” created to promote a “culture of human rights” in South Africa, promoting the new constitutionalist political order and the reformulation of justice as restorative justice (Wilson 2001: 13).

Commission created with the paramilitary demobilization has not had any impact within the juridical branch.

As Wilson (2001) shows, history and justice have been conceptualized as two independent dimensions in international law, a debate that initiated with the Nuremberg trial in which it was discussed if courts ought to write or not an historical narrative of an armed conflict. This debate then re-appeared with the 1961 Eichmann trial in Israel, and then was intensified during the Holocaust trials in France in the 1970s and 1980s, later gaining new relevance in the wave of democratization in Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe during the 1980s and 1990s (Wilson 2001: ix).

Overall, there is a consensus that courts of law “produce mediocre historical accounts of the origins and causes of mass crimes” (Wilson 2001: 1).¹⁹⁹ The inability of courts to produce history has to do, among other things, with the epistemology of law, positivist and realist, “demanding definite and verifiable evidence typically produced through scientific forensic methods” (Wilson 2001: 7). This attitude towards the relation of history and law, dismisses the commonalities that both share and decouples relatives and victimized subjects’ proposals. Some of these arguments were used in the 1990s to justify a move away from classic retributive justice and towards novel institutions such as truth and reconciliation commission. Truth commissions are in charge of investigating the past, but they cannot, since they are not courts of law, determine individual guilt or innocence and therefore cannot conduct more contextual and open-ended inquiry and garner deeper insights into the origins and causes of political violence” (Wilson 2001, 2011).

Therefore, the power that truth can have for really comprehending the past and change it is lost. For that reason, transitional justice proposes to focus on truth to the detriment of justice. This requires

¹⁹⁹ For liberal legalism, the justice system should not attempt to write history at all, lest it sacrifice a high standard of judicial procedure. Law-and-society scholars state that even if courts try to deal with history, they are going to fail due to the inherent limitations of the legal process (Wilson 2001: 2).

questioning “how to strike the right balance between legal-forensic investigations and historical approaches to truth” (Richard A. Wilson 2001) if the intention is to fulfill victimized subjects’ demands. In addition, this vision misrecognizes or better to say, hides, that law in itself is a system of knowledge that filters evidence and establishes an official version of the past.

Transitional justice is an approach and practice that administers the past recreating a linear notion of time. Since popular “memories of an authoritarian past are multiple, fluid, indeterminate and fragmentary,” truth commissions have a role “in fixing memory and institutionalizing a view of the past conflict,” reproducing standard nationalist narratives that create a discontinuity with the past and periodization, central to the consolidation of the national identity (Wilson 2001: 16). This is an identity for which its other, as Wilson analyses in the South Africa case, is South Africa itself, the South Africa of the past, affirming in that way the uniqueness of the present (Wilson 2001: 16), and the modern tendency to dismiss the *other*, leaving it in the past.

When victimized subjects are demanding truth, they want that truth to be reported in the narration of Colombia’s past—history—but not in order to recreate a romantic “imagined community.” They are demanding to know most of the truth in order to unmask the people responsible for violence and human degradation, highlighting the mastermind and supporters, among them the State, politicians, businessmen, Armed Forces, and any other relevant actor, including multinational and foreign countries. This is a particular manifestation of relatives and victimized subjects’ own conceptions of justice. Even more, for some relatives and victimized subjects, truth is the door that opens the possibility for achieving all of their rights (MOVICE-Bogotá 2013).

The fact that these subjects directly connect truth with history makes it urgent to talk about their relation and how to generate historical narratives capable of working as *effective truth*. Many organizations in Colombia—including the MOVICE and ASFADDES—are proposing a Truth

Commission but with certain particularities: victims' active participation; rootedness in the local level and to build from there towards the national scale; emphasis on crimes committed by the State and paramilitaries; contributing to uncovering the facts about violent events, those responsible, and the modalities of violence; making visible who have been the targeted victims; contribute to judicial processes; clarify where the victims of forced disappearance are held, free them, or locate their remains and deliver them to their relatives; and create a chapter on forced disappearance within the truth commissions' report, and include in the national educational curriculum the results of the commission report (MOVICE et al. 2013; Camila 2015).

In the face of the inevitability of a truth commission, *Sons and Daughters* has proposed elements for its implementation. It cannot be a copy of other elaborations; it must answer to the particularities of Colombian history; it cannot be limited to mere reports about violence; and it must be territorialized, develop itself as a process, and contribute to an ethic and culture of peace at the local level. To advance in these objectives, *Sons and Daughters* proposes *convites de la memoria* (collective memory work projects), i.e. local spaces of memory in which victims through dialog reconstruct with other victims, the population at large, and potentially the victimizers, what occurred in those places.

These *convites de la memoria* should allow Colombians in the local to comprehend their particular histories and how they are tied to the national and regional scales, without having to wait until the final report of the truth commission. These *convites* should also be rooted in pedagogies of art, cultural expressions, and popular knowledges, fostering a deep understanding of the structural causes of violence (Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y Contra la Impunidad 2014). Such collective memory work has to be an exercise that does not misrecognize the multiple interests that exist in the reconstruction of the past and in writing history but, conversely, departs from there, since acknowledging their existence also helps to de-center the materialization of truth from the State.

A Truth Commission that allows us to know the *true truth* and materializes the *effective truth* obligates thinking about pedagogies of history and memory. The experiences of Perú and Guatemala have shown that the *truth for the sake of truth* is inadequate, first because few citizens have real access to the report and second, because they have been shown to be insufficient in providing a basis for a critical understanding of what happened to large segments of society. In my perspective, any national and local narrative of the past and present have to be appropriated and seized in a critical way by Colombians in order to be capable of understanding what occurred and inducing social transformation. Those pedagogies do not consist in indoctrination, but to the contrary have the task of generating capacities for critical dialogues and analysis.

At this point in Colombian history, more than partial accounts or a summation of different versions of the past, the country needs a complex narrative that explains the deep roots of the conflict, identifies the structural conditions linked to its onset, and decodes the generalized use of violence as a way to deal with differences and inequalities. We need, as Nietzsche (1873) says, history for life, a history that impacts the arrangements of the present and allows us to imagine another type of society, that at the same time helps victimized subjects and Colombians in general to understand what happened, which remains a necessity in order to historicize social suffering. A truth like that can contribute to *justice for life*, even helping to transform the way we emotionally relate with *Others* by shifting towards dialogue with them, and neither demonize nor pity them, but living solidarity.

The fact that truth is also essential for victimized subjects' healing and justice opens the question of State and victimizers' responsibility with "victims," and what to do in a possible scenario in which that truth is not reached. Although a great portion of "victims" know some portions of the truth, there is something more behind their claim: a public acceptance of what occurred. Their aspiration to public recognition is also a way to make the entire society

acknowledge their relatives and victimized subject's *human* character, their value as people and beings. This claim is not for an abstract being—the human—but for concrete expressions:

Colombians, indigenous, Afro-descendants, women, peasants, and Leftists, reaffirming in this way the *entitlement* to be different, to plurality. This public, collective dimension of truth and the risk that the State and victimizers do not assume their responsibility, should encourage Colombians to reciprocate relatives and victimized subjects' *gift* and be willing of contribute to reconstruct, build, and enact the *true truth* and the *effective truth*.

“The politically instrumental use of history during an armed conflict is highly complex and selective ... although distortion of the past is widespread, the most common travesty is one of omission, wherein populist leaders neglect to mention the crimes committed by their own side or recollect them in such a way that evades accepting full responsibility. That politicians are so able to evoke historical arguments in these ways results from a prior failure of the society to engage in a full and frank encounter with past wrongdoing ... Where a pervasive regime of denial exists, the past can serve as rich picking for political demagogues seeking to manipulate popular sentiments” (Wilson 2011: vii).

Not reparation but State and victimizers' obligation to indemnify and a duty to repair

“In my mind, this is a poorly used term, because I have no reparation, it would be more like **I get indemnification** ... [In Colombia] ... it's always minimal reparations, flimsy and more favorable to the victimizers than to the victims and creating ... charity. **They're giving us reparations in the form of what are already our rights:** ... education ... groceries ... Charity and lies ... and [economic reparations]... aren't really reparations... **I demand a public apology (pause) and I demand symbolic reparations,** a high school named after Pedro, a park named after Pedro. I demanded that the National Police (pause) create as part of their training a course on human rights that would be called the Pedro Human Rights Course, so that they would never forget the murder of Pedro” (Mamoncillo 2013).

“Reparation” is another concept that is part of what under the transitional justice discourse is recognized as part of victims' rights. As some relatives state, the loss of a loved one is irreparable, as well as the suffering, the experiences lived, and the break up of the social fabric.

Notwithstanding, it is considered that the State and the victimizers have the obligation to indemnify and a duty to repair (MOVICE-Bogotá 2013). For the participants in the chapter, reparations should be made not only by the State (which ultimately uses citizens' money) but also with the economic resources of the victimizers. This vision about reparation contains a critique to the State for both

being incapable of securing the lives of its citizens and directly attacking them, and at the same time demands the State to fulfill its duties to ensure citizens' rights and their well-being. In addition, victimized subjects' conception of reparation contains a deep profundity since it calls attention to the necessity of having structural transformations, something that the most of the time is silenced by the law discourse.

There are different ways to materialize this right depending on the victimized subjects' position, class background, gender, and ethnic belongings. In contraposition to a monetary logic of reparation, some victims put more emphasis on the collective and symbolic dimensions, although economic reparation is important for poor and displaced people, or in cases it works as an exemplary sanction to the State. As Okello (2010) states, in some contexts, economic reparation could speak more directly to victims' sense of justice "to the extent that the victims of human rights abuses are powerless, their calls for reparations rarely, if ever, receive priority" (Okello 2010: 280). In the case of the paramilitary demobilization, for example, in which reparation was a responsibility of the victimizers, the estimated costs of reparation is 55 billion Colombian pesos (US\$23 million²⁰⁰) but only 113 million (US\$48 thousand) have been collected (*El Tiempo* 2013).

²⁰⁰ Currency conversions are rounded to the million or thousand, based on the exchange rate on May 6th, 2015 at xe.com.

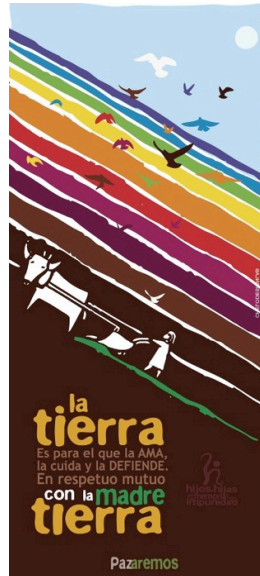


Figure 19: “Land is for the one who loves it,
takes care of it and defends it.
Mutual respect with mother earth.”
Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity, 2013

Reparation in Colombia has been based on a philosophy of “solidarity” with victims, rather than on recognition of state responsibility. It is a process that excludes a significant number of victimized subjects and the scheme remains confined to compensation payments (International Crisis Group 2013: 4) that do not meet the expectations of victimized subjects or “international standards.” This kind of reparation follows a welfare-type policy that consolidates uncritical subjects, mendicants of the State, and that promotes the “trade” of victims’ rights, and moreover in fact, human lives for insignificant amounts of money reinforcing a political tradition of patronage with the State. It has become common after the expedition of the Victims and Land Restitution Land that some people who have experienced violence and lost a loved one are only interested in the economic reparation, without making other claims, justice or truth. This is the way in which transitional justice creates a certain kind of subjects and “domesticates” victimized subjects.

Also at stake in the State’s approach to reparation is a monetarization of life that is coupled with a neoliberal logic. Thus the State is using the argument of fiscal sustainability to delimit the amount of money of the monetary compensations, a total of 40 billions pesos (US\$17 million)

distributed over 10 years, while in contrast, as Senator Iván Cepeda denounces, annually “around 20 billions of pesos [US\$8 million] are assigned for defense expenditures and democratic security” (Martínez Cortés 2013: 15; MOVICE-Bogotá 2013).

Some relatives explicitly observe the economic character of reparation negatively and it has not been always part of their demands. As Camila (2015) told me during her visit to Chapel Hill, in the 1980s the relatives of the forcibly disappeared people did not think of that option, and some lawyers, such as Eduardo Umaña Mendoza, criticized this materialization of “justice.” It was only later, to some degree as part of the “logic” of certain lawyers and a particular development of human rights, that economic compensation came to be considered as part of victimized subjects demands.

“I think reparations are really complex, but I support all these concepts that we talk about all the time. Reparations would have to try to **compensate all the emotional damage in some way, because reparations also have to give people their dignity back** ... I think reparations should go further. I mean, **I don’t really believe in economic reparations** ... [I can understand it] in cases where people decide to assume a confrontational position toward the State in order to force it to recognize some kind of indemnification for the damage done... **Visibilization** has to do with symbolic reparations, and I agree with the idea of naming high schools, it would be great if every street had the name of a victim, libraries, parks, so that it is never forgotten. But right now... they bear the executioners’ names... I would think that **the media should be punished**. That’s real justice, I mean, they’ve deceived us, they’ve made us invisible, they’ve ruined reputations, they’ve taken away the dignity [of our loved ones] ... Reparation cannot be complete without holding the media accountable for playing with dignity and reputations, not to mention our feelings ... I think that all three things, the truth, justice, and full reparations all have to be based upon **memory**...” (Camila 2013).

For the subjects of this research, reparation—*State and victimizers’ obligation to indemnify and a duty to repair*—is directly tied with justice and truth, and has as a central dimension a public/collective recognition of what occurred to the first and second-degree victims. Recognition is a central dimension of victimizer subjects’ demands and proposals.

“For Black Communities Process in Colombia, truth and justice are components of the rights to reparation” (Rosero 2008).

“As the elders say, having them pay you economically is like **eating your own people** ... A real form of reparations would be a **recognition of the guilt of the State for its silence**, its **complicity in all** these crimes, for all the humiliation, for everything that happened. When the State **recognizes that** and says, ‘Look, we understand it was our fault, that it was our forces, that there was a political interest, an economic interest in exterminating and stigmatizing you all ... in disappearing you.’ When the whole world knows it, I think that’s a big part of any reparation, because we will then feel more at ease, that we can move forward. And the other thing would be **that we are able to achieve the dreams that they squelched** ... To be able to study, to do ... what you wanted to in life: be a professional, get ahead ... that your family... [can have] a place [to live] ... If all this hadn’t happened to us, I would have been a professional long ago, without having to be begging for work ... giving away my work in some job, slaving away” (Juan Tomás 2013).

The *State and victimizers’ obligation to indemnify and a duty to repair* should contribute to make visible the reasons for which the victimized subjects were objects of violence, their role and contributions to society, and the way these processes of victimization are related with more complex exercises of embodied violence (Gómez Correal 2015). Thus, some organizations such as PCN, ASFADDES, MOVICE, and *Sons and Daughters* emphasize the collective character of reparation in the sense that victimization is the result of systemic practices of violence against certain subjects, especially the historically neglected, and those that are alternatives to the hegemonic model such as Leftist activists, members of social movements, intellectuals, and human rights defenders.

“It is necessary to struggle for a reparation in which the underlying causes of the Black People's suffering in midst of the internal armed conflict are recognized, as well as the diversity of the victims as collective historical subjects; in our case, this reflects being carriers of culture, our own identity and a life project that has historically been denigrated by the elites, just like the lack of recognizing the relationship between the armed conflict, racism and racial discrimination ... Even though we recognize the victims and their relatives' rights to individual and family reparations, the efforts of Black Community Process in Colombia, PCN, are directed towards the search for collective reparations for the Black People” (Rosero 2008).

Through “reparation,” victimized subjects aim, among other things to, first, give back the humanity of the “victim;” second, to acknowledge their *difference* (as Afros, Indigenous, Leftists, etc.); and third, to grant conditions to continue with a dignified life. For the latter, land restitution is essential since it is one of the measures that can most contribute to advancing the elimination of the

structural conditions that have generated a prolonged embodied violence in Colombia. But land has to be restituted in conditions that allow for it to be enjoyed under equitable principles. That is to say, that the armed actors will not be in the territories, that the State is not going to forcibly displace or kill its citizens, that land is not going to be concentrated in few hands for the benefit of national and international elites, and finally, that the different relations that exist with land—the way that it is conceived by peasants, indigenous and Afro-descendent people—will be respected.

“For me, reparations would be ... **repairing the damage** that they caused us, **being displaced from our territory** ... us being able to go back ... and be at ease, not having those paramilitaries continuing the violence, the killings ... And them giving the land that we lost back ... the animals, cattle ... canoes, our things ... to be able to work again ... our hammocks, our clothing ... That would be reparation for me, that you could go back to your land, **to your territory, but in peace**, not going back and them coming back again to drive you out and threaten you” (La Mache 2013).

PCN specifically demands to be indemnified for both the history of enslavement and the internal armed conflict, emphasizing that the “internal armed conflict” is only one of the factors that have contributed to the damage of Afro-descendants’ rights to life, territory, autonomy, identity, and development (Rosero 2008). PCN’s conception of reparation also highlights that the impacts of the war have generated a concrete “territorial ordering” and exercises of power that break with their territorial autonomy (Rosero 2008). They propose three basic principles that reparation should follow:

“Proportionality: Reparations should be proportional to the impact suffered by our people due to the internal armed conflict. **Integrity:** From the vision of the black people it should incorporate and attend to the entirety of civil as well as political, economic, social and cultural, and collective rights that have been denied the black people. **Responsibility of the State:** The state should recognize that through its action or omission it has violated the rights of the black people, and that these violations affect various generations of the re-born in their collectivity; therefore, collective reparation to the black people implies State policy that links the past and the present, that confronts the power imbalance that the Black People face in relation to Colombian society. The right to reparation must, as a criteria for no repetition, empower the Black People” (Rosero 2008).

Never Again!

“In the two workshop sections that took place in January 2013 with the Bogotá chapter, the right to ‘guarantees of non-repetition’ were observed as the necessity to have ‘real

structural changes of the conditions that have generated State criminality: land, economic inequalities and political exclusion,' which include: a. Agrarian reform. b. Guarantees for the political participation of the Left, social movements and ethnic communities. c. Diffusion of the truth and to make visible victimized subjects through media. d. The elimination of paramilitarism, State and right-wing violence, and finally, e. Guarantees of the rights to freedom and freedom of speech as well as to every right that is part of the 1991 Constitution” (MOVICE-Bogotá 2013).

The last right that makes up transitional justice has to do with State’s responsibility to avoid the same events of violence occurring in the future. In the transitional justice lexicon, it is called the right of non-repetition, what different relatives, victimized subjects and human rights’ organizations have called *Never Again*. This demand has a deep dimension since to follow victimized subjects’ proposals would mean—rather than a hegemonic transition—a profound transformation of Colombia, including the State. In order to guarantee the non-repetition of what took place in the past, it is necessary to advance in the elimination of the structural causes that gave rise to the violence of the present. That is to say: the political, social, and cultural (including gender and ethnic) exclusions, land concentration and the particular conceptions about territory of modernity/capitalism, as well as the current hierarchized geopolitics.

Transitional justice supports hegemonic transitions, in other words, transitions that do not addresses the structural conditions that generate violence and maintain the *status quo*. It includes the way society is organized, the elites in power, and modernity/coloniality in general. In terms of models of society, this type of justice reaffirms liberalism, democracy, and capitalism as the most adequate ways—almost perfect and inevitable—to organize economic, political, social, and cultural life. Therefore, the state has to be reified although, as the history of Colombia demonstrates, it is illegitimate since the State has made violence the foundation of its operation, and it is one of the biggest recipients of the “positive” outcomes of violence (Álvarez and Gómez 2013).

Thanks to the application of transitional justice, the State’s active role in enacting violence is permanently masked and the human right violations it has committed are presented as “errors” or

“exceptions.” This attitude makes it necessary to develop a neutral, abstract, and aseptic conception of the State that dilutes its responsibilities and the concrete actors associated with them. The current moment negates the politics of war in Colombia that the state itself invigorates (Álvarez and Gómez 2013) for which a specific type of memory and forgiveness is required. In that sense, relatives and victimized subjects’ demands around truth and justice are central inasmuch as they give names and surnames to the State and to the crimes committed under its power.

This aseptic conception of the State, which situates it as a supra-political and neutral entity without major responsibility in the political violence, is necessary precisely to re-affirm liberal “democracy.” At the same time, the application of transitional justice re-legitimizes the nation-state model and makes the State the main guarantor of justice and progress; the guarantor of the implementation of economic policies for the privileges of national and international elites in a neoliberal era of recoiling states fostering the concrete political economy of transitional justice.

Since what it is at stake is to legitimate the present model of society but with small amendments, the “transition” consists of the passing of one state of affairs to another similar one, but under other names: peace, post-conflict, and reconciliation. In other contexts in which transitional justice has been applied, the structural causes of violence (structural racism, economic inequalities, political exclusion) were not addressed, as occurred in South Africa (Al-Bulushi 2013) and Guatemala (H.I.J.O.S. Guatemala 2013), among many other countries. Although victimized subjects in this and other “rights” also give a new birth to the State, their critiques are at the same time extremely profound, which makes it necessary to not only deeply re-structure the State but also to think beyond modernity/coloniality.

Behind reaffirming the nation-state and capitalism is the strengthening of the hierarchized current geopolitics. Thereby, although this model states that “internal conflicts” should be resolved internationally (International Crisis Group 2013), the solution does not intend to target the

international structural conditions that forge violence, conflict, war, and inequalities in those countries. Conversely, the dominant understandings imply that it is only the fault of the country—say, due to the incapacity of its people—for living in a “barbaric” manner. The political and economic dependencies, mentoring, and exploitation are maintained in one way or another, reinforcing the unequal power relationships between center and periphery, between the global south and the global north,²⁰¹ as well as the hegemonic emotional habitus that ties the *US* with the *Others*, a structure of feelings that sees suffering from a distance, avoiding to *observe* deeply what is really going on here and there.

As Kleinman and Kleinman (1996) assert, one message that comes across from viewing suffering from a distance is that for all the havoc in Western society, we are somehow better than this “Africa society” (8). This “consumption” of “suffering in an era of so-called “disordered capitalism” is not so different from the late nineteenth-century view that the savage barbarism in pagan lands justified the valuing of our own civilization at a higher level of development, a view that authorized colonial exploitation (8).

This implies that more than avoiding foreign intervention, the latter is considered key for the development and modernization of the country, re-positioning the neo-imperial/colonial economic model, without questioning the asymmetric and anthropocentric relations that sustain that geopolitics. Excellent examples of this are the Free Trade Agreements that have been signed in recent years in Colombia, land grabbing by international companies and the implementation of the mining-energy locomotives.²⁰² It is important to note that the land appropriation by international

²⁰¹ There are many examples that illustrate this. During recent months, President Santos has been traveling, mainly in Europe and the United States, looking for the international community’s support of the peace process. Part of this support is expressed in economic aid and loans, which we all know are neither free nor relieved of economic compensations. Similarly, the Secretary of State of the United States John Kerry recently named Bernie Aronson as a U.S. Special Envoy to Peace Process.

²⁰² A good example is the illegal appropriation of land by the North American multinational company Cargill, the Brazilian Mónica Semillas, and the Italian-Spanish Poligrow (Martínez Cortés 2013). Additionally, Colombia had

companies is directly related with forced displacement and paramilitary violence in the country. As Martínez Cortés finds, those “lands where agro-industrial megaprojects are now developed were used in the past as places where military training, tortures, forced disappearances, and murders committed by the paramilitary took place” (2013).

Overall this political economy of transitional justice assures that the colonial/imperial relation that characterizes modernity/coloniality remains. Peace in Colombia is necessary for and at the same time facilitates the implementation of neo-extractivism and agro industries, both cornerstones to the current manifestation of capitalism. The present transition entails a political economy central to the proposed model that has been a characteristic of political transitions in other geographies. In the case of Guatemala, Nelson (1999) states that peace was necessary for governments and corporations to do business “without looking complicit” and that war became “unattractive to the foreign capital needed for neoliberalism to function” (361).

Challenges for the dispute over the meaning of transition

Human rights and transitional justice are answers to existential questions of *people*, among them how society should be organized, how to relate with each other, and how to deal with problems and conflicts. Both frameworks give centrality to law in that respect—at the expense of other aspects—providing preeminence to the sovereign, each time a more imperialistic one. Thus, what holds society together is not any more common roots but laws (Ignatieff in Wilson 2001: 2), which are not neutral artifacts but the very expression of politics and in this case of a concrete ideology: liberalism. “Law is a form of politics by other means ... Legal meaning is enmeshed in wider value systems, and is caught between other competing normative discourses which are political, cultural, and more often than not, nationalist” (Wilson 2001: 5).

signed 13 commercial agreements with the United States, the European Union and Canada, among others countries by 2013 (Martínez Cortés 2013). These free agreements are structured in an asymmetrical manner, to the detriment of communities, nature, and national producers—including medium and large scale—and to the benefit of national and global elites.

Although transitional justice is a fruit of power and politics, it seems that in the present diverse actors in Colombia are misrecognizing this reality. It does not only impose one way to resolve conflicts but at the same time legitimatizes a model of society that has mainly brought death to the *people*. In the complex moment that Colombia is living today, in which after more than fifty years of “internal armed conflict” it is possible to reach peace agreements with the FARC-EP, it appears that transitional justice is the only possible and realistic way to do that. This “political realism” cannot mean closing our eyes to what is behind its application, something more bigger and complex than the guerrillas and that has to do with the legitimacy of the nation-state, with the Western model of civilization and the types of subjects it creates. Although the State, the nation-state, modernity, liberalism, and the Western model of civilization are big concepts and words, they have been translated to concrete, devastating consequences in the history of Abya Yala/Afroamerica.

In the present, it is urgent to question the visions of the world, the ethics, aesthetics, moralities, emotions, and subjects that transitional justice—along with the law discourse and fetishism, in general—reaffirms and/or constructs. Transitional justice and human rights, as many other discourses, discipline minds, bodies, subjects, and collectivities. Thus, it becomes politically necessary that those that have recognized themselves as victimized subjects and/or relatives question how this political recognition has worked to re-codify the power of domination in their identities, subjectivities, bodies, and political projects.

Transitional justice works, as I have shown, by domesticating relatives and victimized subjects’ demands, and it also has the power of depoliticizing them and neutralizing their subversive capacity. One of the best examples is the Victims and Land Restitution Law, which has worked as a way to disarticulate, depoliticize, and coopt victimized subjects, their organizations, and other sectors of society. The Law has presented an important challenge to victimized subjects’

organizations and others to the extent that the State finally materialized part of their proposals through the law—as many of them demanded—but of course, without responding to the depth of their claims and reinforcing in other victims uncritical approaches to violence and the State, as well as subjectivities of beggars.

In a conversation with the Kankuamo indigenous person Daniel Maestre (2015), who has been a member of the *Organización Indígena Kankuamo* (Kankuamo Indigenous Organization), MOVICE, and *Sons and Daughters*, about the pervasive consequences of the State's use of the category of victims, he exclaims that the category has forged a mentality that have transformed people from day laborers to beggars; it should be a tool but not an identity, and that they, as indigenous people, struggle and make claims not from law but from the fact of being indigenous. Following Redfield's reflections (2008), the different laws through which the condition of "victim" and their rights have been recognized in Colombia, developed a type of "bio politics of low intensity" by which the recognition is at a minimum, with the intention to maintain them "alive" and be able to move the bureaucracy apparatuses (in Aparicio 2012: 137). This logic keeps the Nation-state alive.

The neutralization and de-politicization of relatives and victimized subjects includes the state's strategic use of the category of 'victims,' a greater emphasis on suffering than on dignity, as well as an asymmetrical treatment of victims (guerrillas' victims vs. State and paramilitaries' victims) that continues to make some of them invisible (i.e. victims of the State). One example of this strategic use is the idea that policemen, soldiers, and the Armed Forces are victims, and the attitude of the media, some sectors of society and the State that equates all the victims, misrecognizing the political particularities of each victimized subjects and the victimizers through the empire of testimonies presented out of context. This "universalism" turns pure victims into the "victims" (Malkki 1996).

In that way, it is a particular kind of “victim:” the passive, apolitical, and innocent subject is reified, turning their *memories* into testimonies that lose their political dimension and strip them from their historical character as actors (Malkki 1996). Thus, their demands are individualized, downgrading the potency of their collective and transformational capacity. As Ticktin (2006) states, humanitarian governance constructs a specific political subject and subject position that finds common humanity in apolitical suffering, recreating a “universal humanity” that exists beyond the specificities of political and social life. For instance, during the visit of five delegations of “victims” to Havana, the 60 “victims of the internal conflict” that were heard by both the guerrilla and the State were instructed to specifically talk about their *personal* histories (Camila 2015; Márquez Mina 2015), forgetting the collective character that many human rights violations contain.

In that way, testimony turns into a mechanism against the victimized subjects themselves that has the power to entrench them in the “event” and recreate a “victim” that only see himself/herself as a “victim” not only making their own story more painful but forgetting his/her other subjects positions and identities. At the same time, this approach removes the authority that victimized subjects’ narratives (Malkki 1996) have as evidence and explanations of what occurred and their possibility to construct other futures. It is precisely in that context that my question related with the real possibility of the victimized subjects to speak and be heard emerged and gained importance. The fact of having one’s own voice gives the victimized subject the possibility of establishing narrative authority over “one’s” own circumstances and future, and also implies claiming an audience (Malkki 1996).

In spite of the recognition that victimized subjects of State and paramilitary violence have gained in the country, the mainstream media still contributes to the exclusion of some of them from the “public imaginary,” and usually pays more attention to the less political “victims.” In general, society continues to be indifferent with the victims produced by the State, and privileges in their

emotional engagement with “victims” those that are the product of guerrilla action or those that were/are “innocent.” This idea of the “pure victims” makes people into objects of charity rather than “law,” avoiding political action and responsibility (Ticktin 2006), and accentuating forgiveness and reconciliation.

On the other hand, the transitional justice framework contributes to create hierarchies between victimized subjects through the scheme of paradigmatic and emblematic “cases,” which ends up playing a part in the invisibilization of certain victims and the reproduction of dominant relationships of power between victimized subjects. In this conjuncture, suffering becomes political, economic, and symbolic capital abused by some victimized subjects that do not care that they reproduce traditional, dominant relationships of power and traditional politics, and thus being instrumental to rather than disrupting *hegemony*. Behind victimization is always a demand of recognition that sometimes can work against other victimized subjects, also employing a *seductive*, invisible cooptation that is performed, depending on the actors, consciously or unconsciously by the State, the media, and academia.

This entire situation necessarily raises questions about the power disputes between victimized subjects, relatives, human rights organizations, the Left, and the State (power elites). In the case of the Victims and Land Restitution Law what becomes clear is the limits of law to respond to citizens’ demands and the power of the State to translate radical demands into legalistic and limited restricted claims. It also brings to the discussion the very limits of some of these subjects’ strategies that are reinforcing the fetishism of law and with it the State itself, and the model of the nation-state. This takes me to another question that has to do with the type of political and societal projects that these subjects are proposing and enacting, and the feasibility to advance them through law and the interlocution with the (neo)liberal State. Like I mentioned in previous chapters:

“Thousands of Antigonas have struggled with Creonte and in that struggle they give him a new

existence, even within his own agony” (Huitaca 2015), in spite of the fact that with their struggles and critiques they are smashing it.

Modernity/coloniality has had the power to obscure subaltern actors’ capacity to think beyond the modern imaginary. This can be observed not only in the Left but also in some victimized subjects. Therefore, from within that political “obstruction” the enchantment of transitional justice emerges and takes more power in the current context because of the importance that the peace negotiation process has for the Left, social movements, and some victimized subjects. The enchantment of transitional justice is thus the product of the seductive character of the promises of the modern project, especially in one of its expressions, Marxism, has for some of the subjects of the *digna rabia* in Colombia.

Relatives and victimized subjects’ proposals and contributions to Colombian society are directed towards having the possibility as “humans” to live, being and existing NOW, and in each *Nego-subject’s* and community’s particular territories: the countryside, the Pacific, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, the Guajira region, Bogotá, the neighborhood, the park, the streets, and the *self*. Evidently the State is not the one that is going to guarantee this kind of transition, which means that it is peremptory beyond the peace agreements, to dispute the meaning of the transition and envision other State or *states of society*. This requires non-hegemonic subjects to pluralize the political imaginary that is nurturing the transition, acknowledging the existence of other ontologies, and pushing the emancipatory (Leftist) initiatives of the present to question the modern/colonial pillars of their proposals and radicalize their political commitments to horizontally articulate with non-dominant ontologies.

Transitional justice promises that Colombians will finally become the modern fiction of a country in peace, “civilized,” for progress, ready to advance in its modernization. The problem with this kind of promise is that it is something impossible to achieve, a point we will never reach

because since we were created as the “Other,” we have been framed as backward. We will be always imperfect copies of the original. This situation re-produces a sort of schizophrenia of the being that does not allow us to be what we are capable of being since every solution is always the imposition of the experience of other societies and the hegemonic model. Being imperfect copies is always going to benefit the original model and its allies (Fanon 2008) since they always will have the right to intervene in order to “indicate” the correct path.

Undoubtedly, many Colombians want to experience a transition, but the main question is, what is the transition that we want? How do we conceptualize it? Toward which direction do we want the transition take us? These are difficult questions that implore to be walked collectively, taking into account that if what we want is more than a “soft transition” to a similar state of affairs, i.e. an actual transformation of a deeply inequitable and violent society, then it is necessary to think about how to contribute in the current conjuncture to begin a change that avoids the re-codification of power of domination, death, and inequality. It is urgent to dispute the meaning of transition and allow this moment to give birth to life.

Section VII. Blood, Love and the Belly: enacting other *states of society*

*“The vocabulary of transitional justice itself is limiting,
as is the language of the law
and of human rights generally.
To really question the theoretical assumptions
underlying transitional justice,
it may be necessary
not only to interrogate the effectiveness
or provenance of its acknowledged components
but to go outside of the particular view of the world
that created them in the first place ...
a new language will have to be invented
to reflect this broadened understanding”
(Okello 2010: 277)*

“During 2013, before returning to Chapel Hill we had another two workshops with the MOVICE’s Bogota Chapter, and one meeting in which we elaborated a working plan for the activities of the chapter. We initiated the first workshop, on May 29th, with an exercise of breathing that I guided, inhaling deeply and letting go any “bad” energy that we could have at that moment during the exhalation. Again we asked for permission to our relatives and

ourselves for bringing back difficult memories and because we could get sad. At that point I already observed unhappy faces that were not the product of my words, but of the experience of each victimized subject that necessarily was conjured in the workshop.

That day we discussed the category of victim, the way the participants see the State, memory, forgetting, peace, forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, the life project, and happiness. We first worked in small groups and then we had a roundtable conversation, which allowed recognition of differences but also similarities in their visions. This also fostered discussion. Something unexpected occurred that day. I was stopping by each group to join the conversations when I arrived to a small group in which a mother with her son was trying to “answer the questions.” She said to him: ‘you can tell her what is going on.’ They both—though I do not remember the conversation exactly—told me that he was a reintegrated paramilitary, and that he decided to join them because he felt it was the only option that he had at the moment. Facing few or no jobs at all, plus economical necessities, he had decided to be part of the paramilitary.

I was almost mute. We were in a workshop discussing the demands of people victimized by the State and the paramilitary, and there was that young guy that in addition had lost one of his brothers at the hands of the State and/or at the hands of the armed group he later was part of. His brother was forcibly disappeared and months after this workshop his father was looking to recover his remains. What I could do? I continued with the workshop hoping that the collective discussion did not get out my control. He was the son of a leader that I tremendously respect, and who is working hard to make State and paramilitary violence visible, as well as forcibly displaced people’s rights. In the collective discussion, the participants named the paramilitaries a couple times and the rage that they provoked to them. Being in that moment allowed me again to grasp the complexity of Colombia’s reality and the challenges of peace.

Months later, this workshop was followed by the last one that I did during my year of fieldwork. On that day, the youth attended by himself, rather than in the company of his parents. I proposed the participants work individually or in small groups and talk about the way they envisioned peace. The idea was to represent their notions artistically. We brought pieces of clothes to make an artistic composition. I was trying to “imitate” an exercise that I learned from a doctoral student when I was presenting my research project in Antioquia University, that then became popularized in Bogotá as the *costurero de la memoria* (sewing kit of memory). The guy was drawing alone. He did not use any color or piece of cloth, only a pencil. His composition reminded me of a drawing I had seen years before in a museum in Sweden as the expression of prolonged winters and obscure days. I asked him what his project meant and he answered: ‘solitude’” (Huitaca 2015).



Figure 20: Peace

[Source: Diana Marcela Gómez Correal]

I had been thinking about peace maybe since I was a child, but most systematically while writing my undergraduate thesis and when I joined the IMP. With time I became more careful and critical with its definition, and I had become suspicious not only of its hegemonic, liberal meaning and use, but also with the notion in itself. As Foucault (2003) states, war is the driving force behind institutions and order, and peace is in itself a war code; moreover, war is the “classic edge of law, the moment in which norms can be altered or suspended” (Agamben in Bornstein and Redfield 2011: 17-18). If so, then what is the real role that the State and any law mechanism have in building peace? If under modern expectations and ethical feelings, as Sontag (2003) asserts, war is an aberration and peace is the norm but the first is unstoppable and the second unattainable, what to do? And finally, if violence has been inherent to modernity/coloniality and the Nation-state, how and in which kind of social arrangements can take place “peace”?

This reality makes it urgent to carefully think through relatives’ and victimized subjects’ experience, visions, and proposals of what peace means for them. This chapter will explore how relatives and victimized subjects are conceiving peace, and their contributions to a peace that goes beyond the dominant and even Leftist conceptions. Drawing on their own conceptualizations and life trajectories, I explore how relatives and victimized subjects are bringing “novel” elements to the construction of *another state of society*. In this chapter I focus on both their explicit and verbalized

contributions as well as in those that are latent in their narrations, memories, struggles, demands, and proposals.

This chapter will first discuss the way relatives and victimized subjects conceptualize peace, and then will explore the particularities that memory, healing, love and care, and the relations that are embedded in the body-land territories contribute to imagine and enact another *state of society* that goes further than the nation/state. Finally, I will return to the question of the identity of relatives and victimized subjects, to explore how other subjectivities could take place beyond the limited boundaries of the “victim” created by human rights, transitional justice frameworks, and violence.

Enacting another *state of society*

*“If we think we already know
what is out there, we will almost
surely miss much of it”
(Bennett 2010: xv).*

This dissertation takes the experiences of the victimized subjects I have worked with, including my own, seriously. This means that I engage with the ways reality is comprehended and produced in this concrete context by these subjects, which include elements that are beyond the empire of reason and the modern onto-epistemology. During these more than nine years—since my father was forcibly disappeared—death, dreams, emotions, the body, spirituality, and memory have acquired different meanings for someone that was educated in a modern/colonial/patriarchal world and significantly influenced by Leftist and Catholic thoughts. The “new” meanings that all these components of reality acquired emerged from experience and were comprehended from a variety of *senti-pensamientos* (feeling-thoughts) that are the product of feminist, decolonial, indigenous, and Afro-descendent knowledge, critical modern thought, and the “paganism” that modernity looked to leave behind but that is embedded in the current world.

Relatives and victimized subjects have “unmasked” the way the State has worked in Colombia, the existence of State criminality, and the dehumanization of some Colombians; ethically

and morally censured the exercise of violence as a way to resolve conflicts and shown the pervasive consequences of war in individual and collective lives as well as in the social fabric; proposed essential elements for the construction and maintenance of a fair society rooted in truth and justice; and, among other things, joined the political non-armed struggle to contribute with dignity to the construction of a different country, re-making relations in the midst of all the other ones that violence undoes.

Besides these important *gifts*, relatives and victimized subjects have shown the limits of the law for dealing with their ethical and moral demands, bringing the necessity to base the resolution of the structural, embodied, and pervasive violence that the country has gone through, as well as the ethical and moral issues they bring, through additional mechanisms that include changes in the symbolic, cultural, economic, material, and political realms. In these discussions, victimized subjects and relatives have shown the existence of more than liberal autonomous individuals, but rather *Nego-subjects* deeply rooted in the collective. From that particular conception of the self, they have also showing the necessity of rethinking the definition of the “human” and the treatment that this specie should receive. These diverse contributions question the nation-state as a form of social organization that can guarantee justice and dignity—although it is reified by some victimized subjects—as well as some modern assumptions that have to do with the Law and the individual.

Their dialogues and interpellations do not end there. To the contrary, they are more profound. The other elements that I will discuss in this final chapter contribute to the edification of the *other state of society* that relatives and victimized subjects envision when they define peace. From my perspective, these subjects are enacting through practice relational onto-epistemologies that challenge modern dichotomies and assumptions about the real, the person, society, and the world. These relational onto-epistemologies entail non-hegemonic ways of knowing, building relations, and enacting the world that include memory, dreams, death, the dead, spirituality, affect,

emotions, and territory. Thanks to their experience, relatives and victimized subjects are calling attention to non-hegemonic conceptions about the body, the person, society, differences, healing, land, conflicts, and peace that are central for the current debates in Colombia.

As I said before, the future of Colombia is defined from the seismic layers that I identified to explain the current telluric movements that are taking place in Colombia: the hegemonic, the emancipatory, and the decolonial. The relatives and victimized subjects of this research are product of a *creole* society, the hybridization between indigenous, black, “feminine,” and European ontologies, and mainly part of two of the subterranean configurations of the society: the emancipatory and the decolonial. I situate their struggles in the midst of a historical moment of ontological conflicts “that are associated with the struggle to shape the global age as an alternative to rather than a continuation of modernity” (Blaser 2010). Blaser (2010) asserts that the modern tendency to forcefully make other ontologies fit into its categories is itself one of the triggers for ontological conflicts, something that we are observing in Colombia with more force during the transition to peace (1990-2015).

The victimized subjects of this research come from different cultural, economic, ethnic, gender, and political backgrounds that are essential to take into account to comprehend their particular onto-epistemic contributions. The majority of them are women (10 out of 13). Of them, two are indigenous (La Mache and Juan Tomás), five are Afro-descendent (Manuel, Antonia, Candelaria, Micaela and Eloisa), and five *mestizas*. Six grew up exclusively or mainly in cities (Camila, Betty, Juana, Antígona, Esperanza and Mamoncillo). Three have joined or been close to Leftist organizations (Camila, Antígona and Esperanza). And three are part of a “youth generation” (Juan Tomás, Esperanza and Antígona). None come from the country’s economic elites, and their class ranges from low to middle. Importantly, all of them have opted for organizing and joining organizations and social movements, demanding the dignity of their relatives and the people,

contributing to decode the war code, and locating life at the center, humanity over death and barbarity, in a country shaped by an embodied, structural violence.

Relatives and victimized subjects are performing a politics that may exceed modern politics (De la Cadena 2010), challenging central dichotomies of modern thought, and with it essential pillars of its constitution. The subjects of this research are going beyond the modern ontology and the divisions that it establishes between spirit/flesh, mind/body, past/present, theory/practice, emotions/reason, dead/alive, dreams/real, politics/spiritual, representation/reality, nature/culture, woman/man, and memory/oblivion, questioning the way knowledge is produced, time and reality are conceptualize, the centrality of capitalism, and the figure of the Sovereign.

Doing this, relatives and victimized subjects are enacting a relational onto-epistemology that appear to better account for reality, and that at the same time speak of the existence of an organic totality that is created and recreated through memory, practice, and relations between a variety of “material” beings, *actants*. Developing a political relational ontological practice, the relatives and victimized subjects are opening up the possibility to see the potency that the undervalued sides of the modern/colonial dichotomies have for the creation of the world, and regarding the powers of domination, resistance, and liberation.

This brings important discussions to the current conjuncture that have to do with the role—according to the perspective of relatives and victimized subjects—of memory, emotions, healing, and “land.” Behind this relational ontological political practice is a major question that the modern dualist onto-epistemology has not resolved: *how do we relate with difference, with multiple and radical others?* Nandy states that any cultural dialogue has to start with the category of victim, “including their alternative conceptions of freedom, compassion, justice ...” since they have crucial ideas for understanding the repressed side of the world (in Escobar 2014: 48). Especially important are memory, affect, and territory.

Therefore, the predominance of women in the universe of victimized subjects that have clamored for the dignity of their loved ones in Colombia and other parts of the world, accounts for women's contributions and the centrality of care, love, belongings, and relations in opposition to patriarchal violence, its vertical control over people, and the empire of death. Historically, and as the product of cultural constructions that to some extent have something to do with the materiality of the female body, some women have enacted relational onto-epistemologies that contain dimensions of feeling-thinking-acting that have not been domesticated by rationality and that are the product of affect, emotions, and instinct.

As part of this expression of relationality, other ways to engage with reality and comprehend it emerge, as well as the production of knowledge and actions that bring the dead and dreams, for example, to the forefront. These other ways of knowing and relating are also part of indigenous, Afro-descendent, and peasants worlds, where logocentrism has not completely overcome the other ways of being and inhabiting the world. It is not a coincidence that Mamoncillo—despite being a man that has decided to join victims' organizations, acted thanks to “instinct,” and has privileged life and love—was the person, among all that I interviewed, that emphasized hate the most, desires to take revenge and kill, and for whom it was most difficult to talk about dreams and “life” after death.

Victimized subjects' narration of violence also highlights the importance that land-territory have for some victimized subjects such as the indigenous and Afro-descent people of this research, and the peasants with whom I had dialogue during fieldwork and the workshops that I carried out with MOVICE's Bogotá chapter. Their narrations, a concrete exercise of memory, allows seeing the existence of a particular “organic relationship” with territory that at the same time brings to the discussion other elements of victimized subjects' relational onto-epistemologies that have to do with nature and death.

Finally, something that all the research subjects and their struggles bring up is memory. Memory enacts the world of the relatives and victimized subjects, it works as a performative element that permits “organic relationships” with the past, loved ones, comrades, and others to take place, becoming cornerstone to the formation of *Nego-subjects*, thus to identity and subjectivity. In this respect, *Sons and Daughters* plays an important role maintaining the centrality of enacting memory for the struggles of relatives and victimized subjects, and radicalizing it.

Peace Always Depends on What Type of Society “we” Want to Have

*“The only way
to build peace
is visibilizing ourselves”
(Eloisa, Madres por la Vida 2011)*

“We were in our final workshop during a beautiful and sunny day. Bogotá’s splendor was possible to observe through the windows of the José Alvear Restrepo’s conference room. It was Monday, the 26th of August, 2013. La Mache, other members of the Bogotá’s MOVICE chapter, a member of *Hijos e Hijas*, a student of the National University that was collaborating with the MOVICE, and Chris—a UNC student beginning his year of fieldwork in Colombia with the Peace Community of San José de Apartado—and I were gathering together to think about what peace means. Many ideas were expressed verbally and graphically. Peace was conceptualized for the participants as living in **community**, in **family**, in a space in which is possible to **believe** in people.

They also envisioned peace as a *state of society* in which there are no enemies, and in which paramilitarism does not exist and guerrillas demobilize completely. ‘Peace will not be possible if the criminals’ bands are not included in the process of disarmament, and if there is not a negotiation with the guerrilla ELN (National Liberation Army).’ The young guy that was part of the paramilitaries emphasized that ‘there is not peace because there are Bacrim, Águilas Negras, and other new groups will emerge from the rebels.’ This vision, that can be branded ‘realistic,’ is also part of an intrusive permanence of war in Colombia’s political imaginary that makes the eradication of violence and the invention of another *state of society* beyond war unthinkable.

After expressing the importance of being able to live in family and community, emphasizing **trust and relationality**, and that peace is also stopping armed confrontation and violence, we continued deepening the definition of peace. Thus, peace, someone said, implies having an equitable government that does not enhance discrimination, a country in which we can have the same rights, duties, and obligations, and where there is equality; a country in which displaced people can have access to dignified health care, housing, and education. In the middle of the conversation someone asked: Can I live in peace with hunger? The answer

was obviously no, and was followed by another conclusion: in order to have peace, all the basic necessities of Colombians have to be addressed.

The concretization of victimized subjects demands were also part of the definition of peace (**truth, justice, Never Again, and the State and victimizers' obligation to indemnify and a duty to repair**), fore-fronting the respect of truth and the eradication of impunity for the construction of the community. Furthermore, peace was defined as the existence of a sovereign nation without the military presence of the United States, and where **protest and having different opinions** without being killed is possible. Peace has to guarantee the life of the guerrillas that will demobilize, avoiding the repetition of a previous experience in which some demobilized guerrillas were killed. Similar to other organizations and social movements, the notion of peace was qualified with a surname: peace with *social justice*.

In addition to the youth's gloomy drawing of a landscape with a bridge over a river surrounded by mountains and trees, one of the groups drew five people, three women and two men, holding hands in a circle. Outside the circle they wrote: pueblo (people), indigenous, afros, and peasants; with **solidarity and participation**, with **unity** and our rights guaranteed, with **equal rights** and **social justice**. When they talked about this drawing they stated that in order to reach peace it is necessary to be united, and that peace requires participation, solidarity, and social justice. Another group drew a house in the countryside with trees, a river, and a person working the land; these were the only things that Don Pedro, a displaced older man now living in Bogotá, needs to feel he is living in peace. He also told us that in order to have peace, Colombia requires a **coalitional government**. For him peace is to be **tranquil**, without having someone that interrupts the flow of life. It is also to **love and have faith**.

The last representation is La Mache's. She drew an indigenous woman, and the words *Mujer Majayura*, a combination of Spanish and waiyunaiki (Wayuu's language) that means beautiful lady. The Majayura is wearing a Wayuu blanket with pink, blue, and green colors that has an indigenous symbol painted on her face, an oshokonojushi (a type of spiral). With the Majayura woman, La Mache is describing a **healthy and pure child** that for her personifies peace. The lady is accompanied by a cactus—a **sacred plant**—that for la Mache integrates peace, **happiness and tranquility**, as well as a ground that speaks to **dignity and honesty**" (Huitaca 2015).



Figure 21: Peace

[Source: Diana Marcela Gómez Correal]

Although there are undeniable similarities between guerrilla, State, and some sectors of society's conceptions of peace, victimized subjects, from their experience, are talking about a more radical notion of peace. This radicality emerges from their suffering, and the situations and emotions that they have gone through, and from the "critiques" that they explicitly and implicitly do to the modern/colonial system. Although the organizations I have been working with want peace and are supporting the official peace process, they have a critical conception about what it means and how it will become real.²⁰³

"For me, this is one of the toughest moments [in the country] because... people are thinking about peace, that with the peace talks in Havana everything will go back to normal, and I see things differently... Peace can't be made behind [the people's] backs... And certainly peace without healthcare, without housing, I don't think there will be peace; there's no guarantee of rights, and in particular dignified living conditions in this country are not guaranteed" (Camila 2013).

"I say that there [should be] truth, justice, no impunity... and reparations. If we have those, there's peace. Because if they say there's peace, that there's going to be an agreement... but all the rest is left aside, for me that's not peace... [To build peace, it's necessary] for the war to end! [laughing]. That there's no more violence, no disappearances, torture, murders, all these things that happen in Colombia, and keep happening, and they must say that it's not just the guerrillas [that are at fault], because the paramilitaries are doing this [as well] and the State itself... [If all the] people... who have been driven off their lands by armed outlaw groups are given their land back, but this time with guarantees that they won't be driven off again... For me, that's peace, if people return to their lands to build their homes, to raise animals, to live well like it was before, with no one bothering them" (La Mache 2013).

"The political and epistemological gamble of the peace process is, in our mind, a great opportunity to put forth a truly multi-cultural nation, a multi-ethnic nation, a new perspective about social-ecological-economic integration that keeps enough distance from capitalistic development [...] Our hopes are not based on a more benevolent and modernizing capitalism [...] An economy based on well-being, frugal living and caring for life is the type of economy that can prevent war from coming back to our lands" (PCN, 2000, p. 6 in Escobar 2014: 110).

As is possible to observe through these quotes, the conversations in the workshops, and the drawing, victimized subjects are talking about peace as a *state of society* that goes beyond the

²⁰³ Their conceptions about peace are situated in a complex position, in the middle of the internal contradiction that transitional justice has created between peace and justice, and in the intersection that results from the political closeness of some organizations of victims of State and paramilitary violence with the Left and the guerrillas.

liberal definition that conceives of it as the absence of violence and armed groups. This evidently contrasts with the way the government and significant sectors of Colombia society conceptualize peace, which is observed as the cessation of guerrillas' rifles, the defeat of the "terrorists." The victimized subjects and relatives of this research are including not only the demobilization of the still-alive paramilitaries, but also the cessation of *the illegal use of the legal monopoly of violence by the State*.

The conception of relatives and victimized subjects also contrasts with the vision of the current government that envisions peace as a way to "truly" modernize and develop the country, when they propose and demand peace with social justice. Thus, peace means the existence of a government that guarantees equality and a *state of society* that satisfies people's needs (health care, food, housing, education), the return to the countryside, and land restitution. Relatives and victimized subjects include in their narrations a permanent critique of capitalism that is implicitly included in the notion of peace with *social justice*.

There are certain similarities between the victimized subjects proposals and the way guerrillas conceive peace. The FARC-EP is demanding changes in the political and economical realms, emphasizing the construction of a real democracy and agrarian reforms. With the former, they look to guarantee their integration into political life with conditions that respect their lives and allow them to participate in the democratic process, the means through which they intend to take power now. The latter helps the guerrillas to advance in one of their central struggles: an equitable access to land, one of their main reasons for continuing with the armed option after the end of *La Violencia*.

Notwithstanding the similarities between the FARC-EP and victimized subjects' conception of peace, and the common reference to modern premises (the nation-state continues to be a central actor that has the task of guaranteeing rights and equality and is a place of struggle), the contrast is

also clear in many other aspects with the guerrillas and even more so with the government and hegemonic sectors of society. For example, in relation with the agrarian “problem,” the FARC-EP reproduces a modern conception of land as an object, a resource, paying less or no attention to the relations, dynamics, and beings that inhabit that space. Precisely, this has been the reason for some of the conflicts that the guerrillas have had with peasants, Afro-descendent and Indigenous people, since the FARC-EP has conceptualized territory as a military and ideological “war booty,” stressing its class dimension and forgetting others.

For relatives and victimized subjects, peace means social justice, but also life, memory, truth, justice, “reparation,” healing, care, love, community, differences, relationality, sovereignty (autonomy), and dignity (MOVICE-Bogotá 2013). Moreover, from their experience, victimized subjects are “saying” to Colombian society that there are some “beings” and relations that really matter; they are giving tremendous clues about how to construct those relations, that is to say, *society*. In that sense it is significant that in the workshops they bring to the forefront the historically neglected subjects: indigenous, afro-descendent, peasants, poor people, and women, as well as elements of their particular *cosmovisions*. Through their drawing, La Mache and Don Pedro introduce into the conversation elements beyond logocentrism such as love, faith, nature, land, cactus, flowers, health, and territory. Even the gloomy painting is saying something more profound about peace. It is a landscape without people, is grim and desolate as a product of violence, an empty territory that is deeply yearned for. The young man that did it is from the countryside, a place from which violence expelled him. I have the intuition that while painting, he was remembering and at the same time healing, and maybe dreaming/thinking/envisioning/deserving another future.

From my perspective, only a peace that enables building another type of society is capable of overcoming the war code (Gómez Correal 2013b). Thus “peace” is imagined here as the possibility to design another *state of society* that will be the result of both a collective and more

prolonged work, plus conversation and non-violent dispute between different visions of the world. *Sons and Daughters* (2012) envisions the current peace process as the possibility to stop the war in order to open possibilities for political alternatives to express themselves without being in the middle of the fire, and in consequence, exterminated. Although the peace negotiation process does not have to resolve the totality of the problems that the country has—because this is not only the responsibility of the State and the guerrillas—the peace talks have the task to make a real effort to stop violence and to create the foundations for tackling in the near future the structural conditions that gave rise to political violence. Victimized subjects' contributions go in that direction.

Memory: a political verb

“In June 2011 Hijos e Hijas had one of the national methodological meetings of *Hescuela* in Atanquez. Atanquez is one of the communities of the Kankuamos reservation, and we were working there during the Corpus Christi, a Catholic festivity that was imposed during the colonial period but that still preserves indigenous traditions. *Hescuela* was implemented through study sections that were combined with mobilizations and campaigns that had the intention of making the different thematic modules of the popular education process more intelligible and to maintain articulated theory and praxis, thinking and doing. One of the objectives of the methodological meeting in Atanquez was to understand the module that addresses power and domination but through practice. The idea was to perform an ethnographical exercise for comprehending the complexity of the Corpus Christi festivity. Therefore, we not only participated in the procession—the most well-known and “public” activity of the festivity—but also in its preparation and during other moments, including where the indigenous elements are most visible. During those moments we learned the power of nature, mountains, and rocks, and we listened, for example, to stories about the agency of a big rock that is located in the road where the procession takes place; the rock can do things. The rock is one of the places where the inhabitants of Atanquez pay tribute, and those that do not pay tribute correctly become targets of misfortune. Over the course of these days, we observed and learned about the syncretism of the festivity as a way to resist the Conquest and its impositions, but also as a manner to remember the multiple traditions that gave birth to the dwellers of the region, and the presence of different cosmovisions.

In the book that relates the experience of *Hescuela*, Daniel Maestre, one of the indigenous Kankuamos that is part of *Sons and Daughters*, wrote a text about memory that is a conversation with an elder man of his community:

“I don’t agree with you,” the elder Lionso told me. “To me,” he continued, “memory is what rebuilds a person, because memory is the tool used by the Mother creator to make us, her children, return to the path of harmony with the Earth and all creation. I remember that the last time I saw you, you had short hair, you didn’t chew *ayu* and you didn’t use the *poporo*. Today you look different. Memory has been reconstructing you. She doesn’t need to be reconstructed by you. You need to be

reconstructed by her, and that reconstruction that she has done in you is what has allowed you to strengthen your identity ... When the world began to materialize, the Mother began to build us with her memory ... with her essence. She hasn't built us with things she recalls, because those things aren't memory, memory isn't historical records... memory is each one of us, knowing that we make up part of everything and that everything is contained within us” (Maestre 2012: 111-112).

Here, memory enacts the world, and in so doing, it creates us as part of an ‘organic’ totality” (Huitaca 2015).

For relatives and victimized subjects memory is an end and a means. It is content and form. It is the corporeal, verbalized, and acted expression of their struggles. Memory is the materialization of affect, a mediation of reality through which the real and the virtual come into existence. It works as a hinge joint between thinking, feeling, and doing. Memory involves the body, emotions and thought, and from there constructs the subjects.

Memory was born from the scar that the *affective event* leaves. It helps to give birth to the victimized subjects, and then it turns into an essential element of their struggles and *becoming*. For that reason, the relatives and victimized subjects understand themselves as being born again and as an “extension” of their loved ones’ lives and political projects. It also explains the connection between seeds, being sown, and memory from which an organic belonging is recreated. Memory is essential to the creation and recreation of the US and in consequence the constitution of identities. People and memory are inseparable, and together enact not only a certain conception of time but also other particularities of people’s *cosmovisions*.

Memory implies the particularity of places and rhythms of time; memories are configurations of time and place (Augé 2004).²⁰⁴ We have memories “when time has elapsed” (Ricoeur 2004: 16); our memories are recollections of a past located in an specific space. Following Aristotle, Ricoeur points out that there is an anteriority of the “thing” remembered in relation to its present evocation (2004: 27). The work of memory in relatives is thus directly linked with the

²⁰⁴ As Augé (2004) asserts, the relationship people have with the past, the future, and the present is related with the way they think and manage time. This is not universal. In this section, I am trying to address relatives and victimized subjects’ particular conception of time.

absence and the scar that the *affective event* leaves. Remembrances, *memory-noun*,²⁰⁵ “serve as a screen” to “traces”²⁰⁶ and help time to be lived as story. These *memory-nouns* appear and endure, not only in the mind, but also in the heart and the entire body, as the “signs of the absence” (2004: ix).

Memory is the answer to imposed silence and oblivion, the expression of the rebellious and obstinate character of relatives and victimized subjects. It is a cry full of humanness, ethics, and care that work as a narrative expression of a specific onto-epistemology that speaks and enacts a specific conception about the world, particularly time, death, belonging, justice, and dignity. When the first enforced disappearances occurred in Colombia, relatives wanted to know where their loved ones were, demanding their return alive. They aspired to know the truth of what occurred and to receive justice. For that reason the relatives of ASFADDES exclaimed: *Without forgetting, without forgiveness!* (Camila 2013), and the relatives of the Palace of Justice’s cafeteria: *SIN OLVIDO* (without forgetting) (Betty 2013).

In front of the impossibility to have truth or justice, and in the face of the absence of the loved ones (not only those that were forcibly disappeared but also those that were killed), and the new conditions of life (including enforced displacement and exile), memory became the way to maintain relations with the beloved and with some crucial conditions of the past that were altered, such as land. Thus, memory has been essential for maintaining, in one way or another, one’s previous belongings, fostering at the same time new relations and collectivities and contributing with emotions to the construction of the new identity and subject.

²⁰⁵ Following Ricoeur’s (2004) definition, remembering includes recollection, a process of recognition, re-presentation that entails re-turning back to the space/time when the memory-noun emerge; habit, which does not involve representation; and involuntariness, which is an unconscious action that makes memory more complex. Memory-noun is what people remember: loved ones, their struggles, the experience of violence (Gómez Correal 2012a).

²⁰⁶ Ricoeur identifies three types of traces: the written, the cortical, and the physical. The latter is a “impression in the sense of an affection left in us by a marking event. An event has “touched us ... and the affective mark remains in our mind” (2004: 427). The first two can be altered, erased, destroyed, but not the last one.

Memory confronts violence and the intentions and rationality of the power of domination. Memory brings the forcibly disappeared person, the one intended to be erased from the social landscape, to life again. The N.N. (No Name) not only recovers his/her name, but also their human, social, political, and cultural identity, his/her dignity. For that reason, it is important for the organizations I work with to have the pictures of their relatives and recurrently mention their names.

“How do you give someone their dignity back? Well, by making them visible, [remembering them]... I would think that a form of reparation and also doing justice would be if the media created permanent spaces so that every day you could talk about the victims, as a way of saying to society, ‘Look, they weren’t guerrillas, they were social leaders; see what they were like.’ They dreamed, they had different activities, they played, they fought, they did what any human being does, but besides that, they had projects that maybe didn’t identify with the government, but still were valid projects, right?” (Camila 2013).

Memory allows maintaining the relationship with the loved one through his/her new condition: absent but alive. Memory is one means through which the dead express his/her agency and impact the world, challenging any linear conception of time or the dichotomous understanding of past/present or past/future.

“And certainly it means breaking away from that idea that memory is what the government wants it to be... statistics ... [or] museums ... Memory allows us, in our case, to hear [our loved ones] again, to listen to them ... [it allows us] to laugh again, to be with them again... Memory is that magic thing that makes you forget the pain” (Camila 2013).

“To remember her, to be, for example, in places where she is talked about, who she was, taking her story to universities, to high schools, to the streets, to the marches, to me all that is memory. And that you have that person remembering her, who she was, what she did, what she was like ... her values” (La Mache 2013).

When La Mache shared ideas of the past with me, her tone of voice and face changed. She smiled and sounded happy. Memory, in the empire of the oblivion that kills and produces suffering, is a way to bring life and healing.

“[Memory serves] to lighten your heart, to give yourself relief and to have more strength, because for me, that gives me a lot of strength. Because if I didn’t remember her, that would be even worse, because then this pain, this thing that I have inside, would smother me, whereas if you get all of that pain out... Like we Wayuu do, going to the cemetery to cry in order to [be at rest] and [so that] she feels, the soul of that person feels joy that... someone remembers her ... [In Colombian society, memory is important] for making things visible,

for allowing people who don't know to find out about what goes on in Colombia" (La Mache 2013).

"For me, memory is so important in the cases of the disappearance, because I've found that... if you use memory properly, it allows you to... heal yourself" (Camila 2015).

The *accumulative love* and care that is felt for the loved ones are now expressed through memory. Remembering is to move through the heart (*pasar por el corazón*).

"If we forget what has happened to us, it happens again... If we forget about it, the oppressor doesn't forget and knows that we remain silent. How can I forget my son? ... You have to remember them with acts of love, even if they've died or been killed by barbarous acts; you have to remember them with love and for the sake of love and do things with love towards our loved ones" (Mamoncillo 2013).

Memory is also a way to re-member—to reorganize the dismembered bodies and social fabric—, a way to re-make when possible the relations that were undone, and/or generating others. Memory works as a way to recreate small and broader collectivities; it is not only the concern for the loved ones but also for others that have lived the same or similar situations, and for the society in general. The memory enacted by these relatives and victimized subjects are an ethical and moral concern about the barbarities that occurred. They aspire to work as an imperative: *Never Again*.

"The memory of everything we've lived through... what we hold inside and maintain, all those ... cultural and natural stories that we've lived through over time, that our elders taught us, our ancestors, and that help us have a clear vision of what we want in the future and to not repeat things, errors that were committed in the past" (Juan Tomás 2013).

This conception of memory implies that it has the possibility to transform reality, although usually the discussions in Colombia about this *duty to remember* have not been thought about in depth. In relatives and victimized subjects, memory works as a verb, an action, a capacity, that as Ricoeur (2004) states, belongs to the category "I can." It is a power as well, a political verb (Gómez Correal 2012a) through which struggles take place. *Sons and Daughters*, trying to escape the *memory boom* produced by the transitional justice discourse, the "common sense" of memory, and State cooptation, has developed particular ideas about memory, as well as concrete practices, that

complement those enacted by other victimized subjects, such as commemorations, the Memory Galleries, talks, workshops, poetry, and documentaries, among others.

Rebel Memory

“It is March 2015. While writing my dissertation, almost without control, memories hunt me. It is not exactly a remembrance but more a sensation. I feel profoundly sad and depressed. I try to give a “rational” explanation to that feeling and resolve the “problem,” but now after nine years I know what it is. It is my body that remembers the anguish and the pain that all of us experienced with my father’s forced disappearance. It is the expression of the **involuntariness** of the capacity to remember that is saying to me that the past is still present. I listen. I have to listen to my body, the past, my feelings, and reality. Listening, I decided to write, enacting the **habit** that I have acquired over these nine years, and at the same time that I **recollect** the past, I make of my/our past a possibility. I wrote:

“Rebel memory does not allow itself to be domesticated by a hegemonic transition. Rebel memory learns that in the power of remembering and acting lies the possibility of breaking with this ‘common sense’ of death, impunity, and imposed injustice ... I reflect on what the scene would look like where justice could be done for all the suffering and indignation experienced by so many Colombian men and women that have been victims of violence. Our justice cannot get stuck in the wishy-washiness of Creonte, the State, and those in power. Our justice is built in daily life, day by day, with others in the form of struggle and action. The best way to dignify those who have been forcefully taken away is to end the injustice and build another society” (Antígona-Huitaca March 21st, 2006).

Days later, for the April 9th demonstration, *Sons and Daughters* with other collectives such as *Dexpierte*, took the streets of Bogotá at night and pasted different posters that stated: *Rebel memory does not allow itself to be domesticated by a hegemonic transition; Peace as an excuse to perpetuate inequality; in rebellion, Latin America recovers its existence*. A short film was created and circulated on youtube, in which a different conception about memory and peace were shared and enacted. This is the rebel memory, the one that does not want to be domesticated” (Huitaca 2015).



Figure 22: “Rebel memory does not allow itself to be domesticated by a hegemonic transition”

[Source: *Dexpierte and Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity*, 2015]

Memory has become the way through which relatives and victimized subjects are materializing their demands for truth and justice, and in consequence a manner to enact *other justices*. Through memory they are telling part of the truth—the one they know and can publicly talk about—of what occurred, and they are making justice towards their loved ones and what occurred with them. Besides, relatives and victimized subjects are rebuking what both the State and society are not: they are saying to the entire nation what is wrong with this model of society. Therefore, memory turns into a “cognitive issue” (Ricoeur 2004: 55), a *political verb*, and exercise that entails thought and emotions. Doing this, it escape from the realm of *memory for the sake of memory*, the memory that recreates “imagined nations,” masking inequalities, and maintaining the *status quo* without making any significant transformation.

“Hmm, I have that duality, because sometimes I think (pause) ... [that I want] to run away from all this, to forget everything. Not forget Pedro, but forget everything the Colombian government has done to me ... To forget all the cases I’ve heard all these ... years ... I would like to forget all that. I’d like to run away sometimes and not know anything ... I’ve wanted to forget ... without forgetting Pedro but I can’t ... I can’t forget ... so many people who have been killed, I can’t forget everything that has happened because they’ve given me no other option. [I would find] peace if I could find out the truth ... The same thing love does to hate ... but if you don’t find any love or truth, then what can make you whole?” (Mamoncillo 2013).

Relatives and victimized subjects find wholeness through memory. A contexts such as Colombia’s since the paramilitary demobilization that has produced a *memory boom*, has required that victimized subjects reflect more about how memory can contribute to the ethical and moral claim: *Never Again!* The government is thinking more about a memory that supports forgetting of what occurred and reifies a future completely rooted in the current social configurations. Yet these organizations and victimized subjects envision a different memory: one that materializes the *true* and *effective truth* that transforms the configuration of the present.

In that context, *Sons and Daughters* has proposed the notion of memory for social transformation, which contains a **long-term memory** that is framed within the *long-durée*

approach; a **memory of struggles**; and a **critical memory** (Gómez Correal 2012a). The memory of struggles is the *practical engagement* with the history, demands, achievements, and contexts of social movements, the Left, human rights organizations, and intellectuals, of the organizations that our fathers and mothers belong to. Long-term memory places the particularities of Colombia in the development of the modern/colonial project, through which the present is understood, highlighting the resistance of Indigenous and Afro-descendent people, and contextualizing the particularities of the experience of women, peasants, and poor people.

Critical memory aims for an analytical understanding of our relatives' stories and the trajectories of the Left, as well as a critical reading of Colombia's past and present that neither idealizes nor demonizes any subject or struggle, yet has the capacity to grasp its complexity. From my perspective, this critical approach is what can assist this generation in avoiding getting "stuck" in the eternal present of modernity/coloniality, and learning from the past to build other presents that contribute to eradicating the war code and moreover, practice another politics. The exercise of a *critical* memory, I venture to say, is the only way that can move us away from the abuses of memory and from the replication of the dominants' ways to employ memory.

Memory for transformation re-enacts the performative dimension of memory, especially its possibilities to create and recreate life. This memory for transformation that locates memory itself at the forefront and not in the back since the past is what we know and are able to observe (Maestre in Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y Contra la Impunidad 2009), requires that people let it touch them. Memory-nouns are there, everywhere, but it requires people interacting with the past since memory without feelings, thoughts, and will cannot do transformative work. Thus, this memory of transformation only can take place in the struggle, in the doing, a labor that as *Sons and Daughters* has proposed, has to go beyond the world of victimization to articulate actions with other social movements and organizations. Memory as political verb shapes the social mobilization of the

present in order to play a part in eradicating the structural causes of the embodied, pervasive violence in Colombia.

Thus, *Sons and Daughters* are proposing a living memory that resists the institutionalization, reification, and objectification of memory through monuments, museums, and commemoration dates, as well as its manipulative character. Some relatives and victimized subjects have questioned the institutionalization of memory that is taking place in Colombia thanks to the transitional discourse through the establishment of local and national memory centers that most of the time turn into an object memory. This reproduces a Cartesian vision that can make memory lose its power as a *verb*, its capacity to transform. As such, the concomitance that memory enacts between the self, doing, and knowing could be lost. *Sons and Daughters*'s alternative has led to radicalize the understanding and practice of memory as a rebel, subversive, savage, dignified memory, a memory that does not want to be domesticated, but rather dynamic, libertarian, feminine, and in the street (Gómez Correal, Poveda, and Valencia 2013).



Figure 23: “Danger! Memories in transition”

[Source: *Sons and Daughters for Memory and Against Impunity*, 2014]

Some members of the organization have talked about a *guerrilla memory* (Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y Contra la Impunidad 2012b)—a word difficult to use in the present and maybe for many years in Colombia—capable of facing, through remembering-transforming, the re-codification that dominant power is attempting by using the self/collective knowledge, means, and struggles of relatives, social movements, and human rights organizations. This has made necessary, as F. Giraldo (2014) points out, to reformulate memory in a rebel and bio-slow (*bio-lenta*) way, a memory *IN/UN*: INsurgent, UNsubmissive, INsubordinated, INdeterminate, INconclusive,

UNnatural, INSurrective and against INjustices! This memory does not forget its origins, territory, past, or future.

Memory, forgetting, and oblivion

“During one of the workshop with MOVICE’s Bogotá Chapter, a controversy took place when we were discussing memory and forgetting. One participant shared his thoughts about the topic, and said: ‘I do not live remembering the past, I live in the present and the future.’ This exclamation resulted in a series of interventions that affirmed the centrality of memory. Someone else shared: ‘the role of the MOVICE is to remember, remember is to live.’ The man that opened the discussion, after some interventions, replied that ‘what was lost is lost,’ a position that is similar to other victimized subjects that decide not to join any organization and/or struggle, and to some Colombians that consider that the past must be left behind in order to continue living. After some other ideas that were presented, the man declared that he had been silent for 20 years and that he lives the present but ‘**what he has inside is never forgotten.**’

This conversation opens important questions about forgiveness and oblivion, its role and its possibility for individuals, collectives, and the national body politics. When we were in that workshop I was having my own experience and relation with forgetting. At that time, I was conscious that I had *put to rest* some painful and violent memories: the images of my father in *Medicina Legal* (Legal and Forensic Medical Institute) but at the same time I was conscious that those memory-nouns were there, and that sometimes they haunted me thanks to context—the reality of violence remains alive—and the involuntariness of remembering. For that reason, in that day's workshop, I asked the rest of the participants what they want to remember about their experience of victimization and what parts of the violent event they aspire to know. A great number of them emphasized the necessity of being informed of everything, including details of how their loved ones were killed, something that I constantly said in public and to myself that I am not interesting in knowing. In our conversations, La Mache shared with me her perspective:

“I remember everything ... You should remember the good. And the bad too, because that is knowing what happened. [There are things that] cause me pain, but I heal, I get it out, even if I cry. But I tell what they did to her ... I tell all of it, because that relieves me, knowing that I’m telling the whole story ... of what really happened. The good and the bad” (La Mache 2013).

Some months later, when I returned to Chapel Hill after fieldwork, I started to have these strange sensations in my body when it was in a position of ‘silence’ during acupuncture and yoga. I started listening to what my body had to say with more attention. I imagined that being in Colombia during one year and having seen my father’s remains again as part of the exhumation triggered with more force those memory-nouns that I was trying to *put to rest*, to forget. One night, during October 2013, I have a truly revealing dream.

My conscious and subconscious were having a conversation in which the conscious asked: ‘why cannot I sleep and why do I continue to feel pain in my colon?’ In my dream I was dreaming and I got up crying and crying. My mother approached to me and asked me what

happened, crying I told her in dreams: ‘how were they capable of treating my father that way?’ The subconscious was giving an answer to my problem: I was unable to sleep and having health problems because I had not dealt with those painful memories. In October, after the dream, I went to Colombia to a meeting of *Sons and Daughters* and H.I.J.O.S Guatemala and Perú, and in some informal conversations I spoke about my dream. Some male members of *Sons and Daughters* underestimated my dream and even someone that had not lost a love one told me that I was obsessed with my father’s case. It surprised me, and it was painful, but I also realized the difficulty some Colombians still have dealing with social suffering, and also how differently—sometimes—women and men deal with similar topics and experiences. Later on, in March, I started therapy to ‘process the painful memories,’ and it was in May when I exclaimed: ‘I hate them. I cannot forgive the unforgivable’” (Huitaca 2015).

Like Freud (2008), Ricoeur (2004), and C. Nelson (2008) assert, oblivion is not possible since memories are ever present, and the past has its own materiality and thus its own life (Gómez Correal 2012a).²⁰⁷ Individuals and collectivities have the ability to *put the past to rest*—actions that in colloquial language people call forgetting—but they cannot erase it. This idea of forgetting is intimately tied with the conception that is possible to leave behind the past, which makes up a core part of the modern lineal conception of time.

This exercise of *putting to rest* (that can be both intentional and unintentional), as well as remembering is selective. Thus, as Borges (1962) states, memory and “forgetting” are the product of selection that is subject to event and history (Augé 2004); they are the basis for constructing narratives of the self and the collective. These narratives are the product of the interaction with others, although there are some tales that are more collective, or at least more interwoven than others (Augé 2004: 41). The construction of some of these tales that can take the form of history are driven by a politics of memory (Ferrandiz 2006) for domination. Under this politics, some actors’ role in violence is erased, while their heroism is highlighted.

This is precisely the case of Colombia, in which hegemonic memory and history are used to forget, erasing the atrocities committed by actors such as the State and the elites. Thus, there is an

²⁰⁷ The impression left by others remains in me available, accessible, as though awaiting recall, but not ready-at-hand. It involves that “what we have once seen, heard, experienced, or learned is not lost definitively, but survives” (Ricoeur 2004: 434).

abuse of memory and forgetting in the country when certain actors of the conflict are more interrogated, and when some human right violations are more visible than others. There also may be an abuse of memory by the entire universe of victimized subjects when they do not critically analyze all the actors of the conflict, and when they do not exercise a critical memory of their relatives' stories.²⁰⁸ Thus, memory is a battlefield for the definition of the past, the present, and the future.

Under the hegemonic notion of time, peace is conceptualized as a revision of the past that does not really question what occurred and the rationality behind it, let alone contribute to radically transforming it. Pretending to leave the past behind has, among others, three consequences. First, the model of society that enable domination remains undisturbed; second, the suffering of victimized subjects is not taken seriously; and third, their proposals and the visions of the subjects that have been located in the past for their equation with backwardness—indigenous, peasants, and Afro-descendants— are again rendered invisible.

Leaving the past in the past confines “people’s meaning to the ephemeral present, to the present where modernity rules sovereign ... Oblivion, the denial of living memory, the coloniality of time, has been a necessary mechanism for implanting modernity’s rule over the present as presence, over what it names ‘the real’” (Vázquez 2012: 8). Despite the historical fever of the modern/colonial world, it is a time with a dead history and memory, selectively amnesic, precisely because the way it remembers forgets the transcendental (the particular), recalls the banal (the universal), and reproduces the death logic. The dominant memory forgets its exercises of power,

²⁰⁸ Ricoeur (2004) distinguishes between blocked, forced, and manipulated memory. In the case of manipulated memory, he expresses: a “devious form of forgetting is at work here, resulting from stripping the social actors of their original power to recount their action themselves. But this dispossession is not without a secret complicity, which makes forgetting a semi-passive, semi-active behavior, as is seen in forgetting by avoidance ... a wanting-not-to-know” (449). As active, this “forgetting entails the same sort of responsibility as that imputed to acts of negligence, omission, imprudence, lack of foresight...” (449).

inhumanity and the suffering inflicted in the others, remembering the more universal, abstract bonds that tie people, the feeling of nationality.

Rebel memory and memory of transformation are then a struggle against imposed “forgetting” and attempted oblivion (to render inexistent). Domination has worked through it, eliminating difference, rendering invisible the *Others* and their *cosmovisions* and proposals, killing some of these subjects, negating even their resistance and agency, destroying community, and in the process hindering their own possibility to recreate the collective and *Nego-subjects*. In this process, under the modern/colonial onto-epistemology, the lineal conception of time aims to leave behind the “painful and backward” past, contributing in the present to a specific conception of peace and society. As Buck-Morss (2000) concludes, conceptions about “temporality have political implications” (60).

The problem for this hegemonic notion of time—the lineal time—is that although imposed oblivion wants to destroy the past, the past remains everywhere: in micro spaces, in the body, the person, and the collective. The current claims of afro-descendent and indigenous people are saying to Colombia that the horrors of colonialism are still alive, at the same time that relatives and victimized subjects’ bodies are telling them that the past is there, in their own micro-territory.

If, as we concluded in MOVICE’s workshop, “forgetting” is repressed memory (MOVICE-Bogotá 2013), the past is always there and it contains painful memories, then what to do? Colombia requires a serious dealing with the past, not through memory for the sake of memory but by means of a radical memory of transformation that looks to construct a future in which the injustices of the present will be no more. It necessarily implies carefully thinking about the kind of future that is envisioned; deciding what memories individuals and the collective are going *to put to rest* after dealing with them; healing; and reflecting about the subjects that are born thanks to the performative work of memory. It also has to discuss who is going to remember—extending this

duty to others beyond victimized subjects, enacting relationality and reciprocating the *gift* they give to society—as well as to critically elaborate on the relationship between past, memory, and the narration of history, something that I discussed in the first section of the dissertation.

Care, love, and life

*“When we love
we can let our
hearts speak”
(bell hooks 2000: xi)*

“In the last workshop with the MOVICE, in which we collectively discussed the way relatives and victimized subjects conceptualize peace, La Mache drew a woman with an indigenous symbol in her face, an *oshokonojushi*, a type of spiral that represents the flexibility of the Wayuu woman in front of reason.²⁰⁹ Facial painting has great importance for the Wayuu, especially women have been painting their faces for centuries in moments of great social significance. It represents their close relation or integration to the cosmos and nature. When they paint their faces, they choose a symbol that highlights a virtue or quality that they have. During our first workshop, when we painted our bodies as part as the MOVICE’s campaign: *Memory is in the skin*, La Mache painted the same symbol in her face” (Huitaca 2015).

Relatives and victimized subjects are developing a concrete political ontological practice and a politics of re-existence that includes aspects that have been misrecognized and sub-valORIZED by the modern/colonial and patriarchal onto-epistemology such as affect, intuition, and emotions. This reality is historically situated and it is also product of the association of emotions with the feminine, which has included the assignation of specific roles, spaces, and concrete emotions.



Figure 24: La Mache’s depiction of peace

[Source: Diana Marcela Gómez Correal]

²⁰⁹ Labor en el Aula (2015: http://feyalegriaguajira.blogspot.com/2013/12/suchepa-wayuu-pintura-facial_9130.html)

“The truth is that women do not understand the philosophy of **revolutions**, nor do they have the moral or intellectual strength to take care of political issues, in whose details they very often make mistakes. But **instinct** is more the base of their sense and insights to perceive justice, to have respectable **feelings**, and to exert **piety**” (Samper in Rojas 2002: 29).

“Public life is not women’s place. Women must remain at home, softening with their **care and smiles** the bitterness we brought from outside. ... [To women I say,] stay at home. Allow us the pleasure of being **president or dictators**, to bewilder in elections, insult in Congress, lie in newspapers, and **kill** our brothers in civil wars ... To accomplish her beautiful and heroic destiny, a woman does not need political rights, nor emancipation and independence as claimed by modern innovators. This is her **humanitarian and civilizing** mission, her true and heroic destiny: to support those **suffering**, to **sacrifice for the ones she loves**, to bring relief to the sick, to inspire compassion and virtue in her son’s heart; to fully accept the responsibilities of mother and daughter; to practice **charity** in the middle of a society full of **egoism and love for money**; to smooth habits and to bring home poetry appropriate to her charm, beauty, grace and **tenderness**” (Kastos 1855).

These quotes show the specificities assigned to white/mestizo women during the Independence, product of a patriarchal and *machista* society that on the one hand associates women with care, happiness, piety, instinct, feelings, humanitarianism, suffering, sacrifice, love, compassion, virtue, charity, and tenderness; on the other hand, it equates men with revolution, politics, violence, selfishness, and the act of killing.

This association between women and emotions has misrecognized the importance of both women and emotions in the production and engagement with the world, as well as the role of emotions in politics, domination, and violence. In addition to hiding the role of emotions in those domains, it has ignored the significance that affect and emotions have for constructing the social, their role in the production of knowledge and in enacting other kinds of human relationships; as well as women’s role in the maintenance of the community.

Beyond any kind of biological essentialism—which has been criticized by different feminists and is one of the main arguments against patriarchy—what is clear in the experience of relatives and victimized subjects in Colombia is that women have been cornerstone to the protection of life due to, among other things, their relation with care and love, while men historically have been those responsible in our society for the destruction of life. As Beauvoir (1981), Paredes (2010)

and (Varela 2005), among other intellectuals have shown, violence is assigned to men as a way to give him power and a sense of identity, making war almost always a “men’s game” (Sontag 2003).

It does not mean that women are the only ones that care or love, or that they do not go to war or exercise physical violence, but my argument is that there is a way to care and love that enhances life and relations in which women have historically been central. The same happens with other subjugated subjects that are associated with the feminine (peasants, indigenous, and Afro-descendent), due to their location in another dichotomies: civilized/savage, past/present, past/future, nature/culture.

Under this devaluation of emotions their potency as a form of knowledge is completely misrecognized, strengthening the dichotomous modern understanding of reason/emotion. As we observed in the fourth chapter, emotions are embodied thoughts (M. Rosaldo in Leavitt 1996) that are essential for engaging with people’s surroundings and events. They are a type of knowledge that induces decisions, elections, and actions, thus challenging logocentrism and the empire of reason. Furthermore, what relatives and victimized subjects’ experience shows, is that there are dimensions that remain incomprehensible for humans, and especially for modern rationality due to the preeminence of reason.

Thus, there are unconscious, non-rational mechanisms and processes through which people engage with the world that go beyond logocentrism and that have to do with affect, instinct, memory, dreams, and spirituality. This is precisely the meaning of the Wayuu symbol, women’s capacity to go beyond the rational, which opens the door to domains that can contain clues for facing the limits of reason.

Emotions are cornerstone to the construction of society and specific ties of caring and belonging, for which love and care are essential. They are also part of the construction of the Other that the divisions of the modern/colonial constitution US/THEM reproduce. As I discussed in the

first section of the dissertation as well as in the fourth chapter, emotions have also been employed for domination, but a type of *horizontal care and love* looks to have the potentiality to recreate and maintain relationality and life.

Bearing this in mind, I want to highlight some relevant aspects of a practice of life central to care and love. The construction of certain social bonds has been possible because of care, which in our society has been associated with women. The practice to care for others implies protecting their lives, ensuring their well being, and observing them as part of the same community. This type of care that emerges in micro spaces of the social—love relationships, family, neighborhoods, and communities— contributes to forge senses of belonging, and vice-versa, common identities foster relationships of mutual care. In these micro spaces, care works as a *gift* that is reciprocated, but that usually is more enacted, distributed, and circulated by women, which creates and furthers gender inequalities.

“So ... we arrived and we said, ‘*Madres por la Vida* wants to leave Colombia and Buenaventura a legacy, a Colombia where every child, every elder can watch the sunset, where we can start dreaming again, where we can laugh freely and live in peace, where each kid’s dreams, each person’s dreams can be made reality.’ So, we won’t allow any more atrocities against us, as women. And we said ‘us women’ because we’re the ones who care, bearing the burden, the ones leading, the ones who weep, who suffer for what other sisters are going through. That’s why... [we do] that **listening** that the government doesn’t do... [**we feel**] **the pain** that this sister has and [we put ourselves] in each others’ shoes, we see ourselves as human beings, **not as rivals or enemies**. That’s why it’s our dream to keep building things and why we invite each and every woman to unite and form groups to do the exercise of continuing to **dream**” (Candelaria, *Madres por la Vida*, 2011).

In order to face violence and the destruction of the social fabric, individual and collective projects, it is essential to spread and locate *horizontal care* at the center of social relationships with the entire society, including the notion of justice, and even with those that are conceived as political opponents. This does not mean that conflict is misrecognized but that putting care in the center could have the potentiality to avoid resolving conflicts by killing who thinks different. Moreover, it implies reformulating Descartes notion about the real through the notion *I feel-think therefore I am*.

The ontological assumption that *I think therefore I am*, negates the existence of many beings that from a logocentric perspective defines thinking in a particular way—such as the written word—denying women, indigenous, Afro-descendent, children, and the elderly’s other, and non-logocentric ways of thinking. Furthermore, this modern vision has misrecognized the role of emotions in the construction of the human, in identity and subjectivity.

Love and care are acts of recognition of the other as equal across difference, and it is the product of our engagement with them. This intimate knowledge can also be a tool of domination. Like Scarry points out, knowing another may well enables, rather than disable the capacity to inflict pain on that person (in Laqueur 2009: 37). This is the way in which “love and care” have been conceptualized in patriarchy, colonialism, and through the nation-state.²¹⁰ When love and care turns vertical, they are deprived of their capacity to forge relations and enhance life, making the latter disappear. In this process, there is not any way to escape to my own “dehumanization” when I “dehumanize” the other. My self-love, the love for those that I consider truly “my own,” became the destruction of the others and as well as my own, since we are all interconnected. This “love and care for domination” does not potentiate the autonomy of the other, but to the contrary, it eliminates it, generating dependency in some cases and destruction in others.

Thus, a context such as Colombia’s today requires horizontal love and care that can contribute to transform the hegemonic emotional habitus, and recognize radically different beings as worthy of those horizontal feelings. The recognition of radically diverse beings allows more than tolerance of differences, as proposed by multiculturalism. It must be practiced in them, and practiced in *us in connection with others*. The current capitalist, rational, and violent society has

²¹⁰ These notions of horizontal and vertical care and love need more reflection since the social ties that they create also produce a complex mesh of feelings, rationalities and obligations that if not are seriously thinking reproduces asymmetrical relationships of power that usually contribute to the social status quo. For instance, conflict between parents and children or between lovers is difficult to address since feelings of love, responsibility and debt – among others – are involved.

expropriated US from ourselves through the empire of individualism, competition, the market, commodities, reason, and war, making the encounter with the self and the others almost impossible.

Amid this reality, a liberatory care and love that recognizes the other in his/her potentialities, singularities, and vulnerabilities without exercising power of domination is essential. This requires significant changes in our subjectivities. First, the construction of reluctant subjects (Gibson-Graham 2006) capable of change, and second, the formation of critical subjects that monitor and control the seductive desire to dominant the other. These *senti-pensante* subjects are beings willing to work collectively for life as a way to impede violence and destruction. This necessarily requires a shift in our emotional habitus that also acknowledges the power of emotions, their capacity of destruction and construction, and that invites the “spectators” of social suffering to act in order to transform the conditions that have allowed the infliction of pain. As well Colombians have to recognize that hate is present, has been part of our emotional habitus, and in the hands of some has been translated into violence and the physical elimination of the opponent.

On the other hand, compassion, charity, or pity is not the best way to reciprocate victimized subjects’ *gift*. As Ticktin (2006) states, when humanitarianism is enacted through a moral imperative of compassion and “fills in for the failure of political-rights discourses and practices, the exclusionary effects can be brutal (...) rather than furthering human dignity, the result is a limited version of what it means to be human” (34). Thus, a politics of compassion produces a limited humanity that keeps political, class, racial and gender hierarchies intact, maintaining certain people as less than human. Sentiments for “humanity generally did not translate easily into care for humanity at hand (...) This strange optic may indeed have enabled, as much post-colonial history writing suggests, an ever mounting level of imperial violence against imperial subjects beyond the limits of sentiment (...)” (Laqueur 2009: 33). In other words, charity is not the same as solidarity (Tate 2007: 78-79).

The *gift* that the subjects of this research are giving to Colombian society and to the construction of “peace” requires an emotional engagement through *horizontal effective* solidarity, love, care, practice, and action. This involves changes in daily life, in the personal and the collective, at the micro and macro levels, and in politics. For that is it fundamental to learn to see with different eyes, and not with those that we have internalized through patriarchy and colonialism, which foster sentiments of superiority that destroy any possible horizontal relationship with the others. The country needs care and love rooted in the collective that does not aim to kill, oppress or suffocate, but that enables life. This will propagate the existence of *Nego-subjects* capable of caring and fighting for freedom, and also able to experience it. As bell hooks (2000) reflects, “profound changes in the way we think and act must take place if we are to create a loving culture” (xxiv).

Privileging this particular emotional engagement can encourage other transformations in the way society is constituted. It will include a reorganization of gender relationships—extending the role of caring to men—and widening the beings that should be subjects of care: the human that is different, nature, the dead, land, plants, animals, and objects. This will contribute to the strengthening of *comunalidad* (communality), a way of being in which the communal condition, the US, forms the first layer of the meaning of the “*existencia propia*” (one’s own existence) (Esteva in Escobar 2014: 54). Although Esteva considers that this project can be only possible in real entities such as the community, I consider that there are other “real” entities where *comunalidad* can be materialized such as social movements, organizations, families, and other communities of belonging.

I want to mention one last reflection in relation with emotions. The ways they work, as embodied sensations, problematize not only the reason/emotion dichotomy, but also the modern vision about the person and the body. In some modern trends of thought, the body is defined as the place of biological data that marks the boundaries between the interior self and the external world

(Marcos 2000: 101), fixing it. This contrasts with relatives and victimized subjects narrations that allow seeing the existence of an “organic entity” that integrates mind-spirit-emotions and is constituted through a diverse number of relations. This entity—that is not self-contained but porous—is also product of the relationship with others. The human being, Ingold (2000) says, is a “singular locus of creative growth within a continually unfolding field of relationships” (4-5) that is part of a world inhabited by beings of manifold kinds (human and non-humans).

Healing through relationality

*“I would think that [we] also
[get sick] in the heart”
(Camila 2013)*

“Forgiveness has become an imperative in the present, but contrary to what we might expect, since Colombia is predominantly a Catholic country, some Catholic victimized subjects have decided to not accept apologies. This was the case of a woman whose son was killed as part of the *Falsos Positivos* that the Armed Forces carried out as a military strategy under President Uribe, during a period in which current President Santos was Minister of Defense. Forgiveness has been accompanied by the idea of reconciliation, one that seems difficult to reject if one supports the peace negotiation process. For me, both notions are very problematic. On two occasions during my most recent visit to Colombia in the summer of 2014, I expressed that reconciliation cannot be the responsibility of the victimized subjects but of those that have decided to kill each other, and those that have supported war and violence. I do not have anyone with whom I must to come to terms, since I have not done anything to anybody. The fact that I do not forgive or reconcile with the victimizers does not mean that I will obstruct peace or see them as my enemies” (Huitaca 2015).

Transitional justice in one or another way pretends to “heal” the nation—the body politics—in order to continue with its legitimization without having to radically transform almost anything. As Wilson (2001) states, “healing is the popular idiom for building the nation” and the treatment that is proposed is “truth-telling and, flowing from this, forgiveness and reconciliation.” It does that, the author continues, opening the wounds of the collective body, cleansing them, and stopping them from festering (14-15).

In Colombia the discourse of forgiveness and reconciliation is neither new nor only part of the context of transitional justice. To the contrary, it is embedded in Christian beliefs, although they have not been applied by every believer in the country. Forgiveness entails a certain morality and emotions that make it mandatory in this religious discourse; Jesus Christ teaches that if you are slapped on the right cheek, turn the other cheek also (Luke 6:29). It is a way to forget what occurred, the damage provoked by other, and to do not claim anything for the suffering inflicted, as if suffering is something normal. The idea of reconciliation is tied to a notion of abstract and romantic peace that aims to re-establish harmony, when harmony has not existed for decades and centuries among certain actors, and when there are human acts that are unforgivable.

“Reconcile yourself with them? **No, I don’t think so.** For example, I can’t... Oh, my God that would be really intense to be face to face with a murderer! To think that many people have such a strong heart to be able to say I forgive you... For me, it was my daughter that that person killed, and the way they did it... So it would cause so much pain to see one of the people who... did such a thing to my daughter. I wouldn’t have the strength to forgive... may God forgive me, but to imagine that he killed a person, a little girl” (La Mache 2013).

It also, intended or not, erases the emotions that are produced as part of the violence inflicted. As many relatives and victimized subjects state, forgiveness is an optional choice. The first thing that society has to do is to face and recognize the emotions that violence has provoked, social suffering, their consequences, the force of emotions, and the different trajectories that affect have unleashed depending upon the social actors. Colombia has to acknowledge that although victimized subjects experience hate, rage, and feelings of revenge, they have opted for non-violent means, placing dignity and life at the center.

“Well, forgiveness is **individual and it can’t be forced**; it’s each person’s choice, not even each family, but each person ... I continue to say **neither forgiveness nor forgetting.** Because in this case it’s not about forgiveness, it’s about justice. So, forgiveness also creates impunity, because... Forgiveness doesn’t ... give you back, it doesn’t take away the pain, but it also doesn’t give you back the person or those moments ... And reconciliation, well, I honestly don’t even think about that. I think **we are so far from reconciliation**, because there’s so much impunity and so much **anger and rage** ... I think that we should recognize our differences ... that others think differently, act differently... but to reconcile ourselves with the murderers, not me” (Camila 2013).

The decision to not forgive is a way to say that there are human acts that are unpardonable, and that in consequence cannot occur again. This position is a moral and ethical claim that from my perspective contributes more to the society than imposed forgiveness. Reconciliation is a long-term process that cannot be imposed.

“Well, I think that ... it’s **not something that can come about all at once**, I mean **the wounds are so deep** that it’s something that has to come about little by little ... First, we have to bury the dead, and when the dead are in their rightful place, **since they are the ones who have given us all this strength**, then perhaps that forgiveness will come when **our spirits can get rid of all the rage**, can bury the rage as well and then perhaps we can really be able to forgive those that did this, but not before” (Juan Tomás 2013).

One important question that needs to be addressed is who reconciles with whom. From the perspective of diverse relatives and victimized subjects, the reconciliation has to take place between the victimizers.

“**Who am I going to reconcile with** and who am I going to forgive if they haven’t even presented themselves to be forgiven or be reconciled with? To borrow from what professor Umaña said about his son when they say forgiving and forgetting to him, ‘Who do I forgive if no one has come before me, and who do I forget? Do I forget my son? With whom do I have reconciliation? I didn’t fight with you, I didn’t fight with the students, I didn’t fight with the unions’ ... I’m not going to reconcile myself with the students or with Colombian society since I didn’t fight with them ... At this point, since life is always changing, **at this point I’m not forgiving** ... Let their gods forgive them, let their families forgive them for being murderers. I have no reason to forgive them” (Mamoncillo 2013).

Wilson considers that “reconciliation in an effort to forge a new moral vision of the nation in the end destroys the most important promise of human rights; that is, its possible contribution to a thoroughgoing transformation of an authoritarian criminal justice system and the construction of real and lasting democratic legitimacy” (Wilson 2001: 230). From my perspective, to the contrary, human rights cannot transform and bring change by itself. Thus, neither the law nor religion, or their mere integration can be the solution. What the present requires, among other things that I have mentioned in this chapter—deep cultural changes that transform the symbolic and material relationship that Colombians have with difference, transformations in the hegemonic emotional

habitus, and a preeminence of practice—is a profound process of healing. This is of great importance since as the body says: the wound is there.

How to heal?

“Juan Tomás: To heal ourselves, we speak to the elders ... the way of dealing with it is spiritual, we have to heal our souls. When we heal our souls, then we’ll heal ourselves.

Diana: And how do you heal your soul?

Juan Tomás: Well, it’s going to, each person has a special place in nature, a space where they go, where they talk, say, it’s a rock, a river, a tree. So, you go there and start to say all those things that make you suffer, that is, to cry about them, to say them there and then you start feeling that calm coming to you.

Diana: Hmm.

Juan Tomás: Last year, before coming here, I had never climbed to [the summit of] the Sierra [Nevada de Santa Marta] ... [We got to the highest peak] ... [and a *Mamo* tells us,] ‘You all were brought here by your ancestors because you have a wound that you haven’t been able to heal’ ... We were up so high... it’s an indescribable place.

Diana: How beautiful!

Juan Tomás: There, you heal, you feel ... that the process begins, I mean, you don’t heal all at once, but you get tranquility ... it gives you a clear vision of what you have in life... I mean, you are cleansed because ... the place is indescribable! [*laughing*] (Juan Tomás 2013).

From my perspective, and following what the victimized subjects of this research feel-think, healing requires more than opening wounds and cleaning them, because healing is necessarily linked with the *true* and effective *truth*, a *dignified justice*, and a *real recognition*. In the transitional justice and State’s perspective, mourning and healing have an end, it is possible to close this “stage” of individual and collective life, when what some victimized subjects are saying is that it is not possible. The past will always be there, but in order that it does not represent excessive pain, it is necessary to individually and collectively address it. The hegemonic model and treatment rejects that there are some wounds that are irreparable by denying that what occurred profoundly disturbed the social order and the moral and ethical arrangements through which the collective works.

Therefore, a first step towards victimized subjects and nation's healing is that the *demands* of truth, justice, and reparation fulfill victimized subjects' expectations as much as possible. Due to the complex context of the present that makes it necessary to "negotiate" some victimized subjects' rights, it is peremptory that the State, the victimizers, and even more importantly from my perspective, **the society** commit to contribute in the medium and long term to demand and materialize the *true* and *effective truth*, a *dignified justice*, and a *real recognition*. After all, victimized subjects' demands – which are not only their "rights" but the "rights" of the entire society—have been proposed as foundational elements of societal life.

Similarly, the entire society has to acknowledge that there are acts that are irreparable, and the State and victimizers have to recognize that they inflicted a terrible pain that leaves a profound mark that does not disappear by asking for forgiveness. Thus, healing is not to erase the past, as the hegemonic model pretends, but to process it and learn to leave more relieved. The point is that this is not only a task of the "victims," but a collective responsibility. In order to advance in this, some Colombians have to change their emotional engagements with victimized subjects, especially with those victimized by the State and the paramilitaries, and they have to stop justifying the "dehumanization" of certain people as well as the existence of some armed actors and their acts of terror.

The fact that healing has a collective character and greatly depends on truth opens a big question for victimized subjects. What to do in a possible scenario in which neither the *true truth*, a *dignified justice*, a *real recognition*, or Colombians' engagement occurs? Besides continuing the memory work, victimized subjects have to take seriously their bodies, hearts, and souls, and deal with the past and haunting memories, process painful recollections, and even, if necessary, stop their activism and struggles for a period or periods of time, in order to re-center the *self*.

As I mentioned before, violence undoes relationships, one of them with our selves. To re-center the self does not mean to reproduce the idea of the self-contained person, the liberal autonomous subject, but to address the particularity of each history in specific bodies, fluids, and organs, recognizing that the entire body is a web of relationships. This is not an individual task, it is impossible to heal in complete solitude, but an exercise that require multiple, radical others, including the dead, animals, mountains, water, nature, ancestors, family, comrades, friends, *mamos*, and psychologists, among others, since we not only have to heal the scars of the “internal armed conflict,” but more profound wounds, those inflicted also by patriarchy and the modern/colonial world. Healing—not as an end process—implies recognizing the interconnection of the entire person-body, the interconnection of each member of the society, and the interconnection with the entire universe. This means that mourning has also a collective dimension.

Territory: a weaving of co-emergent multiple relations

*“Uncovered in the ashes,
you will find the warm placenta
that your mother robed you in.”*
(Jamioy 2010: 67)

*“Of corn are my songs
and of water my essence.”*
(Chikangana 2010: 109)

“Ever since I was a boy I always [had dreams], more than dreams ... like visions or the ability to see, to interpret people. Since I was very small I remember that I didn’t eat any kind of animals that were killed by knife, no pigs, goats, no cattle ... I ate all kinds of wild animals: doves and birds ... I didn’t eat meat soup either ... And I think that’s what gave me the ability not only to dream [but also to have] visions [in which I could] do a sort of x-ray of the body ... There was a lady that was very old ... and every time she visited ... she brought me ... wild fruits that she found in the forest, on the trails ... As time went by, as I spent more time with the elders ... I asked, ‘what does this mean?’ ... and [they responded] that ‘when you go places, you should gather ... all those fruits and that was in order to take them to the wise ones, to those who had wisdom, that had gifts.’ And so I was able to understand that I had those gifts and that the old woman knew it ... About six months ago I was talking to a Kogi wise man and he was saying, ‘You never lose that ... just when you get caught up in the bustle of everyday life, that running around, that materialism where you’re only thinking about work, money, all that stuff from outside, that you come to live an agitated life and that fogs up your gift, but it’s always there When you take things at

nature's pace, you realize that when you go out, even the animals that are out there are like friends and they [come closer]. So, when you go back to that spirituality, that stays with you" (Juan Tomás 2012).

"I feel that I have a close relationship to the ancestors, with those that have passed on. I see them, I speak to them, sometimes to get messages about what might happen, what to avoid, to see how they can help me or others from where they are ... Death is a natural thing for us, it's not anything to fear. Our ancestors walk with us, they walk ahead, we walk behind, they light our way ... They are always there accompanying me ... The dead are not here, but they continue filling a place there. I'm always aware of them and that allows me to be at peace, in harmony with all that surrounds me, with nature, with myself" (Juan Tomás 2012).



Figure 25: Don Pedro's depiction of peace

[Source: Diana Marcela Gómez Correal]

These narrations are the expression of a different cosmology, another understanding of the world, a different ontology and epistemology that is based in relationality with nature and the death, that recognizes spirituality as a core part of social life and dreams as knowledge production, and that have its concretization in territory. Although Juan Tomás is expressing the thought of the Kankuamo people, similar understandings are part of other indigenous nations and afro-descendent communities in Colombia such as the Wayuu, the Indigenous of the Northern of Cauca, and the Process of Black Communities, among others.

Giving the importance that the discussion about land has in the current conjuncture, and the centrality that territory has for the victimized subjects, it is important—in order to eradicate one of the structural causes of violence—to comprehend how victimized subjects conceive them and what the relationship with the territory entails. When victimized subjects, especially those that are from

the countryside, from peasant, indigenous and Afro-descendent communities, insistently say that their situation was better before, this is not simply an idealization of the past, but a deep complaint that is telling us that something really unique existed in their places of origin that war has destroyed or is destroying. The uniqueness has to do with other ways of being in the world, of inhabiting and relating with multiple others.

This is what explains how Don Pedro—the older man that represented peace with land— frequently spoke with nostalgia and a profound love about the countryside. The same happened with La Mache, Antonia, and others that have been forcibly displaced, and who are demanding to return to their territories. During the last workshop with the MOVICE, Don Pedro expressed that peace for him is to be in his place of origin inhabiting a house surrounded by trees, the river, and land, having the possibility to work it, grow crops, and provide his own food. Don Pedro, who was in every workshop that I carried out, has experienced violence almost since he born. He first lived trough *La Violencia*; and for some years now, he is living in Bogotá, a gray concrete jungle that is indifferent to him.

For the Yanacunas and Camëntšá, two indigenous nations that are located in Colombia, as well as for others that have brought up with a direct relationship with land, land is the mother, who gives birth to humans. At the same time *she* makes a fundamental part of an “organic totality” that contains collective and inalienable dimensions, and that works, as Muyolema (2011) asserts, as a sacred time/space where life is recreated in connection with multiple others. This “organic totality” is territory.

For the relational onto-epistemologies, territories are vital time/spaces of the entire community of men and women, as well as of interrelation with the natural world, which is an essential part of it. In that way, the interrelation with those worlds produces synergies and complementarity for the women-men universe, but also for the reproduction of the natural worlds

(Escobar 2014). For that reason, Juan Tomás talks about certain rules of eating animals and plants that look to maintain equilibrium.

Land is sacred, among other things, because it is the abode of life and death, and it is a bridge between both dimensions and between the transformations that the two entails. As the Yanacona indigenous Fredy Chinkangana (2010) expresses, in “the land are rituals of subterranean beings, that bind our blood with lianas of time ... We return as the tooth of the tiger, poem of the night, drum of the mare, song of the flute at the high time of night, in the deepness of the grand mountain” (23). To return to the land, humans transform into something that we already are, as an integral part of the organic totality.

It is in territory for those who were raised outside cities that the relationship with the dead takes place. In these traditions, there is a permanent inter-connection between death and life that regenerates—enacts—life and reality. The dead are also the *memory* that constructs humans, such as occurs with the victimized subjects. The loved one, although he/she is not alive, has agency and power over people’s present and future. Death is a “vital materiality” that can never really be thrown “away,” for it “continues its activities even as a discarded or unwanted commodity” (Bennett 2010: 6). They are beings with power (thing-power).

Bennett (2010) asserts that matter and energy have the potential for self-organization, and that to “begin to experience the relationship between persons and other materialities more horizontally, is to take a step toward a more ecological sensibility” (Bennett 2010: 10). “If matter itself is lively, then not only is the difference between subjects and objects minimized, but the status of the shared materiality of all things is elevated” (Bennett 2010: 13).

“The wandering dead/ that **speak** from the stars
so as to **live** eternally on Earth
with **waking dreams**
and a **warrior** spirit” (Chikangana 2010: 45).

In these verses, the dead is associated with verbs. They are part of traditions of struggle and help to forge a collective identity through the exercise of memory, and are also part of the quotidian. From my point of view, it is the recognition of the relationship with death as well as with the ancestors that gives strength to the indigenous struggle and their logic of an “organic totality.”

“The voices of our Yanakuna dead wander / around these lands.
The wander in the form of rivers,
and memory of water,
vibrating like a tree in the wind.
That’s why I sing
so that the flowers and the trails can sing
(...)
so the moon will know that I am Yanakuna
man of water and rainbows” (Chikangana 2010: 83)

The relational onto-epistemologies bring through concrete practices and narratives a particular understanding of the world, how it works, and how it is constituted. Under the enactment of an “organic totality,” these relational onto-epistemologies do not perform the division between nature/culture and the individual/community. Therefore, animals, the dead, mountains, and other elements are essential to the notion of the real, of what constitutes worlds. Land, in consequence, is not conceptualized as a separate object but as an essential part of a whole. It is precisely this sense of totality through relations that is destroyed by violence, and what the victimized subjects are making visible and trying to reconstitute.

These particular notions of land-territory challenge the liberal and capitalist views about the inevitability and universality of capitalism, progress and growth, as well as the notion of the self-interest man (*Homo economicus*) (Polanyi 2001). As the narratives that I recounted in the fifth chapter show, indigenous and Afro-descendants’ worlds were/are based on reciprocity and redistribution, all essential before the Great Transformation took place (Polanyi 2001).

They are testimony of multiple resistances to the economic progress that capitalism looks to achieve even at the price of social dislocation (Polanyi 2001), as has been the case in Colombia.

Something that I heard on many occasions was a different conception about wealth that is not associated with money but with having access to a good quality of life in terms of food, housing, environmental conditions and health, among others aspects.

“Today he’s in the government ... and he told me ... that yes, that I shouldn’t talk that way, [that they would give me reparations]. I told him, ‘don’t talk to me about reparations, don’t even start because on my land I had my riches, I wasn’t poor on my land, I didn’t even need a refrigerator, because the river was my refrigerator! And because I could eat what I wanted! ... We [never] lose our dignity and none of us are displaced. Not displaced because we were registered that way, displaced because they took us off our land and took it away, but we struggle on ... we’re not bending our knees to the government!” (Eloisa, *Madres por la Vida*)

“Being displaced... is one of the most terrible things that can happen to a human being... In my case, I lived in Juradó and was one of the most ... well off people ... although I didn’t have a lot, but I was well off because ... I had ... a healthy environment” (Antonia, *Afrodes*).

These are examples of other conceptions of *Buen Vivir* (good life, living well), that challenges historicism, one of the central aspects that is urgent to rethink in order to provincializing Europe (Chakrabarty 2000). Historicism includes the relation with the idea of progress, historical stages, the lineal and integral time, the notion of singularity of historical time, and the principle of interpretation that considers that Europe was the first place in which the important processes of humanity occurred. These visions have worked as a way to measure cultural distance, legitimating the idea of civilization, and constructing the notion of an imaginary waiting room of history, the room that Colombia will supposedly soon occupy. This is a historicism that during the twentieth-century has constructed the idea of the “now,” the present that invites all people—including subalterns—to share the *future* of democracy, as we observed transitional justice to claim. This unique, universal future that destroys any possibility of the pluriverse, attacks those that oppose to it: peasants, indigenous, and Afro-descendent people.

“But what for one person is a basic necessity, for another person is not. So, we can’t speak of one option for development in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country like Colombia without there being as many options for development as there are cultures, right? Our way of life ... here in the Pacific Region, which is directly related to culture, we look at natural

resources not as a source of wealth, but as a space to recreate life. When the State designs macro and mega-projects in our territories that violate the tranquility of our communities, we have declared ourselves permanently in opposition to those models of development. So, they have seen us as an obstacle to the model of development that want to implement here ... and they've branded us as subversives to try to take us off of our lands. We've been resisting this for more than 20 years" (Manuel, PCN 2011).

Under the current hegemonic transition, the promise of the future is again concretize through development, the same discursive device that invented the third world (Escobar 1996), and justified the intervention of international powers. Since development is cornerstone to Santos' project, it is important to remember that it is a cultural and economic project (capitalist and imperialist) that emerged from the particular experience of European modernity, subordinating all other cultures and knowledge (Escobar 2009). At the center of development is "economic growth, the exploitation of natural resources, the market logic, and the search for the material and individual benefit over any other goal." This is a particular form of modernity that, as Vandana Shiva asserts, creates "mental monocultures" that erode "human and natural diversity" (in Escobar 2009: 26). In that sense, transitional justice is also a battlefield with an ontological dimension.

The ontological struggle also contains a different conception of politics that necessarily includes the cases of indigenous, peasants, and Afro-descendent people, other beings. In the following narration, Juan Tomás is bringing to the ontological struggle, and in consequence to politics, earth-beings (entities). This may evince a moment of rupture of modern politics (De la Cadena 2008: 2) contributing to rethink politics and its constituents, and working also as a way to provincialize Europe (Chakrabarty 2000).

Modern politics, as De la Cadena (2008) states, is tied to the denial of the state of Nature. It first differentiates between friends and enemies among humans; and then separates humanity from Nature (the other-than-human being). Additionally, it expelled the dead as well (the other-than-life). In this conception, the pluriverse disappeared and the ontological struggle is make invisible.

“The elders have always taught us that we breathe before we are born and ... that our parents are paying nature so that ... when a child is born, it’s born strong and healthy and wise, and it’s born a person that will do good service for the people, the community, society, in other words, an example. So, from the time they conceive ... even before conceiving, as soon as they are thinking and planning to have a child, the parents are already going to certain places to pay for that, I mean, so that the ancestors are lighting the way for that well being to come. When a child is born... you pay for that. And... they say that what happened was that people forgot about doing that. And... since they forgot about that, it was like... picking up habits from outside, I mean, things that weren’t theirs... They stopped doing what they should and started... focusing on outside things: that those were better, that those things would bring change, development, prosperity, and so they stopped doing their rituals and payments (inhaling)... and they became savages like the... animals. Because to eat any of the fruits that were there, you used to leave the first fruit that ripened there as a payment to nature... and the animals came and ate it and that’s what made the crops abundant... and when... you hunted any animal, you first went to a certain place and asked for permission to use that animal, to eat it. And... afterward, those animals reproduced more and more and when you ate them you didn’t do them harm... But then people became so that... they killed animals, they grabbed them and tied them up... mercilessly, without asking permission or doing that ritual... The soul of nature knows that that animals were put there for us to eat... when you catch the animal, it was conscious of the fact that his time had come to be food. But [now]... the spirit of the animals has begun to be resentful. All those things were turned around at a certain point. [For example,] iguanas were hunted and tied with their hands behind their back and then they cut off their heads. [So then] you... started to see how the armed groups came and tied people by their hands, hung them up... then cut their heads off and stabbed them, so you say to yourself, ‘That was the same thing we did with the animals.’ I mean, a natural process was reverted to that we stopped doing, because you were supposed to ask permission to do that. And that’s why all this happened, because we thought that outside things were better than what we had... [This is] the cosmo-natural explanation of what happened, because we used to pay to keep away bad things, but people started forgetting about what they had to pay so that bad people wouldn’t come... And people [started] defending themselves with weapons (Juan Tomás 2013).

The different expressions of other non-modern dualistic ontologies that are present in the experience of the victimized subjects invites us to recognize their existence and think collectively about the discussion they are bringing and how they contribute to the materialization of a peace—or *state of society*—capable of decoding the war code. So far, through these other narrations, practices, and conceptions, the victimized subjects are saying that is urgent to rethink the notion of the human, the relationship with nature, earth, the planet, and the universe, as well as social arrangements. They are also talking about other ways of producing knowledge—emotions, instinct, affect, dreams, memory—and the preeminence that relations have for the construction of nature-culture worlds.

Their visions challenge and in some aspects go beyond the promises of the hegemonic modernity: democracy and capitalism, imagining and acting new political imaginaries that have the possibility to face the empire of death and destruction.

Re-birth

“Huitaca emerges as a possibility to go beyond Creonte, the Sovereign, the fatherland, the Nation-state. Huitaca is born from Creonte’s violence but has decided to escape in one-way or another from the ritualistic way of victimization. She has to face that she was broken, that she is never going to be the same, but at the same time that she is not completely a new being. She has the *human necessity (entitlement)* to cry, to fall, to be sad, to remember, but she also has the profound necessity to breathe new air, to imagine and enact new worlds and possibilities. She needs to be attentive to every capture of her energy, her affect, in the unbearable circle of suffering and in the power of domination that recreates forever the same project of death: modernity/coloniality. Yes, she is a subject of suffering but she is not only that. She is a being of struggles and dignity that has to find and join other imaginary worlds and to start experiencing that her suffering is not only hers. Huitaca needs the others. One, two, dozen, millions, the number does not matter, but others with whom she can walk this path, a new possibility. People with whom she can hold hands, hear, observe, and recognize each other. A recognition that acknowledges their importance in the construction of the social fabric, and the responsibility that they have with each other. Others with whom she can recreate the collective, acknowledging that relations make the world, and that we all need each other. Huitaca requires being cared for by those that have been living the same situation and those that have not, and she needs to care for others. Huitaca has to have the courage to walk this path with maybe only a few, and to have the strength to build a leak, another conjuncture, another virtual reality mediated by affect that disputes the meaning of the hegemonic transition, the actual” (Huitaca 2015).

As part of the process of victimization and politicization a new identity emerges. Some victimized subjects have opted to name themselves as relatives, while others have been born in the era of the “victim” as part of the peace discourses and the boom of memory and transitional justice. The construction of the identity of relative/victim is an onerous dynamic that involves pervasive and difficult emotions as well as the experience of social suffering. This identity goes hand in hand with transformations in daily life, and many times is accompanied by senses of fear and insecurity.

This identity gives origin to a new subject that sometimes forgets his/her other subject positions; the identity of victim becomes the main self-identification and they lose the potentiality of the other subjects’ locations enabling the formation of a hybrid—creole—subject. The entire

structuration of the new subject is product of both the power of domination and resistance, but when the identity of victim becomes an end and not a means of the struggle, it gives to some extent more materialization to the subject product of the power of domination providing at the same time materiality to the continuation of oppression.

Victimized subjects require analyzing their own process and experience of identity formation and subjective transformation, observing how and where that power of domination is becoming pervasive. Part of challenging that power is to enact a politics of liberation that necessarily has to include a fight for happiness, and to take seriously healing and mourning. As interconnected persons, the construction of a strategic identity of victim that does not leave behind the previous subject and their identities requires a community of collective *permanent becoming*. The community does not have to be big but it is essential to have others with whom to share the subjective fight.

Part of getting away from the dominant identity of violence—one of the power effects of the power of oppression—is to formulate a political horizon beyond the personal experience of victimization. This requires articulation with other struggles, and having the capacity to recognize not only the structure of domination that has produced the violence that has affected the person, but the others that touch other subjects and that are a core part of the dominant matrix of the present.

The struggle of the victimized people that opt to be political subjects—such as those that are part of this research—includes a demand of recognition. That recognition comprises the existence of the “victim,” the acts of violence that took place, their logic, those intellectually and materially responsible, and the rationality behind it. The demand for recognition emerges as an answer to the permanent logic of negation of certain subjects, their struggles, and contributions to society; it goes beyond political violence and has to do with the structural violence that has accompanied the

formation of the nation-state. This long logic of negation has helped to create subjects with a “shortfall” of recognition that is exacerbated with the experience of victimization.

The recognition of the identity of victim goes beyond acknowledgment by the victimizer and the State, and includes the society in its totality. Identities and recognition are relational. For that reason, it is of tremendous importance for relatives/victimized subjects that the victimizer, the State, and society put a name to their experience of violence. In this sense, *Sons and Daughters*'s concept about social impunity is central because it also addresses the responsibility of the Colombian society in the current situation, the necessity that Colombians reject impunity, and that they play a role in the recognition of victimization and the materialization of victimized subjects' demands and proposals.

Both the negation and the recognition of the character of “victim” impacted people's subjectivity, struggles, and trajectories. Besides producing them, the State has the power to decide when it recognizes Colombians or not as “victims,” and how long this condition lasts. Thus, the idea of the hegemonic victim is trapped between their demands and the invisibilization, domestication, and cooptation of the State in the category and logic of victimization that it creates.

Although recognition is a valid demand, it also can entail “traps” such as the hope of being similar to the oppressor or to emulate the hegemonic subject; they become enamored with the recognition of certain interlocutors, such as the media, academia, and politicians, thus playing a game that contributes to the invisibilization of other victimized subjects and masking the still very alive situation of discrimination and silencing of certain “victims.” That type of recognition can foster individualistic leaderships that are more concerned with individual acknowledgment and prominence than for building collective projects for the benefit of other “victims” and subjects.

The relatives of this story that identify themselves as victims (only one does not identify as such but uses it strategically) do so to make visible that a crime, the unthinkable, took place in their

lives and that it is their *right* that this reality is acknowledged not only by the State but also by society. With the category they are appealing to the social bond, to make visible that something was profaned: both the Living and the Dead alongside “the social contract.” They are claiming *reciprocity* with the State, society, and the victimizers. They are proposing—not necessarily in an explicit manner—ways to heal the social body and continue with the construction of more equitable social belonging. There lies the tremendous importance of their “gift.”

Under the hegemonic logic, only the suffering of some victimized subjects is valued and taken into account. Those that reject the category and are struggling for publicly debating the use of violence by the State, risk being rendered invisible in the current conjuncture—and maybe forever—because the recognition of the past in their stories and the achievement of part of their demands is crossed by the identity of victim. Underwater of that identity the main interlocutor is the State. The State is responsible for granting justice, truth, reparation, recognition, and guarantees of non-repetition; yet how will victims’ demands be fulfilled through the State in a context in which the State negates many of the victims that it itself produces? What can these subjects do?

The current conjuncture requires imagination and to re-invent the self. The creation of the new subject: the relative/victimized subjects should be understood as part of a permanent becoming that relates the before and after of the *affective event* not as the end of the previous subject, but the permanent relation of past, present, and future, obviously without misrecognizing the havoc of violence and how heavy and difficult social suffering is. Imagination and re-invention of the self is not an insolated project, but part of a political imagination and practice that looks to give birth to *another future/other futures* in conversation with the past. This process requires short-term futures, in which even the non-recognition of the State does not mean that the subject gets stuck in suffering and the negation of their experience; it requires enacting their own conceptions of justice that go beyond modern, liberal propositions.

“My mother never believed in these things... my mother is an evangelical. One day, after all this happened and things had more or less calmed down, I said, ‘I’m going back to the reservation, I’m going to the village [Atanquez] and I’m going to... travel around those places where I wandered as a kid, like the streams, the rivers, the sacred pools’... The day I arrived, a congress of the indigenous organization was taking place [in 2006]. I went there and I remember the last day when we finished it was around 5 minutes til midnight. So it had been a success, we had a lot of international accompaniment because we were starting to build a strong political organization, people started believing in the process and in unity and that the organization was going to help us get past all that we had lived through. And after [the meeting], the elders... said, ‘In thanks to the mother and the ancestors, we’re going to do a dance, we’re going to dance a chicote... and everyone formed a circle and the dance started. When we finished the dance, we all embraced, and we felt that there was a positive energy running through us all, and I remember I had taken my cell phone to the village for the first time and it turned off... it ran out of battery [I thought]... the next day... [when] I turned it on, it had returned to the same day that I was born... a Thursday... in 1980, and more or less at 1:45 am... I said, ‘this thing is broken’... I went back [to Valledupar], but I was paying attention [to the phone]... When we got to the place that marks Western civilization, the black line, the phone immediately went back to normal... [Days later, when] I went back [to Atanquez] I went to see an elder... and I told him about it... It was all as though I was being reborn, and he said, ‘Do you know why that happened to you?’ ‘I’ve been trying to put together a puzzle and I think... that with all the time I’ve been off the land, away from the mother, nature was calling me... it was telling me that there are many things that I should do for my people, for my land, for the territory, for its defense, I mean, I think that’s what it’s telling me. And it said to me, ‘Make no mistake, you’ve been reborn and you have a high mission to complete. It’s not easy, but it’s not impossible either, and the mother will help show the way. You have a commitment with that’” (Juan Tomás 2012).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The current conjuncture, in which the direction of Colombia will be defined, cannot be understood without employing a long-term perspective that allows us to comprehend both the continuities and changes that the colonial experience and the four transitional moments²¹¹ that I identified as key in the consolidation of the present country have meant for the formation of the existing society. Under this gaze it is possible to observe that violence has been consubstantial to the formation of the nation-state, not as an exception of the Western model of civilization but rather as one of its main constituents, and as a predictable outcome in an “ex-colonial” context. As part of that reality, the State has displayed an *illegitimate use of the legal monopoly of violence*, through which everything that is considered outside of the norm and a possible threat to the hegemonic model of society is physically and/or symbolically eliminated. This includes the Left, but also “women,” indigenous, Afro-descendent and peasant’s communities, as well as any Colombian that is conceptualized as dispensable and less-than-human.

Thanks to the life stories that I followed in this dissertation it is possible to see that some of the technologies of violence employed by the State and the paramilitaries resemble colonial practices and logics of violence; such is the case of enforced disappearances and forced displacement. This violence—as well as some of the expressions of guerrillas’ military action—has as one of their main results the undoing of relationality on different levels: the family, the community, political organizations and social movements, with nature, the cosmos, and the self. State and paramilitary violence looks to destroy any other social, political, cultural, and economic

²¹¹ These four processes are: the formation of the Nation-state, the National Front, the Constitution of 1991, and the struggle for peace of the last twenty years.

alternative to the model of society that was imposed with the Conquest: the Western model of civilization, having as one of its principal targets the appropriation and expropriation of land-territory and body-territory.

Structural violence has been inserted and embodied in Colombians' daily life, bodies, and subjectivities, contributing to the shrinking of the political imagination of some subjects. Thus, the prolonged history of that violence has been a factor in the perdurability of the hegemonic modernity as *the* political horizon since the common understanding is that the country is under violence due to do not being completely modern. The Enlightenment principle of reason did not banish the practice of violence in Colombia; to the contrary, the State's reason has been performed through it.

The roots of structural violence are political, social, economic, cultural, and symbolic exclusion as well as land grabbing. In this context, state criminality has existed since the very beginning of the formation of the nation-state and is associated with the elites of the country. In contrast with the hypothesis of the absence or weakness of the State as one of the most common explanations of the prolonged violence that Colombia has been living, I argue that it is not a product of its absence but the very expression of one of its modern tasks.

One of the best and most recent expressions of structural violence in Colombia is the "Falsos Positivos," extrajudicial executions against *dispensable civilians* carried out by the Armed Forces. This phenomenon is particular but at the same time close and similar to the assassinations of black people in the United States during the last two years (Ferguson, Baltimore, New Jersey, Charleston, etc.), the enforced disappearances of 42 students that took place in 2014 in Iguala, Mexico, and the hate crimes of the beginning of 2015 in France and Chapel Hill. All of them have in common the elimination of differences, a logic that the Western model of civilization has cultivated since the Conquest of America and that has been accompanied by the mobilization of emotions that justify

their extermination. This model is one of death that engenders and produces death, and is regenerated by death itself.

Precisely because violence has sustained that model, the dispute of the meaning of the transition gains relevance in the present. Transitional justice has worked in different contexts as a manner to re-legitimate the modern model of society, which includes the reaffirmation of the nation-state as a form of organizing society, democracy, and capitalism. Transitional justice co-opts and domesticates relatives' demands, visions, and proposals, and denying the potentially of their radicalism, which adds to the development of a concrete political economy and the construction of docile subjects. What is evident thanks to this research is that neither transitional justice nor human rights are capable of providing the solutions that the internalized used of violence requires for the construction of *a society in state of peace*. New political imaginaries and practices are required, as well as deep and extensive dialogues among Colombians and the construction of explicit ethical and moral agreements that necessarily have to go beyond the modern principles of freedom, equality, and fraternity, and that require more horizontal emotional engagements.

These new political imaginaries and practices can be found in the experience of victimized subjects, in their process of politicization and onto-epistemologies. Their trajectories, analyzed through a sociology of emergencies and absences, allow us to see how—rather than two opposing hierarchical poles in which one of the following elements gains preeminence over the other—their politicization and onto-epistemologies are deeply intermingled, making it difficult to separate one from the other: emotion/reason, death/life, mind/body, dreams/reality, spirituality/politics, past/present, and memory/forgetting, etc. This deep relation that is neither oppositional nor hierarchical is the one that creates victimized subjects' worlds, including their identities and subjectivities, and are cornerstone also to politicization, the process by which the relatives and peers of first-degree victims publicly and collectively claim the rights of their loves ones, as well as their

own rights.

In the 1980s, some women such as Juana, Camila, and Betty started to be part of the public sphere, politicizing their ties of caring and belonging, in a trajectory in which not only reason but also emotions were at play. They were facing a patriarchal/cultural command assigned to men: killing. In their process of politicization, as well as in the experience of Esperanza, Antígona, Juan Tomás, la Mache, Micaela, Antonia, Candelaria, Eloisa, and Mamoncillo, emotions, the dead, dreams, memory, spirituality, and the discourses of human rights and transitional justice played an important role.

Accumulative love was central in their politicization. With this I mean the love born and cultivated within kinship and communal relationships and result of other emotions felt for the loved one before the crime was committed. Many of the emotions that mobilized the relatives are linked with care and are a concrete materialization of affect—energy, visceral forces, and power—that works as a mediation of reality, gets actualized in the flow of life, and has the potency to generate liberatory transformation. For some victimized subjects, affect was in play even before knowing what had happened to their loved ones or even before the violent event took place, a sort of pre-sentiment that manifests in different ways and went beyond Western rationality. This materialization of affect—similar to dreams, memory, and spirituality—connects the body with emotions and thought, and relates humans and other beings beyond linguistic communication and physical presence.

In the initial process of politicization, emotions urge relatives to do something, generating practices of meaning-making (Gould 2009: 13). In this journey, relatives walk as *senti-pensante* (feeling-thinking) beings that, moved by emotions and thoughts, “decided” to act. This “decision” does not take place in a concrete moment or conscious way, but in the *movement* of the bodies. Here emotions behave as reactions and actions (Ahmed 2004: 7), working as evaluations and judgments.

Emotions contribute to identify the situation that the victimized subjects are living as unjust, which Barrington Moore (1989) calls “moral indignation” yet did not recognize as an emotion. Indignation becomes a feeling accompanied by others such as anger, fear, and sadness.

Emotions play a role in specific subjectivities and by themselves do not explain that a relative decides to move. Neither can reason explicate it. What is observed in the history of the subjects of this research, is that prior to the event, they had rebellious or out of the norm personalities; they were critical subjects, which avoided the complete disciplining of subjects’ collective instincts, affect, emotions, and moral-ethical judgments, contributing to the construction of reluctant subjects open to transformation (Gibson-Graham 2006).

After the event, victimized subjects comprehend themselves as product of that moment, and the acts of violence help them to construct discourses about themselves, creating a space of authoring (Escobar 2008) and a particular identity: the relative, the victim, and/or the human rights defender. New personal, collective, and historical references guide the comprehension of their lives, incorporating the development of a more critical look at reality product of their new location in society. The identity and subjective changes are accompanied by new discourses, networks, practices, and routines, altering the dispositions, habitus, thought, subjectivity, political views, commitments, and ordinariness of victimized subjects’ bodies; they also construct new “nuclear and extensive families.” The construction of new belongings entails new social and affective bonds, which is part of challenging the power effects of State and paramilitary violence that looks to destroy social bonds and with it demolish the power from below.

It is from within State and paramilitary violence that the consciousness about their power and its modalities are created, and that “new subjects” are created that at the same time display power of resistance and liberation defeating domination. In the entire dynamic of relatives and victimized subjects’ politicization, knowledge production is fundamental. Through this path the

identity of leader and spokesperson emerges, accompanied by the recognition of some segments of society; at the same time, they are stigmatized by others, and denied by the State, some victimizers, and the media. One of State and paramilitary violence's objectives is to deprive people of their sense of agency. Thus, the identity of relative/"victim" is configured in a contentious space of struggle in close relation with the loved one and multiple others, including the dead and objects, both *actants* with agency. Memory plays a crucial role as a type of affect that generates and regenerates the world, reality, and the collective, maintaining the relationship between the relative and the loved one (life and death), and being cornerstone to the formation of the *new subject*. Memory works as a performative power/affect through which the dead display their agency, challenging the linear notion of time.

Victimized subjects have "chosen" to follow a different life project that includes pushing to learn the truth and towards justice, as well as to contribute to changing reality. In this journey, joining and helping to construct the collective is essential. Here, "emotions work to shape the 'surface' of individual and collective bodies" (Ahmed 2004a: 1), to the extent that emotions sometimes define subjects' permanence in the organizations and movements, as spaces that give them strength to continue with the struggle and with life itself. The new bond is experienced as embodied and as the construction of a new body that includes the consolidation of friendships.

Relatives persist in these organizations because their lives' meaning has become closely linked with movements' projects and they have given "birth" to political projects. In part, victimized subjects continue in these organizations and movements because they consider the struggle as a type of *obligation* (MOVICE-Bogotá 2013); the loved one that the relative has lost is relocated, symbolically and physically, within the new ties of caring and belonging, which make the membership in the organization more relevant and "necessary."

The *affective event* has unleashed a series of emotions that mark the subject forever, shaping

relatives and their struggles. Some of these emotions are always present although their intensity can change depending on the conjunctures. In the trajectories of emotions that we drew, pain, fear, anger, hate, revenge, impotency, sadness, and emptiness, among others, were described as the emotions that after the event were continually present, along with hope, love, satisfaction, pride, happiness, and passion.

This self-identification as relatives/victims takes place in a contentious space of struggle, among the power of domination, resistance, and emancipation/liberation. During the 1980s, people like Camila identified herself as a relative, avoiding using the notion of “victim,” which is problematic because of the stereotypes assigned to it. That category entered the country through human rights talk and became hegemonic in the process of the paramilitary demobilization and the application of transitional justice, which gave legal existence to the “victim.” Some relatives reject the category, while others use it without any problem, and others play strategically with the concept.

For victims of State violence and paramilitarism, the identity of “relative” emerged due to social suffering inflicted by others on the individual and collective body politics (D. Nelson 1999), and due to impunity. This space of authoring is fed with dignity, persistence, and all the emotions that the loved one, violence, and impunity unleashed. This new identity has become a more or less stable identity that most of the time erases other subject positions and identities, making that self-understanding onerous. For some, it has become the end and not the means of a struggle, which makes it necessary to think carefully about the identity of victim/relative and the subjects that have emerged due to violence.

This de-construction of the identity of victim/relative should include a reflection on the other subject positions that the person has held in society, as well as of the power dynamics that circumscribe the victimization, the challenges that their power as subjects of resistance, emancipation, and liberation face, and the shortcomings of their actions. It also requires

understanding the manner in which victimization works, creates subjects and their consequences in daily life, as well as the specific characteristics of emotions. Under the empire of logocentrism, they have been misrecognized and undervalued, which has meant the dismissal of: first, women, people of color, poor people, the private sphere, and practices associated with them, such as care and the production and reproduction of social life; second, the role of emotions in the construction of belongings, communities, and society; third, their part in politics, domination, the production of knowledge, identity and subjectivity, the engagement with the world, and the construction of reality; and finally, the dimensions of social suffering.

This particular understanding of emotions is intimately related with patriarchy, and it has a long-term history that has to do with the experience of colonialism, in which a concrete structure of feeling and “emotional habitus” emerged. There is a direct relationship between the way the Other is conceived and the emotions I experience with them. Emotions foster certain actions towards the Others, which have included in the colonial history and construction of the Colombian nation-state, the symbolic and physical elimination of differences. In Colombia, love and hate have contributed to the creation of the US and the Others, and the frontier, the limit, the skin of social relations.

Even though victimized subjects feel hate, a predicable and “normal” emotion in a historical context like Colombia, they are not opting for retaliatory killing of the victimizers. To the contrary, they are privileging *horizontal love and care* in their actions. Focusing on care, victimized subjects are recreating a social bond that maintains family and communal ties, and relationality, rather than undoing it. Relatives and victimized subjects are challenging the “hegemonic emotional habitus,” behaving as *senti-pensante* (feeling-thinking) beings that locate life in the center instead of death. The different types of belonging that connect the subjects of this research with their loved ones display a concrete manifestation of care and emotions that are a core part of the initial process of

politicization. *Horizontal care* is a central element for the construction of *Other* ethics and moralities, senses of justice, and *horizontal emotional* engagements.

A context such as Colombia's today requires horizontal love and care that can contribute to recognize radically different beings as worthy of those horizontal feelings. The recognition of radically diverse beings allows more than tolerance of differences, as proposed by multiculturalism. It must be practiced in them, and practiced in *us in connection with others*. The construction of this horizontal love and care involves important changes in subjectivities such as the edification of reluctant subjects (Gibson-Graham 2006) capable of change, able to monitor and control the seductive desire to dominant the other, and willing to work collectively for life as a way to impede violence and destruction. This has to include a shift in Colombian's emotional habitus that recognizes the power of emotions, their capacity of destruction and construction, and that invites the "spectators" of social suffering to act in order to transform the conditions that have allowed the infliction of pain.

Although the role of emotions has been central in the creation of social and political affiliations in Colombia, for producing fear and docile subjects, and hate and revenge, their role has been ignored, feeding the construction of a hegemonic emotional habitus that tolerates and justifies some murders and acts of violence (paramilitary and state crimes), while censoring others (those of the guerrillas). Hate is part of Colombians' emotional habitus that has contributed to blur and eliminate differences and feed an auto-generative circle of violence. Taking emotions seriously into account necessitates examining their role in domination, even in organizations and social movements, when emotions are sometimes mobilized to win unconditional support without self-critique and to accumulate power of domination.

Writing as a way to imaging and dialogue

This dissertation has been a theoretical and practical exercise that has impacted my academic, activist, and personal life. It has contributed to the process of healing and mourning, including a critical look at my subject formation. The process of writing has been accompanied with a deep rethinking of my identity and subjectivity, of the collective processes I am part of, and the political dimension of both. Part of the pedagogical component of this dissertation consists in translating this analysis and personal experience to the subjects of the research, other victimized subjects, and activists as a way to think collectively about liberatory transformation.

Writing is always an unpredictable experience. It has its own logic informed by reason and emotions, and allowing the interconnection of diverse ideas and topics, materializing the feeling-thinking dimension of the producer of knowledge. In this exercise, some dimensions of the dissertation have gained force, while others have appeared to be crucially important, and others not as relevant as I had imagined.

Social suffering is one of those dimensions that gains more importance during the writing process. I have described it during the entire dissertation not as a way to reaffirm the hegemonic stereotypes about victimized subjects but, conversely, as a way to make visible the experience of the subjects victimized by the State and the paramilitary since many of them are misrecognized, undervalued, and rendered invisible by a great portion of Colombian society, and because violence has been normalized in the country. Human suffering, as Kleinman and Kleinman (1996) state, should be shown in order to identify human needs and to craft humane responses.

Victimized subjects' suffering is not only a cry that denounces that they have pain and the terrible consequences of violence in their lives, communities, territory, and nature, but also its use as a political way to deal with differences. At the same time, through their representations and narrations, victimized subjects are looking to establish a conversation with Colombian society. That

conversation necessarily has to include listening to the body, breaking with Cartesian and dichotomous ways of thinking, and elaborating new conceptualizations and ways to live them. From my point of view, in the stories of the subjects of this research, the body is an “organic totality,” a web of relations in which mind and body, the biological and the cultural are not separated, and where mind-spirit-emotions are interconnected.

Moreover, the body does not have a clear frontier, since beyond materiality, time, and space it is connected with other bodies and beings. It is not a self-contained materiality but, to the contrary, a porous one. This interconnection of emotions and body makes individual and collective processes of healing and mourning more urgent, given the spreading of breast and uterine cancer among mothers, heart attack in fathers, and chronic colon problems in other relatives. Victimized subjects’ bodies are extremely charged with pervasive emotions that make the experience of victimization more onerous. Their bodies are a wound that has many scars and social signs of the injury that needs to heal, but this cannot be a rhetoric healing that follows the modern linear conception of time that pretends to leave the past behind and close a “barbaric” chapter of the nation-state history.

In a moment in which peace is discussed and “negotiated,” it is important to recognize victimized subjects’ visions and practices as *gifts* to Colombian society that give important clues for re-thinking the way society is and should be organized. Victimized subjects propositions feed the ontological struggle of the present, donating to imagine another *state of society*. Part of the *gifts* that the subjects of the research donate to Colombia has to do with putting in the center of social arrangements an ethics and morality of care, love, and the other. They are telling us that justice and truth are essential for the construction of any type of society, and with their claims they are questioning the current notions of the human, the person, the self, the Colombian, and autonomy, inviting us to re-conceptualize those notions.

Furthermore, even though not necessarily consciously, victimized subjects are showing the limits of the Nation-state as a form of organization and of the human rights' and transitional justice's discourses as ethical, moral, and political projects. Their narratives and recounts of the past are showing that *other states of society* have been taking place in Colombia, which include not only more horizontal and embedded relations with the elements that conforms the diverse territories (including Colombians themselves), but also different social, cultural, and economical practices, as well as different conceptions of wealth and nature.

Colombians have to reflect on how they are going to reciprocate victimized subjects' *gift*. It requires an emotional engagement through *horizontal effective* solidarity, love, care, practice, and action that at the same time involves changes in daily life, in the personal and the collective, at the micro and macro levels, and in politics. A new way of relating between us is required, including learning to see with different eyes, and not with those that we have internalized through patriarchy and colonialism, which foster sentiments of superiority/inferiority that destroy any possible horizontal relationship with the others. Today, the country requires "profound changes in the way we think and act ... if we are to create a loving culture" (bell hooks 2000: xxiv).

Healing and mourning are processes that do not have necessarily an end. The writing activity has permitted me to see the dimensions of violence in personal and collective trajectories, the terrible havoc of the power of domination's effects, and the complex and difficult aspects of social liberatory transformation. At the same time, it has been an opportunity to appreciate and look again at the agency of the victimized subjects. It has been also a way to rethink and re-imagine the political action of relatives, victimized subjects, and other subaltern subjects, as well as political imaginaries.

The havoc of the power of domination, and violence as one of its manifestations, has been terrible, especially in relation to undoing relationality; to the internalization of fear, distrust and

hate; to the clouding of other subject positions in the new subjects that emerge; to the destruction of other ways of being (*ser* and *estar*); to relating and conceiving society; and to the physical and symbolic elimination of the Others. If observing that has meant a terrible and hopeless verification of Colombia's reality, the tremendous capacity of resistance of the subjects of this research and the importance of their proposals and demands—that by themselves are an expression of a plural/radical cosmovision that contrast with modern hegemonic onto-epistemology—has given me the opportunity to maintain hope.

Yet, in addition to Colombians' need to transform their engagement with victimized subjects' experience, proposals, and propositions to a more active and horizontal relationships, maintaining hope requires practice. The experience of the subjects of this research contributes to think and enact *other* political imaginaries and practices, and reevaluate politics itself to the extent that new beings, energies, and affects are integrally part of it.

Social movements are privileged places for politicization. That is to say, for social actors to gain consciousness about the structures of domination, imagine other societies, search for ways to transform the structures, and practice them, reflects loci of enunciation where *civil rebellion* can occur. In consequence, they are sites of hope and utopia. Following the criteria that, with Dorothy Holland, in direct conversation with the feminists Gibson-Graham (2006), we have identified as essential to emancipatory transformation (Holland and Gómez Correal 2013),²¹² I observed that within the organizations and movements I worked with it is still necessary to better comprehend

²¹² This criteria includes: 1. Recognition of a structure of domination, some of its elements or at least critical reflection on a crisis of the status quo and its interrelation with other structures of domination. 2. Identification and enactment of a politics of possibility. 3. Creation of alternative discourses/vision. 4. Orientation to a collective and a building of community – an “us” that includes reflection about power. 5. Changes made in daily life and everyday practices. 6. Cultivation of subjects with the desires and capacities for sociability, happiness, and action offered by alternative social and economic arrangements. 7. Ethical commitment and self-cultivation. 8. Purposive shifts in subjectivities and identities. 9. Analysis of the dynamics by which broader structures of privilege are being re-coded/re-established within the movement and constraining success. 10. On-going reflexive dialogues within the movements to revise and rethink their objectives, analyze reality, and reinvent their action (Holland and Gómez 2013: 156).

how domination is performed in order to advance in more effective liberatory action. It is urgent, for example, to understand the way different structures of domination act together and ensemble the matrix of oppression, the power of domination's methodologies and technologies, and reactions and answers to victimized subjects' propositions, demands, and actions of liberatory social change.

On the other hand, victimized subjects have created alternative discourses and visions that need to be articulated in their totality as part of a *politics of possibility* (Gibson-Graham 2006). Their propositions are examples, as I previously mentioned, to *Other political imaginaries and practices* that entail an ontological struggle that has to be identified, interiorized, and potentiated by the entire membership of the organizations and movements, other victimized subjects, and social actors interested in liberation. In the midst of a society that has been permanently divided by war, the organizations and movements of victims need to consolidate their collective processes, putting the reflection about power at the center.

The latter is of paramount importance since it is possible to observe the reproduction of the power of domination within victimized subjects' dynamics and organizations, which necessarily subtract emancipatory and liberatory capacity from the political project. Victimized subjects, human rights defenders, and other subjects that are part of these organizations should observe their political practices and make an effort to construct a more collective power capable of challenging the power of domination, death, violence, and war.

It necessarily requires changes in subjectivities and daily life. In the case of those that have been directly victimized, it is important to reflect about the type of identity that has been constructed and the subjective changes that they have gone through; it is also crucial to make an auto-critical view of how the identity of "victim" has limited their capacity as subjects of emancipation and liberation. This reflection about power, identity, and subjectivity unavoidably obliges being attentive to the seductive character of the power of domination and the internal desire

to emulate the domineering. As well, it is crucial to analyze the role of emotions in the practice of domination within the movements, as well as to potentiate the dimensions of emotions that contribute to imagine and enact more horizontal relationships with multiple others.

Victimized subjects have the need to think by themselves and in articulation with other social actors about what their political project is, and whether or not it includes an emancipatory and liberatory dimension. Victimized subjects' *gifts*, in order to contribute to social liberatory transformation, have to be articulated to broader struggles, and those struggles have the task of listening to the depth of victimized subjects' propositions. In a moment in which their strength is fading amidst a phase of cooptation, domestication, and the paradoxes of the peace process with the FARC-EP, it is urgent that these various *reluctant subjects* of the movement of victims of State and paramilitary violence enhance their capacity of re-invention.

This is not only the conjuncture of the *transition*, but also of a deep rethinking that requires an imagination capable of eroding the foundations of the project of death. The radicalness of diverse political and life projects has to be recovered, articulated, and potentiated. It requires a pedagogy to which this research wants to contribute by disseminating the ideas, findings, and dreams that have been identified through the dialogues that gave origin to these pages, and also helping to reflect about them as part of a commitment as a particular generation, as well. As Frantz Fanon stated, "each generation has a responsibility to produce and transform the terms of struggle and liberation so that succeeding generations can assume the ongoing task in different but more advanced ways" (in Alexander and Mohanty 1997: xlii).

That pedagogy even requires an *Other anthropology* and ways to produce knowledge capable of challenging and transforming the dynamics that contribute to perpetuating domination. It involves an activist anthropology that goes beyond discourses and deconstruction, and makes a step toward the transformation of the closest environments *acting*. Anthropologists also require seeing

themselves in the mirror, observe carefully the image they truly project, and make a decision in relation to that reflection.

In the present there is at stake an ontological struggle not only because the direction of “transition” is under discussion, but also because of the moment that the entire planet is experiencing. The war code not only has to be eroded in places such as Colombia, but in any time/space of the world where physical and symbolic violence have become the way to deal with the subordinated Other. Clues for that transformation can be found in the proposals, practice, and political imaginaries of those historically subjugated subjects—women, indigenous, peasants, Afro-descendants, the poor, the non-hegemonic political actors—that have been negated and postponed by domination. The imposition of the Western model of civilization has continually brought death to our territory. It is not the result of not being modern, but the manifestation of modernity/coloniality. Victimized subjects’ gifts are a window into other *states of society*.

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Personal and collective interviews conducted by Diana Gómez:

Antero. Interview by author. Tape Recording. Buenaventura, July 7, 2011.

Antonia. Interview by author. Tape Recording. Buenaventura, July 7, 2011.

Betty. Interview by author. Tape Recording. Bogotá, December 18, 2013.

Camila. Interview by author. Tape Recording. Bogotá, June 5, 19 and 27, July 16, and December 19, 2013.

Camila. Interview by author. Tape Recording. Chapel Hill, April 1-5, 215.

Correal, Luz María. Interview by author. E-mail. Bogotá, November 18, 2014.

Esperanza. Interview by author. Tape Recording. Bogotá, May 13 and 20, 2013.

Juana. Interview by author. Tape Recording. Medellín, July 16, 2010.

Juan Tomás. Interview by author. Tape Recording. Bogotá, November 30, 2012 and December 31, 2013.

La Mache. Interview by author. Tape Recording. Bogotá, June 17 and 24, 2013.

Mamoncillo. Interview by author. Tape Recording. Bogotá, Febreaury 13 and 27, March 5, 2013.

Mandinga. Interview by author. Tape Recording. Buenaventura, July 9, 2011.

Micaela, Candelaria and Eloisa. Tape Recording. Buenaventura, July 9, 2011