

“MEMORY IS THE STRENGTH OF OUR RESISTANCE:”
A CRITICAL PERFORMANCE GEOGRAPHY OF PEACE, MEMORY, TERRITORY,
AND POLITICS IN THE SAN JOSÉ PEACE COMMUNITY, COLOMBIA

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ABSTRACT

CHRISTOPHER EUGENE COURTHEYN: “Memory is the strength of our resistance”:
A critical performance geography of peace, memory, territory, and politics in the
San José Peace Community, Colombia
(Under the co-direction of Dr. Altha Cravey and Dr. Álvaro Reyes)

This dissertation traces the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, located in the war-torn Urabá region, Colombia. Since 1997, this group of small-scale farmers has resisted forced displacement, the assassination of 15% of their population, and co-optation by paramilitary, state, and guerrilla forces. In contrast to passive notions of ‘tranquility’ or ‘no war,’ Peace Community members define peace actively as a) refusing to collaborate with any armed group and b) building community. Peace is often associated with state diplomacy and military operations, as in the current negotiations between the Colombian government and FARC guerrillas. Yet the Peace Community demonstrates that peace is an embodied, material, and spatial process that can be produced by non-state actors through everyday ethical practices that cultivate dignified living conditions. To resist the racist-capitalist violence of today’s global land grab, the Peace Community cultivates cash and food crops in work groups on common land, makes decisions in village meetings and general assemblies, and participates in human rights and seed-sharing networks. In so doing, the Peace Community produces an alter-territory: a moving set of spatial practices, places, and values that produce a particular political subject. Furthermore, their memory practices are central to their creation of a communal Peace Community subject. By commemorating assassinated farmers with

pilgrimages to massacre sites and stones painted with victims' names, they nurture internal cohesion, build solidarity with allies, and re-affirm an ethic that rejects retaliatory killing. I call this *radical trans-relational peace*: dignity and solidarity created through trans-community networks.

This dissertation draws from my prior work in San José de Apartadó as a protective accompanier from 2008-2010 as well as 49 interviews conducted during 16 months of fieldwork in Colombia between 2011-2016. Methodologically, this project combines a) structural analysis rooted in feminist geopolitics, critical race theory, and world-systems analysis with b) critical and performance ethnography's political reflexivity, co-performative witness in the field, and staged performances of ethnographic data. I call this *critical and performance geography*, a creative, embodied, and ethically-grounded methodology that integrates critical theory and political action research to advance the emergent "pro-peace agenda" in contemporary critical human geography.

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I cannot emphasize enough the extent to which this dissertation is the product of collaborative, collective thinking with members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, other Colombian social movements, fellow protective companions, and university colleagues. While any error in the text is my own, I would like to acknowledge the many people without whom this work would not have been possible.

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As a graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I was honored to have the mentorship of my dissertation committee, which was co-chaired by

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INTRODUCTION: INTRODUCING THE MODERN WORLD-SYSTEM FROM CHARLESTON ET. AL. TO SAN JOSÉ DE APARTADÓ

The date is June 17th, 2015. As I begin to write this dissertation, there has been another massacre in the United States. To the February killings of three Muslim students in Chapel Hill by a white neighbor, and countless cases of white police and para-police killings of blacks from Ferguson to Baltimore and beyond, we add Charleston. Dylann Roof, a 21-year-old white male, has killed nine African Americans of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Sitting in on a bible study group, he shot Pastor Reverend Clementa Pinckney, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Cynthia Hurd, Daniel Simmons, Myra Thompson, Reverend Depayne Middleton Doctor, Ethel Lance, Susie Jackson, and Tywanza Sanders.

Presente.

I can't help but remember the stories and presence of those killed in two massacres in the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, Colombia. The focus of this dissertation, this is a group of approximately one-thousand *campesinos* (rural, small-scale farmers). All or at least a majority are of Indigenous descent. Since 1997, in the war-torn region of Urabá, they have committed to collective work and have participated in solidarity human rights and seed-sharing networks to resist forced displacement and co-optation by paramilitary, army, and guerrilla forces. On July 8th, 2000, in the village of La Unión, six Community work group coordinators were lined up and shot by paramilitaries as a Colombian army helicopter hovered overhead (Figure 1).

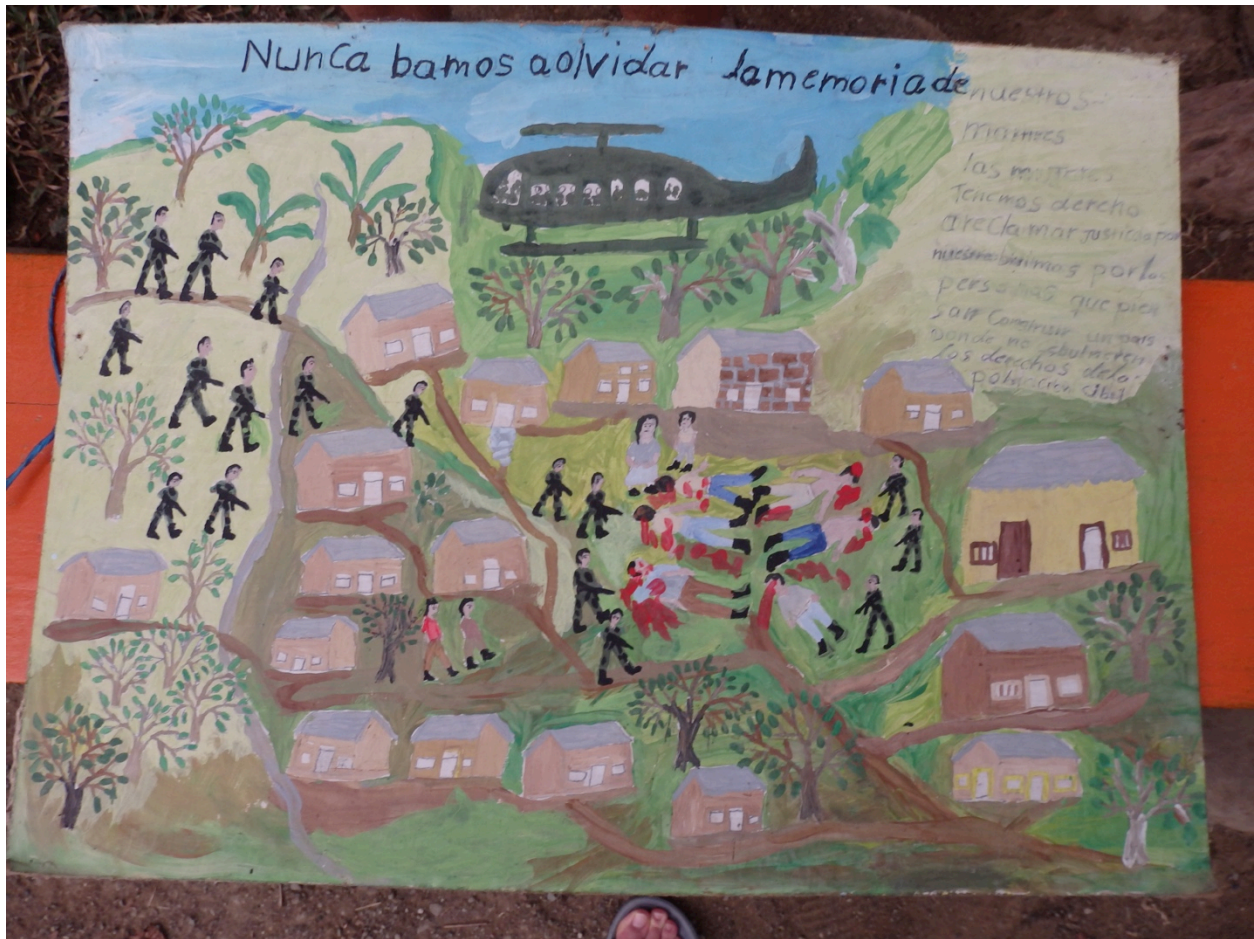


Figure 1. The 2000 massacre in La Unión.
Painting by María Brígida González, titled,
“We will never forget the memory of our martyrs. As women we have the right to demand justice our victims and for the people that think to construct a country where the civilian population’s rights are not violated.”
Source: Author photo.

One of the six, Rigoberto Guzmán, a member of the Community's leadership council, refused their order to kneel, forcing the paramilitaries to shoot him standing up:

Rigoberto Guzmán. Jaime Guzmán. Humberto Sepúlveda. Elodino Rivera. Diafanor Díaz. Pedro Zapata.

Presente.

On February 21st, 2005, in the settlements of Mulatos and La Resbalosa, a joint military-paramilitary operation killed eight others by cutting up their bodies with machetes, including three children and Peace Community founder Luis Eduardo Guerra. In 2009, demobilized paramilitaries testified (*Semana* 2009; Giraldo Moreno, S.J. 2010) that after killing the adults, they killed one-year-old Santiago and five-year-old Natalia on orders from National Army commanders of the 17th Brigade to eliminate these witnesses to the massacre because it was best to kill them before they grew up and could potentially become guerrillas: Natalia Tuberquia. Santiago Tuberquia. Sandra Muñoz. Alfonso Tuberquia. Bellanira Areiza. Deiner Guerra. Luis Eduardo Guerra.

Presente.

This word, "*presente*," is commonly voiced when commemorating the dead in Latin America. It is also used in the United States and elsewhere during gatherings in solidarity with those killed by political violence, especially people assassinated by countries' respective armed forces trained by the United States military. The largest such gathering is the School of the Americas protest and vigil, held annually each November in Columbus, Georgia. As Peace Community member Doña Brígida González said to open my first fieldwork interview, "Memory is the strength is our resistance" to forced displacement, massacres, and persistent impunity (personal interview, 2011).

When I hear, say, or write “Present,” I feel something. As Gómez Correal (2015) asserts, it is not something that I can rationally explain. I feel it. None of the individuals named above are people that I knew personally. All were killed before I even knew of the organizations they belonged to. But, I can feel that they are there, that they are here. They “are,” and not only as an evoked belief or when remembered by their loved ones (De la Cadena 2010; De la Cadena & Gómez Correal, personal communication, 2015). In the cases of the 2000 and 2005 massacres in San José de Apartadó, I feel a special connection to these “victimized subjects” of resistance (Gómez Correal 2015; Ruiz Celis 2012) that is not inherently obvious, but is seemingly produced through the solidarity-creating power of commemoration.

I am not of part of those communities. I do not belong to their organizations or racial group. My connection is different. I have worked with the members of the Peace Community since 2008, when I first lived there as a “protective accompanier” with the Fellowship of Reconciliation Peace Presence (FORPP),¹ who the Community uses to deter armed groups’ attacks. Additionally, in my courses as a teacher, I teach about racist violence—in order to understand cases such as Charleston—and the black liberation struggle in the United States. With regards to the Peace Community, given the years I have worked in solidarity with them, I feel a particular responsibility to critically reflect on my role there and on what I do beyond San José, in terms of the consequences of my accompaniment and now research.

¹ I worked for seventeen months from 2008-2010 as a protective accompanier with what was then known as the Fellowship of Reconciliation’s Colombia Peace Program. This program later became the independent organization FOR Peace Presence, where I have served on the board of directors since 2013: <https://peacepresence.org>

In other words, I am living and implicated in the same world. As a heterosexual, white, middle-class male from the United States, I am not the target of such violence. And I use the word *target* intentionally. In Spanish, the word “*blanco*” has two seemingly unrelated meanings: white and target. Upon further reflection, however, those two meanings *are* related, albeit in opposition to each other. To be “white” in the modern-colonial world means precisely to *not* be the target of systematic or gratuitous violence (Fanon 2004; Fanon 2008; Wilderson 2010; Goldberg 2009). This is exactly why peace communities and other human rights defenders in Colombia invite people like me to serve as “unarmed bodyguards” due to the protection afforded by Global North citizens’ physical presence and political advocacy with state officials (Mahony and Eguren 1997; Koopman 2011a; Koopman 2014). In so doing, accompaniers and other allies spread the experiences and ideas of those organizations to a broader audience, as I am doing in this dissertation.

Accompaniment is not only a strategy used by threatened human rights defenders but also by activists to intervene against U.S. government military policy in Latin America. Due to the Plan Colombia assistance package signed in 2000, Colombia became and remains the largest recipient of U.S. military assistance in the Western Hemisphere (Meyer 2016). While the deal has also supported development initiatives through USAID and reforms of Colombia’s judicial system, at least \$6.8 billion of the \$10 billion package has been military assistance: helicopters, aerial fumigations of coca crops, intelligence collaboration, and training soldiers (Tate 2015; Londoño 2015; Gill 2004). Despite supposed human rights protections within the agreement and vetting systems against training soldiers implicated in violations, research has shown a positive correlation between United States training and Colombian soldiers’ killings of civilians,

which number over 5,000 since Plan Colombia went into effect (Amnesty International & Fellowship of Reconciliation 2008; Fellowship of Reconciliation & Colombia-Europe-U.S. Human Rights Observatory 2014).² I enrolled in graduate school to more deeply analyze the significance of the Peace Community's process as part of my broader intellectual project to theorize how social change occurs and to create alternatives to militarism and injustice.

Are the experiences of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and Peace Community connected? How are Charleston, San José de Apartadó, and countless other cases of violence related? Some might point to specific details and argue that each case is the product of its unique and complex context. Yet I find common threads: racialization, colonization, as well as the state's refusal to directly acknowledge or face these threads. Each of these factors, as I will argue in this dissertation in agreement with critical scholars of race, politics, decolonization, and world-systems analysis, are fundamentally constitutive to politics and society in the modern world (Fanon 2004; Fanon 2008; Wilderson 2010; Quijano 2000; Escobar 2008; Escobar 2010; Reyes 2012a; Ceceña 2012; Gómez Correal 2015; Wallerstein 2004).³

For instance, when Colombian military officers are shown to have killed civilians, military and other government officials frequently brand those responsible as 'a few bad

² For a critical analysis of the political relationship between Colombia and the United States, including how Colombia has been discursively depicted in the United States as both an 'exemplary democracy' as well as 'another Vietnam' in need of assistance, see Murillo (2004).

³ When I speak of the *modern world*, I refer to the 'civilization' that emerged through the European colonization of the Americas. This world-system trumpets individualism, equality, capitalist democracy, nation-state sovereignty, private property, universality, and progress. But it has always been structured by a) unequal and exploitative core-periphery relationships (Wallerstein 2004) and b) hierarchical dualisms between man-woman, reason-emotion, human-nature, and civilization-barbarism (Escobar, forthcoming; Gómez Correal 2015). Modernity is thus both an era (Gómez Correal 2015; Dussel 2000) and an "attitude" (Foucault 1984; Dietrich 2012).

apples,' as exceptions to the otherwise honorable service of the Armed Forces and the state. Two exemplary cases to which I have repeatedly heard or read military commanders and public officers wield the 'few bad apples' discourse include a) the Colombian army's participation in the 2005 massacre in San José de Apartadó, and b) the *Falsos Positivos* (False Positives) scandal that erupted in 2008. A practice long-denounced by human rights defenders, the mainstream media finally reported on how soldiers dress civilians—especially youth—in guerrilla fatigues before killing and then presenting them as guerrillas killed in combat ('positives') in order to increase officers' body counts and earn professional rewards for their 'success' (Amnesty International & Fellowship of Reconciliation 2008; Fellowship of Reconciliation & Colombia-Europe-U.S. Human Rights Observatory 2014)

Further, mainstream media and even certain academic scholarship fail to analyze violence's racial logic. Where race is mentioned at all, such as in the Historical Memory Group's landmark 2013 report *iBASTA YA! Colombia: Memorias de guerra y dignidad* (*STOP NOW! Colombia: Memories of war and dignity*), the framing is often, "The war especially falls on impoverished populations, on Afro-Colombian and indigenous peoples" (Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2013: 25). And consider the following statements from the same report:

The pattern of direct violence that extends to ... indigenous communities and black populations ... makes it possible to recognize the historical exclusion, discrimination, and vulnerability of these communities [and] the premeditated and systematic efforts deployed (26) ... by the illegal armed actors allied with social, economic, and political actors, and even the Public Forces. (153)

I consider this correlation of race and war to be a positive step towards analyzing the race-violence relation, given that such assertions still remain marginal within the dominant narrative about Colombian violence, which is often reduced to Colombians'

‘natural propensity’ towards violence or the ‘absence’ of a state presence in ‘unruly’ frontier regions. Analyzing race helps to hypothesize why the human rights of Indigenous and African descendants remain ignored despite Colombia’s constitution as a multicultural and plurinational state. However, what about *campesinos* that do not identify ethnically as Black or Indigenous? What is the relationship between so-called ‘*mestizos*’ (i.e., mixed-race or culturally-assimilated indigenous people) or ‘*antioqueños*’ (the cultural category of those living in the department of Antioquia, including San José de Apartadó) and Indigenous and Black groups? Are *campesinos* such as those in Peace Community also racialized as ‘other’? If so, how, and what is the relationship between race and the war?

A racial lens is crucial to explain the link between race and violence as well as to deconstruct how the discourse of a “counterinsurgency” war indeed hides how this process is racialized and linked with the modern-colonial project of ‘civilizing’ and ‘whitening’ the population, as in previous waves of violence in Colombia (Steiner 2000; Roldán 2002). Despite constitutional guarantees of difference and life for Indigenous and African-descendant peoples, these legal protections are superseded by what Gómez Correal (2015) signals as a persistent and structural “hegemonic emotional habitus” of hate against ‘the other.’

Additionally, notice how the Historical Memory Group’s report above primarily attributes responsibility to non-state actors. Again, this reduces the actions of the state to cases of ‘surprising exceptions.’ Even where the systematic nature of the violence is inferred, such statements present ethnic groups as ‘disproportionately affected by the war’ instead of asking whether the violence is indeed part of a racist war that implicates not only certain actors but the state and societal system itself.

Similarly, a ubiquitous narrative in the United States—presented by the mainstream media and certain politicians—explains the recent killings of blacks and other people of color as perpetrated by ‘mentally-ill’ individuals (A. Butler 2015). While the Charleston massacre has been widely categorized by government officials as a racist “hate crime,” North Carolina authorities refused to recognize the Chapel Hill massacre of the Muslim students as such. Local police reduced it to “an ongoing neighbor dispute over parking” and the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of North Carolina deemed it an “isolated incident” due to the perpetrator’s “mental-health issues” (Sullivan, Berman, and Kaplan 2015). Similar to the supposed ‘few bad apples’ among the Colombian military, there is a refusal to interrogate the structural system that produces such ‘individuals.’ For instance, United States President Barack Obama framed the Charleston shooting as a case of “*senseless murders*” of “innocent people” (*The Washington Post* 2015; emphasis mine). Similarly, Chris Blue, the Chapel Hill police chief, branded the Chapel Hill massacre as “a senseless and tragic act” (Sullivan, Berman, and Kaplan 2015).

Is there really *no sense* or logic to this violence? And why, as journalist Anthea Butler (A. Butler 2015) astutely asks, is violence by people of color against whites branded “terrorism” by an entire people against another, while whites’ violence against people of color is reduced to the victimizers’ ‘mental illness?’ Even Obama admitted that “communities like this have had to endure tragedies too many times” (*The Washington Post* 2015).

On the Charleston murders, *Democracy Now* (2015a) reported:

In a photo posted on Facebook, Dylann Roof is seen wearing a black jacket that prominently features the flags of Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, and apartheid-era South Africa from when the two African countries were ruled by the white

minority. Another photo posted online appears to show Roof posing in front of a car with the front plate, license plate, that reads, “Confederate States of America.”

According to a survivor of the Charleston shooting, who Dylann Roof reportedly let live in order to tell the story, Roof told one of the victims encouraging him to stop that “You rape our women, and you’re taking over our country. And you have to go” (*Democracy Now!* 2015a). The underlying white nationalism is overt.

This is not the first attack on this church. Charleston’s AME Church was burned to the ground during a slave rebellion in the 1820s, and Reverend Pinckney referenced such histories of resistance in his sermons (*Democracy Now!* 2015b). Therefore, rather than a ‘senseless’ act, this is unfortunately another in a series of attacks on African American churches, which have been historical targets of white terrorism against black liberation movements rooted in church communities. Even branding the Charleston massacre merely a ‘hate crime’ seems to diminish the intent of the perpetrator: it is a genocidal act to instill terror and eliminate a people. Of course, a plethora of critical scholarship demonstrates how racist violence is constitutive to the past and present of modern global power, the United States, and across the Americas (Fanon 2004; Wilderson 2010; Zinn 1999a; Horne 2014; Chasteen 2011; Quijano 2000).

As for Colombia, a “long-range view of history,” including the Americas’ colonial and subsequent nation-state projects (Gómez Correal 2015), highlights that the Colombian state—like the other states in North and South America—has continued the colonial project of extermination of Indigenous and African descendant groups, as well as against the political opposition and women (Gómez Correal 2015; Gómez Correal 2011; Lame 2004; Rojas 2002). Colombian history is marred with cycles of violent

repression of popular⁴ movements that resist capitalist exploitation, expansion, and displacement, and assert political and economic self-determination (Fals Borda 2009a; Hylton 2006; Murillo 2004; Ospina 1997; Roldán 2002). The historical absence of both social revolution (as in Mexico, Bolivia, or Cuba) and national populism (Argentina and Brazil) has left Colombia without even the periodic or limited gains elsewhere in Latin America, such as increased mass political participation, re-distributions of wealth, or land reform (Reyes, personal communication, 2013). Indeed, paramilitary, military, and guerrilla killings of San José de Apartadó's residents *increased* following the *campesinos'* declaration as a "peace community" in March 1997, indicating the armed groups' rejection of these farmers' insistence upon self-determination and refusal to perpetuate the war.

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó's persistent resistance is but one example of the plethora of social movements continuing to challenge this system of killing within the modern-colonial world, especially in Latin America (Reyes 2012b; Zibechi 2012). To add to the emergent scholarship about these movements (Escobar 2008; Ceceña 2012; Ornelas 2012), these Colombian *campesinos* call our attention to the concept of *peace*. Amidst today's global conjuncture permeated by military conflicts, genocide, rape, and poverty, is 'peace' possible? How do we conceive of peace beyond a simplistic opposition to *war* or *violence*?

⁴ I use the term "popular" in the sense of its primary meaning in Latin American to signal that of "the people" (*el pueblo*), the grassroots working classes.

“PEACE COMMUNITIES” AND THE “PEACE PROCESS”

Introducing the “Peace Community”

Peace—commonly understood in the modern world as the absence of war—is not what comes to mind when people think about Colombia. As of May 2015, the country had the world’s second largest internally displaced population at over 6 million (International Displacement Monitoring Centre 2015). And governmental forces, paramilitary death squads, and guerrilla insurgencies⁵ have been engaged in an ‘armed

⁵ First, of Colombia’s current *guerrilla* groups, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército Popular* (FARC-EP, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-Popular Army) is the largest. It arose from small-scale farmers who armed themselves against the government in the 1960s. After suffering waves of internal displacement during the *La Violencia* era of civil war (1946-1957), this group led by Manuel Marulanda arose in armed struggle to defend themselves against military attacks and to advance Left-wing goals of agrarian reform and political participation for *campesinos* and the poor (Ortíz 2006; Chernick 2009; Hylton 2006; Kirk 2003). Second, *Paramilitary* groups refer to Right-wing private armies that were created by the state, drug traffickers, and/or large landowners to counter a) popular social movements struggling for land re-distribution and social reform, as well as b) guerrillas’ kidnappings, extortion, and attacks against corporate enterprises. While not called paramilitaries at the time, the *contrachusma* (against the popular classes) and *pájaros* (birds) of the *La Violencia* era were manifestations of this phenomenon. Epitomized by the emergence in the 1980s of the group *Muerte a Secuestradores* (MAS, Death to kidnappers), Colombia’s current paramilitaries link drug traffickers and regional landed elites with a pro-state counter-insurgency ideology (Romero 2006; Hylton 2006; Giraldo Moreno, S.J. 1996; Taussig 2003; Camacho Guizado 2006). While the umbrella paramilitary organization known as the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC, United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia) demobilized between 2003 and 2006, many of its members have re-armed or merely continued to operate as neo-paramilitary groups using a variety of names, such as *Águilas Negras*, *Los Rastrojos*, or *Los Urabeños* (Human Rights Watch 2010). Third, the drug economy has been central to all of Colombia’s armed actors, albeit in different ways. Paramilitaries have served as private armies for drug trafficking cartels, who control most of the production and trafficking of cocaine. The FARC is not a drug cartel, although one of its prime sources of income has been to tax farmers who grow the coca leaf and/or process it into coca paste, which is subsequently sold to drug traffickers and laboratories who process the paste into cocaine. Fourth, the two *governmental forces* of concern to this case are the National Police and National Army, who are closely allied with and receive aid from the United States government in order to fight the “Drug War” (Murillo 2004; Tate 2015). All of these armed groups have committed human rights violations, with the large majority attributed to paramilitary groups (Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2013).

conflict' for over half a century, as only the most recent era of war during Colombia's national and colonial history.

Yet the country also has an extensive array of social movements, epitomized by the emergence of "peace communities" two decades ago. On March 23rd, 1997, a group of *campesinos*⁶ of Indigenous descent in San José de Apartadó, located in the northwestern Urabá region, became the first in the country to declare themselves a "peace community" (Figure 2). Urabá, part of which borders Panamá, has for the past few decades been one of Colombia's most violent areas. As a strategic drug trafficking corridor, military, paramilitary, and guerrilla forces compete to control its plentiful rivers and fertile farmlands that are coveted by the state and multinational corporations for hydroelectric power as well as banana and oil palm plantations (Aparicio 2012; Ballvé 2012; García de la Torre et al. 2011).

San José de Apartadó's farmers organized themselves as a peace community in the context of Colombian army and allied paramilitary groups' attempt to take San José from FARC guerrillas who had controlled the area for decades. In military operations

⁶ A literal translation of the Spanish term "*campesino*" into English would be "person of the countryside" or "country-folk." It is usually translated as "peasant" to refer to rural farmers that cultivate food and/or cash crops on small plots of land that they either own or rent. However, I prefer to use the Spanish word *campesino* for a couple reasons. First, I am wary of the baggage associated with the term *peasant*, even if I disagree with this baggage. Peasants are often presented as non-subjects, with pejorative connotations of ignorance, rudeness, and unsophistication (New Oxford American Dictionary 2012). Such belittling portrayals include the *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels (1978), who infamously included peasants within those groups that they argue are "not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history" (482). This is not to deny that differing scholarly interpretations of Marx's view on peasants exist. For example, Duggett (1975) argues that Marx's attitude became much more sympathetic to peasants in later writings. Second, as an alternative to peasant, I find the identifier "small-scale rural farmer" to be excessively general and verbose. I agree with Burnyeat (2013)—a fellow ex-accompanier and scholar researching the San José Peace Community—who notes that "*campesino* is a whole cultural category in Colombia and other parts of Latin America that is not accurately conveyed by these translations" (3). Moreover, in conversation Fanon (2004), Guha (1983), and Zamosc (1986), I employ *campesino* in this dissertation in order to analyze the racialized as well as political and social aspects of this subject position.



Figure 2. San José de Apartadó within the Urabá region.
San José is in the department of Antioquia on the border with Córdoba department.
Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

throughout San José's 32 villages, army soldiers 'warned' the *campesinos* that the "mochecebas" (those who cut people's heads off—paramilitary death squads) were on their way, and anyone remaining five days later would face the consequences. The area's villages were abandoned. The majority of the farmers displaced to cities and many have never returned. Taking refuge in the rural district's town, the remaining 500 *campesinos*' re-iterated their commitment to resist further displacement, return to their villages one-by-one, and thus maintain their way of life as small-scale rural farmers. In so doing, they began to reject the presence of any armed group in their spaces and to refuse to collaborate with any actor, including not only the paramilitaries and the guerrillas but also the state's army and police forces, since colluding, fraternizing, or living with one group makes you a target of the other.

The members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó committed themselves to a) not bearing arms, b) neither passing information nor collaborating with any armed group in any way, c) denouncing injustice and impunity, and d) working in collective groups. These commitments are listed on signs erected to mark Peace Community villages and farms as civilian zones (Figure 3).

As of 2012, the number of armed actors' assassinations in San José de Apartadó numbered 210. These are documented by Javier Giraldo Moreno (2010) in his book *Fusil o Toga, Toga y Fusil* (Rifle or Robe, Robe and Rifle). Father Javier, as he is affectionately known, is a Jesuit priest and lawyer who has accompanied and advised the Peace Community since its founding (Figure 4).⁷ Assassinations in San José are

⁷ Father Javier Giraldo has accompanied a multitude of other communities in Colombia as well. One notable example is his yearly accompaniment of the commemoration of the infamous 1990 massacre in the community of Trujillo, in the province of Valle del Cauca, a site of recurrent killings (Giraldo Herrera 2012).



Figure 3. Peace Community billboard #1 (2008):

“The Community Freely:

Participates in community work.

Says no to injustice and impunity regarding the facts.

Neither participates in the war directly or indirectly, nor bears arms.

Does not manipulate or pass information to any of the parties.”

Source: Photo by Julia Nelson and Moira Birss, from RAIS photo archive.⁸

⁸ The RAIS (*Red de Acompañantes Internacionales en Solidaridad* or Network of International Accompaniers in Solidarity) photo archive is a collection of photos taken by Fellowship of Reconciliation accompaniers in the Peace Community that were delivered to the Community in 2014. For more information, see Chapter 7 (pp. 402-413).



Figure 4. Father Javier Giraldo Moreno.
See Father Giraldo (center) narrating a massacre commemoration in Mulatos, San José de Apartadó.
Source: Author photo.

traced all the way back to an army massacre of eleven civilians in 1977. Further, the number of killings intensified following the founding of the Peace Community in 1997.

The Community⁹ attributes 186 killings to the military and paramilitary, and 24 to

⁹ Please let me explain my intentional capitalization of the word “Community” here. In Colombia, the term *community* is a common way to designate a group of people living in the same place, such as a particular urban neighborhood or rural district. Also, rather than always saying the full name—the “Peace Community of San José de Apartadó”—it is commonplace for Peace Community members, accompaniers, and others to refer to the organization as simply “*la comunidad*” (the community) without including “peace.” However, this can cause confusion since not all residents of the district of San José de Apartadó are members of the organized collective known as the Peace Community. Nonetheless, all of the district’s residents can and are often referred to collectively as the “community of San José de Apartadó” since they live there. For clarity, I use the capitalized “Community” to refer to the Peace Community and the lower-cased “community” to refer to the term in its broader sense. Moreover, a similar confusion is possible with regards to “peace communities.” Following the same pattern of upper and lower-cased terms, my use of “Peace Community” refers to the organization in San José de Apartadó. When I write “peace community” or “peace communities” I am referring to this *type* of organization abstractly (as civilian safe zones amidst war) or to the historical movement by various Colombian communities to brand themselves as such, of which San José was only the first. I have read reports of hundreds of self-declared “peace communities” throughout the country. See C. Mitchell and Ramírez (2009) for a list of different organizational framings associated with the peace communities movement, such as *association, laboratory, and experience of peace*. For an overview of the peace community phenomena in the Urabá region, see García de la Torre et al. (2011: 429-473) and *Vida, dignidad y territorio: Comunidades de paz y zonas humanitarias en el Urabá y Atrato. Memorias del seminario taller con comunidades en riesgo: Compilación de documentos* (2003). Even so, San José de Apartadó is the only “peace community” that I am familiar with and that, as far as I’m aware, still names itself as such. Therefore, I deem the shorthand “Peace Community” appropriate when referring to the San José de Apartadó Peace Community. Additionally, as a side note, paying attention to this word-use dynamic over the years, I have noticed that government officials and mainstream media tend to use “community of San José de Apartadó” rather than “the Peace Community” in their statements. For one of many examples, see Gómez Maseri (2013). While I cannot make a definitive claim regarding the deliberateness, intentionality, or consciousness associated with such framings, I argue that such language use can strategically render the Peace Community invisible and non-existent. For example, government officials—such as then Vice President Francisco Santos’s statement during a visit to San José de Apartadó in 2008—frequently claim that “The Peace Community is only comprised of one settlement with barely twenty families” (field notes, 2011). Therefore, my capitalization of “Community” is my way of not falling into a similar conflation or erasure of the specific organization of interest here. For an assertion that explicitly denounces the Peace Community specifically, take the 2013 statement by ex-President Álvaro Uribe on San José de Apartadó: “I re-affirm that FARC and foreign terrorists have utilized certain people in the *peace communities*” (*El Tiempo* 2013; emphasis mine). Note how he does not vaguely refer to the ‘community’ of San José de Apartadó. Instead, he explicitly specifies whom he was stigmatizing as a front for the guerrillas: the peace communities. I wonder about the extent to which actors who want to correlate the Peace Community with the guerrillas use the specific name, whereas if the speaker intends to invisibilize this organization’s existence, they merely say “community.”

guerrilla groups. As of July 2014, the Peace Community's Internal Council affirmed in an email to me a total of 264 deaths to date (personal communication, 2014). With massacres and threats, paramilitary, military, and guerrilla groups have thwarted various Peace Community attempts to re-settle their villages, inducing repeated displacements post-1997 from villages such as La Unión, La Esperanza, and Mulatos. Among the most notorious cases is the 2005 massacre in the villages Mulatos and La Resbalozza, in which a joint army and paramilitary operation beheaded and cut up the bodies of eight people, including three children and Luis Eduardo Guerra, a Community leader, founder, and its interlocutor with the state. Afterwards, the Community re-affirmed its "*ruptura* (rupture)" with the State, originally declared in 2003, meaning that they refuse to dialog with the Colombian state until four conditions are met: 1) the state removing the police post in San José de Apartadó, 2) a Truth Commission comprised of international and national agencies to investigate why persistent impunity prevails regarding human rights violations, 3) that the military respect all civilian spaces in the area by refraining from killing civilians and occupying their homes and villages, and 4) an apology from the national head of state for comments made by ex-President Álvaro Uribe stigmatizing the Peace Community as a front for the guerrillas. Of these conditions, only the latter has been met, when President Juan Manuel Santos offered a formal apology December 10th, 2013 (*El Espectador* 2013).

As of 2016, nineteen years after its founding, the Peace Community spans eleven villages (Figure 5). They continue to assert their self-determination by putting up signs, as shown above, which mark their spaces. They make decisions in village meetings, community-wide general assemblies, and within an elected Internal Council. They continue to struggle to maintain and re-make their livelihood as *campesinos*, through a

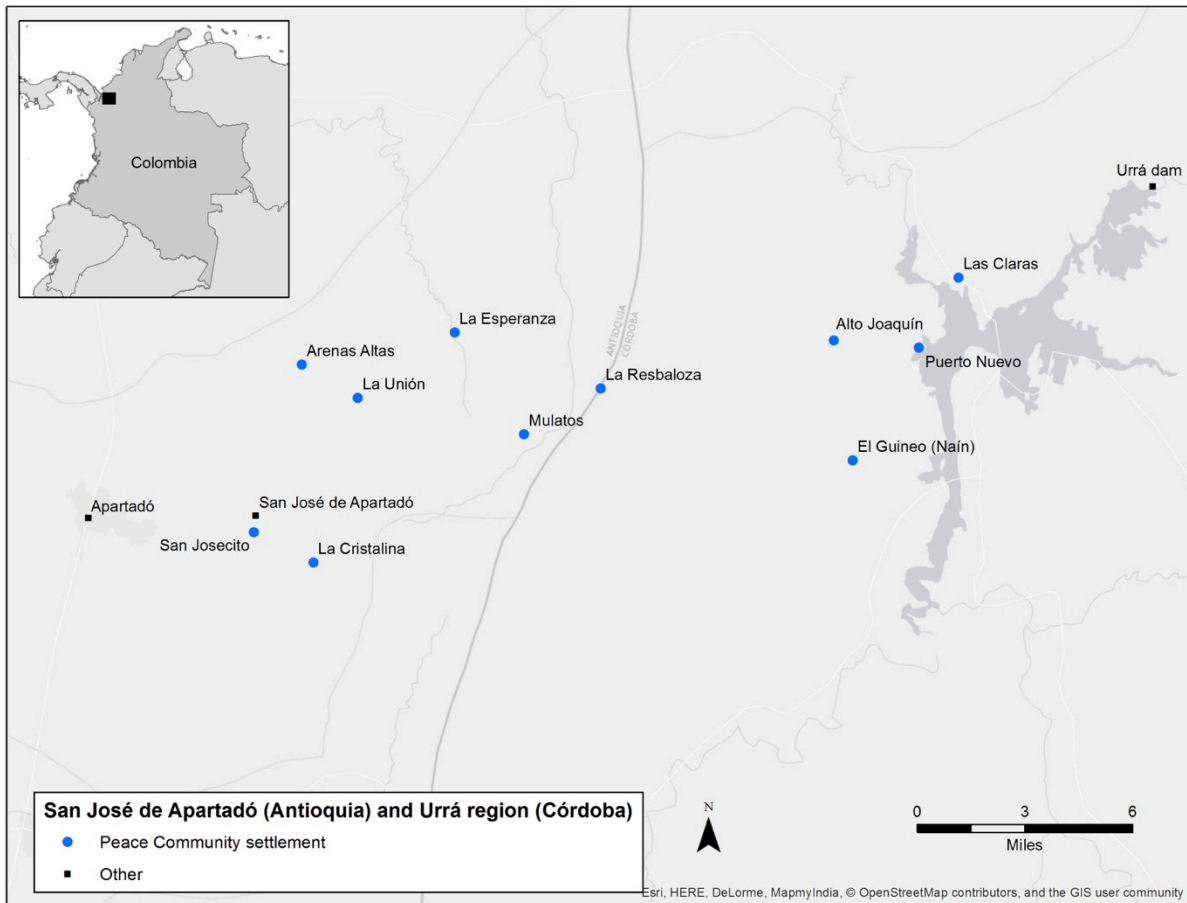


Figure 5. Map of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó. Notice villages in the departments of Antioquia and Córdoba within the northwestern Colombian region of Urabá.
Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel

combination of private and communally-owned land, work groups, organically-produced cacao for export plus a variety of food crops such as corn and sugarcane. In recent years, they have initiated experiments towards food sovereignty through agricultural centers and self-sufficient family farms. They continue to denounce injustice, impunity, assassinations, and threats through press releases, commemoration pilgrimages, and stones painted with victims' names. They have built a solidarity network with other Colombian *campesinos*, human rights defenders, as well as peace activists from other countries. The latter include international observers known as “protective accompaniers” that are invited to live in the community and report to the diplomatic corps and human rights community. And they share seeds and knowledge with other farming and/or Indigenous communities in a *Campesino* University of Resistance. Despite recurrent threats, the Peace Community continues its unarmed resistance to displacement and its struggle for *peace*, which its members define as the active decision to withdraw support for the war's armed groups and as the construction of community.

The “Peace Process”

On October 18th, 2012, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos' administration announced a “peace process” negotiation—or, as the government prefers, “conversations” —with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-Popular Army (FARC-EP). The FARC is Colombia's and Latin America's largest and longest-standing guerrilla insurgency.

Colombians and non-Colombians met the news with a variety of reactions. On the one hand, some people were surprised, given that Santos' prior post was Minister of Defense for former President Álvaro Uribe Vélez, who governed from 2002-2010. Uribe

refused—and continues to criticize—negotiations with the guerrillas. He insists on a strategy of armed annihilation of or surrender by the “terrorists,” the term Uribe has used to refer to guerrillas and an array of social dissenters and human rights defenders. When Santos was elected, people expected this to mean a continuation of Uribe’s approach.

Conversely, the shift away from Uribe’s hardline stance generated excitement and optimism for those who for decades have called for a negotiated end to the armed conflict. Many Colombians and non-Colombians alike feel that such a process might finally lead to the end of a war between the FARC and government spanning more than five decades. President Santos has married his political rhetoric, campaigns, and program to *peace* (Gómez Correal 2015). In fact, his political party, commonly known as “The U Party,”¹⁰ erected billboards throughout the country with different peace quotes alongside their party slogan “*Unidos, como debe ser!*” (United, as it should be!) (Figures 6-8).

Yet the negotiations have also been met with skepticism, since previous dialogs between the state and the FARC have failed, the most recent being the 1999-2002 process under the Andrés Pastrana administration (Chernick 2009). Moreover, a variety of voices have argued that real peace requires much more than the demobilization of the FARC. They insist upon subsequent accords with the National Liberation Army (ELN) and Popular Army of Liberation (EPL), who are smaller but still active guerrilla groups.

¹⁰ The *Partido Social de la Unidad Nacional*, or Social Party of National Unity, is mostly referred to as the “U Party” or just “the U.” The U Party was founded by ex-President Álvaro Uribe, who many Colombians believed to have named the party *the U* less after ‘unity’ and more due to the politician’s last name (field notes, 2011). Due to Santos’ dialog with the FARC, Uribe broke with the “U Party” he had created. He founded another new party under his leadership, the *Céntro Democrático* (Democratic Center), whose principal slogan is “*Mano firme, Corazón grande*” (Firm hand, Huge heart) (Centro Democrático 2015).

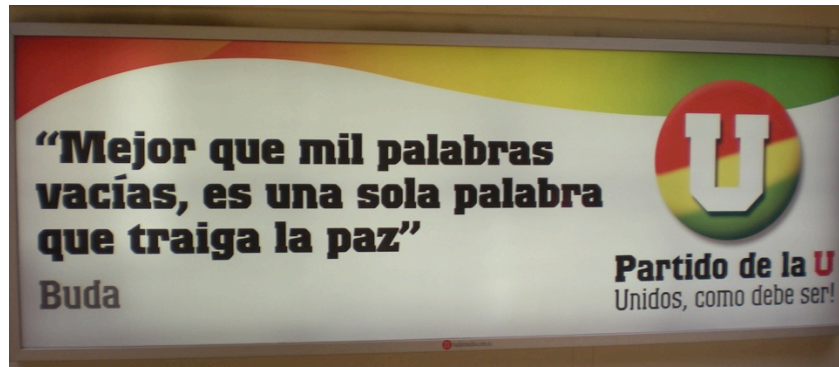


Figure 6. U Party billboard #1: Peace as political discourse.
“Better than a thousand hollow words, there is merely one word that brings peace’ – Buddha.”
Source: Author photo.

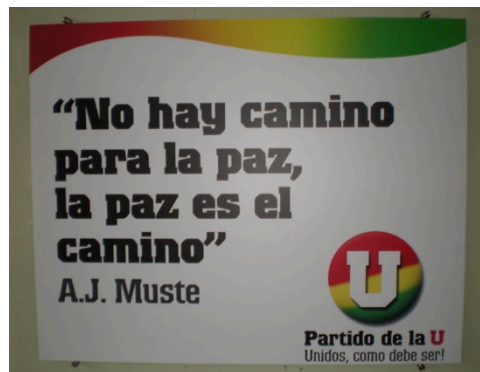


Figure 7. U Party billboard #2: Mobilizing pacifism.
“There is no way to peace, peace is the way’ – A.J. Muste.”
Source: Author photo.



Figure 8. U Party billboard #3: “Peace remains under construction.”
Source: Author photo.

In addition, others also point to the need to demobilize the array of paramilitary groups who—despite the demobilization of the paramilitary *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC, United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia) in 2006—continue to operate and target human rights defenders across the country. Finally, many Colombian popular organizations argue that the country is in need of profound social and political transformations if there is going to be lasting ‘peace.’

In this context, debates about peace are pulsating in Colombia and beyond, as different sectors manifest diverse understandings and projects. These visions of peace range from a) ending the ‘internal armed conflict’ through the guerrillas’ demobilization and the State Armed Forces’ achieving a monopoly on the legitimate use of force; b) demands for the fulfillment of state-guaranteed rights to political participation and basic services like education, health care, and housing; c) calls for reconciliation and national unity, achieved through a process of transitional justice that conducts highly-selective trials on ‘exemplary’ cases of human rights abuse; d) alternative demands for justice that are critical of the top-down transitional justice model and affirm the need for victimizers’ convictions and/or community-based memory work; e) the intensification or rejection of the country’s current economic development model spearheaded by large-scale mining and agribusiness; to f) amid their ongoing resistance to forced displacement and active combat, *campesinos* of Indigenous and African descent who insist upon their communities’ self-determination and dignity.

To be clear, this dissertation is not a direct interrogation of the government-FARC negotiations, i.e., its timeline, actors’ strategies, or the significance of its unique characteristics relative to other attempts at post-conflict reconstruction, transitional justice, or truth commissions. Rather, the formal ‘peace process’ is an element that

profoundly shapes the context in which this study of the Peace Community, other peace imaginaries, and their implications for political transformation, takes place. While people often attempt to create or ensure ‘peace’ through military operations or state negotiations, Colombia is a particularly interesting country in which to research peace. As the list above demonstrates, different Colombians envision and create peace in a variety of concrete and contested ways. These are entangled in divergences over how peace is fundamentally understood by these diverse actors and how it should be produced across space and time. Moreover, these peace imaginaries are also fundamentally questions of politics, memory, and territory.

It strikes me that in this introduction, I instinctively included the billboards as representations of the government’s and Peace Community’s visions of peace. For, within the dominant modern imaginary, isn’t peace about demarcating space—who has control where, as in the nation state? And how better to do so than with signs as markers? Is not ‘peace’ better achieved when people’s ‘territories’ are clearly demarcated (Sánchez Ayala 2015)? Moreover, peace is surely a discourse of power employed to generate support for one’s cause, trumpeting the virtue of one’s vision and position (A. Ross 2011; McConnell 2014).

However, these uses of peace are better understood as “friction” (Tsing 2005), where the same word is interpreted quite differently and utilized towards differing ends. There may appear to be a common language and goal, but I argue that these deployments of peace manifest quite divergent political projects. Indeed, while both the Peace Community and the Santos administration express their peace projects with spatially-demarcating billboards, the ways they understand and practice those ‘peaces’

might in fact reflect radically different territorialities—subjects’ relationship with space (Reyes 2015a; Raffestin 2012)—and practices of politics.

PEACE, TERRITORY, POLITICS, AND MEMORY

This dissertation is about a community that has a radical vision and project of peace. We usually think of peace as a utopian ‘harmony,’ ‘tranquility,’ or ‘no war.’ However, even a ‘peace’ constituted by the lack of open warfare, if amidst the highly unequal and exploitative societies we live in, seems more reflective of what we would deem to be *violence*: the victory of one group over another (Foucault 2003; Dalby 2014), the repression of dissent against injustice (A. Ross 2011), or entrenched hierarchies of capitalist exploitation, racism, and patriarchy (Federici 2004; Daley 2014; Darling 2014; Gelderloos 2007). Precisely, the analytical framework of *feminist geopolitics* guiding some of these critiques fore-fronts the lived and embodied experiences of those experiencing—and potentially resisting—the direct effects of militarization (Dowler and Sharp 2001; Mayer 2004; Mountz and Hyndman 2006). Correspondingly, how did such an understanding of ‘peace’ as the lack of war within and between *states* emerge? And what might peace ‘otherwise’ mean and look like?

In response to geography’s historical complicity in imperialism (Livingstone 1992; P. Williams, Megoran, and McConnell 2014) and out of a plethora of critical and feminist geographies of militarization and war (Loyd 2009; Fluri 2011a; Fluri 2011b; Gregory 2010; Gregory and Pred 2007; Kobayashi 2009; Hyndman 2007), a ‘pro-peace’ agenda emerged in the discipline in 2011. It calls for geographers to re-conceptualize peace from a variety of places and perspectives, in order to mobilize alternative

conceptions towards a just and sustainable world (Megoran 2011; P. Williams and McConnell 2011; Inwood and Tyner 2011; Koopman 2011b).

Rather than vague notions of ‘no war’ or ‘tranquility,’ in my interviews with Peace Community members in San José de Apartadó, they defined peace actively as a) refusing to collaborate with armed groups and b) building community. Peace is often associated with state diplomacy or military victory, as in the current Colombian “peace process” between the government and FARC. Yet the Peace Community suggests that *peace* is an embodied and spatial process that can be produced by non-state actors through everyday ethical practices and places that cultivate dignified living conditions.

In other words, the Peace Community’s peace project produces and is produced by a particular type of *territory*. However, like my re-conceptualization of peace, my approach to territory de-centers this term from its typical modern definition, as a bounded space controlled by a particular group of people. A broader concept of this term is necessary to break with the ‘territorial trap’ (Agnew 1994) of equating territory with the nation-state or sub-sovereignty within states. Therefore, building from re-conceptualizations of territory in geography and anthropology (Delaney 2005; Raffestin 2012; Liffman 2011; Elden 2009; Elden 2013) as well as a new critical subfield that theorizes territory from the perspective of past and present radical social movements in Latin America (Reyes and Kaufman 2011; Reyes 2015a; Porto Gonçalves 2006; Escobar 2008; Ballvé 2013a), I understand *territory* as a fluid series of spatial practices, places, and values that produce—and are produced by—particular political subjects. In other words, territory is a particular production of space that includes but is beyond mere places, or sites with meaning. Territory is more complex, referring to an inherently

political social structure, of which the bounded nation-state of modernity is only one possibility (Reyes 2015a).

Precisely, new theories and practices of territory beyond the nation-state have emerged in Latin American Indigenous and African-descendant communities resisting today's "global land grab" (Peluso and Lund 2011; A. R. Ross 2014) and the "culture of terror" (Taussig 1984) in sites of neocolonial resource extraction. Examples of such movements include the Zapatistas in Chiapas, México; the Mapuche in Chile; as well as the *Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca* (Association of Indigenous Councils in Northern Cauca) and *Proceso de Comunidades Negras* (PCN, Black Communities Process) in Colombia (Reyes 2012b; Esteva 2005; Ceceña 2004; Zibechi 2012; Escobar 2008). In their insistence upon autonomy, dignity, and that "another world is possible" (Santos 2006), these movements exceed the realm of modern politics concentrated around elections, parties, and representation. Rather, such groups reflect an "other politics" (Grupo Acontecimiento 2012; Denis 2012) of "emancipation," which I understand as people breaking relations of subjugation by transforming subjectivities and creating dignified material life conditions in autonomous territories linked together in solidarity networks (Ornelas 2012; Gutiérrez 2012; Reyes 2015b; Reyes and Kaufman 2011; Koopman 2011a).

If the current world is structured by crisis, inequality, and dispossession (Harvey 2011; Calhoun and Derluigian 2011), then *peace as living with dignity* will require a specific politics of rupture (Reyes 2012a) to create such alter-territories. Inspired by the emergent subfields of peace geographies (McConnell, Megoran, and Williams 2014), relational ontologies (De la Cadena 2010; Escobar 2010; Escobar, forthcoming; Blaser

2010), and the *Many Peaces* framework of peace research (Dietrich 2012), I call this *radical trans-relational peace*: dignity through and across relations of solidarity.

Further, if “memory is the strength of resistance,” as asserted by Peace Community member Brígida González, then memory will be central to such peace, territory, and politics. Rather than a reactive act anchored in the past, I understand *memory* to be a spatial practice in the present, rooted in place and landscape, in relation to the past and future (Bal 1999; Halbwachs 1992; Mills 2010; Till 2005; Ricoeur 2004). Memory can be both a) a “strategic practice” where traumatic history is deployed for sociopolitical goals, as well as b) a “difficult return” of bringing forth the presence of people and past events into the present through naming and symbols (Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert 2000). Of course, not all memory work is emancipatory. It can be mobilized for xenophobic or other dangerous ends, resulting in reactionary violence and genocide (Bal 1999; Benjamin 2007a), or function to silence ongoing structural violence (Tyner, Alvarez, and Colucci 2012). In other words, mainstream peace and justice mantras of “never again” are insufficient as long as structural conditions of capitalist-racist-patriarchal violence persist (Depelchin 2011; Acevedo 2009; Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert 2000; Mamdani 2004).

Therefore, a *radical trans-relational peace* is constituted by an alternative form of politics that is rooted in dignity both *within* but *beyond* the people in question. It is relational in three senses. First, it breaks with the modern division between ‘humanity’ and ‘nature’ through an alter-territoriality that seeks not to dominate ‘land.’ Second, through particular forms of commemoration, it rejects the separation between ‘the living’ and ‘the dead,’ recognizing the “agency of the dead” (Gómez Correal 2015). Third,

constituted as it is by trans-community solidarity networks, it speaks to relational space among social movements.

As a critical geography of peace, this dissertation traces the political imaginaries and spatial practices of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó in order to illuminate new ideas of peace and politics ‘otherwise.’ This is an exercise attempting to make theoretically explicit the implicit arguments they make through their words and practices, and to explore the theoretical implications of the concepts they put forward. This will often take the form of comparing and contrasting the Peace Community’s divergence from other political movements, such as those rooted in electoral parties or Indigenous and African descendant communities that demand state-registered ‘collective territories.’ But my intention is never to judge other organizations’ strategies, which I understand to also have their own particularities and value; for example, I have seen that those groups looking for state ‘recognition’ are not necessarily examples of ‘co-optation’ but can indeed be strategic approaches to the state. My task is, however, to understand what the Peace Community says about such politics as an indicator of its thinking and the coherence of its ideas.

Research Questions

Research Question 1. What was the historical, political, and social context in which San José de Apartadó’s farmers organized themselves into a peace community in the region of Urabá, Colombia? Are these *campesinos* racialized and what is the relationship between race, globalization, and Colombia’s war?

2. What is the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó’s political project of peace, given their struggle against displacement and war? How do its members conceive of peace? How do they practice peace? What is the relationship between their community peace praxis and other modes of politics, including state-focused parties, elections, and law enforcement; guerrilla groups’ armed struggle; international institutions; and other social movements?

3. What is the role of memory in imagining and enacting peace? How does the Peace Community create memory through embodied practices and material objects as part of their politics of peace? How do international companions and researchers influence and participate in this collective memory project?

4. What is the role of land and territory in the Peace Community's vision for and practices of peace? How does this community conceive of and produce territory in relation to the territorial conceptions and policies of the state and other social movements? What is the relationship between particular interpretations of peace and those subjects' production of space?

To answer these questions, a critical geography of peace and politics requires a methodology that integrates theoretical-structural analysis with political action research. Combining critical human geography and critical performance ethnography, I call my methodology *critical and performance geography*, which integrates world-systems analysis, critical race theory, feminist geopolitics, critical ethnography, co-performative witness, and dialogical performance for ethical, collaborative, and effective research.

DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

Following this introduction, I describe my methodology of *critical and performance geography* in Chapter 1. I explain how I complement critical geography's structural analysis with specific fieldwork methods learned from my training in critical performance ethnography as a methodology of critical co-performative action research. The remainder of the dissertation is divided into three parts:

Part I, "What is the Peace Community?" explores the historical, social, and political context in which the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó emerged in the northwestern Colombian region of Urabá. Chapter 2 integrates critical race theory and a

discussion of processes of regionalized racialization in Colombia to examine of the context in which the Peace Community emerged and continues to resist. To complement this chapter, I include a two appendices at the end of the dissertation. The first is a timeline of San José de Apartadó history and the second is a series of yearly maps that depict the Peace Community's history of massacres, displacements, as well as returns to abandoned villages through time and space.

Part II, "What is peace?" analyzes different understandings of peace by academics and in Colombia today. Chapter 3 includes my theoretical contribution to peace research, in which I trace the recent emergence of the peace geographies subfield, put it in conversation with the transrational Many Peaces framework of peace studies, and ultimately propose my own conception of *radical transrelational peace*. Chapter 4 delves into the debates about the meaning and practice of peace in Colombia today in the context of the state-guerrilla "peace process" negotiations.

Part III, "What is politics?" explores the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó as a case of an "other politics" of emancipation. Whereas Part II focuses on Peace Community interviewees' verbal *definitions* of peace, the chapters comprising Part III examine *practices* of peace in San José de Apartadó. Chapter 5 traces the relationship between the Peace Community's politics of peace and their forms of embodied and material commemoration through pilgrimages to massacre sites, painting stones with victims' names, and folk paintings of Community history. Chapter 6 examines debates about 'land' versus 'territory' among and between social movements and states in Latin America today, while exploring the Peace Community's production of an alter-territory through solidarity caravans, resistance networks and the *Campesino* University of Resistance, as well as food sovereignty initiatives in agricultural centers

and self-sufficient family farms. My final chapter, Chapter 7, analyzes the politics of my own research as critical and performance ethnography, in which I describe a photo memory project I co-developed as well as my performance pieces that I have performed in and beyond the Peace Community. In the Conclusion, I offer a final reflection on the significance of the San José Peace Community for the theory and practice of politics and research today.

CHAPTER 1

CRITICAL AND PERFORMANCE GEOGRAPHY

A critical geography of peace and politics requires an appropriate methodology that combines structural analysis with political action research. If I want to ‘create and live a different world’ by cultivating collective subjects, then I have to enact that theory through my research practice. This dissertation is what I term *critical and performance geography*, a methodology that integrates a) critical human geography and b) critical performance ethnography.

The discipline of critical human geography interrogates and maps power relations among and between peoples and places. Informed by a Marxist critique of capitalism (Marx 1976a), critical development studies (Escobar 1995; Galeano 1997), and especially world-systems analysis (Wallerstein 2004), critical geography is able to add an explicitly spatial deconstruction of core, periphery, and semi-periphery relations as well as states (Harvey 2001) and social movements (Oslender 2008). Furthermore, the critical geography subfield of feminist geopolitics attends to the militarization-state-resistance nexus by foregrounding embodied practices that reveal the interrelation between global, national, local, and personal processes of power (Dowler and Sharp 2001). In other words, a theoretical analysis is crucial for understanding how phenomenological conditions are structured by sociohistorical power relations. Following Gómez Correal’s (2015: 25) use of Marx, a structural analysis is fundamental

for any intellectual program to study and act in the world, because the point is not merely to interpret but *change* the world (Marx 1976b: 145). For example, a structural analysis of gender and patriarchy has been fundamental for feminists to re-think and understand the oppression women face, resist such subjugation, and create a politics to transgress such structures (Gómez Correal 2011). Critical theory is thus essential for deconstructing systems of power and creating emancipatory alternatives to them (Gómez Correal and Pedraza 2012).

The framework of critical and performance ethnography, moreover, combines in-depth dialog and participation, reflexivity, interactive performance, and a broad array of research presentations methods for a just present and future (Conquergood 1985; Conquergood 2002; Madison 2010; Madison 2012; Vasudevan 2012). In other words, where critical human geography recognizes and attends to unequal power dynamics across places and bodies, critical ethnography recognizes and insists upon the role of the researcher as a performer—and potential transgressor—of those power dynamics towards emancipatory research and politics. As Tsing (2005) recalls from one her interlocutor's prescriptions, “ ‘Be a hair in the flour,’ he explains. A hair in the flour ruins the legitimacy of power” (206).

Critical and performance ethnography is rooted in critical theory that is constituted by imaginative and embodied study as a tactic of intervention within spaces of struggle. Conquergood (2002) alliterates this approach as the three As or Cs: artistry, analysis, and activism, or creativity, critique, and citizenship (152). Madison (2012) calls it “critical theory in action” (16). This stresses how *doing* is *knowing* (Conquergood 2002; Ceceña 2012; Porto Gonçalves 2002a). Core tenants include: a) political positionality, reflexivity, action, and discretion; b) engaged communication, where the

interview is a performance of knowledge production; c) foregrounding people's voices; and d) diverse and evocative presentation methods for broad impacts. I will explore each of these in turn.

Critical ethnography insists upon attention to the political stakes of one's research for the researcher and groups in question. It is not enough to simply present the complexity of the topic without taking positions, making proposals, and putting one's theoretical claims into practice. Research does not take place in a vacuum. Actors, processes, and oppositions already exist and are in motion. Taking a political stand with regards to the issues, policies, and relations under question prevents one from falling into what Sandoval (1997) calls *neither-norism*: 'I'm neither against nor for such-and-such phenomena.' Two examples with respect to this dissertation could be: 1) 'I'm not going to actively protest the racist state killings in Colombia and beyond, but that doesn't make me in favor of them,' or 2) 'I neither support nor critique particular ideas and practices of peace because every perspective is valid.' Rather than being a conduit to neutrality or a detached 'objectivity,' the failure to take a position on political violence and resistance *will* inevitably coincide with a position, most often that of reproducing the status quo (Gómez Correal 2015). Critical ethnography insists that researchers reflect upon the implications of their positionality and the legacies of their 'proximity' (Vasudevan 2012), and that those who are indeed committed to the status quo or a state project make this explicit.

Critical ethnography is thus a means to enact what Gómez Correal (2015) terms her "intentional objectivity" (17), approaching the world's conditions through subjective and material realities. In my case, I must take the political stakes of the different conceptions and practices of peace in Colombia seriously because, as a geographer, I am

inevitably a participant in the construction of particular forms of peace, memory, territory, and politics through my presence and communication of the research. Of course, taking a political position is understood not as making a once-and-for-all declaration about what is and should be, but to critically analyze the implications of particular theories and methods, in order to advance ongoing conversations that are fundamental to an emancipatory politics as always dynamic, reflective, and transformative.

Personal experiences and political leanings can also limit or possibilize our abilities to interpret or comprehend particular phenomena and political projects.¹¹ For instance, during a presentation at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Peace Community leader Jesús Emilio Tuberquia responded to a question about the role of outside researchers by stating that they often misunderstand, “They write in their summaries that we are anarchists. No, we are a *project of life*” (personal communication, 2011). I sense that researchers and companions committed—whether consciously or unconsciously—to the modern state system of electoral representation and law enforcement have difficulty interpreting the Peace Community’s practice as more than a limited retreat within the system, i.e., as a courageous but still ‘parochial’ or ‘unrealistic’ alternative. I have heard these arguments on many occasions. Therefore, I argue that to fully appreciate the depth, significance, and possibilities of the Peace Community, we have to approach it from the perspective of a radical, anti-systemic

¹¹ A notable example is the recent work of Gómez Correal (2015) on the emotional ties of caring and belonging of victimized subjects in Colombia. As she reveals, her experience as a victimized subject herself potentiated her ability to interrogate particular elements that had been relatively ignored in anthropological and modern scholarship, such the role of dreams, emotions, and the agency of the dead.

politics (Wallerstein 2004) that exceeds what seems politically and socially ‘realistic.’¹² Indeed, much of my subjective political formation took place as an accompanier in the Peace Community, exposing me to such a politics of “rupture” and convincing me to take such alternatives to electoral politics and armed struggle seriously.

Further, research with a community in the middle a war zone such as San José de Apartadó is often conditioned upon solidarity collaboration with the organization in question, for security or other reasons. Of course, being *in solidarity* does not mean *in total agreement* with organizational strategy. In any case, I wish to disclose that my objective here, as an outsider, is not to provide a comprehensive account of all of the internal workings of the Peace Community. Similar to Escobar’s (2008) work with *Proceso de Comunidades Negras* (PCN, Black Communities Process) in Colombia, I am a non-member and I view my role as a scholar to explain the significance of their project for understanding and evaluating our current conjuncture and strategies of social transformation, rather than presenting a list of the Community’s internal dynamics, whether I have critiques or not. The appropriate space for raising any such critiques is directly with Peace Community members and their Internal Council, rather than through this dissertation. Here, I agree with Tsing (2005) who remarks,

My ethnographic involvement with activists taught me the restraint of care: There are lots of things that I will not research or write about. I do not mean that I have whitewashed my account, but rather that I have made choices about the kinds of research topics that seem appropriate, and indeed, useful to building a public culture of international respect and collaboration. (xii)

¹² For this framing, I am indebted to Priscilla Vaz. In a private conversation, she shared with me an interaction she had with a group of colleagues. To her insistence on pursuing change beyond mere reforms and dominant institutional channels, they told her that she had to be “realistic” and “pragmatic.” Inferring that small changes and thinking are not enough, she replied, “Then, I am *unrealistic!*” (personal communication, 2010).

Therefore, my political critiques and proposals will always be in relation to these guidelines. Here, I distinguish critical and performance ethnography-geography from journalism, due to the former's additional array of ethical protocols and explicit theoretical concerns (Amelia Fiske, personal communication, 2015). Such an ethic is essential to protect against the potential harms of research through dialog, care, and discretion, without compromising one's commitment to critical analysis.

Regarding the researcher's practice in the field, therefore, critical and performance ethnographers position themselves as *witnesses* and *co-performers* rather than *observers* to stress the political stakes and roles performed through engaged research with organizations or communities. Madison (2010) puts it this way, "Performative-witnessing is also to emphasize the political act (responsibility) of witnessing over the neutrality (voyeurism) of observation" (25). This is a push to break with Orientalist and colonial ethnographies, which are tainted by intentions of conquest or compromised by misguided and dangerous assumptions about 'static and unchanging cultural groups' (Wallerstein 2004; Said 1979) to be observed 'over the shoulder' (Conquergood 2002).

For example, my research takes place within a specific time period and through which I intend to understand a 'coherence' to the Peace Community project in order to present a narrative about its significance. In so doing, however, this is to signal how the Community has dynamically transformed over time and across space, as well as my own role in this research process.

Moreover, I understand the back-and-forth conversation of semi-structured interviews as a performative space in which knowledge is produced through continual reflection and clarification that critique and create theory (Pollock 2005a; Madison

2012). The interview as conversation becomes a space of “dialogical performance” (Conquergood 1985): sharing and creating ideas, although my default as an outside researcher is always to listen first and foremost. Active listening and researcher reflexivity are essential for constructive collaboration to occur, especially in a threatened community like San José de Apartadó. As Conquergood (2002) stresses, critical and performance ethnographers must pay attention to coded and encrypted messages, including indirect and nonverbal modes of communication:

The state of emergency under which many people live demands that we pay attention to messages that are coded and encrypted; to indirect, nonverbal, and extralinguistic modes of communication where subversive meanings and utopian yearnings can be sheltered and shielded from surveillance. (148)

I conduct research with this cultural sensitivity not only as a means of gaining a deeper understanding of a community, but also as an ethical issue of respect and security.

In any ethnographic work there is always the danger of speaking *for* others. Speaking of liberation theology praxis and drawing from the work of Michel Foucault, Welch (2007) signals that “there is an ongoing tension between avoiding the indignity of speaking for the oppressed and attempting to respond to their voices by engaging in social and political critique” (376). Therefore, Madison (2010) explains how critical and performance ethnography fore-fronts collaborators’ voices and actions. Through extensive or creatively-rendered quotes, this approach is careful to not displace people’s ideas and philosophies with academic analysis and scholarly references.

For instance, Guha (2009) exposes the ways in which even historians sympathetic to the Indian insurgents they wrote about silenced the latter’s consciousness, as in reducing their struggle to socialism (228, 235). While a socialist

historiography obviously did not impede the agency of the insurgents themselves, it did constrict the reader's ability to comprehend the insurgents' voices.

Consequently, Depelchin (2011) insists,

Always remember those who resisted the conquest of their land because they were defending much more than their land. To remember requires much more than mining memories and archives; it will take listening with loving attention to the voices which tend to be ignored, to poets, to those who did die of hunger, to those who would like to speak for themselves as they are. (54)

This speaks to the importance and power of story. In fact, affective life stories possess a power to reach others on a personal level. By potentially generating an emotional connection with the reader or listener, the particularity of an individual story often resonates more deeply with diverse groups than a universal theory. As famously written by de Certeau (1984), "what the map cuts up, the story cuts across" (129).

This connects with the final methodological component I will examine: the communication and impact of the research. Alexander (2005) defines performance ethnography as "literally the staged re-enactment of ethnographically derived notes" (411). By emphasizing the political action of the researcher, critical and performance ethnography challenges the idea of methodology as 'data gathering' alone. *Co-performative witness*, hence, goes beyond how the presence of the researcher affects a community in the field. It extends into concrete forms of participation in political struggles. Also, it insists upon an intentional methodology beyond the realm of field work and not limited to written work, by not assuming that academic publications (alone) will shift real conditions. According to Denzin (2003), "critical ethnographers go beyond thick descriptions of local situations to resistance performance texts/events that urge social transformations" (33). Madison (2010) adds: "The major work of

performance ethnography is to make performances that do the labor of advocacy, and do it ethically to inspire realms of reflection and responsibility” (12).

Critical and performance ethnography thus provides tools for diverse and effective presentations of the research, both written and non-written. These include a) rendering a scene, b) poetic transcription of interviews, c) interactive digital archives, and d) staged theatre pieces both in the field and with other audiences.

To render a scene is to describe a site with sensory detail, to illustrate what is heard, touched, smelled, seen, tasted, or felt in that space. Leaving out post-analytical reflections, the idea is to place the reader in the space and/or body at that particular moment. Rendering a scene is particularly useful to preface an interview excerpt by describing the environmental surroundings of the place or context. For an example, see how Alexander Craft (2008) employs this layout effectively by engaging the reader at the outset by rendering a scene and then proceeding to provide contextualization, theory, and analysis, while interspersing story throughout.

One of the primary limitations of plain written text is the difficulty of capturing tone and pace. According to Burke (1969), “The [written] record is usually but a fragment of the expression as the written word omits all telltale record of gesture and tonality” (185). To circumvent this limitation of writing and perform words on paper, performance ethnographers employ poetic transcription, which Glesne (1997) defines as “the creation of poemlike compositions from the words of interviewees” (202). In a similar fashion to rendering a scene, the purpose and power here is to bring the reader closer to the speaker, lessening the emotional distance between the two. *Ethnopoetic* transcription goes even further to humanize the written word by ‘drawing’ the voice. It is a method of conveying emotion, rhythm, and tone by using bold, italics, caps, font size,

or spatial variation. This enables both someone reading the words aloud—such as in a publically spoken or acted performance—or a silent reader to more closely feel and replicate the original essence of the way the words were spoken.

Performance as an educational and advocacy tool consciously engages and evokes emotions, which are a fundamental part of social action and politicization to induce strategic actions (Gómez Correal 2015; Madison 2010). One step is to cultivate empathy (Madison 2010) and response-ability (Oliver 2001) by using performance to create a connection between the audience and the issues and peoples under discussion. Madison (2010) then calls for a “turn from the *sense of being present* toward the *aim to provoke*” so that the audience makes judgments and begins “to feel oppositional to/with the polemics being performed” (145). In other words, the shift from empathy to argument (145) aspires to spring people into a political response (151), which Madison (2010) describes as “invoking a response-ability in others ... that will lead to ... something of larger philosophical and material effects” (10-11).

FIELDWORK METHODS

As a critical and performance geographer, I use not only the written word but also my body in space as a mode of inseparable investigation, analysis, and presentation. In other words, this approach emphasizes that geographers not only write about and analyze from the perspective of space; geographers also perform and create space. Therefore, my concrete methods include archival research, in-depth personal and group interviews, as well as an array of practices that fall within what is typically called ‘participant observation’ but what I prefer to term *co-performative action research*.

Each of these methods are explained in detail below, with commentary on how this project is intentionally critical and performative.

As a critical and performance geographer, I am situated as an active participant in the Peace Community's process that builds from my historical relationship with them. I have spent a total of 20 months in San José de Apartadó, having visited at least once a year from 2008—when I first worked there as a Fellowship of Reconciliation Peace Presence (FORPP) accompanier—until 2014, plus another visit in March 2016. The Peace Community officially approved my proposal to do dissertation research with them in a general assembly in 2012. Between 2011 and 2016, I completed 16 months of field research in Colombia, which is part of the 35 months I have worked and studied in Colombia over an eight-year period.

When I was in San José de Apartadó, I slept in houses provided for international accompaniers or, on rarer occasions, in a Peace Community member's home. During pilgrimage caravans, I slept in a hammock that participants tie up in village gazebos or libraries. On an international delegation that I co-led with FOR Peace Presence in 2014, delegates and I stayed in hotel rooms. While in Bogotá and Medellín, I would stay with members of my personal network.¹³

¹³ While in Urabá, I would also often travel down to the nearby city of Apartadó about once or twice a week to buy supplies and to connect to the internet. To give an idea of travel to, from, and within the Peace Community, if you depart from the United States, you cannot arrive there in one day. The closest city is Apartadó. From the major city of Medellín, it is a seven-hour bus ride (or more if there are land slides, which periodically occur along what is called Antioquia's *Vía al mar* or Road to the Sea) or a one-hour flight. There are also three direct flights a week from Bogotá. Once in Apartadó, there is a jeep that leaves for San José about every hour from the transportation terminal, where bus employees yell to gather passengers for their route, yelling "Turbo, Turbo, Turbo! Carepa! Carepa! Carepa!" One has to be on guard, as various Colombians have been assassinated there. On one occasion, I remember a pair of men acting as private security who approached me and another international, and they admitted to being demobilized paramilitaries. At the jeep station for San José de Apartadó, people set luggage down on the ground under a plastic covered waiting area until loading the bags onto the top of

To inquire into people's ideas of peace, memory, and territory, I conducted 49 *semi-structured interviews*, which included five *group interviews* of two to four people concurrently that reflected local practices of communal debate and decision-making. In the Peace Community, I interviewed a total of 27 members from eight of their eleven settlements, and I had repeated interviews with six members. These interviewees included eleven women and sixteen men, whose ages ranged from people in their twenties to the elderly.¹⁴ Some were founding members of the Community and some have only joined in recent years. For other perspectives, I interviewed eleven members of other Colombian social movement organizations (including Father Javier Giraldo), four army and police officers, and six protective accompaniers, for a total of 48 people interviewed altogether.¹⁵

the jeep. People transport huge bags of goods. From San José down to Apartadó, the jeeps are filled with crops going to market, while from Apartadó up to San José, the roof and inside are filled with foodstuffs (especially rice and cooking oil) as well as farming, house, and construction supplies. In dry weather, the jeep from Apartadó will arrive in the Peace Community settlement of San Josecito in 45 minutes. From San Josecito, it is a two-hour walk up the Serranía de Abibe to the village of La Unión. From there, it is another four hours walk to La Esperanza, or five hours to Mulatos.

¹⁴ To be clear, I did not inquire about interviewees' ages. I assume this range in relation to which landmark historical events interlocutors experienced and spoke about, as well as knowing some people's ages from our personal relationships.

¹⁵ Due to security concerns, I do not disclose personal interviewees' individual names but refer to them as a "community member," "officer," or "activist," etc. However, some exceptions include Jesuit priest Javier Giraldo Moreno (commonly referred to as "Father Giraldo"), Peace Community member María Brígida González (commonly referred to as "Doña Brígida"), and community organizer Ricardo Esquivia of *Sembrandopaz* in Sincelejo, Sucre. All of these are well-known public figures not requesting anonymity. Another person I cite by name is former FOR Peace Presence accompanier Michaela Soellinger, who inspired by conceptual articulation of *radical transrelational peace*; I asked Soellinger if I could acknowledge her contribution by name, which she agreed to. Finally, when Peace Community members' voices are transcribed from public events or documentaries, I cite their names. Commonly cited spokespeople in this dissertation include Jesús Emilio Tuberquia and the deceased Eduar Lancho. I have translated statements made in Spanish into English. The same goes for literature and quotes originally published in Spanish.

These interviews took place in a variety of places and for different lengths of time. Most interviews ran for about an hour. A few lasted less than a half-hour given unexpected interruptions, while my longest interview was a group conversation lasting two and a half hours. With Peace Community members, my interviews typically took place in their homes, where I would go to visit (Figure 9). Sometimes I went to particular houses with the intention of conducting an interview, while other times, they would happen spontaneously while on a house visit. For example, if people made insightful comments during informal conversation, sometimes—given the situation—I would ask them if I could include their idea in my dissertation and begin an impromptu interview by asking them to repeat their previous statement and proceeding to continue with more questions and conversation. In a similar fashion, other impromptu interviews took place in the FOR house in La Unión during community members' visits there and fellow accompaniers were often part of these conversations. Indeed, one of my interviews was a joint interview initiated by FOR Peace Presence as part of their annual evaluation of the accompaniment project. I also conducted interviews during Peace Community gatherings, such as my interview with Father Giraldo while sitting on the ledge of a home in the Mulatos Peace Village after the Rodoxalí march and *Campesino* University gathering in 2013. In addition, a few of my interviews in San José de Apartadó took place while walking from one village to another. My interviews in Medellín and Apartadó took place either in NGO headquarters or in private homes. With police and army officers, I went to their command headquarters and held the interviews in their offices.

Adapted as appropriate for the particular interviewee or group, my questionnaire included the following questions: How do you define peace? How do you understand the



Figure 9. “Dialogical performance.”
Interview with Doña María Brígida González in San Josecito.
Source: Author photo.

roots of the war? What is your perspective on the state-FARC peace talks? Why do you commemorate in the ways that you do, and how do those memory practices affect your organizational process? What is the relationship between memory and peace? What do land and territory mean to you and how do they relate to peace? What is your relationship with state agencies and other Colombian and international organizations? What is accompaniment and how do you evaluate it? How have your organization's strategic practices emerged and/or changed over time? What have you learned from other organizations and what lessons can you offer for other peace building initiatives?

I transcribed each interview myself, often the same night or day after conducting it, to allow for preliminary coding and data analysis throughout the fieldwork process. This also allowed for prompt follow-up questions with interviewees gleaned from any intriguing or unclear comments. Dialog facilitates more accurate understandings and verification of concepts and events (Miles and Huberman 1994). More significantly, however, as a reciprocal and ongoing space of questioning and debate, this collective research of dialogic performance produces new knowledge during and through interviews themselves (Conquergood 1985; Madison 2012; Pollock 2005a).

Interviews can also be a form of political accompaniment. One visit to an army base was particularly memorable. Upon my arrival to Urabá in September 2013, I emailed and faxed a letter to the region's military authorities to announce my arrival to the region, copied to my research sponsors and collaborators. When I finally went to a military base to schedule an interview in April 2014, I was able to arrange a meeting on the spot with one of the commanders. I remember reminding myself how easy it was to get access given my position as an international researcher and the power that connoted; it seemed even easier to get a meeting as an academic than it was while I was

an accompanier in frequent contact with these officers. I brought my introduction letter with me and presented it to the folks I asked for interviews. After glancing over it, one officer passed the letter off to a lower-ranking official for her to take into another room and review. He asked me about my time as a FORPP accompanier, which he had seen indicated on the letter, and proceeded to call the current team's cell phone to ask if they knew me. When the lower-ranking officer returned, he asked her what the letter said, and she responded that it explained what I had verbally told them, that I was there from the University of North Carolina doing research about peace and wanted to speak with them. We continued to talk, until he suggested I interview other officers within the brigade, which I did. I interviewed Colombian army and police officers not only to include their perspectives in this geography of peace, but also to disclose my presence in the area and embody my political network as a form of potentially dissuading attacks against the Peace Community.

In performance ethnography's spirit of performatively staging ethnographic notes (Alexander 2005), many of my interview quotes throughout the dissertation are *ethnopoetic transcriptions*. For instance, I open each chapter with a poetically transcribed interview excerpt that was particularly illuminating for me during the research process. Rather than Glesne's (1997) method of drafting a poem from selected interview quotes, my ethnopoetic transcription approach is to render the interview's words in such a way as to give the reader the best sense of how those words were spoken. In this way, bolded or italicized words that emerge from the transcription can

also be a conduit for narrative analysis in relation to the words or concepts on which the speaker placed the most emphasis.¹⁶

Proceeding to my next method, in order to witness daily practices and events, I conducted *co-performative action research* in San José de Apartadó and with other groups. These included artisanal gold miners in Caldas; Black and Afro-Colombian community associations in Chocó and Bolívar; *campesino* organizations in Sucre, Bolívar, and Caldas; land restitution activists in Antioquia; student activists, community organizers, and urban Hip Hop youth collectives in Medellín; youth conscientious objectors in Medellín and Bogotá; nonviolent reconciliation trainers in Barranquilla; and trade activists, human rights defenders, state crimes victims' organizations, and representatives of the Colombian Congress in Bogotá. In multi-organization gatherings in San José de Apartadó as well as in campus events at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I also interacted with representatives of Indigenous communities from Cauca, Chocó, Cesar, and Guajira; Afro-Colombians from Cauca; *campesino* communities from Quindío and Cauca; and victims and human rights organizations from Bogotá (Figure 10). I recorded hand-written notes in paper notebooks, before transcribing and expanding upon them in my field journal word documents (Figure 11).

Specific organizations whose public or written works, or members' personal statements to me, that I will cite—as I deem appropriate and ethical to do so—include:

¹⁶ As will become clear when the transcriptions appear, beginning with Part I, my spoken words will be justified to the right margin of the page, with my interviewees' statements justified to the left margin. No 'key' is required for reading these. The 'shape' of the words in relation to one another should evoke particular intonations. For full disclosure, however, I used the following rubric as my guide: *italics* is used to signal *emphasized words said with a high pitch*; words said in a **low tone** or with a **deep resonance** are in **lower-case bold**; finally, **ALL CAPS** and **BOLD** indicate words said **LOUDLY**, with **EVEN MORE FORCE OR EMPHASIS**.



Figure 10. Fieldwork sites in Colombia.

The cities and darkly-shaded departments indicated above were sites I visited and conducted direct fieldwork in. The more lightly shaded departments were sites of indirect fieldwork, which I did not visit personally, but the dissertation includes ideas and statements from community representatives from these areas who I met during the course of my research at inter-organizational gatherings in San José de Apartadó or speaking events hosted at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.



Figure 11. Taking field notes during a Peace Community gathering.
Source: Author photo.

- *Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del norte del Cauca-ACIN CXAB WALA KIWE (Territorio del Gran Pueblo)* [Association of Indigenous Councils in northern Cauca (Territory of the Gran People)], often referenced as, simply, *the ACIN*.
- *Consejo Comunitario Mayor de la Organización Popular Campesina del Alto Atrato* (COCOMOPOCA, Major Community Council of Campesino Popular Organization of the Alto Atrato river region)
- *Hijos e Hijas por la Memoria y Contra la Impunidad* (Sons and Daughters of Memory and Against Impunity)
- *Movimiento de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado, MOVICE* (Movement of Victims of State Crimes)
- *Red Juvenil* (Youth Network) of Medellín
- *Sembrandopaz* (Planting-peace), in particular, founder and Executive Director Ricardo Esquivia
- *SERPAJ Colombia* (The Colombian branch of *Servicio Paz y Justicia*, or Service of Peace and Justice)
- *Tejido Awasqa Conciente* (Conscious Cultural Weave), a youth collective commonly referred to as, simply, *Awasqa*
- *Tierra Digna – Centro de Estudios para la Justicia Social* (Land of Dignity Research Center for Social Justice)
- *Tierra y Vida* (Land and Life), originally founded as the *Asociación de Víctimas para la Restitución de Tierras y Bienes, ASOVIRESTIBI* (Association of Victims for Restitution of Land and Assets).

The following are a few examples of this co-performative action. I participated in multiple anniversary gatherings and commemoration pilgrimages where Peace Community members hiked to the sites of massacres and recounted those histories (Figure 12). I also joined a 2013 rural caravan that marched across various villages in San José de Apartadó to challenge paramilitary and military harassment and kidnapping. As a former FORPP accompanier and current member of the organization's Board of Directors, I have also provided auxiliary support to the accompaniment team over the years a) as an accompaniment trainer, b) by sharing my security analysis upon



Figure 12. Critical performance geography: Producing space through research. On a pilgrimage during Holy Week in April 2014 to commemorate those killed along the Apartadó-San José road. Source: Photo by Gale Stafford, with permission, from FORPP photo archive.

consultation, and c) serving as a co-leader of FORPP delegations in Colombia and co-organizer of speaking tours in the United States. Also, like other internationals in San José de Apartadó, my presence as a researcher provides an element of protection to particular communities that I walk alongside. There were times when I accompanied, by semi-formal petition, individual Peace Community leaders during trips outside of the Community, for instance, to buy supplies in the city of Apartadó.

Further, the Peace Community, FORPP accompaniers, and I designed a collaborative *memory photo project*, allowing for analysis of how international accompaniers and my own research influence and contribute to the Community's collective memory. I delivered 2,500 digital photographs collected from accompaniers' archives for the Community to use as they so choose, such as the possibility of creating digital archives and/or memory boards for events, schools, and libraries, as well as their memory museum under construction. I also projected three photo slideshows in different villages, paying attention to community members' reactions to particular photos. This inspired subsequent conversations with community members about particular people (living and deceased), past events, and the role researchers and accompaniers play in documenting San José's history not only for the outside world, but also by returning and re-presenting these materials within the community to induce ongoing remembrance, reflection, and motivation to continue the struggle.¹⁷

During my doctoral coursework—in collaboration with other critical ethnographers at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill—I created a series of staged theatre *performances* about displacement, commemoration, and accompaniment that I use to represent San Jose's experiences with other audiences, such as academics,

¹⁷ For an examination of this memory photo project, see Chapter 7 (pp. 402-413).

students, and NGOs. Notably, I have used them in scholarly conference presentations, classroom lectures, and FORPP's 2013 accompaniment training. Such a pedagogy of role-play, poetic transcription, and audience participation serves to nurture collective and engaged learning spaces. I provide the scripts to three of these pieces in Chapter 7, when I describe my use of performance beyond and within San José de Apartadó. The titles of two of these works, "Even the stones speak" and "If we remain on the land," also serve as titles for chapters 5 and 7, respectively. During my field work in San José de Apartadó, I organized performance events in two Community villages to stage these works. Community members and accompaniers performed roles in various performances, affirmed that these representations appropriately reflected their ideas and history, and explained their value as educational memory events in and for the community itself.

I also incorporate *archival sources*, including a) the accompaniers' photo collection; b) news articles from local (*El Heraldito de Urabá*) and national (*El Tiempo*, *Semana*, *El Espectador*) newspapers; c) book annotations, including texts I have only found in the Peace Community's library, notably, *Sembrando Vida y Dignidad* (Figures 13-14); and d) Peace Community communiqués available on their website:

www.cdpsanjose.org. In addition, I also incorporate statements from a number of documentaries of the Peace Community available on DVD and online. These include:

- 1) *Hasta la Última Piedra* (Until the Last Stone), directed by Juan José Lozano (2006)
- 2) *Comunidad de Paz, resiste* (Community of Peace, resists), produced by students at the University of Pereira (Moncada Hurtado, Ossa, and Caro Morales 2011)
- 3) *Detrás de los Medios: San José de Apartadó* (Behind the Media), produced by the *Asociación Campesina de Antioquia* (ACA, Campesino Association of Antioquia) (2008)



Figure 13. Archival ethnography #1: Prior scholarship.
Reading a community copy of *Sembrando Paz y Dignidad* in the international
accompaniers' house in San Josecito.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 14. Archival ethnography #2: Community-written history.
Reading *Noche y Niebla. Tipo Caso 6* in San Josecito.
Source: Author Photo

- 4) *Hope for Colombia: The Grace Pilgrimage 2010 Bogotá*, produced by Grace Media Productions of the Tamera community and directed by Rafael Buenaventura (2011)

I also incorporate selected public statements and personal stories that I recorded during my time as an accompanier or recalled during my graduate coursework. With respect to the former, I am specifically referring to a two-day workshop organized by the Peace Community for its international accompaniers in 2010. One day was dedicated to Internal Council Members narrating the Peace Community's history and the other was a presentation on paramilitarism by Father Javier Giraldo.

Prior to departure in July 2014, I reviewed my findings with the Peace Community leadership council. I received additional feedback and the permission to proceed writing about and performing my core observations and arguments.

I want to be clear about how I understand and framed this research to be participatory and how it is not. Similar to Koopman (2008), I conceive of this as research not *of* but *with* this community, but in a particular way. It is not participatory research in the sense of mutually co-designing my dissertation questions, themes, or materials for publication.

First, I come to this work with my particular intellectual questions, guided by specific scholarly debates taking place in the university and among social movements today. For example, I joined FORPP and later entered graduate school driven by my long-held questions about peace and politics, and specifically, to evaluate nonviolent and armed strategies of social change with respect to the production of sustainability and peace. Conversely, my conceptual interrogation of territory and land emerged in graduate school through the academic literature on the discourses, production, and significance of territory in contemporary Latin America. Finally, my attention to the

dynamics of memory emerged over time from my experiences in the Peace Community; my reflections as an accompanier about memory's influence on fear and village returns as; the interest UNC colleagues expressed in these practices during my first year of graduate school; and members' affirmations to me about memory's importance during my pre-dissertation field work.

Secondly, the Community's Internal Council never requested that we sit down to co-structure the project, such as my thematic focus, particular questions, or methods. Similar to other researchers' experiences there, such as Gwen Burnyeat (2015), there is a level of trust regarding what I will write and perform based on our historical relationship (Burnyeat, personal communication, 2014). Of course, being a conduit for telling their stories is an honor and a responsibility, which I do not take lightly. In any case, I feel that the Peace Community is more interested in my collaboration through concrete acts on the ground rather than a focus on the written work alone.

Therefore, this work is participatory co-performance through particular contributions that are embedded within the Peace Community process, as mentioned above: walking with them in the pilgrimages, supporting FORPP's ongoing accompaniment, collecting and returning accompaniers' photos, and spreading written work about their experience and its significance.

My data thus include transcribed interviews, field notes, annotated photos, as well as annotated community and press archives. I analyzed my data with Atlas.ti 7 software, using deductive coding to trace discursive, narrative, and visual patterns regarding terms identified as key Peace Community lexicon during dissertation research and from scholarly literature reviews. I organized narrative, content, and discourse analysis patterns and interpretations into word documents to determine representative

examples, coherencies, and incoherencies among Peace Community members' and other organizations' conceptualizations and practices. Given the amount of data that emerged from the deductive method, I did not, as I had planned, end up using inductive coding of notable quotes to trace and develop other recurring terms and themes not yet identified, but I look forward to doing this coding in the future.

In summary, my work is *critical* by rejecting orientalist ethnography with its complicity in conquest or the pretention of an outsider observing and looking in over the shoulders of a research 'subject-object' (Conquergood 2002). As a geographer, I am inevitably a participant in the construction of particular forms of memory, peace and politics through my presence and publications, and thus take such political stakes seriously by highlighting the voices of this community and merging my analysis with a theory of radical politics necessary to fully grasp their praxis. This is thus a 'feminist geopolitics' (Dowler and Sharp 2001; Fluri 2011a; Mayer 2004) by analyzing the militarization–state–resistance nexus through embodied research *with* a social movement (Koopman 2008) creating peace and memory through everyday practice. This is a *performance* geography in that I represent my experiences and Peace Community voices with ethnopoetic transcriptions and performance pieces. Moreover, for both the community and armed actors, my body as a researcher marching in a pilgrimage or meeting with government officers performs international solidarity with this political project. I also understand the interview itself, not as an extraction of data, but as a performative space of dialogical knowledge production. The back and forth conversation of a semi-structured interview allows for continual reflection and clarification as well as the formation, critique and crystallization of theory (Madison 2012; Pollock 2005a; Conquergood 1985).

As a doctoral dissertation, this work is inherently an intervention to enrich academic discourse and debates about critical geography, ethnography, peace, memory, territory, race, and politics. As a performance geographer, however, my intended audience is broader, including a) NGOs and congressional representatives in Colombia and in the United States concerned with peace communities and human rights; b) fellow companions; and c) the Peace Community itself. Among my challenges is to re-present my work to diverse audiences in ways that actually inspire thought and action about peace, memory, territory, and political change. Precisely, performance geography facilitates putting the body and the word in motion for the broad distribution and efficacy of research.

To conclude this introductory part of the dissertation, I quote Taylor (2003), who wrote the following in *The Archive and the Repertoire*:

I draw from my own repertoire [of lived experience and performance] for some of the material in this book: my participation in political events and performances, ... live enactments and encounters, ... in public lectures, in the classroom ... This book, however, is destined for the archive. (51-52)

In the same vein, my work for peace in Colombia with respect to the role of the United States involves, but is not limited to, the academic realm. Nor is my academic production limited to the written word. But as part of that broader project, this dissertation is an attempt to make some Peace Community memories and narrations, as recorded and interpreted through my own subjective witness, into a material form—that of a scholarly text—while trying to preserve in my transcribed renderings as much of the embodied statements and political practice as possible.

PART I

WHAT IS THE PEACE COMMUNITY?

ON DIGNITY, BY POETIC TRANSCRIPTION

After an hour and a half walk down through tropical hills, I reach the Peace Community settlement of San Josecito. This is a settlement of about 150 people, with houses of mostly wooden walls and dirt floors. I have made this walk many times before, and like every other, it leaves me tired, and my back and socks sweaty. It will feel good to sit down...

I head to the house of a Community member in order to have an in-depth conversation about memory and dignity in the Peace Community. This will be my first official research interview. Nationally and internationally known, she is María Brígida González, affectionately called *Doña Brígida*. I arrive at the house, recognizable by the flowers at its entrance — pink and red petals hovering over green stems. I go inside, and she greets me with a hug and smile. She proceeds to show me some of her recent pieces of art: a painting about Community villages threatened by the nearby Urrá dam projects, and beaded bracelets that spell *Comunidad de Paz*.

The village was calm and quiet when we began to talk, with the only noise an intermittent rooster crow or Community member stopping by to say hello. Soon, however, someone started pumping merengue music SO LOUD, to the point that I had to lean closer to hear her words. I was nervous, hoping my voice recorder was still picking up her voice...

When I go *there* and I, say to **people: dignity.**
How, do you want me to explain it?

Okay.

What is a life of dignity?

for the **Peace Community.**

¿For the *Peace Community*?

Well.

It is having... *shelter... health*, which is part of *life... education...* and land where you can **farm**.

and *to grow stronger, in yourself...* in order to **REJECT**, everything that is counter to **dignity**.

(A MERENGUE SONG IS BLASTING “**¡VAMOS’AHORA, VAMOS’AHORA!**”)

dignity is , being in settlements that don’t allow the armed public forces *here*.

And *we are here*.

for example, this, ¿why is it called San Josecito *of Dignity*?

Because when we came, from... from San José ... we came to **BUILD** ... *here*.

We are constructing *dignity*. To not live alongside the armed actors.

That IS, dignity.

Not giving into the system, *correct?*

Not *giving in* to the **system**.

not...

Not, **NOOOT**,

not **COMPROMISE YOURSELF** , not

be complicit.

yes. and not be complicit. In... the atrocities, and in all the demagoguery of the **government**.

THAT is dignity.

(González 2011, personal interview)¹⁸

Dignity is a central keyword in the Peace Community lexicon and a word I frequently use in this dissertation. This opening passage is meant to introduce ethnopoetic transcription and also how I am understanding dignity from the Peace Community’s perspective. It is a complex concept and Doña Brígida signals a number of components. There is the issue of basic material needs, including shelter, health, life, education, and land. Peace researcher Dietrich (2012) might categorize these within what he calls a “moral peace” as justice, where everyone ‘has enough.’ Doña Brígida

¹⁸ For the script of the performance from which this poetic transcription is derived, see Chapter 7 (pp. 420-423).

continues by mentioning “not living alongside the armed actors” or being complicit in the “atrocities” and “demagoguery of the government.” Dignity also incorporates the idea of truth, being true to one’s own convictions as well as the truth about reality, which in this case is the reality of political violence and discourse. She also mentions “growing stronger in yourself,” which refers to a personal element of growth and transformation as a subject, in what we can imagine to be a number of ways: politically, spiritually, and communally, among others. This understanding of dignity is central to my conception of peace in Part II, which I understand as a radical transrelational peace of *dignity* across and through solidarity networks.

INTRODUCING SAN JOSÉ DE APARTADÓ

Located in the municipality of Apartadó within the Colombian *departamento* (department or province) of Antioquia, San José de Apartadó is a *corregimiento* (rural district) with 32 *veredas* (roughly translated as villages or dispersed settlements, *veredas* are the smallest administrative unit in Colombia) (Figure 15. Located in the Urabá region near the Panamanian border, this area is a strategic corridor for drug and weapons trafficking to and from North America. The site of multinational banana plantations, plentiful rivers, and mineral reserves coveted by capitalist enterprise, Urabá has for decades been a contested space between the Colombian army, police, paramilitaries, and rival guerrilla groups (Hylton 2006; Ballvé 2012; Romero 2006; Aparicio 2012; Koopman 2011a; Steiner 2000; García de la Torre et al. 2011; Díez Gómez 2009; Ortiz Sarmiento 2007).

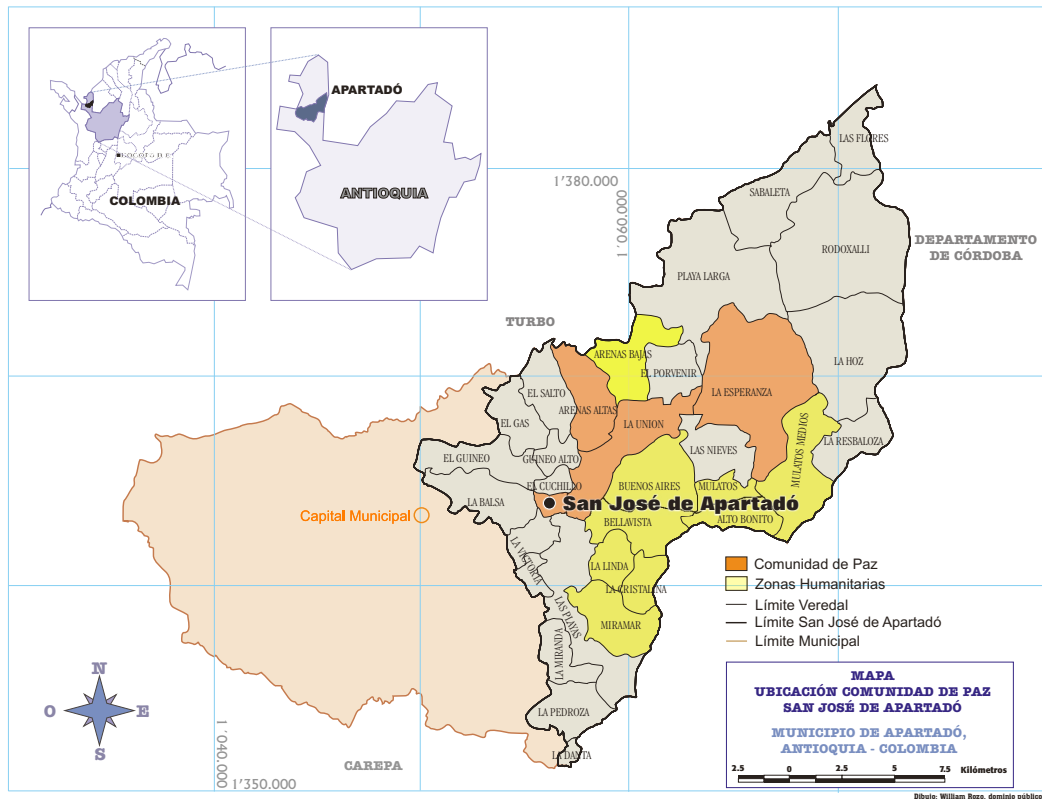


Figure 15. *Corregimiento* of San José de Apartadó within the municipality of Apartadó, Antioquia.

This map depicts Peace Community settlements and Humanitarian Zones as of March 2005. For a map of the current villages that comprise the San José de Apartadó Peace Community, see Figure 5 on page 20.

Source: www.cdpsanjose.org, accessed September 30th, 2010.

Urabá is not an administrative region but refers to a northwestern part of Colombia, which includes portions of the Chocó, Antioquia, and Córdoba departments. The northernmost part of *el Urabá antioqueño* (the Antioquian Urabá, i.e., the part of the region within the department of Antioquia) meets the Urabá Gulf on the Caribbean Sea (Figure 16). *Urabá antioqueño* has five urban centers roughly all at the same longitude. From north to south, they are Turbo, Apartadó, Carepa, Chigorodó, and Mutatá. These small cities are located in the lowland areas of the region, in which Urabá's massive banana monoculture plantations for export are located. The command headquarters of the National Army's 17th Brigade, which has jurisdiction over the area, is located in Carepa. From the city of Apartadó to the rural district and town of San José de Apartadó, one takes a 45-minute jeep ride that climbs up into the *Serranía de Abibe* (Abibe Range) (Figures 17-19).

As described by Aparicio (2012), the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, “controls” some of the richest ecosystems in the Serranía [de Abibe], which not coincidentally, are situated in the zones furthest from the urban settlement of Apartadó. As strategic corridors for arms and drug trafficking, they are among the most disputed by the armed actors. (256)

In other words, the water that feeds the city of Apartadó and the massive banana plantations in Urabá's lowlands flows down from San José de Apartadó. The district's small-scale farmers grow a variety of crops, the most common being corn, beans, yucca, cacao, sugarcane, plantain, and avocado (Figures 20-21). They also harvest many fruits growing in the area, such as tangerines, lime, mango, *lulo*, *guanábana*, and *zapote*. And they raise various animals, including chickens, pigs, turkeys, cattle, and horses (Figure 22).



Figure 16. Gulf of Urabá from the Serranía de Abibe.
Source: Photo by Julia Nelson and Moira Birss, from RAIS photo archive.



Figure 17. Jeep parked in the Apartadó transportation terminal.
This is prior to departure for San José de Apartadó. At departure time, the roof is packed with passengers' supplies, such as bags of rice, cooking oil, and house supplies.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 18. Road from Apartadó city to the town of San José de Apartadó. The National Army and Police frequently set up control posts at a midpoint along the road or on the immediate outskirts of Apartadó. It is also on this road, only 5 to 15 minutes away such public forces' control posts, where paramilitaries erected blockades in 1997, 2000, 2002, and 2004, prohibiting people and/or supplies from moving between Apartadó and the town of San José de Apartadó. Source: Author photo.



Figure 19. Nearing San José de Apartadó on the road from Apartadó. During heavy rains, there are frequent landslides, one of which pushed the retaining wall seen here (financed by the presidential development agency *Acción Social*) into the *Río Apartadó*. The Apartadó River flows down from the Serranía de Abibe and provides water to Apartadó and the banana plantations in Urabá's lowlands. Source: Author photo.



Figure 20. Corn.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 21. Cacao.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 22. Peace Community cow.
Note the branding “CDP” for *Comunidad de Paz* to signal that it is owned by the collective. The Peace Community decided to use the cash prize that came with the Fellowship of Reconciliation’s 1998 Pfeffer Peace Prize to purchase a number of cows, which have since reproduced into an even greater herd, including the cow pictured here. Source: Photo by Luke Finn, with permission, part of RAIS photo archive.

Beginning in the mid 1990s, the paramilitary United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and the National Army's 17th Brigade forcibly displaced thousands of *campesinos* across Urabá. In 1996 and 1997, specifically, military and paramilitary operations intensified in the district of San José de Apartadó, a traditional stronghold of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and Leftist Patriotic Union party. On March 23rd, 1997, the remaining 630 *campesinos* still living in eleven of San José's villages declared themselves a neutral 'peace community' as a strategy to avoid attack from all of the groups and be able to remain in their lands. The Peace Community's core commitments are:

- Participating in community work
- Saying no to injustice and impunity
- Refusing to participate in the war directly or indirectly
- Neither bear arms nor pass information to any armed actor (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2005a)

However, rather than diffusing attacks against them, their declaration as a peace community only intensified armed groups' attacks. They have been targeted by all sides, including repeated displacements during attempted returns to abandoned villages. They have lost 16% of their population¹⁹ from 186 assassinations attributed to state and paramilitary forces, along with 24 killings by guerrillas, as of 2012 (Figure 23). These are chronicled in the book *Fusil o Toga, Toga y Fusil* written by Jesuit priest and lawyer Javier Giraldo Moreno (2010), who has accompanied the Peace Community since its founding, documenting human rights violations and leading commemorations of the

¹⁹ This percentage is calculated from a total population of 1,300, which is the most common value used to estimate San José de Apartadó's population from 1997 until today. Obviously, the actual number of inhabitants has dramatically shifted over time due to recurrent displacements, assassinations, and *campesinos*' returns. Also, note that not all of the 1,300 residents of the San José de Apartadó rural district are members of the Peace Community, and the Peace Community also includes members living in the neighboring municipality of Tierralta, Córdoba.

Year	Pre- CDP	Post- CDP	# of killings	% of total
1977	12		12	6%
1992	3		3	1%
1996	12		12	6%
1997	6	44	50	24%
1998		13	13	6%
1999		4	4	2%
2000		26	26	12%
2001		8	8	4%
2002		21	21	10%
2003		1	1	0.40%
2004		7	7	3%
2005		18	18	9%
2006		5	5	2%
2007		11	11	5%
2008		1	1	0.40%
2009		5	5	2%
2010		1	1	0.40%
2011		9	9	4%
2012		3	3	1%
%	16%	84%		
Total	33	177	210	100%

Figure 23. Killings in San José de Apartadó by year from 1977-2012.

Note how the number of assassinations sharply increased following the founding of the Peace Community March 23rd, 1997. Approximately one-fourth of the documented killings between 1977-2012 took place in 1997 alone. While 16% of their documented assassinations occurred before the formation of the Peace Community (“Pre-CDP”), 84% of the killings have occurred following their declaration (“Post-CDP”), with an average of 11 per year between 1997 and 2012.

Source: Table by author using data from a San José de Apartadó Peace Community postcard listing the names and dates of each killing up to 2012, according to the database of the Bogotá-based Center for Research and Popular Education (CINEP). For data and details of each killing to 2010, see Giraldo Moreno, S.J. (2010).

victims. The Peace Community posts archived and new *comunicados*—online press releases or communiqués—on its website, www.cdpsanjose.org. In a July 2014 email, the Internal Council gave me an updated figure of 264 total killings.

One of the most brutal massacres occurred in two villages, Mulatos and La Resbaloza, on February 21st, 2005, in which eight people, including Community founder and leader Luis Eduardo Guerra, plus three children, were dismembered with machetes by paramilitaries and army soldiers. Guerra had only recently re-settled and begun planting crops there, to prepare for a larger return by additional families to the area. After the massacre, the zone was abandoned again, until the Community planned another return three years later in 2008. Today, Mulatos has been re-settled, renovated, and named the Luis Eduardo Guerra Peace Village (Figure 24).

Another significant displacement also occurred in 2005, when the state insisted on building a police post in San José town, in violation of the Community's principle of not living alongside any armed actor, since doing so places civilians in the crossfire of rival groups. Therefore, San José's residents displaced to private Community land fifteen minutes away on foot, where from scratch they constructed the village of San Josecito (little San José).²⁰ The settlement was effectively a self-made refugee camp, and in its early years suffered from malaria and dengue fever outbreaks. Health standards eventually improved after running water and a sewer system were installed. As of 2016, San Josecito has tens of homes, two school buildings, a restaurant, library, numerous gazebo meeting spaces, cacao-processing machinery, two soccer fields, and victims monuments in its center which include stones arranged in a circle, tombs of deceased

²⁰ For a Peace Community folk painting of this displacement, see Figure 60 in Chapter 5 (p. 308).



Figure 24. The Mulatos Peace Village.
Folk painting by María Brígida González, with the caption:
“Mulatos Peace Village. Land fertilized by the blood of the martyrs.”
Source: Author photo.

members, and a memory museum under construction in the form of a rotunda and circular cemetery surrounding it.

These responses to massacres and harassment are indicative of the Peace Community's varied strategies for resisting displacement and building an alternative anti-state peace project through community autonomy. They make decisions collectively in general assemblies and village meetings. In groups, they grow cash—organic cacao—and food crops, including corn, beans, sugarcane, and chickens. They participate in a network of communities that organizes a *Campesino* University of Resistance about once a year to share knowledge about medicinal plants, autonomous education, media communications, and juridical strategies to resist displacement. They commemorate assassinated members with pilgrimages, stones, folk paintings, and online communiqués. They invite international observers, 'accompaniers,' to live in the community and report to the diplomatic corps and human rights community (Koopman 2011a; Koopman 2014). And each week, members in each village organize a community work day (*el comunitario*).

The Peace Community's organizational structure mixes horizontal and vertical elements. It includes work groups, village work coordinators, committees, the Internal Council, and the general assembly. I will briefly describe each of these:

Work groups. As part of their commitment to collective work, every Peace Community member is part of a work group of at least two people who grow subsistence and/or cash crops, and then share the proceeds. Each group has a coordinator. These work groups farm land either a) owned by one of its members, b) owned by another community member, or c) on collectively-owned Peace Community plots. Through these arrangements, every individual and work group has access to land.

Village coordinators. Each village has a coordinator who coordinates the weekly Community work day (*el comunitario*²¹) and is responsible for organizing a weekly meeting the day before the *comunitario*. At least one member of each agricultural work group must attend this meeting. Together, they brainstorm what work needs to be done, decide which jobs they are going to do, and then determine who will participate in which sub-group. Common tasks include maintaining walking paths, planting or harvesting collectively-grown crops such as cacao or sugarcane, building and maintaining Community buildings, and doing repairs on accompaniers' homes. Facilitated by the village coordinator, these meetings also serve for each village to discuss Community-wide topics on a weekly basis, such as updates from other settlements, security analysis, or planning for upcoming pilgrimages and events.

Committees. The Peace Community has a variety of internal committees, each comprised of a few people with a coordinator. The education committee is comprised of Community teachers. The reconciliation committee is their internal conflict resolution team. The sports committee organizes the yearly football/soccer league. The economic committee oversees Community finances and agricultural projects, such as cacao production and export. And they have other committees for health, women, and capacity-building/training (*formación*).

Internal Council. The *Consejo Interno* is comprised of eight elected Peace Community members, including the organization's Legal Representative. The council members serve to coordinate all Community activities and they make periodic visits to all of the Peace Communities' settlements. Council members are responsible for day-to-day strategic decisions about the Community's security. They also serve as the Community's representatives and spokespeople with external entities, such as government embassies and NGOs, and they coordinate with accompaniment organizations about where the latter are needed each week.²² The Internal Council meets as a group every week to coordinate their weekly actions and analysis.

General assembly. The maximum authority within the Peace Community is the general assembly, in which the entire Community gathers to share analysis about the current conjuncture and make collective decisions about the most important matters affecting the organization. There is usually one or two assemblies per year. Common tasks include: a) electing the Internal Council, b) strategic decisions about economic projects or the Community's relationships with external entities, such as the Colombian state and NGOs,²³ and c) deciding upon

²¹ Community work days are often called a *minga* in other parts of Colombia, including in Nasa and other Indigenous communities.

²² On the immense workload and challenges faced by Internal Council members, see Aparicio (2012: 264-266).

²³ For example, my proposal to do dissertation research with the Peace Community had to be

whether to admit new members who have gone through the initiation period or expel members who have broken Community rules.

The Peace Community currently has physical protective accompaniment from three organizations: Peace Brigades International (PBI),²⁴ Fellowship of Reconciliation Peace Presence (FORPP),²⁵ and Operation Dove (officially *Operazione Colomba*, in Italian, but known in Colombia as *Palomas*, the Spanish word for dove).²⁶ The latter two have permanent teams of two to four accompaniers living in two Peace Community villages, La Unión and San Josecito, respectively. As part of a larger organization that has offices in different Colombian cities to accompany human rights defenders across the country, PBI has a team of over ten accompaniers in Urabá, whose home base is in Apartadó, from where it sends groups of two or more on a periodic basis to accompany the Peace Community and other organizations in the region (such as the Humanitarian Zone in Curvaradó, Chocó). On a weekly basis, Palomas, FORPP, and PBI meet with the Peace Community's Internal Council to coordinate their movements. Council members make periodic "petitions" to the accompaniment organizations to request that a

approved by the general assembly.

²⁴ Peace Brigades International has accompanied San José de Apartadó since the process leading up to the Peace Community's formation in 1997. In those early years, PBI accompanied the community indirectly by providing protective accompaniment to the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission, who was organizing with San José's residents. As of 1998, PBI began to directly accompany the Peace Community through periodic visits by groups of at least two accompaniers to San José de Apartadó. See PBI's website <http://www.peacebrigades.org>, as well as their Colombia program page: <http://pbicolombia.org>.

²⁵ FOR Peace Presence began its accompaniment presence in 2002 with its base in La Unión. The team fluctuates between two and three accompaniers. FORPP has another team based in Bogotá that accompanies a variety of other Colombian partners, including Tierra Digna and *Acción Colectiva de Objetores y Objetoras de Conciencia* (ACOOC, Collective Action of Conscientious Objects). Its webpage is <https://peacepresence.org>.

²⁶ Operation Dove began a permanent accompaniment project in the Peace Community in 2009. The team is usually comprised of four accompaniers at a time, whose home base is in San Josecito. See <http://www.operazionecolomba.it> and their Colombia program page: <http://www.operazionecolomba.it/colombia.html>.

particular organization accompany them to a particular place on a certain day. For example, common petitions include accompanying a threatened Community leader on a day-trip to the city of Apartadó or accompanying Internal Council members' on their periodic visits to villages further-afield. There are also “emergency” petitions when accompaniers are asked to accompany Peace Community members responding to massacres and forced displacements.

Despite recurrent attacks against it, the Community now spans eleven villages. In 1998, they made their first village return to La Unión, followed by re-settlements of Arenas Altas and La Esperanza. Nevertheless, these villages would suffer additional forced displacements in ensuing years, only to be re-settled again afterwards. Moreover, the Peace Community is no longer limited to the district of San José de Apartadó, Antioquia, whose residents were displaced in 1996 and 1997 and subsequently founded the Peace Community. Since 2009, *campesinos* from the neighboring department of Córdoba have also joined. These people were forcibly displaced in the mid-1990s in the run-up to the construction of Urrá hydroelectric dam. However, in 2003, some of them returned to land not submerged by the reservoir. Following the Peace Community's 2008 return to La Resbalosa, which straddles the departmental Antioquia-Córdoba border, members there began to communicate with folks in the easterly municipality of Tierralta, some of whom have since joined the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó (Figure 25).

Therefore, the Peace Community has members in San Josecito, La Unión, Arenas Altas, La Cristalina, La Esperanza, Mulatos, La Resbalosa (all of those within San José de Apartadó, Antioquia), as well as El Guineo/Naín, Alto Joaquín, Puerto Nuevo, and



Figure 25. Map painting of San José de Apartadó's villages plus Córdoba. Painting by María Brígida González. Notice that it includes the neighboring Urrá dam region. Source: Photo by *Palomas de Paz* (Operazione Colombia), with permission.

Las Claras (in Tierralta, Córdoba). These settlements are typically about two to five hours apart on foot (Figure 26). As of 2011, according to an internal census, the Peace Community had 1,162 members committing to its principles (Moncada Hurtado, Ossa, and Caro Morales 2011a).

Chapter 2, titled “De-indigenized but not defeated,” delves more deeply into how and why the Peace Community organized as such in 1997, its struggles in subsequent years, and the significance of this experience in relation to Colombian history, society, and politics. It will examine the Peace Community’s resistance in terms of the following themes, which I consider paramount for understanding the importance of their struggle for autonomy: 1) the ongoing history of forced displacement in Colombia going back to the Spanish Conquest, which continues today amidst neoliberal neo-extractivism; 2) the history of racist violence against Indigenous and African descendants; and 3) the inability of electoral politics and armed insurgency to adequately transform the country’s unequal and violent social structure. I will argue in this section that the Peace Community represents a third-way of politics that breaks with electoral party politics and armed struggle directed at taking control of the state. Rather, the Peace Community pursues a politics of autonomy aptly termed an “other politics” (Grupo Acontecimiento 2012; Denis 2012), as I will eventually argue and describe in Part III of the dissertation.

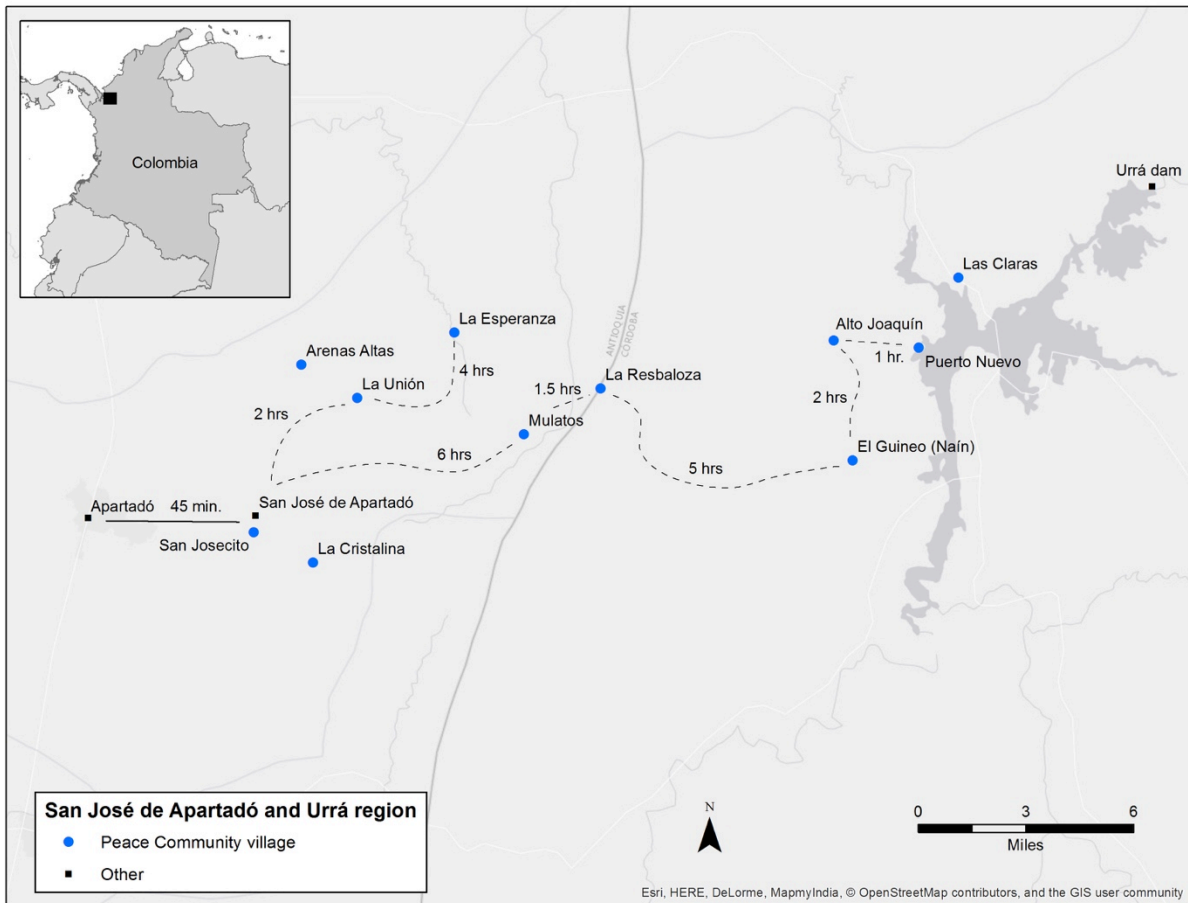


Figure 26. Walking the Peace Community.

This map shows approximate walking times a) between Peace Community settlements and b) the standard jeep time between Apartadó and San Josecito during the dry season. Times can increase during or after heavy rains due to the difficulty of crossing rivers or mud patches.

Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

CHAPTER 2

DE-INDIGENIZED BUT NOT DEFEATED: CONTEXT AND HISTORY OF THE SAN JOSÉ PEACE COMMUNITY²⁷

I asked a Peace Community member, “Why do you think there is a war? What are the armed groups’ interests?”

“Because the Peace Community denounces what they do.” (personal interview, 2013)

The query above became one of my core interview questions, along with how Peace Community members understand peace and memory. In asking this question, I was curious how Community members analyzed the reasons behind the violence against them. I was curious about the extent to which they would explain the reasons for the war in terms of the Urabá region’s geo-strategic location and the coveted resources in the lands where they live. Indeed, many members affirmed the economic roots of the war, rooted in struggles for land, water, and minerals. The quote above was the first answer that deviated a bit, asserting that *the war against us is because we denounce the war*. Thinking to myself, my initial reaction was, “But what is the root of that war to begin with, which is denounced? Are not the condemnations contingent upon a prior war to begin with that is decried?”

²⁷ As a complement to this historical background chapter, see Appendix 1’s timeline of San José de Apartadó history (pp. 460-465) and Appendix 2’s series of yearly maps that demonstrate the waves of displacement and massacres suffered by San José’s farmers, as well as their subsequent returns to abandoned villages (pp. 466-480).

Yet as I proceeded to ask this question more and more, I noticed that Community members would generally stress one or both of these two explanations: They are attacked a) for the richness of their land coveted by outside interests and b) for their denunciations of the state's violence. I kept thinking that the true 'root' of the war would have to be the first: a war over resources that is denounced, spurring further repression against that movement. Yet Community members' repeated assertions of their being targeted due to standing up to the state began to signal what I interpreted as a different understanding of time. I realized that I was limited to thinking in a simplistic linear and chronological fashion ("well, which is it? Which comes first, the denunciations or the war being denounced?"). I began to understand how there is no 'one' moment in the recent past to which the war can be traced, a specific date 'when the war against us began.'

That is not to say that there are no specific dates that we can point to. There were the mass displacements of 1996, which induced the remaining farmers in San José de Apartadó to search for a political strategy to remain in their villages. And from March to October 1997, following their declaration as a Peace Community, military and paramilitary repression as well as a massacre by FARC guerrillas caused the abandonment of the entire district. We could also point to the army's massacre and forced disappearance of eleven *campesinos* in La Resbalosa in July 1977, which Community members point to as the first massacre in the area, as a preface for what was to come (Giraldo Moreno, S.J. 2010: 13-20). Or we could reference how decades prior, as elder members frequently mention, many of the eventual founders of the Peace Community fled assassinations and homes set ablaze in other regions of Antioquia during the *La Violencia* era (1946-1957), eventually settling in what became San José de

Apartadó. The point here is that this is a war that seemingly ‘has always been.’ Studies of the Peace Community tend to begin their historical context with the military-paramilitary onslaught in 1996 (Masullo J. 2015; Pardo Santamaría 2007; Giraldo Moreno, S.J. 2007), as I indeed did in this dissertation’s introduction. Yet this is a war that can be traced to the racialized-partisan violence of the *La Violencia* period and, as I argue, even further back to the Spanish Conquest of Indigenous peoples in present-day Colombia from whom most, if not all, Peace Community members are descended. If we are looking for a date ‘when the war began,’ we are smart to analyze the legacies of the colonial period in the current moment.

The quote that opened this chapter also signals how these *campesinos*’ organization as a Peace Community, rather than throwing water on the fire of war as intended, indeed fueled the war. When Community members signal both resource conflicts *and* their denunciations of the state as the drivers of war, they thus infer that the violence is linked with specific economic-geopolitical interests that are part of a larger system of annihilation that intensified due to their stance as a Peace Community.

LAND, POLITICS, AND RACE

Rather than provide a comprehensive history of Colombia,²⁸ I will preface my historical and social history of San José de Apartadó with a discussion of themes I consider paramount for understanding this struggle’s context and significance. These include a) Colombia’s historical land concentration in few hands, most recently

²⁸ For excellent sociopolitical histories of Colombia, please see Hylton (2006) and “Chapter 2: Blood: The fluid of life and death” in Gómez Correal (2015: 61-192).

intensified due to paramilitarism and neo-extractivism; b) the inability of the dominant strategies of modern politics—reformist electoral party politics and armed struggle directed at taking the state—to reverse the country’s unequal and violent social structure; c) the imaginary of the “internal enemy” rooted in what Gómez Correal (2015) terms a “hegemonic emotional habitus of hate”; and d) the history of racist violence against Indigenous and African descendants, which permeates all of the above.

Land concentration

First, the war is integrally related to a confrontation over land control and access. According to an article in *The Economist* (2012), “Land distribution in Colombia is among the most unequal in the world, with 52% of farms in the hands of just 1.15% of landowners, according to a study by the United Nations Development Programme.” Beginning with the colonial Conquest, land has become more and more concentrated, such as the large holdings of the Catholic Church and other landed elites (Hylton 2006). Post-independence, the modernization of agriculture proletarianized Colombia’s *campesinos*, further concentrating land ownership (Fals Borda 2009b; Kalmanovitz 1995). The civil war period between Liberals and Conservatives known as *La Violencia* (1946-1957) was not a purely partisan war as it has often been understood. Conversely, violence did not occur uniformly or simultaneously across the country. It erupted in new-settlement areas where *campesinos* and large landowners struggled over increasingly concentrated land amidst the transition to capitalist agriculture (Roldán 2002; Fajardo Montaña 2002). This process of neocolonial capitalism produced a stratified, binary social system of elites and popular classes (Fals Borda 2009c). As I will delineate below, it is from such a region (the Dabeiba region north of Medellín in Antioquia), that the *campesinos* who would settle in San José de Apartadó fled in the

1960s. Moreover, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) was founded in 1966 by *campesinos* struggling against this process of land dispossession and military operations against communist sympathizers (Hylton 2006).

Today, new extraction technologies and energy needs in the Global North induce capitalist-state enterprise into new frontiers, such as the Colombian Pacific and Urabá, previously seen as backward wastelands but now coveted for their natural resources (Escobar 2008). Furthermore, the emergence of a new drug-trafficking elite in the 1980s intensified the concentration of land even further. Drug traffickers laundered much of their earnings by purchasing land, which is also a symbol of social status in Colombia. As much as 6 million hectares changed hands between 1985-1995, in what has been called a ‘counter-agrarian reform’ (Reyes Posada 2009). As will be described below when I discuss social movements’ attempts to reverse this unequal land distribution, the Colombian government has consistently focused on policies to promote the settlement of ‘unsettled’ land rather than re-distribution (Fajardo Montaña 2002; Reyes Posada 2009). Additionally, the government has prioritized access for companies producing export-oriented commodities such as oil, coal, gold, and oil palm (Ballvé 2012; Ballvé 2013b; Escobar 2008), rather than subsistence farmers’ access to land. Then leader of the paramilitary *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC, United Self-Defense Forces) Vicente Castaño described this in no uncertain terms,

In Urabá we have oil palm crops. I, myself, was able to get business people to invest in those projects that are long-term and productive. The idea is to take the rich to invest in this type of project in different parts of the country. To bring the rich to these zones is for the state institutions to arrive. Unfortunately, the state institutions only go along with these things when the rich are there. We have to take the rich to all the regions of the country and that is one of the missions that all the [AUC’s] commanders have. (*Semana* 2005)

Scholars have thus described this as a war of capitalist modernization against *campesinos*, in which small-scale subsistence farmers are converted into wage earners dependent on the market and landowning elites (Altieri 2007), what Fals Borda (Fals Borda 2009b) has called the “decomposition of the *campesino*.”

Accordingly, Peace Community members affirm the connection between the war and economic interests in San José de Apartadó. One member put it this way,

These are incredibly rich lands. And that is why they are fighting over this land and want to kick us out, because of the richness that we have. Especially, pure air, and pure water. And the Serranía de Abibe is very rich in what has to do with coal, many minerals. Gold, etcetera. And they are already conceded to a multinational corporation. (Moncada Hurtado, Ossa, and Caro Morales 2011a)

In one of my interviews,

I asked, “Why do they want to displace you?”

“Because they say that the area belongs to them, that they have to control this whole area, I don’t know why. The highway that they are building to discover, what is that called?”

“A mine,” I said.

“Yes, mines. They evict us from here and they end up positioned. That’s why we have to struggle to not leave here.” (personal interview, 2013)

Another Peace Community leader, in a presentation to an international delegation, situated this conflict over land in the neoliberal era of free trade agreements,

This whole war has an objective: free trade. To kill the people in the social organizations, to annihilate the Indigenous communities and unions because we demand rights. To kill many in order to subjugate the rest, because they have to exploit the mines, gold, oil, water, minerals, and as *campesinos* we do not want to leave the land. For the government, they have to kill us. The story of so many years of war is due to this. To pave the way for enrichment and wealth. As *campesinos*, Afro-Colombians, and Indigenous peoples, we do not need petroleum to live, according to our ancestral practices, but we are now obliged to because the United States and Europe needs it. With the free trade agreements there will be many more deaths than until now. The needs of the United States and Europe increase but the communities are going to resist, although the others are the ones with the guns. (personal communication, 2012)

This leader described what Dávalos (2011) has deemed “competing territorialities.” This refers to the contradiction of Indigenous and Black communities’ resistance vs. neoliberal extractivism, the latter being the economic development model dominant across Latin America, whether in ‘neoliberal’ regimes allied with the United States or the so-called counter-hegemonic ‘progressive’ governments (Dávalos 2011; Bebbington 2009; Laing 2012; Gudynas 2010; Gudynas 2015).

Moreover, it is not only a war due to state-corporate interests in accumulation and resources, but the war is also a business itself (Altieri 2007). According to Peace Community member Doña Brígida González,

Many governments, in Europe and América, are interested in the war! Why? Because there are grand weapons manufacturing powers whose capital is in guns. If wars end, then to whom are they going to sell the guns? Given this, will there ever be peace one day? (personal interview, 2013)

Therefore, the concentration of land in few hands as well as the business interests in new natural resource frontiers and the weapons economy are crucial conditions shaping the war in San José de Apartadó.

This land concentration persists despite Colombian *campesinos*’ long history of struggle against such unequal land distribution. Among the best examples is Indigenous struggles in southwestern Colombia and the *Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos* (ANUC, National Association of Peasant Users). To begin with latter, in the 1960s Cold War era, the United States’ Alliance for Progress with Latin American governments was designed to inhibit communism through anti-poverty reforms. In consequence, then Colombian President Carlos Lleras Restrepo announced and enacted agrarian reform legislation. The ANUC was created and became the most powerful, widespread, and legitimate societal movement of its day. ANUC had support from

students, Leftist parties, and Leftist insurgencies. In an international delegation presentation, *campesino* organizer Ricardo Esquivia of *Sembrandopaz* in Sincelejo, Sucre, described the coupling of agrarian reform with the ANUC,

[It] worked together harmoniously and was a magnificent idea. But the difficulties were that the large landowners did not want agrarian reform. What they wanted was to rid themselves of poor lands and appropriate the best ones: to sell the worst to the government and continue like before. The government thought it could control the ANUC, but the latter was actually thinking about a real reform: the right to land as the right to good lands. (personal communication, 2014)

With agrarian reform promises unfulfilled by 1971—re-distribution only occurred on 1% of targeted land—the ANUC carried out land takeovers in the Sinú river region (Córdoba), Boyacá, Valle del Cauca, and in the Llanos, etcetera (Hylton 2006). Moreover, the radical Sincelejo wing of the ANUC (Zamosc 1986) conducted workshops on land rights and community organizing around the country, including in San José de Apartadó (Aparicio 2009).

At the same time, in Toribío, Cauca, Indigenous people in this southwestern department recovered *reservas* (reservations granted to them during the colonial era) and enunciated visions for autonomy and collective land, life, and culture. This built from previous struggles, which included but are not limited to those led by Manuel Quintín Lame.²⁹ This leader's program has inspired and informed Indigenous

²⁹ A movement arose in 1890 to re-constitute Indigenous reserves in Tolima, which later crystallized in the struggle of Manuel Quintín Lame. The movement post-1890 also resisted the expropriation of reserves in Cauca and Nariño, where they still existed due to strong councils, despite encroachment by whites, clergy, and large landowners (Fals Borda 2009b). Quintín Lame was descended from the Páez tradition of resistance to colonization and was motivated to contest both the ongoing expropriations of Indigenous land by settlers, large landlords, and expansionist rural businesses, and the constant humiliation of Indigenous people's semi-slavery (Castillo 2004). In 1914, Lame dynamized Tolima's Indigenous movement, which carried out town takeovers and worked to re-create Indigenous reserves. Despite a repressive and defamatory campaign against him, as well as hundreds of detentions, through Lame's educational and organizational movement, Indigenous people re-constituted a reserve in

movements ever since, including the *Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca* (CRIC, Indigenous Regional Council of Cauca) created in 1971³⁰ (Nene and Chocué 2004; Rappaport 1998; Rappaport 2004), as well as the *Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del norte del Cauca* (ACIN, Association of Indigenous Councils in northern Cauca), founded in 1994³¹ (Figures 27-28). In the 1970s, specifically, Indigenous organizations allied with industrial workers, intellectuals, students, and other *campesinos*, as part of a national popular movement that culminated in the general strike of 1977 (Hylton 2006; Gómez Correal 2015).

Landowners, industrialists, and their paramilitary mercenaries (known at the time as *pájaros*, ‘birds that would sweep in to kill at night and vanish without a trace’) reacted with violent counter-reform against the land reform movement, especially in the hotly contested Atlantic coast region (Hylton 2006). Almost without fail, every attempt at agrarian reform throughout Colombian history, even with periodic support from the central government’s ruling class, has been met with resistance and reactionary repression by Colombia’s regional and local elites. Such a dynamic persists today in the wake of President Juan Manuel Santos’ Victims and Land Restitution Law, where land claimants are being killed at a staggering rate (Haugaard, Castillo, and Romoser 2012; *Semana* 2012a; *El Tiempo* 2014a).

Ortega, Tolima, and founded a new settlement Llanogrande (re-named San José de Indias) in 1924 (only formally re-constituted in 1939). Nevertheless, as in other gains by radical-popular-ethnic movements throughout Colombian history, regional elites continued with violent repression against the Lame movement and Ortega reserve. Violence escalated between 1945-1953, during the *La Violencia* period, as regional authorities and landowners took advantage of unrest at the national political level to unleash war against Indigenous leaders and communities, resulting in mass displacement (Castillo 2004).

³⁰ See the CRIC’s website: <http://www.cric-colombia.org/portal/>

³¹ See the ACIN’s website: <http://www.nasaacin.org>

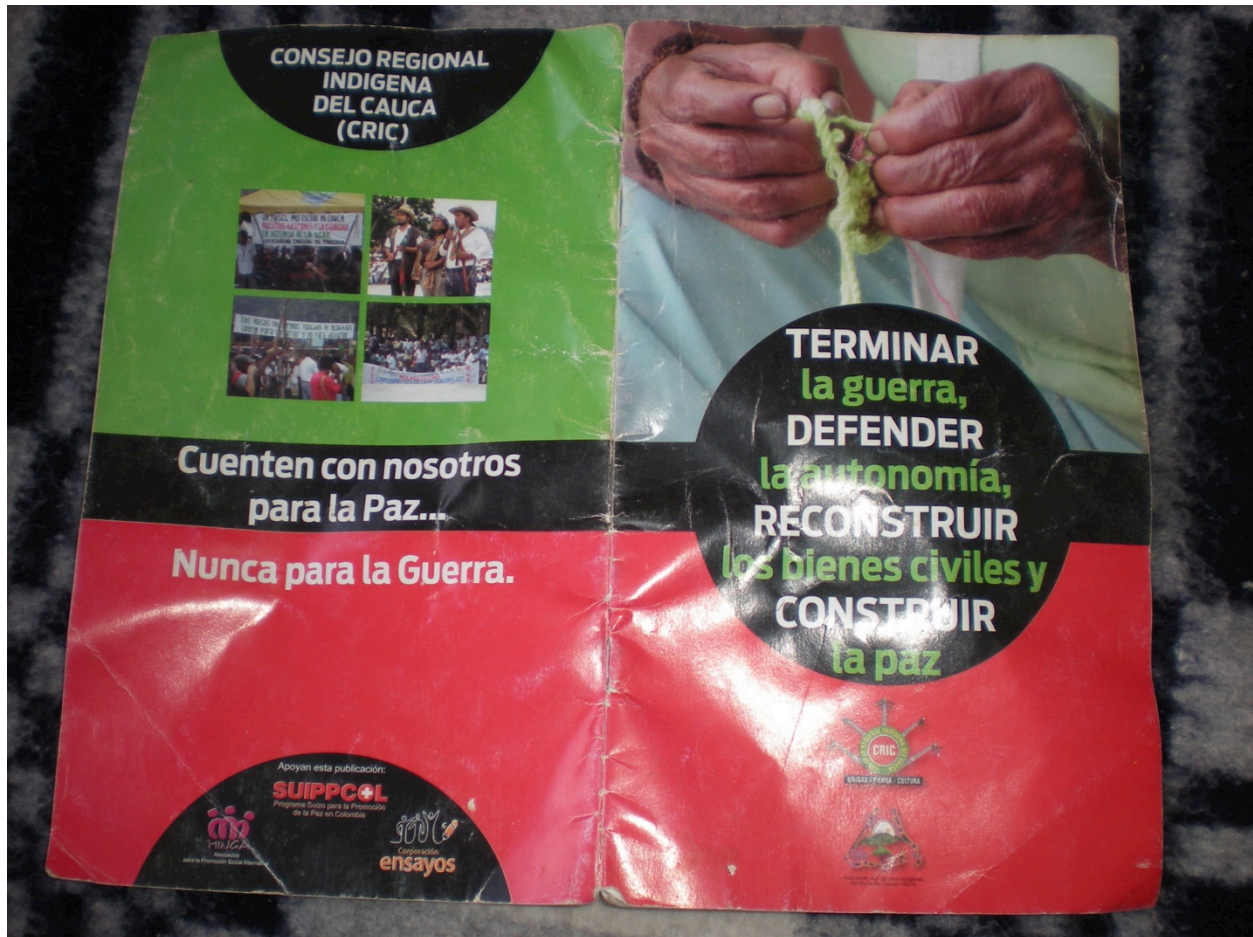


Figure 27. CRIC booklet.

This is the cover of a CRIC booklet gifted to me by a member of the ACIN:

“Count on us for Peace... Never for War.

End the war, Defend autonomy, Reconstruct civilian goods and Build peace.”

Source: Author photo.

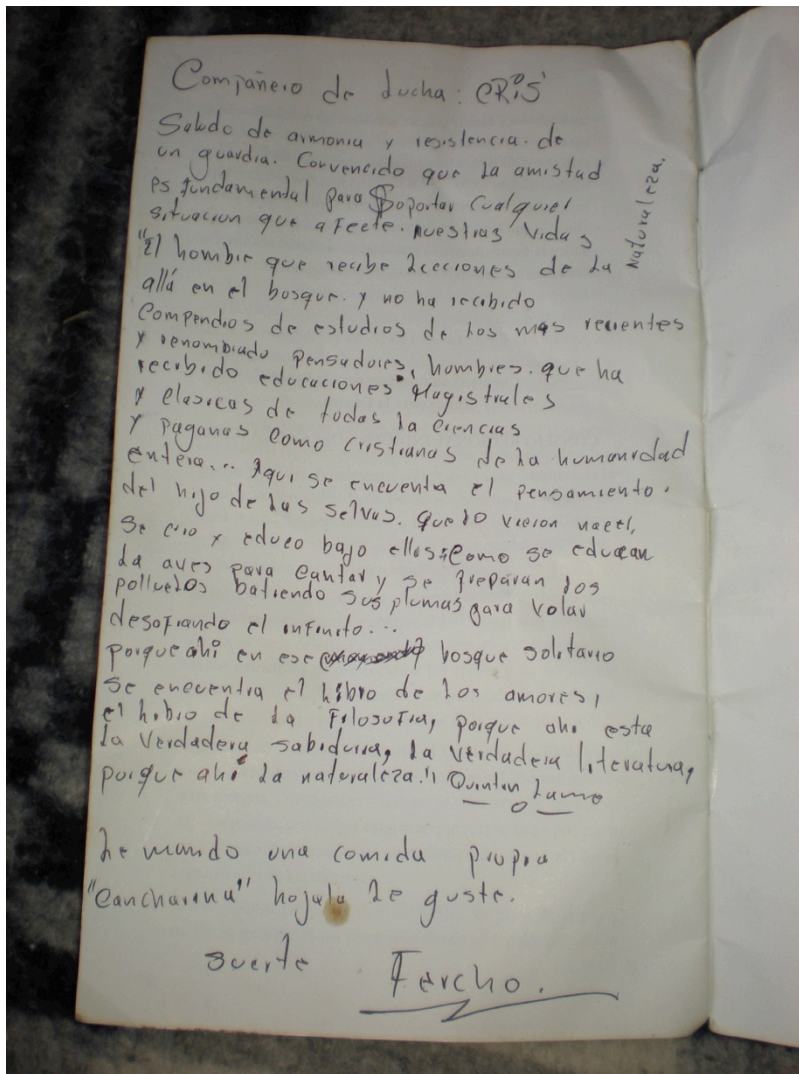


Figure 28. Quintín Lamé's legacy.

On the inside cover of the CRIC booklet gifted to me by a member of the ACIN, most of his letter is a quotation from Manuel Quintín Lame's (Lame 2004) book *Los Pensamientos del Indio que se educó dentro de las selvas colombianas* (The Thoughts of the Indian Educated in the Colombian Forests), originally composed in 1939 and finally published in 1971, the same year the CRIC was founded, although it had inspired Indigenous movements since its composition (Nene and Chocué 2004):

“The man who receives lessons from nature there in the forest and who does not receive understandings from studies of the most recent and renown thinkers, those men who have received masters and classics education of all the sciences and pagans as Christians of the entire humanity... Here one finds thinking, from the son of the jungles, which saw him born, grow up, and educated under them. How do the birds educate themselves to sing and prepare themselves flapping their wings to fly, defying infinity? Because there in that solitary forest one finds the book of loves, the book of philosophy, because there is the true wisdom, the true literature, because nature is there.”

Source: Author photo.

Political failure

This discussion on land struggles serves to transition to the second theme I find central to understanding the emergence of the Peace Community: the failure of the dominant forms of liberal and counter-hegemonic politics to change Colombia's historically exclusive political structure. In addition to the ANUC, two of the most emblematic 20th century attempts at social change by the political Left in Colombia include the FARC guerrillas and the *Unión Patriótica* (UP, Patriotic Union) political party. Both were strategies to reform or indeed take control of the state but with different means: insurgent armed struggle and electoral party politics, respectively.

Following the assassination of Liberal guerrillas who demobilized at the end of the *La Violencia* period,³² the FARC was founded in 1966 to defend themselves from further forced displacement. This was the post-*La Violencia* period in which the leadership of the Conservative and Liberal parties agreed to rotate the presidency; while intended to avoid partisan violence and ensure political stability, it also locked out any alternative political parties. Additionally, this was the Cold War era, and the Colombian government advanced the U.S.-informed Plan Lazo, a counter-insurgency project to kill suspected communists. The most famous military operation was in 1964 in the communist-hamlet municipality of Marquetalia, Tolima. In response, some of *campesinos* under siege that escaped organized themselves into a mobile guerrilla army (Hylton 2006). The FARC's political platform has historically been focused on two

³² According to Hylton (2006), during the *La Violencia* period, "Communist enclaves were the only territories where life was *not* regulated by terror" (46). In 1952, delegates from different Liberal guerrilla groups gathered in the First Conference of the Popular Movement of National Liberation, which set out a framework for conflict resolution, communal and individual land use, cattle market regulation (the main economic activity in the Llanos regions where the Liberal guerrillas were based). They also banned torture, including against political opponents, and included a law on "civil marriage, divorce, women's equality, and indigenous rights" (46).

issues: agrarian reform and increased political participation for *campesinos* and the poor. In subsequent decades, the FARC would expand into a variety of Colombian departments and come to include revolutionary students, unemployed youth, and Leftist politicians fleeing persecution (Chernick 2009). Their largest expansion took place in the era of the booming cocaine economy, from which the FARC earned income by initially taxing drug traffickers and then taxing coca leaf growers at the beginning of the commodity chain (Ortíz 2006)—the FARC’s role in the illegal drug trade is not to be confused with that of the Medellín and Cali cartels and subsequent narco-paramilitaries, who vertically integrate and control production and trafficking (Camacho Guizado 2006; Tate 2015). Moreover, the FARC never truly represented a threat to take over the Colombian state militarily. Despite the FARC’s expansion into 13% of the country’s municipalities covering up to 40% of Colombia’s area as of 1998, these areas account for “less than 10 percent of the population, none of its industry, and remarkable little infrastructure” (Tate 2015: 53).

In their practices, the FARC can hardly be identified as a political alternative for addressing Colombia’s inequality and exploitation. Chernick (2009) is correct to assert the FARC is not a purely ‘communist’ movement: it is influenced just as much by Colombian liberalism as Soviet communism. In terms of producing an alternative to capitalist socioeconomic relations, Vásquez (2011) remarks,

The FARC does not want to realize that the social reproduction based in the coca economy creates precarious social identities, more subject to economic interests than to strong political identities and ideas, which are an indispensable condition for a project in which political discourse and rhetoric are in fact central. (416)

I recall Peace Community farmers telling an international delegation in 2011 how the FARC insists that *campesinos* grow coca, since this is the best income generator

available to enable their survival. The farmers telling us about this reacted by questioning such a strategy, given that growing the coca leaf—while not ecologically destructive on its own—invites government fumigations, which cause incredible damage to the soil and water. These *campesinos* also said that they reject growing coca because in so doing, the farmer has to cede to the authority of the actor to whom they are selling, be it the FARC, paramilitaries, or police-army officers, as is common in Urabá’s rural areas and small towns (field notes, 2011). Unlike the paramilitaries who work against community’s self-organization, the FARC promotes communal living and work. However, their form of community is not voluntary. It is mandatory and forced: breaking their rules for “living in a dignified and honest community” results in fines, while ‘capital offenses’—including being an informant, rape, repeated drug abuse, falling asleep while on duty, or using a weapon against another FARC combatant—are punished by execution (Tate 2015: 117-249).³³ In other words, the FARC reproduces the hierarchical social relations of sovereign power, while perpetuating a cycle of indoctrinated and retaliatory violence (Sanchez G. 2006).

In contrast, the Patriotic Union party emerged as an attempt to shift Colombia’s unequal and exclusionary social and political structure through electoral politics and subsequent policy reform. The party was founded in 1985 by an array of guerrilla fighters leaving ‘the mountain’ to seek social change through the ballot box. It also included other members of the Colombian Left, such as urban intellectuals. It arose in the historical conjuncture leading up to 1988, when city mayors in the country’s municipalities would be elected for the first time by popular vote, rather than being

³³ For a photograph of a FARC poster in Putumayo listing its rules and the fine value for violations, see Tate (2015: 117).

appointed by the national president. San José de Apartadó was one of the areas where the UP party had strong support and implemented an array of social investment programs. However, paramilitary campaigns—coordinated, supported, or tolerated by the Colombian Armed Forces—subsequently assassinated 3,500 Patriotic Union party leaders across the country from 1985-2000, including two presidential candidates, in what has been called a “political genocide” (Pinto Patiño 2012; Caycedo Turriago 2006; Hylton 2006; Kirk 2003). Wherever one’s sympathies lie regarding the Patriotic Union’s project, it ultimately was an ineffective strategy for political change, albeit seemingly not due to its own ‘failures,’ but rather due to the limits of electoral politics in such a context.

This is not to say that state-oriented politics of party politics and armed struggle are ineffective. Surely, ‘effectiveness depends on the goals of the particular political movement. Indeed, while the guerrillas are the most critiqued for their combination of *‘todas las formas de lucha* (all the forms of struggle),’ it is actually the paramilitary groups which have best combined an armed movement with electoral politics in order to effectively to advance their ideological project (Romero 2006). This exemplifies how in the dominant forms of sovereign power and modern politics, war can be ‘politics by other means’ (Clausewitz 1982) but hegemonic politics is indeed ‘war by other means’ (Foucault 2003). San José de Apartadó’s farmers’ strategy of forming a ‘peace community’ rather than arming themselves in self-defense or forming a new political party, suggests the exhaustion of the former two tactics of political change, but also the potential for an ‘other’ type of emergent politics.

In any case, a crucial factor in the historical inability of Colombian opposition parties to achieve widespread reforms is due to the staunch resistance by the Colombian

elite to carry out reforms. The Colombian 'elite' is not a homogenous group, especially today with the emergence of a new drug-trafficking elite.³⁴ However, time after time throughout Colombian history, even in cases where sectors of the elite favored social reforms (such as current President Juan Manuel Santos' initiative to institute a land restitution law and diplomatically negotiate with the FARC), such change has been thwarted by elites' ultimately uniting against change or regional-sectorial groups impeding the materialization of reforms through the use of paramilitary repression. A few examples include a) Indigenous and Afro-Caucano *sociedades democráticas* (democratic societies) in mid to late 19th century Cauca, ultimately destroyed by a Liberal-Conservative unification against these forms of popular democratic politics (Hylton 2006); b) Liberal and Conservatives unification against the Quintín Lame movement during *La Violencia* (Fals Borda 2009b; Castillo 2004); c) regional elites' counter-reform violence against the ANUC and the agrarian reform law of 1968 (Hylton 2006); d) the political reaction to the 1962 book *La violencia en Colombia*, when Conservatives refused to implement any structural changes within the military to curb indiscriminate violence (Fals Borda 2009d); e) the intensification of paramilitary attacks on Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities *after* these groups secured rights to collectively-owned territories in the 1991 Colombian Constitution and Law 70 of 1993 (Escobar 2008). Indeed, Sánchez G. (2006) has argued that there is nothing to commemorate in Colombian history; the most widely commemorated event is one of

³⁴ On the tension between urban class elites and new rural elites, Vásquez (2011) writes that urban elites want modernization under liberal democracy (such as a negotiated exit from the armed conflict) and are open to changes in development model, whereas the new rural elites are allied to narco-trafficking and would be big losers with the opening of the countryside to democratic rules.

tragedy, the *Bogotazo* uprising following the assassination of populist Liberal presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948.

Internal enemies and racism

What drives Colombian elites (and/or other elites around the world) to so staunchly resist reform and repress dissent? This is not purely a question of preserving material wealth (Rojas 2002). On this question, scholars have signaled how the inability to achieve progressive reforms in Colombia is rooted in the Cold War ideology of the “internal enemy,” who was understood as anyone who threatened the status quo, such as guerrilla insurgents but also including all political dissidents, such as unionists, radical intellectuals, and *campesino* movements (Gómez Correal 2015; Gómez 2007; Giraldo Moreno, S.J. 1996; Romero 2006). Gómez Correal (2015) speaks of a “hegemonic emotional habitus of hate” in Colombia rooted in the colonial-modern project of hatred against all those that a) are ‘other’ to the nation or b) question the status quo. This is indeed a key component of the country’s unresolved social contradiction or *agrietamiento estructural* (structural crack or break) (Fals Borda 2009e). Of course, this “hegemonic emotional habitus of hate” (Gómez Correal 2015) directed against the nation’s “internal enemies” (Giraldo Moreno, S.J. 1996; Gómez 2007) is not merely a Cold War phenomena. It is rooted in the colonial formation of the Colombian nation state (Gómez Correal 2015). Who were the original ‘enemies?’

Colombian and Colombianist scholars have begun to pay more attention to the role of race in this structural crack (Roldán 2002; Hylton 2006; Wade 2009; Serje 2005). The articulation of an ‘internal enemy’ in 20th century Colombia is rooted in the original enemy in colonial and post-independence Colombia: the racialized subject. Therefore, a critical theory of race, racialization, and racism is necessary to understand

race in Colombia and its relevance for analyzing war and politics in San José de Apartadó. I return to a question posed in the Introduction: while the Peace Community's farmers identify as *campesinos*, which is a supposedly distinct cultural category from ethnic Indigenous, Black, and Afro-Colombians, might we further unmask the war against San José's farmers as structured by racism?

Race is not a biological reality. A social construction that was historically produced through colonialism, *race* is the social hierarchy of modernity, comprised of humanity's poles from 'civilized' to 'barbaric.' As a hierarchy, this is not merely a categorical distinction of difference. It is *racism*: inequality and exploitation (Goldberg 2009), which Gilmore (2006) shows to indeed mean premature death, both physically and socially, for those marked to be 'less than human.'

As delineated by Reyes and Kaufman (2011), during the European Conquest of the Americas, the colonizers perceived a fundamental difference between themselves and those they colonized. They did not perceive Indigenous people demarcating or controlling space through private property or in a state (Galli 2010). Rather, they saw them as 'living in a state of nature' (Hobbes 1991; Reyes and Kaufman 2011) and were thus 'animals' rather than humans. For example, in colonial Spanish America, according to its *Casta* paintings, the offspring of an Indigenous and African couple was termed a *lobo*, the word for wolf or coyote, i.e., no more than an animal, which for the European imagination, was an utmost insult.

Race has, therefore, always been a spatial category. It is a question of *territoriality*, which I understand to mean the relationship that people have with space (Reyes 2015a; Raffestin 2012). This conception of territoriality exceeds how the term is typically understood, as the feeling or act of creating and defending one's space against

another (Sack 1986; Delaney 2005; Sánchez Ayala 2015). But ‘sovereign’ control over a given space or place is merely one possible relationship people can have with space. It is only one form of territoriality (Reyes 2015a).

Yet for the colonizers, humans were defined by their separation from nature and animals. Dietrich (2002) points out how, in places where “the environment is not objectified and functionalized in the service of humankind,” (52), the modern worldview “often leads us to see anomy and chaos where, if viewed from close quarters, there is a good measure of vernacular organizational form and a considerable amount of social creativity and skill in improvisation” (51). In other words, for the colonizers, you were only ‘human’ if you *dominated* space by *demarkating* it. Thus emerged the distinction between the colonized subject being ‘in a state of nature’ vs. the colonizer subject and its country’s ‘citizens’ participating in human ‘civil society’ (Reyes and Kaufman 2011). In other words, race emerged as a distinction between humanity mediated by the hegemonic notion of territory, as a demarcated space controlled by a particular group. Indeed, the European identity was not a pre-existing one. It was produced through the colonizers’ mutual identification as ‘not indigenous or blacks in the Americas and Africa’ (Quijano 2000). As a “coloniality of power” (Quijano 2000), race also emerged as an explicit political strategy by colonial masters to *divide* the non-elite class in the colonies, in order to undermine rebellion. Whereas indentured servants from Europe were not slaves like the Africans trafficked to the Americas, the two were burgeoning and potential allies since both were subjugated to exploitation, albeit of different kinds. The “color line” was drawn when European workers were provided with particular goods and benefits by colonial elites, these indentured servants subsequently became ‘white’ and

thus fearful that ‘blacks’ and ‘indigenous’ might threaten their access to those privileges (Zinn 1999b).

For Wilderson (2010), race functions as a triad of white, red, and black. And this triad is fundamentally a question of territoriality. Whites occupy the ‘civilized’ position, as those that own property and are members of the ‘civil society.’ Blacks are inherently ‘slaves.’ They have no spatiality of their own and are thus to be owned and exploited by whites. Blacks can also be owned by the intermediary group, the ‘red’ Indigenous ‘savages,’ who are recognized as having had land and exerting sovereignty over space in the past (Wilderson 2010). Indigenous people are thus defined by living in ‘a state of nature’ rather than in a modern civil state, but they can be potentially saved through conversion to Christianity, as argued by Spanish defender of Indigenous people, Bartolomé de las Casas, during the Spanish conquest (Reyes and Kaufman 2011). Indeed, as I will illustrate in Part II on peace, ‘modern peace’ is constituted by the security of those comprising the ‘civil society,’ which is secured by a state that disciplines those ‘living in a state of nature’ and protects against people from other nations (Hobbes 1991; Foucault 2003; Dietrich 2012).³⁵

With modernity, personal and collective identity is thus integrally derived from the dominant ideas-practices of territory and territoriality. National identity, i.e., the identity one has due to the nation-state borders one lives within, becomes one of if not *the* most foundational identity in the modern world (Cowen and Gilbert 2008). From those nation-state boundaries, people derive the core part of how they understand themselves and act in the world (Reyes 2015a).

³⁵ Of course, Foucault’s (2003) conceptualization of ‘race’ is broader than that of most scholars, including the mentally ill and disabled, i.e., all those that threaten the productive biopower of the capitalist state and its population.

Yet this is not only an ‘us’ and ‘them’ between nation-states. It is also the creation of ‘internal enemies’ within states: the ongoing racialization of those considered to be ‘savage’ or ‘slave’ (Wilderson 2010). I use the term racialization here intentionally. While I sympathize with Goldberg’s (2009) frustration that the term *racialization* is typically employed far too callously in a way that can invisibilize that what we are talking about is *racism*, I still find racialization a useful term to refer to the *process* through which people are *made* and *marked* ‘other.’ Surely, given that modern society is *structured* by racism, racialization is a continually reproduced process. In other words, whiteness, blackness, and indigeneity are not simply social ‘identities’ but structural conditions of restriction and possibility (Goldberg 2009). Race is fundamentally a question of *threat*: Who is threatened *by* the system and who is a threat *to* the system (Goldberg 2009).

In Latin America, there is not officially formalized segregation like in the pre-civil rights United States or apartheid South Africa. And people often point to greater extents of ‘racial mixing’ in the region. However, the region’s nationalistic projects of *mestizaje* and *mestiçagem* (where the nation became defined by its racial mixture) that followed the Mexican Revolution and the abolition of slavery, was less about plurality than whitening (Goldberg 2009). Rather than a mutual cultural integration, Latin American governments favored the importation of white Europeans to serve as the labor force in the growing industries. Surely, aspects of Africana have been incorporated into different national identities and cultures, such as tango and samba, but these are better understood as co-optations that de-politicize these cultural practices rooted in anti-colonial struggle. In other words, the ‘red savage’ and the ‘black slave’ remain less than human (Wilderson 2010). And ‘*ladinos*’ or ‘*mestizos*’ are those that assimilate into the

dominant white-civil culture by ridding themselves of their indigeneity. For some, notwithstanding, this does not mean getting rid of all indigenous cultural practices, necessarily, as “indigenous mestizos” in Peru demonstrate (De la Cadena 2000).

While some indeed move up the ‘social ladder’ through urbanization and modern education (De la Cadena 2000) the political discourses of *mestizaje* (such as Brazil’s supposed ‘racial democracy’) serve to invisibilize persistent racist inequalities and exploitation (Vargas 2004; Goldberg 2009). To build from Wilderson’s (2010) Afro-pessimism, unlike blacks who are defined by the gratuitous violence against them, it seems as if Indigenous people are semi-humans that can maintain certain cultural traditions as long as they do not inhibit the needs of the nation and capitalist enterprise.

I have taken the time to delineate these critical theories of race because I believe they are fundamental for a deeper understanding of the Peace Community context. While other studies on the organization have not analyzed their resistance as a race issue, I argue that the racial ‘coloniality of power’ (Quijano 2000) profoundly structures San José de Apartadó and the Urabá region.

Racialization and campesinos in Urabá

Therefore, to return to the Colombian context, how has racialization functioned in the country? Rojas (2002) points to the racism embedded in the post-colonial Liberal and Conservative parties, which became the dominant political parties across the region post-independence in the early 1800s. These parties are usually analyzed in terms of what distinguished them, i.e., their preference for religious or secular governance and land ownership. However, this narrative invisibilizes what is a more significant element of these parties for understanding Colombian politics and society. Rojas (2002) argues that elite Liberals and Conservatives were indeed more united than divided. They were

united by their shared despise for the non-white population given their shared concern with the ‘will to civilization,’ i.e., to advance the European project of modernity, which Rojas (2002) argues, far superseded their aspirations for the accumulation of wealth.

Similar to the way race functions in Latin America and elsewhere, it is not only a question of territoriality but of place. As in environmental determinism, racialization is a simultaneous process of marking ‘primitives’ and the ‘inhospitable’ climates they live in (Livingstone 1992). Consistent with the *mestizaje* project, these people and places marked ‘other’ through spatial terms that are not explicitly racially signified is another means to invisibilize race and perpetuate racism.

Urabá has precisely been one of the regions considered among the ‘*territorios salvajes*’ (savage territories) throughout Colombian history (Serje 2005). After the 1905 territorial re-ordering of Colombia’s administrative units, Urabá’s central corridor became part of Antioquia, giving the department a “*salida al mar* (exit to the sea)” at the Gulf of Urabá. Steiner (2000) describes the central Antioquian government’s establishment of control there as a “colonial encounter,” defined by the imposition of “*antioqueño* (Antioquian)” values and practices to produce a ‘conservative,’ Catholic, and ‘hard working’ subject—i.e., the production of a particular territory—there.

Urabá as the ‘frontier’ is the peripheral space ‘unknown’ by the core (Sánchez Ayala 2015). García (1996) references the dominant discourse: “*Urabá era la tierra de nadie* [Urabá was the land of no one]’ or, in other words, of anyone who had the capacity to impose themselves over others” (29). ‘Savage territories’ and ‘the land of nobody’ thus signal a colonial understanding of space: if there is not a modern administration of space through private property and state institutions, then there is ‘no one’ there (Galli 2010). Their inhabitants thus occupy the “zone of nonbeing” (Fanon 2008) outside of

the white ‘civil society’ (Wilderson 2010). Of course, there are people there, and what these discourses reveal is that these zones *are not yet colonized*. They remain the peripheries yet to be subjected to a full primitive accumulation (Marx 1976a).

As an example of how counter-insurgency and race rhetoric blend together—what I find to be an extreme case of the ‘internal enemy’ logic’s “emotional habitus of hate” (Gómez Correal 2015)—take the case of Vargas Q. (2006), a leader of the victims of the FARC movement. In his 2006 book *Comunidades de paz: Estrategia de guerra. Caso San José de Apartadó* (Peace communities: War strategy. Case of San José de Apartadó), he claims that the Peace Community is ultimately a Soviet “gulag” *a la colombiana* (29) and “not a camp of peace but a concentration camp” (39). He proceeds to say,

It is good to say that this community of San José is of negritudes, it must be said, that they are also African immigrants as well. Whatever brings fruit to the discrediting campaign against the Army is good (for them) (197) ... When indigenous communities today reclaim respect for their culture, it is not clear to which culture they refer: to the pre-Columbian savage and enslaving one; or the one defended by the Spanish Crown; or the modern, a mix of tribal rituals with a communist tendency. (196)

These imaginaries do not tell us anything about those made ‘other,’ i.e., what their actual inhabitants think and do. These people might or might not practice alter-territorialities. Rather, these discourses are a reflection of and window into what the *core* thinks and is (Said 1979); they are “the mirror of the nation-state” (Serje 2005). They reflect an understanding of politics and governance as ‘sovereign power’ (Foucault 1995; Foucault 2003), where those supposedly living ‘in a state of nature’ and amidst a war of all against all (Hobbes 1991) must be disciplined by sovereignty: set arrangements of who controls what and whom (Reyes and Kaufman 2011). Therefore, the core’s description of these zones as areas where the predominating logic is “*Quítate tú pa’*

ponerme yo (Get out so I can insert myself)” (Aparicio 2012) is indeed reflective of the dominant modern imaginary, which insists upon disciplining these areas into a particular territorial-political formation, in which there is an exclusive control of space by the nation-state (Reyes and Kaufman 2011). Díez Gómez (2009) argues that, in Urabá, what prevails is “not a discussion about social problematics but the elimination of those who are different. [There is a] lack of tolerance for the ‘other’” (63), where “no neutrality exists.”

In fact, most Colombian authors, when describing areas like Urabá, describe them as zones of ‘*colonización*’ (Díez Gómez 2009; Aparicio 2012; García de la Torre et al. 2011; García 1996). Yet the sense with which they use this term is not to refer to political colonization but what I would interpret into English as *settlement*, which in this case refers to the arrival of small-scale farmers and, subsequently, capitalist entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, I argue that this use of “*colonización*” is especially appropriate, even if the authors do not intend to argue as much. Absolutely, Urabá is one of the world’s areas today in a process of primitive accumulation (Marx 1976a). Different places in Latin America have been colonized at different times. This took place in the early colonial era in some areas (such as Hispaniola, Tenochtitlán, Cuzco, Potosí, and Zacatecas), while others were brought under the rule of the Spanish-Portuguese-French-Dutch-English or independent nation-states later. Conversely, Urabá was not colonized during the Spanish Conquest (Steiner 2000), but experiences what I deem to be colonial conquest today.

Rather than the war in Urabá reflecting a failed or absent state, the ‘conflict’ is a means through which the state is itself produced and constructing itself (García 1996; Ballvé 2012). Indeed, for an analysis of the intersections between forced displacement,

paramilitarism, state formation, international development, and capitalist accumulation in the Chocó region of Urabá to the west of Apartadó, see Ballvé (2012; 2013b). Such processes of consolidating state power are deemed necessary for modern society, as affirmed by none other than paramilitary Vicente Castaño, who I quoted earlier (*Semana* 2005). These regions are discursively produced as both a) ‘disease-ridden’ and ‘dangerous,’ as well as b) the sites of incredible riches. Steiner (2000) cites a description of the ‘riches’ in the Pacific department of Chocó in the *El Antioqueño* newspaper in 1904,

In Chocó everything is fabulous. Its forests are curdled with the most valued resins, of almost inappreciable woods ... cotton and sugarcane grow there in a truly incredibly way. And at the entrances to its mountain ranges and riverbeds there shines a lustful change to the eternal nightmare of men. It is an immense camp for all the industries; it is the future of Colombia. (8)

In other words, according to this logic, these regions can be the future of prosperity for the nation, but not if left in the hands of ‘the natives.’ As an inference that ‘Indigenous people are incompatible with modern politics and development,’ take Colombian Senator Paloma Valencia’s recent proposal that Cauca department be “divided in two. One indigenous department and another for the *mestizos*” (*El Colombiano* 2015), a proposal immediately branded as racist by commentators. Moreover, what does Valencia mean by ‘*mestizos*?’ She seems to infer non-indigenous, i.e., ‘white,’ *mestizos* like herself rather than “indigenous *mestizos*” that actively practice indigenous rituals (De la Cadena 2000). What about the Peace Community farmers in San José de Apartadó? No one identifies them as indigenous and they do not conduct indigenous cultural rituals. Would that make them white *mestizos* like Senator Valencia?

But no one would call them white. One Peace Community leader explained to an international delegation in 2012, “By nature, we are of indigenous blood, and we carry that within us.” Indeed, they are the product of “de-indigenization,” a revelation I owe to (Reyes 2015, personal communication). Most of the *campesinos* who settled in what became San José de Apartadó were originally from an area to south, halfway to the city of Medellín. San José’s farmers came from municipalities such as Dabeiba, Frontino, and Cañas Gordas. This region had been the target of the Antioquian government’s campaign to spread the “*raza antioqueña* (Antioquian race),” and its ‘superior’ religion and customs of Catholicism, conservatism, and ‘hard work’ (Steiner 2000). *Raza antioqueña* is a code word for whiteness, given Antioquians’ insistence that they are the ‘most European’ among Colombians (Rojas 2002; Steiner 2000). Both state education and the Catholic Church played a role. Steiner (2000) documents how the Catholic missions framed their goal as “the reduction, evangelization and civilization of the indigenous tribes” (86) that were living in the surrounding areas of Frontino and Dabeiba; they inaugurated missions there rather than in Caimán Nuevo’s Indigenous *resguardo* between Turbo and Necoclí because of the former’s cooler climate more agreeable to the Spanish priests. By the time these de-indigenized *campesinos* would migrate to Urabá, they identified as *antioqueños* and not “indigenous.”

Therefore, even though they do not *identify* as “Indigenous,” they are *indigenous descendants*. But we must be reminded, *race* is not a question of biology or mere phenotype, but one’s position within the hierarchy of modern society. In this process of becoming Antioquian *campesinos*, have they moved up the social ladder like the urban women in Cuzco, Peru, that De la Cadena (2000) worked with? Do Antioquian elites in Medellín now treat them as equals?

To return to my interviews in San José de Apartadó, one member explained that the war remains a project to eliminate them and their way of life:

I asked, “And why is there this war?”

“In order to get rid of the *campesino*.”

I followed up by asking, “They have not been able to take this land because of your resistance; why do they want the territory?”

“To let it rot! Or bring in other people to work. Those people, I tell you, do not work or let you work.” (personal interview, 2013)

In another interview, a Peace Community member analyzed the relationship between *campesinos*, wealth, wisdom, and the state:

The poor ... for states, and for the [Colombian] State, we are trash. We are trash. We are not part of the society. The state ... has totally abandoned small-scale subsistence farming. And education. Why? Because it believes and thinks that the *campesino* does not know how to read or write, is brute, and is not capable of reclaiming anything. And it turns out that they are mistaken. Because maybe someone does not know how to read or write. But [s/he] writes, listens, and analyzes. ... We are poor, but we are not poor, we are rich! Because we have our abilities and wisdom. We know how to teach many things and these are riches! ... How many unhappy rich people are there? They can't be happy with all the comforts that they have. (personal interview, 2013)

Therefore, these members explain the violence as not only about resources and accumulation, but as an anti-*campesino* war. While *mestizo campesino* as a means of anti-racialism serves to invisibilize ongoing racism, the war remains an anti-Indigenous process. Strikingly, whereas these *antioqueños mestizos* are supposed to have ‘moved up’ in social status, what I heard over and over again were affirmations to the similar conditions across ‘Indigenous’ and ‘*campesino*’ communities.

During a gathering of the *Campesino* University of Resistance in 2013, one participant from an Indigenous community in Cauca said, “In my territory, we live the same violence that we all live” (field notes, 2013). Another, from an Indigenous community in Chocó, affirmed, “They are the same problems in each region, call them

indigenous, *campesinos*, Afros. You want to see a place that is different, but you only see the same everywhere: the homes, the violence” (field notes, 2013).

A representative from an ACIN community in Cauca added an explanation of their specific resistance to the armed groups. She argued,

“Defending the civilian population,” say both the army and the guerrilla. From both of them: stigmatizations, assassinations, and threats. The war is not in order to protect, but a plan of territorial consolidation, as they call it. They have pit us against one another, our Afro, Indigenous, and *Campesino* comrades. The need that we all feel, the inhabitants of the national territory is the same. There is racial persecution. This is not about a couple policies but a system. (field notes, 2013)

In other words, this person deconstructs the racial-ethnic distinctions as categories that divide and rule. Moreover, to affirm that the violence is “racial persecution,” which is ‘systemic’ and not an issue of individual policies, is to confront the dominant narratives of a ‘few bad apples’ among the armed groups that serves to invisibilize the role of racism in Colombia’s war. As Indigenous descendants, it seems, whether or not you speak Spanish, practice Christianity, or identify with the Colombian nationality, if you do not cede to the needs of capital and the nation-state, you are nonetheless targeted as the ‘internal enemy’ and forced into either co-optation or resistance. Another participant affirmed how even legal recognition of Indigenous space means little when it conflicts with the interest of the nation-state, “There is recognition of territories, of Indigenous reserves. But for the state this has no value, only the riches that there are in the territory” (field notes, 2013). Therefore, while some have theorized Colombia’s violence as a “war against the society” (Pécaut 2001), these Indigenous-*campesino* voices call for us to question the extent to which it is a war *of* modern society *against* racialized people.

Another member of an ACIN community shared with me in a personal conversation how, “The guerrillas and the military soldiers come to an agreement between them. Each one positions themselves on a different side above the community (so that they can both attack us)” (field notes, 2013). Another *campesino* delegate from Quindío argued,

The guerrilla does not want us to get organized either. We have to organize ourselves more strategically. To continue forward. We would like to accompany the Peace Community here with more people from my region. I will not leave you alone as long as I am alive. (field notes, 2013)

If race serves to divide and rule (Zinn 1999b), then these solidarities between ‘Indigenous’ and ‘*campesino*’ in this University of Resistance are implicitly an active rejection of the function of racialism and racism, to fetishize difference and impede collaborations among the non-elite. What is clear to me from *Campesino* University participants’ statements is that a) neither the state nor the guerrillas are the political answer for these communities and b) that despite different ethnic identities, the conditions they face are quite similar (without denying that each will vary according to its specific context, of course). It must be said that this is a *specific group* of communities that have organized as the *Red de Comunidades en Ruptura y Resistencia* (RECORRE, Network of Communities in Resistance) (“Comunidades Campesinas Declaran Su Ruptura Con El Sistema de Justicia Colombiana” 2003). They do not represent all Indigenous and *campesino* organizations in Colombia, among which there are others that *embrace* the presence of state and/or non-state armed groups as well as extractivism as an appropriate development strategy.

Therefore, in this dissertation, I prefer to refer to the Peace Community and other such *radical* rural communities comprised of Indigenous and African descendants as

communities in resistance, a categorization derived from the name of this network, in order to not equalize all people that identify as Black, Indigenous, or *campesino*. Nor do I pose these groups as the *only* communities in resistance in Colombia but, rather, the ones with which I have worked most closely and thus refer to when I use this term.

Indeed, if race is a question of who is threatened *by* as well as threatening *to* the dominant society (Goldberg 2009), the Peace Community is certainly racialized by their phenotype and autonomous politics as the ‘Indigenous savage’ to be exterminated by the modern-colonial project, which is exhibited by the mass violence levied against them by the Colombian state both *prior* to but also *in the wake* of asserting their self-determination from both the state-paramilitaries and guerrillas. To re-word Rivera Cusicanqui’s (1987) quote “Oppressed but Not Defeated,” I would argue they have been *de-indigenized, but not defeated*. It is to this historical process of resistance that I now turn: the origin of the Peace Community.

FORMATION OF THE PEACE COMMUNITY IN 1997

As a critical and performance geographer, I will forefront Peace Community voices to narrate their history. I employ a series of ethnopoetically transcribed excerpts from Luis Eduardo Guerra’s final interview, interspersed with my own commentary, historical references, and supplementary statements by other Community members and now-deceased-leader Eduar Lancho’s books.³⁶ I use ethnopoetic transcription as a

³⁶ Eduar Lancho was a native of Bogotá who, along with Father Javier Giraldo and Sister Clara Lagos, became one of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission’s Colombian accompaniers of the Peace Community in 1997. While officially a non-member *asesor* (consultant), he was beloved by Peace Community members and considered a full member and

mode of representation and analysis. Indicating which words Guerra stressed with bold, caps, and italics not only gives the reader a better sense of *how* he spoke but also helps to focus our attention to particular words and themes.

Luis Eduardo Guerra was among the victims of the 2005 massacre in Mulatos, soon after this interview was recorded by the Italian Solidarity Network.³⁷ Luis Eduardo, as he is affectionately known by Community members and accompaniers, was one of its founding members, most respected leaders, and most well-known internationally, having traveled to Europe and the United States on speaking tours (Figure 29). For example, he spoke at the School of the Americas vigil in November 2002 in Columbus, Georgia. His final recorded interview is famous for his affirmation that “today we are speaking, tomorrow we can be dead,” right before he would in fact be killed. The Community frequently plays the audio in full during the annual 2005 massacre commemoration in Mulatos. As I will discuss more in depth in Chapter 5 on memory, the use of this interview is a means to embrace Luis Eduardo’s “agency of the dead” (Gómez Correal 2015), both within Peace Community commemorations as well as this dissertation: his words continue to create history and truth.

one of their greatest leaders. He epitomized the figure of the “organic intellectual” (Gramsci 1971) as an intellectual embedded in a struggle whose analysis and leadership shaped and was fundamentally shaped by the movement (Lanchero 2000; Lanchero 2002; Buenaventura 2011). Lanchero was among the most threatened members of the Peace Community. After suffering repeated bouts of malaria from his time in San José de Apartadó and ultimately cancer, Lanchero passed away in July 2012. He informed his family that he wanted to be buried in the Peace Community. The day after his death, hundreds and hundreds of *campesinos* went to meet his casket as it arrived to San Josecito (Giraldo Moreno, S.J. 2012), where his tomb remains today (Figures 30-31).

³⁷ Video of this interview is available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnCD3ksFoZQ>



Figure 29. Luis Eduardo Guerra commemorated.
Source: Photo by Mayra Sofía Moreno, with permission, from RAIS photo archive.



Figure 30. The “organic intellectual”: Eduar Lanchero.
Eduar Lanchero, second from the left, with Community members at the renovated school in La Resbalosa in 2010.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 31. Eduar Lanchero's tomb in San Josecito.
Source: Author photo.

Guerra was asked to begin by explaining the conditions in which they organized themselves and why. He notes the waves of evictions in the villages of San José amidst a context of increasing paramilitarism and its attack on popular movements in the region:

This was as a consequence of all the *conflict* that there was in the region. Since... '95. All the development of the paramilitary project. The extermination of the Patriotic *Union*, the Communist *Party*, and in general, all of the popular *organizations*, that there were in the region. When *all of* this extermination took place, through blood and fire from the military and paramilitary forces, the campesino communities in San José de Apartadó, those of us that inhabited the villages, we were left, totally *alone*. And suffering all the aggressions of the army. And of the paramilitaries. The large majority of the 32 communities [villages] that existed, had to displace. (Red Italiana de Solidaridad 2005)

In the years preceding the founding of the Peace Community, Urabá had become one of the foci of the state and paramilitary's counterinsurgency project, which included attacking not only guerrillas but also residents living in guerrilla-controlled places as well as popular or Leftist social organizations. Whereas previously they were appointed by the national government, as of 1988, city mayors were popularly elected by the populace in each municipality. The Patriotic Union had widespread support among the region's residents given its pro-*campesino* development program, and San José de Apartadó was a strong voting bloc for the party. In addition, Bartolomé Cataño, who founded the *corregimiento* in 1967, was a Patriotic Union councilor to the Apartadó City Council. San José's villages benefitted greatly from the policies of the Patriotic Union governments. The district began to see social investments, including the construction of health centers and schools across the district, even in villages far afield (Figure 32). Under the administration of mayor Gloria Cuartas beginning in 1995, the municipal government began installing electricity and running water. However, this project was interrupted by the paramilitaries' killing campaign against Patriotic Union members and displacements of San José's farmers. At the time of the mass displacement in 1996,



Figure 32. Legacies of the Patriotic Union.

This former health center was built in Mulatos as part of the Patriotic Union's social investment in health and education infrastructure in San José de Apartadó in the 1990s. It is now a mini health center and grain storage building in the Peace Community's Luis Eduardo Guerra Peace Village of Mulatos.

Source: Author photo.

only San José town and the village of La Unión had running water and electricity. The extermination of the Patriotic Union party meant the end of these social investments and most of San José's settlements remain without electricity and running water today.

Part of their larger campaign across Urabá, the paramilitaries and the army targeted San José de Apartadó as a historical stronghold of both the Patriotic Union as well as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), whose Fifth Front was reportedly founded there in 1973 (García de la Torre et al. 2011: 300). These military-paramilitary operations occurred amidst a confluence of Antioquia's governmental leaders united by their counterinsurgency aim: Governor Álvaro Uribe Vélez and 17th Brigade Army Commander Rito Alejo del Río. Additionally, fierce anti-guerrilla leader Carlos Castaño of the paramilitary United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) was based in neighboring Córdoba (Romero 2006).

Campeños reacted to mass displacements by marching to the city of Apartadó and occupying its stadium from June to July 1996. They denounced forced displacement in San José de Apartadó and called for an end to paramilitary-state violence. A governmental Verification Commission followed that documented 91 state crimes between May and August 1996, including joint military-paramilitary joint action, forced displacement, and the destruction of crops, among others; all of these crimes still remain in impunity. The march was organized by San José founder Bartolomé Cataño. He was assassinated August 16th, 1996 (Giraldo Moreno, S.J. 2010).

With the extermination of the region's Leftist and popular social organizations, such as the Patriotic Union, the farmers in San José had to search for an alternative political strategy. Luis Eduardo Guerra proceeds to describe the reaction of those that remained after the initial displacements, and how they responded to their increasing

isolation by building alliances with the Catholic Church and national human rights organizations:

And us, those of that were there, *still in eleven communities [villages]*, decided, to look for support in the [Catholic] Church. To see what we could do. [We had to decide] if we were going to let [the armed actors] kill us *there*, [or] if we would have *to leave*. The large majority of us had nowhere to do to. And that is where, we searched for the **POSSIBILITY**, with the help of *the Church*, some other organizations, national **NGOs**, *we yearned for* or we made the proposal, initially, of what were humanitarian territories, to concentrate ourselves there, and ask for the respect of the **armed actors**, including the State, the *paramilitaries*, and the insurgency. (Red Italiana de Solidaridad 2005)

The idea of conforming “humanitarian territories” emerged in a series of workshops facilitated by the local Catholic diocese as well as two Colombian NGOs: the *Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz* (Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission) and the *Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular* (CINEP, Research and Popular Education Center). This proposal was rooted in the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international humanitarian law, which affirm the right of civilians to not participate in wars against their will.³⁸ This is one of the three primary ‘vectors’ Aparicio (2012) identifies as fundamental to creating the conditions of possibility for the Peace Community to emerge as what he interprets as an assemblage in this particular place and time in the era of neoliberal governmentality (Aparicio 2015): a Colombian Left directed by unions and the progressive wing of the Catholic

³⁸ Members of the ‘progressive’ Catholic Church, including those part of the Liberation Theology tradition (Welch 2007), were involved in similar community organizing initiatives across Colombia during this period. For a corollary example in the southern department of Putumayo, see Tate (2015: 120-122, 131-132). Part of the human rights network, members of the Catholic Church conducted popular education programs, facilitated sustainable development projects, and stressed collective work. They were central to the founding of a new political party in Putumayo in the late 1980s, the *Movimiento Cívico Popular de Putumayo* (Grassroots Civic Movement of Putumayo). Part of a movement to gain access to state funding and programs, the party mobilized high voting turnouts and votes. As in Urabá, however, paramilitaries arrived in the region and their first targets were Putumayo’s local signatories of an agreement with the national government for public financing for services and infrastructure development in the department (Tate 2015).

Church committed to defend and protect ‘the poor’ and ‘the victims’ (Aparicio 2012: 281).

Of course, the ability to create an organized resistance to war was also informed by San José’s farmers’ decades of community organizing experience. Aparicio (2012) identifies this as another vector of the Peace Community assemblage’s conditions of possibility: a tradition of Colombian *campesino* settlers struggling for autonomy (281), which, in this case, can be traced at least as far back as their survival of *La Violencia*. Additionally, in San José itself, they had participated in workshops facilitated by the UNO (National Union of Opposition) and the radical Sincelejo wing of the ANUC (National Association of *Campesino* Users) (Aparicio 2009). Its farmers had been organized as *Juntas de Acción Comunal* (Communal Action Boards), the smallest organizational unit in Colombia. They had also bought and sold cacao through San José de Apartadó’s Balsamar Cooperative (Figure 33). Finally, its *campesinos* drew from decades of self-organization upon their settling of the area in the early 1960s. In groups of fifty to one hundred, farmers living in or adjacent to a given village would work on one family’s farm one day, and then move to another family’s plot the next. Known as the *convite*, San José’s farmers frequently recall how this form of collaborative work would conclude each harvest with village celebrations. Therefore, the commitments to collective work and solidarity that would come to define the Peace Community were re-configurations of already-existing *campesino* practices.

Even so, I find Guerra’s emphasis in the quote above on the word “possibility” quite telling: the apparent ‘impossibility’ of an alternative political strategy beyond policy reform, displacement, or armed self-defense. This is a sentiment I encounter frequently among the Peace Community. Their survival and alternative is never taken



Figure 33. Balsamar Cooperative.
Doña Brígida González showing her painting of the Balsamar Cooperative building in the middle of the town of San José de Apartadó. Her caption reads,
“San José de Apartadó. UP Unión Patriótica.”
Source: Photo by *Palomas de Paz* (Operazione Colombia), with permission.

for granted. It is always an experience of contingent possibility, constructed in daily practice and through strategic decisions, epitomized by their strategy to organize themselves collectively in 1997. Another founding Peace Community member and member of the Internal Council at the time, Renato Areiza, speaking from the village of La Unión, reiterated the key role of the Catholic Church through the region's bishop:

This was a **village**. There were *pool halls, stores, bars...* all the things you would find in a **village**. In '97, the paramilitaries had advanced in all of [Urabá,] and across the entire *country*, you could say. They had already been displacing people from the other villages, like *La Esperanza, Las Nieves, Porvenir, Mulatos ...* We were *worried*, we saw that the people from [*the villages*] *further up the mountain* were displacing, and so, we wondered, “**WHAT** about us? Are they also going to kick us out too?” So we asked Bishop Isaías Duarte Cancino for advice, for an *idea*. He told us, well, we need to form **NEUTRAL ZONES**, so that the armed actors **don't enter**. And so we said, *okay*. (Lozano 2006)

However, the community ultimately decided against naming their organization with the language of “neutrality.” While many Community members continue to refer to their neutrality and its importance—Guerra will too, below—their official designation was not as a “neutral zone.” They intentionally and strategically named themselves a “peace community,” for reasons described by Father Giraldo Moreno (2010):

Throughout the year of 1996, various *neutral communities* were being established, for the most part among indigenous groups of Antioquia. But by the end of the year, there was a strong debate about the word “neutrality,” since there were interpretations that only considered this possible in relation to the illegal armed groups and not with regards to the official army. For many, however, the fusion between the National Army and the paramilitaries was so evident, and their methods of barbarism so identical, that there was no way to make a distinction between the armed groups. For that reason, they opted for the denomination of *Peace Community*, that says NO, equally, to all the armed groups. (35, emphasis original)

This diverted from then-governor of Antioquia Álvaro Uribe's proposal of “neutrality.” During this period, Governor Uribe attended a meeting of delegates from communities across the region, including San José. He proposed that they organize

themselves as “*Convivir*” communities, an organizational model he was advancing across the department. Officially called *Servicios Especiales de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada* (Special Services of Surveillance and Private Security), they were structured for civilians to break their links with the guerrillas through an alliance with the National Army (Giraldo Moreno, S.J. 2007: 53). Residents would arm themselves against guerrilla attack and inform state forces about guerrillas’ movements. In effect, these civilians would become paramilitaries themselves or, at the very least, become governed by paramilitary-army units (Tobón 1997). As demobilized paramilitary Éver Veloza García, alias “H.H.,” famously declared in 2008 during his testimony as part of the Justice and Peace Law, “Let’s not tell lies, all of the *Convivir* were ours,” (Comisión Colombiana de Juristas 2008).

San José de Apartadó’s *campesinos* refused to become a *Convivir* allied with the state and paramilitaries. Moreover, this framing as a “peace community” is also significant by creating a different organizational goal, expectation, and praxis than the mere ‘neutrality’ of a ‘humanitarian space’ of refuge. In addition to withdrawing support and legitimacy from the armed groups, a “peace community” also defines what will constitute the group *internally*.

Guerra proceeds to describe what their declaration would mean in concrete actions by the San José’s *campesinos*: “When we finally organized ourselves and made the declaration, it was March 23rd, 1997. We signed the commitment to not participate in the war, to not collaborate with any armed actor.” The other core principles included not passing information to any of the armed parties; saying no to injustice and impunity; and participating in community work (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2005a). These are listed on signs that mark Community villages and farms. In

subsequent years, they have also made other rules explicit. These include a) not drinking alcohol within San José de Apartadó, which often induces armed groups' intervention to resolve disputes, b) not growing illicit crops, which have become increasingly common in the Serranía de Abibe and whose production brings the *campesino* under the authority of the guerrillas and paramilitaries who purchase and traffic them, and c) consistent with the Peace Community's "rupture" with state agencies, not receiving state reparations to victims, such as those offered by the 2011 Victims and Land Restitution Law legislated by the Juan Manuel Santos administration (Figure 34).

Even today, the original principles roll off the tongues of Community members almost verbatim in their statements: "not participate directly or indirectly in the war; not collaborate with any armed actor; participate in community work." They know them by heart, and visitors hear them repeatedly when talking to Community members. This reflects the intensity of community members' belief in these principles, which is the product of the communal process of deciding what those regulations would be. Father Giraldo gave an account of this process:

It was a profoundly democratic process. Each norm was written out, discussed in each family, and then discussed house-by-house, on street corners. Later there were assemblies and then it would return to a second process of discussion by family, neighborhood, and assembly. And for that reason, it is a *reglamento* (set of rules) of much consensus. (Moncada Hurtado, Ossa, and Caro Morales 2011a)

Eduar Lancho (2002) provides his own perspective:

The desolation was brutal but the resistance maintained alive, because it was not a process sustained by a certain number of leaders but was a historical movement of an entire community in which everyone believed, from the oldest to the youngest. (49)

Given the support of the Catholic Church as well as different NGOs, the members of the newly formed Peace Community hoped to be respected by the armed groups and



Figure 34. Peace Community billboard #2 (2013).

More extensive than earlier signs (see Figure 3 from the Introduction), this billboard includes three additional commitments:

- “The Community freely ...
- Does not consume liquor.
- Says no to illicit crops.
- Does not take reparations to victims.”

Source: Author photo.

be able to remain in their homes and farms. However, Renato Areiza describes what immediately followed:

And so we signed a declaration where it would be registered that we agree to being **neutral**. And we signed it on March 23rd of '97. Which we can say, for us, was *fruitless*, because the following *week* there was an **INTENSE** joint **military-paramilitary** attack... (Lozano 2006)

San José's residents frequently recount how army soldiers responded by bombing the villages with helicopters. Troops patrolling the villages infamously told farmers that they had five days to leave before the "*mochecabezas*" (those that cut people's heads off) would arrive. In fact, paramilitaries arrived only three days later, killing many of those they encountered (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2005b: 16; Giraldo Moreno, S.J. 2010; Masullo J. 2015: 30-31).

Luis Eduardo Guerra continues on how the armed actors received their declaration as a "peace community," and the Community's subsequent reaction:

As a consequence, what happened was an even *stronger* repression. There was the mass displacement of those eleven communities [villages], where they faced *massacres*, where [the army/paramilitaries] gave timetables to displace the people, so that people would displace, with threats that they would *kill them*. From then on, we all concentrated ourselves here in the town of San José de Apartadó. (Red Italiana de Solidaridad 2005)

In other words, the process of forced displacement in San José de Apartadó occurred in two rounds. The first was in 1996, when the majority of the residents left. The second took place *after* the remaining San José residents declared themselves a "peace community." When asked how many people were displaced between 1996 and 1997, residents of San José have told me that there were approximately 3,000 inhabitants in the district prior to the paramilitary incursion.

Father Giraldo gives his analysis on the events following San Jose's farmers' declaration as a peace community, "I interpret it as a response by the state, affirmed

through its actions, which said, ‘We don’t want this type of communities. And so that other communities do not become motivated to do the same, we are going to exterminate this one, drowning it in its own blood’” (Lozano 2006). In other words, as Finn (2013) argues, when the Peace Community rejected all forms of violence and put the state’s violence on par with that of non-state armed groups, it called the state formation itself into question, because the state is precisely defined by its ability to exert legitimate force over its population (Weber 1946).

Then, on October 6th, 1997, the Peace Community began to suffer attacks from FARC guerrillas as well. During a *comunitario* (community work day) in La Linda, three Peace Community members, including Internal Council leader Ramiro Correa, were assassinated by the FARC’s Fifth Front due to the Peace Community’s new refusal to sell any goods to the guerrilla. Lanchero (2002) describes the aftermath:

It is impossible to describe the days that followed, the weeping and desperation. The loneliness was immense and the energy was at rock bottom. The idea of leaving San José caused terror, and it was visible that the social fabric that was still just returning had been torn. The task of reconstruction looked even more difficult because everyone was moving about on their own: the workshops, jobs, analysis, gatherings of joint reflection had been left behind. The search for community had been clouded by the smell of death.

Terror left a clear lesson: the communal and organizational work was seen as a danger. To participate was a death threat. During this rough period nobody attended meetings or workshops. In the community work days, they were only able to bring together three people at a maximum. It was disheartening to see the proposal of a different economy destroyed, of an experience for dignity in the middle of war. (51-52)

Therefore, while most attacks against the Community have come from the military and paramilitary—and, as a result, the Community’s denunciations are mostly directed at the state—the Peace Community was not only a rejection of becoming informants for the state in Governor Uribe’s *Convivirs*. The Peace Community was also

a rupture with *the guerrillas*, who had been the traditional authority in the zone for decades.

A Peace Community member described the arrival of the FARC and EPL (Popular Liberation Army) to San José de Apartadó decades earlier.

The first guerrilla group here was men following *Tiro Fijo* [‘Sure shot’ or Manuel Marulanda, founder of the FARC]. The first innocent person they killed was a nurse. ... Then came the EPL. ... They said they came to defend us, because we were defenseless, poor, and they did not want the rich people to abuse us. Instead, they said that we had to arrive at equality, where the rich person was less rich and the poor person was less poor. That was what they told us. But look at them afterwards and now, what they did, when [the EPL demobilized in 1991]. They joined the paramilitaries. ... Later, the FARC ... asked, “are you with us?” I responded, “But we don’t want any army.” ... They said goodbye and we kept walking. ... Their forces kept getting bigger, the 5th, 57th, 58th fronts. ... They would exploit the *campesino* and even kill. They said that the time would come when the state would put us in the middle of war. ... I would tell them, “I am a working person [not aligned with any armed group]. And that’s the truth.” (personal interview, 2012)

This individual exemplifies the insistence upon working autonomously without interference from any armed groups that so defines not only the Peace Community but also many of Colombia’s *campesinos*, which Aparicio (2012) calls “a liberal tradition of *campesino* settlers struggling for their autonomy” (281). Moreover, former Internal Council member Jesús Emilio Tuberquia deconstructs militaristic politics,

There are people that believe that guns protect them, but that is a lie. That is a very big equivocation, no? Because guns are not designed to safeguard the life of people but to destroy it, put it to an end. (Moncada Hurtado, Ossa, and Caro Morales 2011a)

Of course, most civilian non-combatants tend to cooperate with an armed actor—whether or not they sympathize with the actor’s cause and presence—if there is only one where they live.³⁹ In such regions, there tend to be low levels of direct violence because

³⁹ For an analysis of the dynamics in which *campesinos* become guerrilla-supporting *milicianos* (armed militia members who provide provisions but are not uniformed guerrilla combatants),

the armed actor's authority is uncontested and killing its 'supporters' likely does more to de-legitimize them than maintain support. However, when another rival armed group enters to contest the area, lots of violence tends to ensue. The invading force targets the residents as 'supporters' of the other group, while the group traditionally controlling the area will react with increasingly harsh treatment against those suspected of collaborating with or shifting their allegiances to the new group (Vásquez and Vargas 2011).⁴⁰

Precisely, the formation of 'peace communities' was a strategy to resist attack and displacement amidst such a confrontation between armed actors. In San José de Apartadó, following the killings by army, paramilitary, and guerrilla forces in 1997, only a small percentage continued to resist through the peace community strategy. To continue with Luis Eduardo Guerra's narration,

SOME of us continued in the process, about 630 people. *Others* did not, they left. Because they **no longer** *believed* that they would respect us. And from then until now, this has been a situation of **resistance**. Because we have had

see "Apéndice: ¿Qué es un miliciano?" written by Giraldo Moreno (2010: 413-429), who argues that becoming a *miliciano* is not ideologically motivated but is a strategy for victims' survival amidst limited options in Colombia's rural war arena.

⁴⁰ A congruent dynamic took place in the Putumayo case referenced in an earlier footnote. As documented by Tate (2015: 128-132), paramilitaries came to Putumayo looking to achieve vertical control of drug production and trafficking from the south of the country to the north. Paramilitaries entering the region, unlike guerrillas, were not embedded in the local social fabric. Most came from urban areas, were linked with state forces, were against community organizing, and were very hostile towards local clergy. In contrast, guerrillas were embedded within local social life, as many were born in the region and part of community work projects. However, amidst paramilitaries' takeovers of urban areas, the FARC became increasingly brutal against those it suspected of betrayal, including members of the Catholic Church and those organizing a *Red de Formadores de Paz* (Network of Peace Trainers) as well as potential peace communities in Putumayo in the late 1990s. For example, Father Alcides Jiménez, who had participated in workshops in the San José de Apartadó Peace Community, was assassinated while saying mass by FARC gunmen on September 11th, 1998. Local residents viewed this as the FARC's "retaliation for his encouragement of autonomous community organizing" (128), which he did through workshops and proposing that people not join armed groups, use arms, or grow coca. Following his death, the group he had organized "fell dormant as residents feared further retaliation" (128).

massacres, selective assassinations – we are speaking about how they have assassinated more than 130 people among us. From the civilian population. Various leaders of the Community. (Red Italiana de Solidaridad 2005)

I find it telling that Guerra emphasized the words “*some* of us” and “*others*.” He points to divergent reactions to the ongoing violence. Guerra is not saying that the ‘others’ were misguided in their assessment of the situation. To the contrary, the prediction that the armed groups would continue to disrespect the unarmed population was proved correct. Therefore, Guerra signals a different distinction at play here. It is not that people’s analyses of the conflict diverged. Rather, it was folks’ way of reacting to or facing that violence. This speaks to a fundamental distinction between those that chose—and continue to choose—to participate in the resistance as a peace community, and others that chose to flee or have subsequently opted to leave the organizational process. This dynamic again focuses our attention to the question of politics: first, how to build a collective sufficiently strong and organized in order to resist such conditions and, second, the types of political subjects producing and produced by a particular territorial formation (Figure 35).

ON RESISTANCE, RETURNS, AND RUPTURE: THE PEACE COMMUNITY 1998-2016

The Peace Community’s process illuminates how it is often only a few individuals whose actions can galvanize or benefit a larger group.⁴¹ Eduar Lanchero (2002) describes what happened in the wake of people’s deep depression following the October 1997 massacre by the FARC:

⁴¹ I indebted to former FOR companioner Mayra Sofia Moreno for this observation (personal communication, 2013).



Figure 40. Painting resistance.

This is the back cover of the 2007 book *Sembrando Vida y Dignidad*, which features a painting by María Brígida González, titled:

“Displacement leaves poverty, hunger, [and] desolation, but we struggle with hope to return to our lands.”

Source: Author photo.

One Friday afternoon, there was a community meeting in the Catholic chapel. Only seven people came. But ... they formed the first work group, an organizational structure that would be generalized across the community. It was a resurgence of a solidary economy amidst the ashes of war. [And] the group had a concrete goal: to return to La Unión. (53)

According to Community members' recollections of this meeting shared with me over the years, Eduar Lanchero himself was the person who called the meeting. Lanchero was a particularly inspiring leader, speaker, and writer, whose role in galvanizing San José's farmers to persist in their resistance cannot be underestimated. As often occurs in the meeting between the urban intellectual-activist and rural communities in resistance (Fanon 2004), there was a profound process of mutual inspiration and learning. Eduar epitomized the figure of the "organic intellectual" (Gramsci 1971). On the one hand, the Peace Community's struggle deeply inspired Lanchero, who, according to Father Giraldo, "found in the Peace Community what we was searching for" (personal interview, 2013). On the other hand, San José de Apartadó's farmers were deeply moved by Lanchero's leadership and words on what he deemed to be the significance of their actions. One of his many moving insights states,

Every tree planted was an action against the war, because it was saying no to displacement. It was a form of refusing to abandon the land, to re-affirm life, and strengthen the dignity of the community that, in spite of death, was taking its first steps to once again sustain itself autonomously and independently. (Lanchero 2002: 51)

The prior two passages speak to the emergence of work groups and village returns as the core elements of the Peace Community process. The work groups have been described as "the fundamental motor of its economic strategy, a practical mechanism to reflect and make decisions in the collective interest" (Proietti 2007). "To speak about our community's work groups is to speak about its development and essence; they reflect ... our construction of a new society" (Comunidad de Paz de San

José de Apartadó 2005b: 17). “This dynamic has permitted us to put into practice the principle of solidarity and of unity” (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2005a: 15).

The Peace Community further strengthened their work groups in the wake of a series of paramilitary blockades of the Apartadó to San José road in 1997, 2000, 2002, and 2004 (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2005b). Effected through paramilitary *retenes* (check points), they inhibited San José’s farmers from bringing up food and supplies. Former Internal Council member Diana Valderrama describes the blockades and the Community’s response,

As a community we had an experience, which was an economic blockade. They assassinated all the drivers of the Apartadó-San José road, and then no drivers would come up, causing a panic. We spent three months without food. They wouldn’t let food or anything come up. What enabled people to survive? We sustained ourselves, because people had their crops. Nobody went hungry because, if I didn’t have, the other *compañero* did. We shared whatever we had: yucca, plantain, something. We were prepared, even though we didn't know this could happen, because we at least had food. We realized that this sort of thing could happen again. But since we live in the countryside, we have our farms, and all we need to buy are basic goods. (Lozano 2006)

The strengthening of their food sovereignty was coupled with an emphasis on building a community also rooted in collectivity and solidarity. Valderrama continued,

We saw that there were many women, head of households on their own, because their husbands had been disappeared or killed in front of them. We saw the necessity to no longer work individually, every owner of their farm, sustaining themselves without worrying about their neighbor. ‘My’ problem became ‘our’ problem. Out of that was born the idea to work in work groups, where you harvest together and then all the profits are shared. (Lozano 2006)

One might interpret the Peace Community as being fundamentally “a group of peasants who, above all, organized themselves to seek protection from armed groups’ violence” (Masullo J. 2015: 21). Yet while the goal of survival might have driven the initial formation of the Peace Community in 1997, the organization’s emphasis on

solidarity, dignity, and self-sufficiency through collective work groups signal the enhanced complexity of what this political process has become. This is not merely a question of “endurance” or ‘momentary’ ruptures (Aparicio 2015; Povinelli 2011), but what I witness as the production of a coherent politics struggling to break with individualism and dependency. According to former Internal Council member Wilson David, “*No aguantamos, resistimos* (We do not endure. We resist). Because ... resistance implies generating the possibility of another world to the logic of death” (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2007: 80). In other words, there have been a subjective shift from mere survival to the creation of a different world through the community process.

Moreover, work groups are not their only form of collective work. Another is the weekly community work day, known as the *comunitario* (Figure 36). An accompanier gave an ethnographic account of the first time he witnessed a Community work day:

My first accompaniment was for a *comunitario* two days after I arrived. They were working on improving the path from [San Josecito] to La Unión. And, it was about 40 people, kids, women, a *comunitario* where everyone was on the same team. And I went down there super early. I was there around 7am, and already, [four men] were there. On what was just a patch of mud. And by the end of the day they had built... ... The actual work involved first moving all the big rocks out of the way of the path where it was going to be, [towards] the river, ... [then] going to the river collecting small rocks, laying the big rocks down, laying the small rocks down, going to the river, collecting silt, like alluvial sand, and then covering the small rocks, and then lining the *camino* (path) with larger rocks. And I think most of this was done for the benefit of horses [*Laughter!!!*]. That is a public good: the community came together, and there were children, old people, and there was one kid whose specific job was to chase wasps away [*Laughter!!!*]. He had a *palo* [*stick*], and [one man] poured gasoline on top and the kid was chasing wasps away ... and that was his specific job. That was right after I first got here. It made an impression. It was really cool. Not only the Community uses that road, frickin’ guerrillas use that road, the military uses that road. But it was a public good, and it benefitted everyone. And it took a lot of work, from everyone in the community. If you added up all the man hours, there were like 40 people, about 12 hours worth of work. And that was just that day. The next week they did it for other parts. (personal interview, 2013)



Figure 36. Antagonistic peaces: The *comunitario* vs. enforced 'security.'
Folk painting by Doña Brígida González of San José town (center) and La Unión (top right). Notice the depiction of a *comunitario* (Community work day) harvesting wood, as well as signs reading "Unauthorized Entry Prohibited" yet army and police forces throughout the town.
Source: Author photo.

I would expect the early days of the Peace Community, in its first return to La Unión, to have looked quite similar. In the process, everyone works together where people of different ages and abilities have specific responsibilities that contribute to overall well-being. Lanchero (2002) recounts the Peace Community's first return to an abandoned village, providing his analysis of its significance:

Despite all the death, the community continued to maintain its strength because the return to La Unión was now a reality. They reconstructed the houses. Beginning to clear the jungle and plant crops was not easy but the people were strengthened by the knowledge that they were reconstructing the community fabric. This was an important moment in the organizational process. It was learned that suffering was shared and overcome in solidarity. They confronted the conflict economically, but beyond mere money, that meant a relationship with nature, with the conflict, with the community and beyond. (53-54) ... The blood and tears soiled the land, but the taste of life and dignity flourished in the bananas and cacao [that were planted], and no pest could destroy the fruit of an alternative and solidarity economy in the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó. (56)

In the months after returning to La Unión in March 1998 (Figure 37), the Peace Community re-settled Arenas Altas and La Esperanza. However, additional hardships would lie ahead. Between 2000 and 2002, La Unión alone would suffer three more forced displacements, one induced by the July 8th, 2000 massacre of six work group coordinators, including Internal Council member Rigoberto Guzmán. With a military helicopter flying overhead, paramilitaries occupied the village, separated the women and children from the men, and subsequently picked out the male work group coordinators from their hit list, which paramilitaries notoriously create with the names of those they plan to kill. Peace Community members recall how Community leaders had met with officials of the 17th Brigade only days earlier. The paramilitaries ordered the men to kneel down. But Rigoberto Guzmán refused. Community members lucidly recall how he said to the paramilitaries, "I do not have anything to be ashamed of. In the

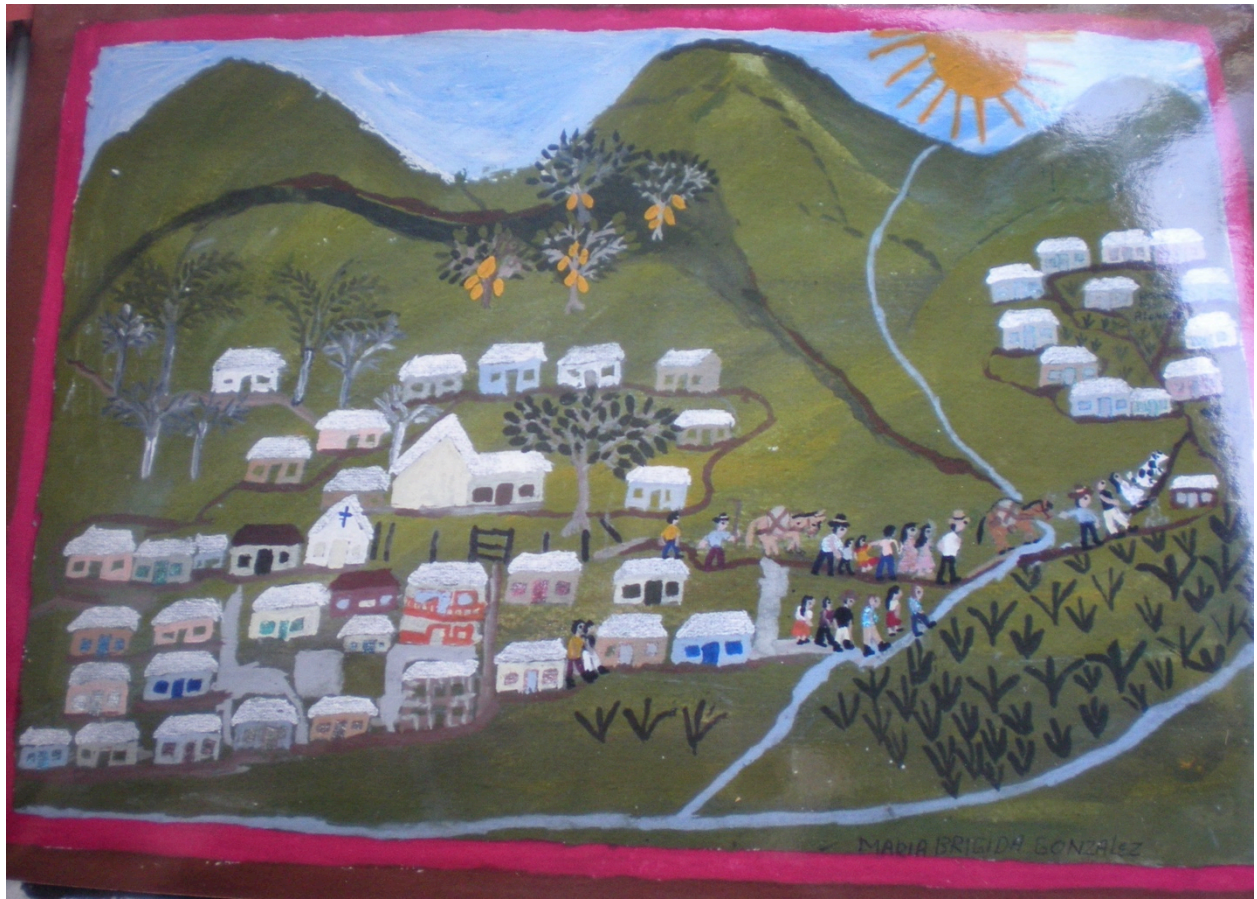


Figure 37. Return to the first village.
Folk painting by Doña María Brígida González depicting the return of displaced Peace Community members to the village of La Unión in 1998.
Source: Author photo.

Peace Community, we are civilian *campesinos*. If you are going to kill me, then kill me standing up,” which the paramilitaries then did (see Giraldo Moreno, S.J. 2010: 55) (Figures 38-40).

The 2000 La Unión massacre was preceded by another in San José town in February of the same year, in which paramilitaries killed five *campesinos*. In response, the Peace Community stopping meeting with the military. A governmental Special Investigation Commission proceeded to investigate human rights violations in San José de Apartadó. Despite testimony given by many San José residents, the commission did not lead to any judicial sanctions or convictions.

The Peace Community would eventually respond to such impunity by entering into a “*ruptura* (rupture)” with the Colombian state. This “rupture” was announced in 2003 with the creation of the *Red de Comunidades en Ruptura y Resistencia* (RECORRE, Network of Communities in Rupture and Resistance). Launched in September 2003 during a meeting of Indigenous and *campesino* communities in San José de Apartadó, they declared their refusal to provide any further testimony to the judicial branch of the government until systemic impunity ended (“Comunidades Campesinas Declaran Su Ruptura Con El Sistema de Justicia Colombiana” 2003).

In 2005, the Peace Community would sever its communication with the Colombian state even further. February 21st, 2005, a joint military-paramilitary operation killed eight *campesinos* in two separate massacres in the villages of Mulatos and La Resbalosa. The victims included three children and Internal Council Luis Eduardo Guerra, who had been the Community’s interlocutor with the state regarding the placement of a police post in San José de Apartadó. While the government wanted the police post in the town of San José, the Peace Community insisted that the post be



Figure 38. Resistance remembered with stones.
Stone monument in the center of La Unión at the site of the 2000 massacre.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 39. Resistance remembered with names.
Sheet in Community member's home with names of assassinated members.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 40. Resistance remembered with painted faces.
This painting of the six victims of the 2000 La Unión massacre is located in the library named after Rigoberto Guzmán (top center) in La Unión's Agricultural Center, which was inaugurated in 2009.
Source: Author photo.

placed somewhere else along the Apartadó-San José road. A police station in San José town would violate the Peace Community's principles of not living alongside any armed actor and put the community in the crossfire of rival guerrilla's attacks on the town's police post. Following Guerra's death, former Antioquia Governor and then President of Colombia Álvaro Uribe announced that the post police would be installed in April 2005. As recounted by then Internal Council member Renato Areiza during a Community meeting in 2006, "The police did not come to cover or protect the civilian population, but rather that the civilian population covers them" (Lozano 2006).

The entire population of San José town abandoned the town and began building a new settlement 15 minutes down the road on foot. Constructed from scratch on private Peace Community land, it was named *San Josecito de la Dignidad* ('Little San José of Dignity'). Moreover, in the wake of the February massacre, President Uribe stigmatized the Peace Community as a front for the guerrillas in a public statement on March 20th, 2005, during a visit to Urabá:

Peace communities have the right to exist in Colombia thanks to the rights accorded by our political system. But they cannot, as is practiced in the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, obstruct justice, reject the armed forces, prohibit the sale of licit items, or restrict the freedom of the citizens that reside there. In this Community of San José de Apartadó there are good people, but some of their leaders, sponsors and defenders are being gravely accused by residents of being auxiliaries of the FARC and of utilizing the Community to protect this terrorist organization. (Asociación Campesina de Antioquia 2008b; Masullo J. 2015: 57).

President Uribe incorrectly blamed the FARC for the massacre and did not even condemn the massacre or offer condolences to its victims. Instead, this public address reiterated his defamation of the Peace Community (Asociación Campesina de Antioquia 2008b).

In response to this series of events and persistent impunity, the Peace Community announced four conditions for resuming dialog with the Colombian state:

- 1) An apology from Colombia's president for stigmatizing comments against the Peace Community on May 27th, 2004 and March 20th, 2005
- 2) Removal of the police post from San José town
- 3) An end to military-paramilitary killings and harassment in the district's Humanitarian Zones and Peace Community settlements
- 4) A Truth Commission comprised of national and international agencies to investigate why impunity persists for human rights violations in San José de Apartadó, including why the 2000 Special Investigation Commission failed to lead to any judicial cases or convictions

To clarify the third condition above, the Humanitarian Zones were proposed in February 2005. They were designed as spaces where civilians could take refuge during combat, so as not to have to displace all the way to San José or Apartadó. Mostly located in schools, these were such safe space zones in at least seven *veredas* within the district, including Mulatos, Alto Bonito, Buenos Aires, Bellavista, La Linda, La Cristalina, Miramar, and Arenas Bajas. The Peace Community demanded that the armed groups respect the Humanitarian Zones, even through those villages were not active Peace Community settlements.⁴² However, the humanitarian zones eventually ceased to operate after many of their coordinators were assassinated in subsequent years. In addition to the 2005 massacre in Mulatos, ten days after the zones were announced, paramilitaries later killed humanitarian zone coordinators Arlén Salas, Edilberto Vásquez, Francisco Puertas, and Dairo Torres, among other residents of these *veredas*, between 2005 and 2007 (Fellowship of Reconciliation 2007; Giraldo Moreno, S.J. 2010).

⁴² Many of these residents are not Peace Community members because they do not comply with all of the organization's commitments, such as participating in a weekly community workday or refraining from consuming liquor or accepting monetary victims' reparations from the state. Even so, the Peace Community continues to demand that the armed groups respect these unarmed *campesinos'* right to live and farm where they are.

Amidst these recurrent violations, subsequent rulings by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and Colombian Constitutional Court (the highest courts in the Western Hemisphere and Colombia, respectively) have backed the Peace Community's position to remain neutral in the conflict. They call on the Colombian state to take the first steps toward re-establishing dialog. As of 2016, only the first condition had been met, with current President Juan Manuel Santos offering an apology for Uribe's comments in December 2013 (*El Espectador* 2013).

Moreover, the Peace Community has obtained protective accompaniment from international NGOs as a means of protection. Koopman (2011a) describes protective accompaniment as an "alter-geopolitics" that uses global structures of citizenship and racial privilege to leverage dissuasion against state and parastate armed forces to increase security for human rights defenders and peace communities (Mahony and Eguren 1997). Aparicio (2012) identifies this as another confluent vector creating the conditions for the emergence and continuation of the Peace Community: international humanitarian organizations' solidarity with small-scale farmers resisting displacement through nonviolent methods (281). The Peace Community first had direct international protective accompaniment from Peace Brigades International in 1998, who had previously accompanied San José de Apartadó indirectly through their accompaniment of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission. Following the 2000 massacre in La Unión, the Peace Community reached out to the U.S. branch of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), an interfaith peace organization who had awarded their annual international Pfeffer Peace Prize to the Peace Community in 1998. FOR organized an international delegation with another U.S.-based NGO, Global Exchange, to visit the Urabá region in 2001. In response to petitions from the Peace Community's Internal

Council to accompany the Special Investigation Commission, FOR and the Peace Community eventually strategized to create a permanent protective accompaniment presence in the village of La Unión in 2002. This was the first international organization whose accompaniers lived within the Peace Community, a model that was later replicated by Operation Dove, an Italian-Catholic Church peace organization, which began permanent accompaniment in San Josecito in 2009.

To return to Luis Eduardo Guerra's interview, he described how attacks against the Community nonetheless persisted over the years, emphasizing the state's different forms of attack. In addition to paramilitary blockades of the Apartadó-San José road, these include defamatory campaigns that complement assassinations.

We have looked to, all of the institutions of the State at the national level. We have, even, proposed, investigative commissions. And the results have been: *none*. All those assassinations are in impunity. The current situation is that, practically, what we see is a new strategy to continue *attacking us*. There is the *economic blockade*, there are *threats* made openly by paramilitaries and army officers. (Red Italiana de Solidaridad 2005)

Also notice Guerra's commentary on impunity. Despite the Inter-American Court and Colombian Constitutional Court's ruling, notice how international embassies in Colombia continue to place the burden for re-establishing dialog on the Peace Community rather than on the state:

And although this is, **denounced** nationally and internationally, **nothing** happens. We, even, have been very clear about these principles, we have maintained a position of neutrality with respect to the insurgency. But, nonetheless what they say is that we continue **to be**, organized directly by the insurgency, that we receive direct orders from the insurgency in order to discredit the State and denounce the State. And to say that "it is only the State that violates **human rights**" ... is a lie, **any way you look at it**. Because we, what we have said publically and what we continue to say, is that *among* those 130 killings, the subversion also has a grand participation. In more than twenty cases. We don't have anything to hide from any of the armed actors. The only thing that we do is ask for respect for those that are part of the civilian population. ... Even at the level of the *embassies themselves*, which say that [the government has] a total

willingness, [but] it's the communities that oppose the government's presence. When that is a complete **lie**. And that they are not violators of human rights, that the human rights violators are the insurgency, when we have said, look, there is a very clear example, how many deaths do we have? In how many have the paramilitary forces participated? Why is *all* the paramilitary structure in the Urabá region supported? So I think that it is a *difficult situation*, in these times, because economically, and politically, the government is working *very hard* against the communities. Especially against San José de Apartadó. (Red Italiana de Solidaridad 2005)

In other words, the Peace Community is challenging the legitimacy of all violence against the unarmed population, including that of the guerrillas as well as the state's supposed legitimate use of force. Guerra signals that the prime state strategy against the Peace Community had shifted, away from mass killings but towards a new array of attacks, including defaming campaigns and judicial impunity. In fact, the only convictions for all of the human rights violations in San José de Apartadó were of paramilitaries and army officers conceding to their participation in the 2005 massacre that killed Luis Eduardo Guerra (González Arango 2010). The highest ranking officer convicted was an army captain, rather than the 17th Brigade commanders who planned the February 2005 *Operación Fénix* and ordered the executions, according to demobilized paramilitaries' testimony (*Semana* 2009).

There has not been another mass killing in the area since the double massacre in Mulatos and La Resbalosa in 2005. But the state-paramilitary and guerrillas continue to attack the Peace Community in new ways. For example, selective assassinations continue, such as the killing of Bernardo Ríos on the eve of the Peace Community's 14th anniversary in 2011 (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2011a; Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2011b). As this dissertation goes to press, the most recent killing took place on September 21st, 2015 (Giraldo Moreno, S.J. 2015). There are consistent threats (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2011c; Comunidad de

Paz de San José de Apartadó 2014a; Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2014b). And there have been repeated forced displacements, especially in the village of La Esperanza⁴³ (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2008; *El Tiempo* 2015b; *Radio Macondo* 2015).

Moreover, the state seems to have re-evaluated its strategy in the area. When the police post was installed in the town of San José in April 2005, the police patrolled an empty village because all the town's residents had relocated to San Josecito (Lozano 2006). In the coming years, the Uribe administration began to promote social investments in San José de Apartadó through his executive branch development agency, *Agencia Presidencial para la Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional* (Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation, popularly known as *Acción Social*).⁴⁴ This agency was founded to provide displaced populations with humanitarian aid. San José de Apartadó was soon announced as one of the pilot project areas, along with numerous Indigenous communities, many of which were precisely those refusing the presence of the state's police and army forces. *Acción Social* began to finance housing construction in and near San José town. More and more residents began returning to live in San José, i.e., leaving San Josecito and the Peace Community. Export-oriented teak plantations began to cover the hillsides surrounding San José town (Figure 41). As part of its periodic humanitarian events held in the town, in 2009, *Acción Social* handed out beans imported from the United States, the *easiest* crop to

⁴³ For a ethnographic performance account of one such displacement in La Esperanza and how the Peace Community mobilized international accompaniment to retain its settlement there, see the script for "We will stay if..." in Chapter 7 (pp. 428-437).

⁴⁴ As of 2010, subsequent President Juan Manuel Santos re-named this agency the Departamento Administrativo para la Prosperidad Social (Administrative Department for Social Prosperity): <http://www.prosperidadsocial.gov.co/Paginas/Inicio.aspx>



Figure 41. State-promoted development: Teak plantations. This export-oriented project covers a hillside adjacent to the road from San Josecito village to the town of San José de Apartadó. Source: Author photo.

grow in the area's rich soils, which Peter Cousins (2009), a FOR accompanier reporting on the event, compared to "taking coal to Newcastle." Ex-mayor Gloria Cuartas Montoya (2007) interpreted this *inversión social* (social investment) as a new tactic in the wake of still-occurring assassinations as a strategy to break the Peace Community's neutrality and resistance, by pulling *campesinos* to live in the police-controlled town. A Peace Community leader reflected,

For years after our declaration as a Peace Community, we asked for social investments from the government following the extermination of the Patriotic Union. Yet it is only now, after the Peace Community vacated the town of San José, that the state makes social investments. (personal communication, 2014)

Of course, Community members note that such social investments come with a price. The town of San José remains a site of frequent combat, given FARC attacks on the police post and adjacent military training site (Lozano 2006), while the *Junta de Acción Comunal* (Communal Action Board) formed in the town in 2009 has also denounced ongoing police and army harassment (Junta de Acción Comunal - Corregimiento de San José municipio de Apartadó 2009). Moreover, according to a Peace Community Internal Council member, "Humanitarian aid creates dependency. [*Acción Social*] gave out seeds, but they were genetically-modified seeds" (group interview, 2014). Referring to seeds with the terminator gene, member Javier added,

There is a kind of bean seed. Where these beans are cultivated, they put in a lot of chemical fertilizer. They are brought here and planted. They do not produce. If they do produce, it is only a minimal amount, and you cannot plant them again because the seeds do not have that ability. They are adapted to chemical fertilizer. Therefore, they are not going to work in this ecosystem, in our soil and climate. Nevertheless, the business wants to make these sales—it is in their interest, you see—where we buy seeds, plant them, and then have to continue buying them over and over. These are seeds that do not work for us. ... It's profit for them, but destruction for us. (Fellowship of Reconciliation 2011)

In other words, Peace Community members and many of their sympathizers argue that these social investments are in fact tools to undermine the *campesinos'* subsistence and autonomy, creating dependency on the market and the state (Cuartas Montoya 2007; Altieri 2007; Pérez 2007). Internal Council member Jesús Emilio Tuberquia summarized their lack of faith in the state:

When they shoot people, well, we do not believe in that state or in the public forces that act in that way. Leaving behind widows, orphans, so much misery, more and more, displacements ... burning homes, robbing our livestock, horses, [and] harvests. They rob food, rape our women, massacres, selective killings, robberies of money that they have done, the public forces with the paramilitaries. The constant death threats against us. The trumped up judicial charges, which they wield against us, being the victims. (Moncada Hurtado, Ossa, and Caro Morales 2011a)

Luis Eduardo Guerra reflected on the volatility of the Peace Community's resistance, including his chilling assertion about speaking one day and dying the next, just before his own assassination:

We have always said, and in this we have been clear, we **until today we are RESISTING**. And still, in this project to continue resisting and defending our *rights*. We do not know until when. Because, what we have lived during our entire history is that today we can be speaking, tomorrow we can be **DEAD**. That today San José de Apartadó is there, tomorrow the majority of the people can be *displaced*. Because there could be a massacre there of thirty people. ... *Here in this region, everything* is possible. (Red Italiana de Solidaridad 2005)

However, the Peace Community's 'resistance' is not only *against* displacement and assassination. Their resistance is also constituted by the production of an alternative, as Guerra proceeded to say,

But while we are here, our projects of life continue. ... We are also looking, to partner with other communities nationally, other communities that are resisting, and *how* among all of us, we can design our own project of **LIFE**. There is the University of Resistance, which we call **Communities** in Resistance. It doesn't mean that we are in an **armed** resistance. Our resistance is against the **STATE**, let's be *clear*, but an **unarmed resistance**, it is a **civilian** resistance.

Here, Guerra clarified that their resistance is against the state. But it is simultaneously a break from state as well as guerrilla violence. In addition, he refers to the Network of Communities in Rupture and Resistance (RECORRE), which had only been launched two years before this interview in 2005. He also mentioned the *Campesino* University of Resistance, whose first session was a month-long gathering in Arenas Altas in August 2004. Guerra explained their significance:

That is why our project continues. ... Where *economically* in these communities it is very difficult, to resist. But we continue, having, economic *proposals* to do **PROJECTS**, that guarantee that we have food and that we have a **minimal dignity**, as people, in order to continue **resisting**. Because, there is a very clear saying, that “as long as the stomach is **FULL**, we can think, and we can do a lot. But when the stomach is empty, there *everything* comes to an end.” (Red Italiana de Solidaridad 2005)

Notice how the ethnopoetic transcription signals the words he emphasized the most in these final two passages: resistance, death, life, state, projects, and full (stomach). In so doing, Luis Eduardo Guerra counter poses the death project-system of the state vs. the communities in resistance’s vision of life through unarmed resistance, solidarity, and projects that meet the communities’ material needs. Today, RECORRE and the *Campesino* University are now more than a decade old. In addition, the Peace Community has put knowledge learned in the *Campesino* University into practice in its Agricultural Centers and Self-Sufficient Family Farms, which will be described in Chapter 7 on territory.

Despite all of the attacks against it, the Peace Community is now comprised of eleven villages. Moreover, the Community has extended beyond the *corregimiento* of San José de Apartadó in Antioquia to include *campesinos* living on the banks of the Urrá dam reservoir, constructed in 1998, in the neighboring municipality of Tierralta in Córdoba. When the Peace Community returned to Mulatos and La Resbalosa in 2008,

three years after the massacre in which Luis Eduardo Guerra was killed, its members began to increase dialog with the *campesinos* in the neighboring farm of El Guineo in the *vereda* of Naín.

One of the most strenuous and inspiring accompaniments I ever did with FORPP was a trip from Mulatos to Córdoba in March 2010. Joined by another FORPP team member, two accompaniers from Operation Dove, as well as a Dutch masters student doing her thesis on San José de Apartadó, we accompanied Peace Community leaders on a visit to meet with new members in the settlements of Naín, Alto Joaquín, Puerto Nuevo, and Las Claras. I will conclude this sub-section with an ethnographic account:

The tropical jungle path below my feet is a mix of brown, grey and green. Light brown dirt alongside patches of dark brown mud mix with grey rocks; some are pebbles, others the size of two fists. The path's edges rise up in grasses, ferns and other deep dark green to almost yellow leaves, backed by the browns of tree trunks. Bup...bup...bup...bup, the sound of our steps, adds to the constant, faint but high-pitched voicing of the forest: insects, chirping birds and flowing water. Splash splash splash, the hooves of the horse carrying a community member ahead of me cross a stream and pierce the water; my rubber boots then make contact, ga-lush, ga-lush... Looking up, a flower jumps out of the foliage, opening up with its pink, white and red petals. Ooh, the foul smell of the excrement the horse ahead just left behind, and then a return to the refreshing, heavy and slightly sweet aroma of the humid jungle.

Stopping to take a drink from our water bottles or the stream – ahh the attempt to drink quickly causes drops to roll down my chin and neck – the farmers wipe their sweaty brows with the cloth towels they keep over their shoulders. A few hours of hiking remain, so the rest is short. A high-pitched call “*Vamos!*” is followed by a deep yell “*Mula! mula!*” and, with that, the trot of hooves, and rubber boots, resumes (Figures 42-43).

Our semi-silent saunter is replaced by talk of almost having reached a house along the way. Soon enough, after climbing up from a riverbed to higher ground, we see the thatched roof and light brown walls of wood cut from the surrounding hills. Palm trees surround, and a man takes his machete from its black case covered with yellow and red designs, hanging from his waist, to chop open the green shell of a coconut, revealing its white flesh interior, and clear, sweet water. Next, we reach a body of deep green water and board a small boat. There is much commotion: Everyone in our party of ten or more is chatting about the hills through which we have walked until now, and the reservoir we are about to cross.



Figure 44. On an accompaniment from La Resbalosa to Naín, Córdoba.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 45. Overlooking the Urrá reservoir from Alto Joaquín.
Source: Author photo.

We smell the exhaust from the motor as we rev up to travel. From the canals of this lagoon, we emerge onto the Urrá reservoir: its wave-less light blue hue spreads wide into the horizon. The black dog of a nearby resident of the reservoir's shores paddles along feverishly with our wooden motorboat. We pull up to a muddy shore; backpacks are passed from one person to next from the boat to land, and then carried up a slight incline to a family of farmers' home. Night is rolling in, as are mosquitos to electric light bulbs and our sweaty skin. The buzz of insects is drowned out as greetings are exchanged between new acquaintances and old friends.

Over the next few days, we met the new Peace Community members in Naín, Alto Joaquín, Puerto Nuevo, and Las Claras. A member from Alto Joaquín described the process of joining the Peace Community: "We knew about the work of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and the farmers in this region organized meetings to discuss the possibilities of joining. Then, Community members came to meet with us, to fully explain its principals. We feel much stronger and safer now that we are part of the Peace Community."

During its first eleven years of existence, the members of the Peace Community shared a common history: displacement in 1996 and 1997 from their farms and settlements in the district of San José de Apartadó, followed by the subsequent struggle to return to their homes, be it to La Unión, La Esperanza or Mulatos. However, these new members from Córdoba are neither victims of that particular displacement nor relatives of the families that founded the Peace Community. But that is not to say they do not share a similarly tragic story. To the contrary, they do, albeit under different circumstances.

In the mid 1990s, the Colombian government authorized a massive hydroelectric project known as Urrá (after the name of the company, Urrá S.A.). Construction began in 1998, and this dam of the Sinú River flooded 7,400 hectares and displaced almost six thousand people. According to a Peace Community member from Las Claras: "This lot here where we are standing has been my family's since I was a child. Then came Urrá and massive displacement. People were offered a very small amount of money for their homes. Those that wouldn't sell were threatened by paramilitaries. They killed lots of people. We displaced from here in 1995 to a town nearby. It was also dangerous there, and there was no work, so we returned here in 2003." This plot of land is located on ground still above the reservoir, and is planted with various crops, such as rice, sugarcane, and cacao. A wide variety of crops are planted in this region due to its incredibly rich soil. However, since 2007, Urrá S.A. and the Colombian Ministry of Mines and Energy have urged the construction of another dam, known as the "Sinú River Project," or Urrá II, which would inundate over 50,000 hectares, seven times as much as Urrá I. There has been a struggle between different Colombian government agencies about Urrá II. In June 2009, the Ministry of Environment denied the hydroelectric proposal on grounds that the new reservoir would encroach into part of the protected Paramillo Natural Park. Other concerns include the adverse

social consequences for the inhabitants of the area, which include not only Peace Community families, but also other farmers and indigenous Embera Katío communities. Nevertheless, the project's proponents remain undeterred. Despite the Environmental Ministry's ruling, the President of Urrá S.A. revealed in March 2010 that in order to begin construction as planned in 2011, he would appeal to the State Council for approval. At the time, a resident of Puerto Nuevo told me that the farmers in the region feared being forcibly removed from their homes by 2011, and that "if they go ahead with Urrá II, about 100,000 families will be displaced." Nevertheless, given the widespread resistance to Urrá II on ecological and social grounds, it has yet to be constructed as of 2016.

It was the struggle to defend itself from displacement and violence that the Peace Community had been founded in San José thirteen years prior. Now, the Peace Community extends its resistance against the encroachment of the armed groups and mega-projects across even more area to encompass these areas in Córdoba.

Many residents here have already been threatened for deciding to organize themselves with the Peace Community. A youth from Las Claras said, "I recently had to stand up to the army and guerrillas and tell them that I am a Peace Community member and therefore do not collaborate with or share information with the armed groups." In fact, Peace Community communiqués dated January 18th and February 21st of 2010 recorded instances of army soldiers in Naín and paramilitaries in Las Claras threatening civilians, respectively.

Still, throughout the four settlements we visited, common sentiments among the new Community members were excitement and hope. Members in Alto Joaquin said, "We are farmers and we want to work. This rich land gives life and food. We are happy to be part of this community because the Peace Community defends the rights of the *campesino* population. Before, when there were threats, we had to leave, and that was that." According a man from Las Claras, "There is more security now due to the international support and accompaniment. When there are threats, internationals will bear witness and respond." A man from Alto Joaquin added, "We hope that as the other farmers see how we work as a community, they will join as well. There are threats, but we are going to resist being kicked off our lands again" (Figures 44-45).

CONCLUSION

I interpret Peace Community farmers' persistent rejection of both displacement as well as co-optation by state-paramilitary-guerrilla forces as a corollary rejection of the "zone of nonbeing" (Fanon 2008), which in this context is the assigned role to



Figure 46. On the Urrá reservoir during a FORPP delegation.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 47. Peace Community meeting in Córdoba.
Source: Author photo.

Indigenous *campesinos* of being pushed to wherever is necessary to benefit corporate and landowning elites. Many eventual Peace Community members did displace from San José to nearby cities in 1996 and 1997, before ultimately returning to the Community. Many of these folks explained how they could not find work in the city with a common refrain being, “In the city, you even have to buy a banana! What?!” (field notes, 2012). In other words, while this has been cogently interpreted as a “reverse strike” (Masullo J. 2015), I prefer to see this as these *campesinos*’ resistance to the primitive accumulation of being transformed into market-dependent labor (Marx 1976a; Federici 2004), whether that be working for or ceding their land to the oligarchy.

In contrast to the majority of Colombia’s *campesinos* who displaced and took refuge in stadiums, towns, and cities across the country during (but also prior to and since) the late 1990s, the Peace Community’s insistence upon staying put deviated from the norm (Aparicio 2012; Masullo J. 2015). When mayor Gloria Cuartas sent buses to San José to bring the displaced farmers to ‘safer areas,’ they refused. This decision to remain was widely criticized at the time by national and international NGOs and governments. As explained by Aparicio (2012), “Some comments made about this decision made reference to its ‘stupidity,’ the possibility of ‘a massacre foretold,’ or the ‘absolute irresponsibility of the Community regarding what could happen’” (239). Such views assume that there are ‘safe spaces’ elsewhere, rather than recognize how the displacements in 1996 and 1997 were merely the latest in a history of dispossession of these Indigenous descents since the *La Violencia* (Steiner 2000; Roldán 2002) and even the colonial era (Lame 2004).

As one Peace Community leader articulated during a public workshop in 2010, “The assassins should be the ones to leave, not us.” In their declaration (and eventual

“*ruptura*” with the state beginning in 2003), we see the political expression of these *campesinos*’ presupposition of their equality (Rancière 2010). In the process, as De Marzo (2007) argues, “new subjectivities ... have permitted [a] decolonization of the imaginary, which is indispensable for every action of social and political transformation” (71). This is part of an “other politics” of emancipation (Grupo Acontecimiento 2012; Ceceña 2012) that is unwilling to sacrifice its dignity, which means “to grow stronger in yourself, ... to not live alongside the armed actors ... [or] be complicit ... in the atrocities and in all the demagoguery of the government” (González, personal interview, 2011). By rejecting both the state-paramilitaries *and* the guerrillas, and then committing to communal solidarity, the Peace Community presents an alternative to authoritarian politics. In contrast to *mandatory* community work in FARC zones that is hierarchically organized (Tate 2015), participation in the Peace Community is *voluntary*, which possibilizes a different type of autonomous yet solidary political subject. Crucially, the *Campesino* University of Resistance is a place that nurtures collective analysis and solidarity action among Indigenous descendants, whether they identify as *campesino*, *mestizo*, or Indigenous. In so doing, there is an implicit rejection of the racist hierarchies of modern society that function to divide indigenous descendants between *mestizo campesinos* and ethnic Indigenous people, and thus undermine their solidarity and collective actions. Indeed, the cost for doing so has been immense, as the number of assassinations and waves of forced displacement show. And their struggle continues.

I will conclude this historical overview with an ethnographic example of how the struggle for ‘the assassins to leave, not us’ plays out in everyday relations on the ground.

One morning in 2013, a Community leader asked one of the accompaniment organizations and me to accompany him to a Peace Community farm above San Josecito (Figure 46), where a military troop had been camped. We were joined by



Figure 46. View overlooking San Josecito.
Notice the Apartadó River snaking alongside the village built on the riverbank.
Source: Author photo.

his work-group partner and a donkey, so they could bring back some bananas to feed the family's pigs.

To walk to the farm, we entered a trail from the road towards Apartadó, where three soldiers were on watch. After climbing up the hillside, we came across an army troop of at least seven soldiers. The commander came down and the Peace Community leader began to speak: "I come to ask that you retreat from here, since this is private property of the Peace Community, in which no armed actor is admitted. Therefore, we demand that respect."

The troop commander responded, "Well, we are here by an order. It would be better that you speak with them at the [17th] Brigade [headquarters]. I will pass on this information to my Major."

Peace Community leader: "But you all know very well, that if you do not enter with a judicial order, then you cannot be here, on private property. Maybe you will leave an explosive here, like years ago, when a youth picked one up..."⁴⁵

Battalion commander: "But we do not leave behind explosives. And look, we are here precisely to protect the life and security of the civilian population."

Community leader: "We do not need the protection of any armed actor. You are here and the guerrilla attacks. Look, you are the ones that are fighting, so do it elsewhere, not in the spaces of the civilian population of the Peace Community. You, together with the paramilitaries and the guerrillas are the ones that have killed us. We number more than 200 dead since 1997."

Commander: "But you can't say that what is was like before is how it is now. We are here in this position (above San José and San Josecito) precisely to protect the Peace Community, where there has been much suffering. We are responding to so much violence here. We have not seen any paramilitaries. We don't work with any illegal armed actor. Look, you can walk for two hours and not see an armed actor..."

Community leader: "Of course, since you have everything coordinated. There are paramilitaries all over. ... We are going to return later to see if you have left. How quickly can you communicate this to your supervisors?"

Commander: "We do an organizational plan at certain times, every four hours. ... I will communicate it. ... Look, we would prefer to be in Apartadó, but it is an order for us to be here. We are not complicit with the paramilitaries..."

⁴⁵ During the conversation, the Community leader and army commander frequently interrupted each other and spoke at the same time. Moreover, it should be noted that I did not audio record the conversation. Rather I wrote this rendering in my field journal, as best as I could remember, upon returning to San Josecito.

Community leader: “Yes, it is the *campesino* that has clarity, not the people with guns in their hands.”

And we left. We saw another three soldiers about a minute away in another camp. We hiked up further, where the Community members gathered some green bananas as food for the pigs. (field notes, 2013)

During my time in San José de Apartadó since 2008, I have witnessed such interactions on many occasions. When the military enters Peace Community spaces, Community members confront them. The interaction typically proceeding as follows: Community members remind the soldiers of the Peace Community’s principles, insisting that the soldiers leave, since their presence puts the Community at risk from immediate attack or subsequent retaliation from rival groups. The soldiers frequently challenge these demands and resist moving elsewhere: they assert their right, duty, and order to be there for the protection of the civilian population and, specifically, the Peace Community. They frequently argue that the military of the today is not the same brutal force of the past or that those guilty of killings are merely ‘a few bad apples.’ Eventually, the soldiers usually leave, after rounds of Community members’ insistence or after international accompaniers begin to call the soldiers’ supervising officers at the brigade. Peace Community members have repeatedly told me that these encounters proceed very differently when no internationals are present: rather than affirmations that the soldiers are there to protect the community, they usually threaten and accuse community members of being guerrillas.

In the dialog above, notice how the army commander used the term ‘armed actor,’ saying “you can walk for two hours and not see an armed actor.” In other words, the army’s presence does not qualify as an ‘armed actor,’ inferring that the army and police are legitimate defenders of law, security, and life. In Colombia, armed groups are

often qualified as either ‘illegal’ or ‘legal,’ in which paramilitary and guerrilla forces are rendered ‘illegal,’ whereas the public forces are ‘legal’ and therefore legitimized.

The Peace Community calls this framing into question. Its declaration in 1997 demanded that *all* armed groups respect their lives and land. For these *campesinos*, the question is not whether a group is ‘legal’ or ‘illegal.’ To repeat the interviewee whose quote opened this chapter, San José’s farmers are attacked, precisely, “Because the Peace Community denounces what they do”: that all the armed groups *violate*. According to the leader cited in the vignette above, *campesinos* are the ones that have “clarity, not the people with guns,” i.e., the clarity to both understand the war and to make conscious and ethical decisions. Beyond being armed or unarmed, the interaction above signals a political divergence between the farmers and the soldiers.

Of course, both the Peace Community and the military produce collective subjects, but different types of collectivity. Militaries function through orders made by superior officers to inferior combatants. “We would prefer to be in Apartadó, but it is an order that we be here,” in the words of the troop commander above. The designation of ‘commanders’ itself reflects such relations. It is a collective subject produced through discipline and compliance, with little room for ‘conscience,’ thus producing a hierarchical collectivity.

As I will argue throughout this dissertation, this contrasts with the political subject produced through the Peace Community process. The latter is a also collective subject, but one striving for a certain level of horizontality, in which there is communal land, decision-making, and voluntary rather than coerced commitment. The Peace Community is *not* a completely horizontal organization (Aparicio 2012; Aparicio 2015), whose village coordinators and Internal Council members make certain decisions

without consulting the collective. However, the Peace Community combines such verticality with horizontal structures, such as the work groups and general assembly to protect against the concentration of absolute decision-making power in the Internal Council (Aparicio 2012). This question of what type of politics subjects are produced through this particular community of peace will be the focus of the next two parts of this dissertation. To proceed, in Part II, I will survey how different Colombians envision 'peace' amidst today's 'peace process' conjuncture and such debates' contributions to the emerging subfield field of peace geographies.

PART II
WHAT IS PEACE?

I'm just a wrinkly old woman; what would I have to say?
IT'S TRUE, I don't know what to say. Let's say I say *something or another*, but that's not **how it is**. So, I feel embarrassed.⁴⁶

Nah. For example, I have a question

Go ahead and ask.

This is called the Peace Community, so for you, someone who has participated in this **process**, what does "peace" mean?

Peace for me is to have, to have, how do I say it ... everyone being together with the same **idea**.

Interesting

Yeah? (Haha! [laughter])

Yes ... neither someone being upset, nor where one person is *here*, another *over there*, and another there. ... That you are able *to do what you need to do* ... [If] one person comes *here*, but another moves *over there* ... things *do not come together*. Instead, everything **COMES APART**. Right?

...

So, peace is community?

Peace is *community*.

...

And how is it to **GO** towards that peace? What is the *path*?
(personal interview, 2013)

⁴⁶ I include her initial reluctance to share ideas to then show how the "dialogic performance" (Conquergood 1985) of the personal interview (Pollock 2005a) can break through such hierarchies of knowledge. "Experts" do not own a monopoly on knowledge, and communication itself is a means of knowledge production. In subsequent conversations, I would remind her how her ideas were a breakthrough for my understanding of peace.

This was the first time I directly asked someone in San José de Apartadó about the meaning of peace. This interview deeply moved me, leaving a profound impression and spurring pages and pages of reflective field notes that evening and beyond. I was immediately surprised and amazed by her framing of peace as “everyone being together with the same idea” in order to be “able to do what you need to do,” which I subsequently paraphrased as everyone working together with the same goal.

This Community member’s conception for me was a break from the common ways I had heard others theorize peace. She did not reduce peace to a material or societal condition, and did not mention war at all. Instead, she inferred unity and collective work among themselves. I began to see how peace could be defined independently from violence. It was only after she said that “peace is community” that I realized, unconsciously, that I was expecting her to define peace as living without war, as harmony, or when people have their basic material needs met. Those latter visions corresponded with what I heard elsewhere until then, both in Colombia and in the peace literature I had read: “negative peace” as the absence of physical violence and “positive peace” as the absence of structural violence and the integration of human society (Galtung 1964).

Interestingly, Laliberte (2014) cautions against asking people to define peace at all, arguing that they typically fall into simplistic claims or dominant clichés about tranquility or no war (48). Yet, as I proceeded to ask more and more people about their understanding of peace, both Colombians and international companions responded with, rather than vague notions of peace, a wide array of diverse—and sometimes incredibly specific—understandings, proposals, and practices. The focus of this Part II

will be to render and analyze the significance of those expressions for enriching geographies of peace.

This Peace Community member's answer was also the first of what became a pattern among others members. In subsequent interviews, I continued to preface my question with "you call yourselves a Peace Community, so..." before asking what peace meant. I noticed that people would often answer by naming the Community's commitments, such as communal work or not collaborating with any armed group. I began to suspect that naming the Community in my formulation of the question, rather than asking about peace on its own, affected their engagement with the question. I felt that their statements could have just as well been answering, "What is community" or "what is the Peace Community constituted by." Yet, as the interviewee asserted above, the two are integral, which made me reflect on the significance of their naming themselves a "peace community" in the first place, and how that has affected their understanding and enacting of both concepts. Rather than a safe zone "humanitarian space," for which there might be a temporal or spatial 'peace' of refuge, the act of constituting an organization as a "peace community" demands a higher degree of unity, solidarity, and collective work among the group. It raises the stakes from physical survival alone and makes explicit the goal of constructing a particular sociocultural structure. Such a commitment and vision of peace comes through in members' definitions, for most of whom peace was not only *not* participating in the war but also *actively* participating in the construction of a community. In conversation, Community members frequently raised the question of what distinguishes members who are committed to building community from other *campesinos* merely interested in surviving amidst war and have thus never joined, left, or been kicked out of the

Community. This alludes to another dynamic of peace, that of unity and whether exclusions are also a part of living peace; how do such distinctions among *campesinos* in San José reproduce or subvert the exclusions and divisions of modern society?

In the member's statement that opened this chapter, "everyone being together with the same idea," there is a sense of utopian conviviality and the need for a certain uniformity among the group. Yet in practice, difference and conflict are central to the Peace Community process; in their founding document, they name as core principles both the "respect of plurality" and the "freedom" of the Community and individual members to make their own decisions (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2005a). Such principles are epitomized by not re-stigmatizing those that leave the Community as 'guerrillas' or 'paramilitaries,' and by marching in solidarity with other non-member *campesinos*, as in the 2013 march to the adjacent village of Rodoxalí against the paramilitary presence there.⁴⁷ To "be together with the same idea," in practice for them, has not been the result of a predetermined or assumed directive but rather of communal dialog and decision. As one Community leader described,

We always think and act in common. Even if we have different thoughts, and maybe even argue or disagree, in the end we end up uniting because it is a strength. What we have always said: strength is collective. (group interview, 2014)

As we will see in a multitude of members' reflections on peace, resistance and creating an alternative to war requires unified organization, commitment, and work.

I ended the transcription that opened this Part II with the question I posed about the "path" *towards* peace. She proceeded to narrate her personal journey migrating to San José from the south, and how the Peace Community was founded. However, I

⁴⁷ This caravan is described in Chapter 6, (pp. 347-363).

included the question in this chapter's opening because it reflects where my own conceptualization of peace was at the time: for me, peace was still something 'out there,' to be achieved, for which there was a path or paths. When I began to write this chapter and returned to this interview, I noticed something else. This woman initially began her definition by saying that peace is "having..." without completing the sentence. When she finally articulated her vision, she switched to "being": "everyone being together." The former suggests peace as a condition, the point at which you have something; the latter speaks to peace as a process, as who we are is always becoming. In fact, this tension between condition versus process has been the focus of the recent geographies of peace (P. Williams and McConnell 2011; Loyd 2012). And the tension of having versus being parallels what are characterized as "moral" (or normative) versus "energetic" cultures of peace within the *Many Peaces* or *transrational* peace framework pioneered by Dietrich (2012). Even at the time of the interview, I was struck by her sense that peace is not something that we can wait for from others. Instead, we have to create and "be" it now.

Contemporary peace geographies scholarship has generated numerous critiques of the often undefined or vaguely used concept of *peace*. Yet most of this work has unfortunately stopped short of proposing new definitions, as called for by Megoran (2011). But if we relegate ourselves to critically deconstructing dominant notions without proposing new framings, we are thus left with those limited mainstream concepts. New working definitions, which invite critique as well as imagine and articulate what peace 'otherwise' can be, are necessary for further enriching peace geographies scholarship.

Building from a) critical theory on violence and politics, b) peace geographies, c) the transrational school of peace studies, and d) the praxis of the Peace Community and

other Colombian actors, I pose my own definition: Peace is a spatial process of creating and living dignity and self-determination that does not compromise the dignity of other people, places, and beings. I call this *transrelational peace*, a term for which I am indebted to the international accompanier Michaela Soellinger, from whom I first derived it.⁴⁸

I propose this spatially practiced peace ‘through and across relations’ as a referential framing or qualifier for other claims, theories, and projects of ‘peace.’ In other words, a *transrelational peace* perspective allows us to evaluate different forms of peace, by always analyzing power, the experiences of and effects for those internal and external to a particular ‘peace’ process or condition: Is such a ‘peace’ constituted by dignity? What are its spatial practices and politics? Is such self-determination at the expense of others or cultivating multiple praxes of relational dignity? One might argue, as some Colombian activists indeed do, that such a peace of dignity is impossible within the modern-colonial world permeated by intersectional violences. Therefore, *transrelational peace* must be constituted through a radical politics, as rupture (Fanon 2004; Reyes 2012a) with the violent divisions and demarcations of modern warfare, society, and territory, and as the cultivation of alternative “worlds” (Reyes 2015b) and relations of radical solidarity.

⁴⁸ Soellinger’s reflection can be read in Chapter 4 on page 221. When defining peace, she used the word “transrational” citing Dietrich’s school, where she studied. But I was not yet familiar with the term. Rather, I heard and transcribed “transrelational.” It was only after I read Dietrich (2012) and had a follow up conversation with her in which she clarified “transrational,” that I returned to the interview audio and heard it correctly. Nevertheless, what I heard as *transrelational peace* led me to conceptualize the latter term and in fact prefer it, given its inference of relationality and relational ontologies (Escobar 2010; De la Cadena 2010; Blaser 2010). Similar to the conversation that began this section, I find this to be another example of “dialogic performance” (Conquergood 1985) where through the back and forth of inspirational conversations and clarifications, even misunderstandings are generative for producing new knowledge.

As an enrichment of the emerging subfield on peace within critical geography and following the 'Many Peaces' framework, this Part II of the dissertation analyzes the implications of particular peace interpretations and practices. In Chapter 3, I review the emerging geographies of peace literature, suggesting how this scholarship is enhanced by integrating theories of violence and the peace studies subfield of transnational peace. Then, in Chapter 4, I present a social cartography of diverse understandings and practices of peace in Colombia today, ranging from government officials to an array of people active in social movements. The latter include urban community organizers, NGO activists, international accompaniers, leaders of African and Indigenous-descendant *campesino* communities, and ending with the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó.

CHAPTER 3

PEACE GEOGRAPHIES: EXPANDING FROM MODERN AND POSITIVE PEACE TO A RADICAL TRANSRELATIONAL PEACE

During the past half-decade, human geography has seen the emergence of a new subfield that interrogates the notion of peace. Emerging out of critical geographies of globalization, war, and militarization, this disciplinary subfield has focused new attention on peace. Complexifying common-sense understandings of peace as tranquility or lack of war, this scholarship has unearthed how peace is a spatial process and political discourse (P. Williams 2013; Woon 2015; Koopman 2014; A. Ross 2011; Loyd 2012; Daley 2014). Many of these scholars have called for a pro-peace agenda in the discipline: empirical studies to conceptualize peace from different perspectives and places, and to mobilize alternative conceptions to challenge systems of violence in working towards a just and sustainable world (Megoran 2011; P. Williams and McConnell 2011; Inwood and Tyner 2011; Koopman 2011b; McConnell, Megoran, and Williams 2014). In response, geographers of peace have theorized the politics of peace in diverse contexts and in relation to a number of other concepts, such as anti-violence (Loyd 2012), nonviolence (Woon 2014), human rights (Laliberte 2014), and memory (Courtheyn 2016). Drawing from the notion of positive peace and other religious conceptions, Megoran (2011) posits a working definition of peace as “sustainable and just relationships” (182), inviting others to propose their own.

Drawing from Galtung's (1964; 1996) canonical peace studies concepts of *negative peace*, *positive peace*, and *structural violence*, peace geographies have revealed that what is commonly called 'peace,' i.e., the lack of open warfare, often reflects situations that are more aptly deemed 'violent': the repression of dissent or entrenched hierarchies of racism, exploitation, and patriarchy (Daley 2014; Loyd 2012; A. Ross 2011). Geographers have relied on the notion of positive peace, which refers to the absence of direct, structural, and cultural violence through the integration of human society. While this concept usefully contrasts with 'negative' peace, it remains vague (Koopman 2011b) and can limit us to modernist framings (C. Mitchell 2012). Therefore, while geographers have deconstructed *how* peace manifests as a discourse and practice in different contexts, few have responded to Megoran's (2011) call for new definitions of *what* peace 'otherwise' might mean.

Yet there is another point of departure for re-conceptualizing peace. The *Many Peaces* framework—later named the transrational school of peace research—emerged at the University of Innsbruck in the late 1990s with a parallel goal to that of peace geographies in the early 2010s: to investigate diverse understandings and practices of peace across space and time, so as to enhance peace scholar-practitioners' theories and methodologies. The transrational subfield was pioneered by Austrian scholar Wolfgang Dietrich, deemed "the foremost thinker in the field of peace" by Gustavo Esteva in his review of *Interpretations of Peace in History and Culture* (2012), Volume 1 of Dietrich's *Many Peaces Trilogy*. Despite their converging aims, geography has yet to integrate this framework. Surprisingly, the only reference I found among the peace geographies literature (Koopman 2011b) is Dietrich's initial paper, titled "A Call for Many Peaces" (Dietrich and Sützl 1997). Since then, transrational peace research has made significant

progress. Drawing on a variety of understandings from different cultures and time periods, Dietrich categorized the many peaces into four families: *energetic* (peace as harmony), *moral* (peace through justice or belief), *modern* (peace as security), and *postmodern* (peace through truth). He then coined his own notion, *transrational peace*, in an attempt to articulate the elements of the other families into a holistic framework for theorizing and practicing peace. I suggest that incorporating transrational peace studies will provide geographers with a broader spectrum of peace understandings from which to further hone our analyses and formulate new conceptions.

This chapter surveys the progress of the emerging subfield of peace geographies and puts it into conversation with transrational peace research. I begin with a review of the peace geographies literature, pointing to its contributions in unmasking the dominant ‘modern’ or ‘liberal’ peace of state-enforced order and security. I then trace how theorizing *peace* and *violence* through critical theories of race and politics gives further coherence to geography’s critique of normative peace. Subsequently, I describe the *Many Peaces* approach to peace research, describing what Dietrich means by energetic, moral, modern, postmodern, and transrational peace. While I embrace this exploration of multiple meanings of peace, I nonetheless insist that settling for what he calls a “plurality of the peaces” is insufficient, given that certain ‘peace’ projects work to exterminate others. Therefore, in the conclusion, I propose my own conception of peace, which is inspired by fellow peace geographers, the transrational framework, and my ethnographic fieldwork with the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, Colombia. I propose the conception of *radical transrelational peace*—*peace across and through relations of dignity, autonomist politics, and solidarity*—as a reference point for

evaluating the ‘plurality of the peaces,’ inducing scholars’ critique of this notion, and inspiring them to formulate additional definitions.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF PEACE GEOGRAPHIES

In the wake of a series of publications about war, peace, and conflict (Flint 2005; Gregory and Pred 2007; Gregory 2010; Kobayashi 2009), critical geographers began to more explicitly call for re-conceptualizing peace and for a pro-peace agenda in the discipline. In 2011, three such calls were published in separate journals, including *Antipode* (P. Williams and McConnell 2011), *Political Geography* (Megoran 2011), and *ACME* (Inwood and Tyner 2011). Several of those authors contributed to the innovative 2014 compilation *Geographies of Peace* (McConnell, Megoran, and Williams 2014), while additional geographies of peace have been published elsewhere (Loyd 2012; Woon 2014; Woon 2015).

Critical and especially feminist geography’s attention to place, scale, and power relations between peoples and places push peace theory beyond state-centric or aspatial notions (Richmond 2014; P. Williams, Megoran, and McConnell 2014). While the discipline has historically been complicit with imperialism (Livingstone 1992; P. Williams, Megoran, and McConnell 2014), as a political and spatial practice, geography can also work to create peace. As articulated by Koopman (2014):

Peace is shaped by the space in which it is made, as it too shapes that space. ... [G]eography can help to build peace because peace is inherently spatial ... [and] by focusing on grassroots peacemaking practices. (109)

Geographers have contributed to peace studies by engaging with a variety of themes. These include conflicts of urban co-existence (P. Williams 2013; P. Williams

2014; Darling 2014); transnational migration (Megoran 2014); state projects of militarization, border controls, and post-conflict (Daley 2014; Donaldson 2014; Gregory 2010); and social movements for “antiviolence” (Loyd 2012), an “anti-killing culture” (Inwood and Tyner 2011), national liberation (McConnell 2014), human rights (Laliberte 2014), and environmental sustainability (Schoenfeld et al. 2014). In the process, human geography’s contributions include signaling how peace a) is a spatial process, rather than a fixed condition, b) is entangled with processes of violence, c) has diverse interpretations, d) shapes and is shaped by political, economic, social, and cultural dynamics, and e) functions as a political discourse, which can be employed for repressive as well as liberatory ends. Arguing for “thinking peace in the plural,” Koopman (2014) eloquently writes: “Peace means different things at different scales, as well as to different groups and at different times and places. Peace is not the same everywhere any more than war is” (111).

For instance, in her work on Muslim-Hindu relations in Varanasi, India, P. Williams (2013; 2014) theorizes peace as relations of co-existence across difference. She illustrates how Muslim-Hindu direct violence, pervasive elsewhere in India, is diffused in Varanasi through political responses to terrorism as well as economic and community interdependence, albeit a society in which Hindus enjoy a hierarchical position. Even so, Darling (2014) warns against interpreting co-existence as peace unless hegemonic power relations are transformed, arguing that seemingly peaceful co-existence can reflect a tenuous, and likely temporary, “less-than-violent” situation, as he characterizes periodic friendliness between local residents and political refugees in Sheffield, UK (237). As such, these geographies approach peace in relation to what they deem to be ‘violence’: armed confrontations in India or societal inequalities in the Global North.

This suggests that theorizing peace requires thinking and acting beyond ‘co-existence’ (living alongside) and moving towards ‘conviviality’ (living together) (Gómez Muller 2008).

Geographers have especially critiqued and thus decentered the ubiquitous approach to peace as a lack of open warfare between or within states. Daley (2014) calls this dominant understanding a hegemonic “liberal peace,” rooted in the model of representative democracy and capitalism. Upon becoming globally dominant through colonialism and the post-decolonization development project, this modern approach forecloses other ideas of peace in the process. However, modernity’s ‘liberal peace’ does not achieve the universal well-being it trumpets, let alone a sustained ‘negative peace’ (Daley 2014; Harbom, Högladh, and Wallenstein 2006; Dietrich 2012). This has led scholars to affirm that ‘peace’ or ‘post-conflict’ is more aptly understood as the time between the last and the next war (Dalby 2014; Kirsch and Flint 2011). In other words, ‘politics is war by other means,’ rather than the other way around (Foucault 2003). This is no surprise, of course, given capitalism’s inherent social relation of exploitation and imposed work (Marx 1976a; Lefebvre 1976a) that is structured in racism and sexism (Fanon 2004; Federici 2004). Even though peace can be a strategic discourse for social movements, such as the Tibetan freedom struggle (McConnell 2014) or the Colombian Peace Community (Koopman 2014), governments and warlords frequently wield discourses of ‘peace’ to advance their projects or a violent status quo (A. Ross 2011).

Therefore, given that peace and war are mutually constituted (Kirsch and Flint 2011) and that the former is usually understood as the ‘opposite’ of the latter, understanding peace requires deeper theorizations of violence (Loyd 2012). Similar to how peace should not be assumed or left undefined, it behooves critical scholars to have

a specific definition of violence (R. Williams 2007: 182). Like peace left undefined or used as if its meaning were assumed, violence and war are terms commonly used in the academic literature without specific framings (even in Dietrich's comprehensive peace research), despite rich scholarship on them. I suggest that theorizing peace in relation to critical theories of violence, race, and politics gives further coherence to geography's critique of modern 'peace.'

TOWARDS A DEEPER THEORIZATION OF VIOLENCE

Theorists of violence have proposed a variety of concepts, which generally distinguish but also point to the relation between a) physical uses of force and b) other less recognized or visible forms of harm and exploitation. These include *subjective*, *objective*, *overt*, *direct*, *structural*, *systemic*, *cultural*, and *slow violence*, as well as violence as product, process, or violation. After reviewing these in turn, I will consider the implications of thinking violence and peace politically.

Concepts of violence

Violence is most often equated with physical harm or killing, which Galtung (1996) terms *direct violence* and Žižek (2008) categorizes as *subjective violence*, which includes the most visible or what people are first to affirm as violence, such as “acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, [and] international conflict” (1). Lawrence and Karim (2007) describe this as violence as “product,” i.e. an ‘event’ supposedly separated, distinct, or as a recognized exception from the norm or system (11). Bourdieu (2007) uses the term *overt violence*, although for him, this encompasses not only physical but also economic forms of harm. On the latter, many authors use the term *structural*

violence (Galtung 1996) to identify that which does not injure someone physically but nonetheless deeply harms them psychologically, communally, or physically but in a less overt way. These include the power relations of poverty, inequality, racism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity as structural forms of domination. Correspondingly, Nixon (2011) has articulated the notion of *slow violence* to describe the delayed and long-term effects of environmental injustice tied to industrial waste and toxicity, especially in poor communities of the Global South. For Žižek (2008), these fall within *systemic violence*, the “often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems” (1). In other words, *systemic violence* is foundational for particular political, economic, social, and cultural orders; some benefit at the expense of others. As a counter to the openly visible subjective violence, for Žižek (2008), systemic violence falls under the category of *objective violence*, which also includes *symbolic violence*, that imbedded within language (1). Galtung (1996) termed this *cultural violence*, i.e., all forms of expression, discourse, or representation that legitimize or encourage direct or structural violence.

Accordingly, Lawrence and Karim (2007) insist upon seeing violence not as “product,” through the lens of events alone, but rather as “process,” the structure in which violent events occur (11). Tyner (2012) specifies that violence is a totalizing practice; it is a complete subjugation of some person or people. Taking violence and power as equivalents (Lawrence and Karim 2007) points to how violent behavior and systems are relational and spatial mechanisms of social and spatial control (Tyner 2012). Similarly, Bourdieu (2007) insists that *overt violence* and the violence of everyday power relations of domination are not contradictory or opposed; physical and structural violences are always in relation and often mutually reinforcing. In other

words, differentiating between ‘*direct* or *subjective* violence’ and ‘*structural* or *objective* violence’—to repeat Žižek’s and Galtung’s framings, respectively—is less about separating the two than asserting that what we understand as violence must include naturalized and unquestioned forms of exploitation and injustice (Lawrence and Karim 2007). The distinction between a) direct, physical, or subjective violence and b) objective or structural violence is rather one of aesthetics or emphasis rather than true contrast.

Violence as violation

The extent to which all forms of physical harm should be considered *violence* is also contested. The etymology of the word reveals its roots in the Latin *violare*, which means “to bear in on with force ... dishonor ... and violate” (Naglar 2001: 46). I find the final idea, “to violate” particularly compelling, which R. Williams (2007) qualifies as “the breaking of some custom or some dignity” (181). Violence as *violations of dignity* adds a specificity to violence to break with its connotation of all forms of injury, which furthers thinking violence and peace politically.

For instance, when one being kills another, it is only a violation when there is a moral or ethical judgment of it as such (Benjamin 2007b; Dietrich 2012). A predator killing prey for survival is not violation; the lion does not ‘violate’ the lamb it kills for food (Dietrich 2012; Naglar 2001). The predator-prey relation, as an interdependent relationship with an ecosystem, should not be uncritically deemed *violence*.⁴⁹

The same should be said for ‘self-defense’ against an ‘offensive attack.’ Gelderloos (2007) argues that a person or group that injures another in self-defense is not violating

⁴⁹ Another example, albeit a quite disparate one, is surgery. The surgeon cuts or harms parts of the body in order to cure or treat other parts; surgery is only violence if there is a violation through the act, such as reproductive sterilization without the patient’s consent.

the aggressor. Take the example of rape. There is a danger in classifying both a) the rapist's act or intention to rape and b) the 'victim' stabbing or shooting the rapist in self-defense as violence. Of course, the latter is physically harming but not *violating*. Rape is the violating act.⁵⁰ Self-defense is an attempt to end the violation, albeit through physical harm. This so-called 'violent' act of resistance might instead be characterized as an act of dignity and even peace, towards ending an act of rape and a system of patriarchal domination (Gelderloos 2007). When we interrogate who is violating whom, we protect against potentially equalizing and thus equally criminalizing these acts (Fanon 2004).

For instance, R. Williams (2007) points out that violence is often associated with the unruly, as that against authority, whereas actions towards order are framed as 'defense,' such as by states. Similarly, Benjamin (2007b), notes how violence is often framed in relation to illegality: "even conduct invoking the exercise of a right can nevertheless, under certain circumstances, be described as violent ... if it exercises a right in order to overthrow the legal system that has conferred it" (272). These arguments about authority and legality lead to a key question: Is the order being defended, or the interruption to that order, the violation?

Such an analysis is crucial to deconstruct the question whites commonly ask blacks in the United States: 'Are you for or against violence?' Cone (2007) responds by asking "*whose* violence, against *whom*?" pointing out that the world is already violent and the United States was founded on the violence of genocide and slavery. Such questions about whether an oppressed person supports 'nonviolence' inherently pose a

⁵⁰ For an analysis of how rape is not 'collateral damage' but an intentional strategy of war, see Mayer (2004).

ridiculous ‘choice:’ ‘Which “violence” do you prefer, the violence against you now or the “violence” of liberation?’

As the supposed antonym to war, peace is thus a term thoroughly imbued with race. The dominant notion and practice of modern state ‘peace’ that maintains white privilege through an order of inequality and exploitation is anti-black and anti-indigenous (Fanon 2008; Wilderson 2010). It makes sense that modern peace, which I will trace below to hierarchical moral traditions and the Roman peace (Dietrich 2012), would pose socioeconomic change towards re-distribution or the disruption of certain power relations as negative and peaceless, so as to perpetuate hierarchies of power. As Thoreau (2002) might say, to break an unjust law through civil disobedience is not violent, but what is in fact necessary to change that unjust situation. We have to remember to ask ‘*whose* peace, at the expense of *whom*?’ Is a particular peace vision disrupting this racist structure or perpetuating it?

To take another example, Megoran (2014) signals the transnational migration of a singer from an Uzbek region in Kyrgyzstan to and from Israel as a geography of peace through migration. This is despite Megoran’s own acknowledgement that this individual is a millionaire investor and proponent of Israeli settlements in Palestine. He admits that “peace *for* one group of people may not be good news for another” (225). Yet this phrasing of ‘good’ or bad ‘news’ understates the apartheid and genocide Palestinians face. If ‘peace’ for some reinforces war against others, how can we accept that as *peace*? If peace can be applied to any situation, the term seems to lose any meaning. Therefore, interrogating dynamics of *violation* provides a useful rubric for disentangling what is *peace* and what is *violence*.

Consequently, we must neither limit our understanding of violence to physical harm alone nor equate all physical harm with violence. Force should not be uncritically equated with violence; to influence or move oneself or another can be judged positively, negatively, or indifferently depending upon the situation. *Conflict*—tension produced by differences of ideas, proposals, and projects—is a fundamental part of human life and society (Muñoz 2001). *Violence* is when conflicts are ‘resolved’ through the violation of one or more of the parties, whether between or within groups and individuals. Of course, the resolution of an *antagonism*—a contradiction only resolvable through the elimination of one of the sides in which there is no possible compromise or reconcilable solution at all—is structured by violence itself (Mao 1957). If we follow Lawrence and Karim’s (2007) argument that *all* violent “products” are inseparable from the systems and violent “processes” in which they take place (11), then all acts of violence would thus be part of a larger war, even if *war* retains a connotation of large-scale attacks and destruction not inevitably evoked by the word violence alone. At the very least, this scholarship on peace and violence reveals how the term ‘negative peace’ in modern society is a contradictory misnomer.

Thinking peace politically

Given the range of intersectional violences that permeate today’s world, is peace possible? A wealth of recent scholarship has proliferated to theorize the current “global crisis” of neoliberalism as well as potential ruptures with the violent modern-colonial world (Reyes 2012b; Wallerstein 2011). Much of this work examines social movements in Latin America resisting the “global land grab” (Peluso and Lund 2011), noting how these movements often exceed the limits of modern state politics of elections, representation, and NGOs. This “other politics” (Grupo Acontecimiento 2012; Denis

2012) of “emancipation” refers to people breaking relations of subjugation, by transforming subjectivities and creating dignified material life conditions in autonomous territories (Ornelas 2012; Gutiérrez 2012; Reyes 2015b; Reyes and Kaufman 2011). Challenging individualism and isolationism, they are rooted in the cultivation of collective political subjects (Zibechi 2012; Ceceña 2012) that collaborate across communities through solidarity networks (Koopman 2011a; Courtheyn 2016).

This is not to divorce *violence* from *emancipation* or equalize *liberation* and *peace*. Surely, a resistance or emancipatory struggle can commit or lead to violations in its practice. Consider post-revolutionary Algeria (Abane 2011), or the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) who in their struggle for agrarian reform and political participation for marginalized farmers (Chernick 2009) have reproduced hierarchical and repressive state politics in the process (Tate 2015: 115-119). Thus, distinguishing between what is legitimate defense or liberation and what is a violent attack will always depend upon judgment (Dietrich 2012). This requires a critical analysis of the power relations and actors in question, as in Gómez Correal’s (2012a) “critical history for life.” A critical analysis of what constitutes a violation and thus *violence* (like analyzing or creating any concept) is necessary for as well as consistent with a processual “other politics” of continual reflection-action.

Whatever we call *peace* or *nonviolence* (Megoran 2011; Woon 2014) will have to address the intersectional violences of the modern world-system (Loyd 2012; Daley 2014). Precisely, the praxis of an “other politics” presents the possibility of supplemental definitions of peace that are geographically and politically situated. One potential alter-peace is geographer Daley’s (2014) consideration of *ubuntu* in Africa: “I am because we are.” She points to how this term has been co-opted by some, but there are attempts by

others to re-claim it as what she signals are localized forms of peace against the dominant “liberal peace” (70). For the most part, however, geographers have failed to propose new definitions of peace ‘otherwise.’ Towards this end, I suggest that engaging with the Many Peaces framework provides another productive point of departure.

THE TRANSRATIONAL ‘MANY PEACES’ FRAMEWORK

The transrational Many Peaces school categorizes peace into five families. These include modern peace as security, moral peace through belief or justice, postmodern peace through truth, energetic peace as harmony, and transrational peace that combines elements of all of the other families.⁵¹ These families point to peace at a variety of scales and through quite divergent political projects. Moreover, only some envision or construct peace as an ‘opposite’ to conflict or open warfare.

⁵¹ It is imperative at the outset of this discussion to banish any form of Orientalist interpretation of such categories as linked with an ‘essence’ of particular ‘peoples’ or ‘regions’ (Said 1979). Unfortunately, such explanations have been common in the discipline of geography, as in environmental determinism (Livingstone 1992). Dietrich (2012) does point to *tendencies* of particular philosophical or religious traditions’ interpretations of reality and society, and thus of peace, citing Taoism as an example of an energetic approach and institutionalized Christianity as a moral approach. However, these categorizations do not in any way imply a particular person’s or people’s *essence* as energetic, postmodern, or moral. An ignorant understanding might jump to the conclusion that Taoism and Buddhism, and thus Asia, are inherently energetic, while institutionalized Christianity and the modern State, and thus Europe and the West, are essentially moral and modern. Dietrich provides a plethora of examples to demolish such inferences, such as Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Ávila, and Confucianism. His categories are not linear, either. Apart from modern interpretations emerging out of moral traditions, there is no fixed teleological causation or emergence. Each family can emerge from and be found within each other. Dietrich thus cautions against seeing these categorizations as ‘real’ categories; the different interpretations and practices are in relation to one another. Hence, his categorical exercise—which I find illuminating for going beyond the ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ peace framework and to analyze divergent peace notions—is one of posing concepts and categories as a tool towards understanding and acting in the world.

1 Modern peace

Dietrich locates the ‘negative’ and ‘liberal’ peace so thoroughly critiqued by peace geographers and violence theorists within *modern peace*: peace through state-enforced order as well as individuals’ and the nation’s security. The Many Peaces school has traced the historical emergence of this notion to the Greek-influenced imperial peace of the Roman Empire. *Mars* was initially the god of livestock farming and *Pax* the god of agricultural fertility. Later, Mars became known as the god of war and Pax the god of peace, and the conception of a war and peace binary emerged:

Earlier they had formed a holistic, harmonious principle of peace and fertility. It is only through the formation of the Roman state and Empire and through the adoption of Greek perceptions that they were perverted into the antagonists of war/peace. ... In the time of Emperor Augustus this culminated in the cultic veneration of the goddess Pax as symbol of Roman world domination (*pax romana* or *pax augusta*) in combination with the goddess of victory (Victoria) in the sense of a victorious peace. ... On Roman coins Pax is depicted with the victor’s laurel wreath, armed with lance, spear, and shield and her foot on the neck of a vanquished enemy, Mars with lowered lance and an olive branch. (Dietrich 2012: 39-40)

While the distinction between Pax and Mars becomes negligible, epitomized by the symbolism of the Roman coins themselves, this process contributed to imagining the absence of physical violence through military force as a type of peace, a la Galtung’s “negative peace.” We will see that moral, postmodern, and energetic notions do not necessarily fall within this oppositional conception. For Dietrich (2012), “if you want peace, prepare for war, is the manifest motto that results from this understanding of peace,” (98) which is indeed a phrase written on the back of Colombia’s military service card (field notes, 2013). Thus, the Roman peace is one of law and order through victory, where a strong center of power secures the supposed lasting absence of war, which served as the basis for the ‘peace’ of the modern nation-state (Foucault 2003).

Yet modernity specifically produces and defends *individual* subjects (Foucault 1982), initially those belonging to sovereign colonizer nation-states (Reyes and Kaufman 2011). Modern peace is thus constituted by the security of individuals and the nation; law and order; and conflict resolution between states by treaty accords (Dietrich 2012; Hobbes 1991; Kant 2012).

The work of Thomas Hobbes epitomizes modern peace. For Hobbes, ‘men’ are equals in their natural state, competing with one another for resources resulting in humans’ war of all against all, or “every man, against every man” (Hobbes 1991: 88). Those in a ‘state of nature’ lack the necessary fear of death to preclude their use of force against one another. Therefore, ‘peace’ as the defense of individuals’ mortality requires a dominant authority—the sovereign state which people fear and submit to—to keep everyone in check and thus limit violence amongst the people so that everyone is free to actually pursue their material well-being (Robin 2004; Dietrich 2012). Of course, this fear and the desire for security are predicated upon and fuel the annihilation of others that are perceived to threaten those subjects’ mortality or material accumulation. Modernity separates humanity from ‘nature,’ to dominate and control not only nature but also those people racialized or gendered as closest to ‘nature.’ As mentioned above in the review on violence and in Chapter 2, the ‘individuals’ deserving protection is predicated upon who is considered ‘civil’ and ‘human’ in contrast to ‘barbarian’ and ‘non-human’ black and indigenous people or women, thus inducing struggles over inclusion-exclusion throughout the modern period (Fanon 2008; Wilderson 2010; Reyes and Kaufman 2011; Wallerstein 2004; Federici 2004). Modernity has thus been plagued by wars to ‘defend’ the security of capitalist nation-states and to accumulate material well-being for its citizens (Dietrich 2012).

Dietrich notes that such cultures often emerge in times of crisis, in which fear or memory of loss in the past connect with a hope for salvation in some future. In such conjunctures, norms used as a *tool* of rule can then become the *end* or the legitimizing reason for institutions' existence itself. The "state of exception" becomes the norm (Agamben 1988). Dietrich argues that, from periods of intense fear, "war" emerged out of certain men's quest to avoid their own sacrifice, their own death, and their own mortality. It emerges out of a fear of individual death, where through waging war one proves one's own life by killing another; large-scale modern war is also linked with the emergence of nationalism, in which a select warrior class is supplemented with armies to defend 'the nation' (Ehrenreich 1997).

Of course, the security of a human individual or the institutional state is never absolute, unlike a religious trust in the divine. Yet another wing of modern peace continues to insist that war can be averted through regulation and norm. Immanuel Kant's idealist tradition breaks from Hobbes realist pessimism. The former insists that war can be averted through regulation and norm: state-guaranteed security and contracts can contain if not eliminate violence. Kant's perpetual or "eternal peace" argues that peace is a natural human state, achievable not through authoritarian rule but rather rational conflict resolution, i.e., international contractual law (Kant 2012). International Relations is a modern interpretation and production of peace *par excellence*; this field's response to World Wars I and II by spreading capitalism and the nation-state model posed these wars as an "operating accident" within a generally peaceful system rather than constitutive of modernity (Dietrich 2012: 164). In response, Marxism rejects capitalist subjugation and correlates with a peace through communism and equality, in which everyone has their material needs met; this is achieved through

working-class revolution to take control over the means of production and eventually abolish the violent state serving capital, thus allowing for people to live communally (Marx and Engels 1978). In fact, Dietrich (2012) argues that much warfare of the 20th century can be understood as a struggle between two antagonistic projects: peace as security (as in Fascism) versus peace as equality and justice (e.g. socialism), with its incredibly brutal outcomes (144, 197). In other words, the modern world-system—that claims to lead to but in fact undermines equality and justice—results in extremely violent clashes over inequality and injustice.

2 Moral peace

Dietrich categorizes the *moral peaces* as those structured by prescriptive norms, i.e. a clear set of rules and regulations for achieving peace, albeit of a different form than modern peace's nation-state contracts and security. Dietrich suggests two primary forms of moral peace. First, there is peace as the fulfillment of everyone's material needs, such as peace as hospitality. Dietrich brands this 'peace as justice.' Second, for particular religious traditions, there is peace through the divine in the afterlife, yet structured in this life by the defense and advance of one's religious community against others. I will begin with the latter.

Dietrich classifies traditions typified by a personified, male God that loves and punishes the "great moral peaces." Here, the material world is separated from the world of heaven and the divine. We see this in certain monotheistic and universalizing religions, such as institutionalized Christianity, where there is peace with the divine in the afterlife through salvation or suffering in this life. Surely, there might be peace on earth through God's community, but ultimate peace occurs in the *future* by divine redemption; only with the arrival of the Messiah will there be true justice and peace.

Analyzing the old European liturgical saying “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to those of good will,” Dietrich (2002) notes how within this moral perspective,

Peace, then, is not practiced by people on earth themselves, but is given unto those among them who are of good will. Only the giver of peace, that is God in the highest, can decide who is of good will and who is not. (49)

The ‘freedom’ to decide between good and evil thus legitimates the attempt to exterminate the evil of others based on everyone’s positioning vis-à-vis God, the ultimate truth. Suffering is therefore justified, both for believers on their path to future salvation as well as through attacks against others for their ‘evilness.’ As Dietrich (2002) remarks,

[P]eace is meant for those who count themselves among the community that resorts to this God. Those who do not are excluded from the peace order of this community and possibly exposed to an uncertain fate. (49)

According to this explanation, there is ‘no world peace in the sense of a relational understanding between neighbors. Outsiders remain ‘barbarians’ and are always the object of ‘just’ physical violence’ (Dietrich 2012: 98). The only ‘eternal peace’ is from God. This is precisely what is at stake in contrasting understandings of the slogan “Never Again” regarding political-genocidal violence: it should never happen again “to *my* people” versus “it should never happen to *any* people” (Mamdani 2004: 10-11; see also Depelchin 2011). For Dietrich (2012), the great moral peaces try to impose what they perceive as ‘the One Truth’ and thus never achieve any peace beyond war, contributing little to inter-communal well-being

While Dietrich states that there is no evolutionary progression from one peace family to another, he points to one exception. He notes how *modern peace* emerged from the *great moral peaces*, albeit shifting its ‘One Truth’ from the divine to the

material world (Dietrich 2012). Both reflect dualistic understandings of reality: good and evil become oppositional, contradictory, warring, mutually exclusive, hierarchical, and real entities, along with other such dualisms: right and wrong, man and woman, the chosen people or community versus the enemy, or even peace and war. This diverges from an (*energetic*) yin/yang interpretation of reality, where two apparent opposites are really just allusions to the true oneness and embeddedness of both (Dietrich 2012). Moreover, both modern peace and the great moral peaces assume linear resolutions to ‘peacelessness’: transitioning from evil to good, error to truth, or insecurity to security.

However, not all normative, religious, or moral praxes are necessarily violent. As a first example, take the notions of *Salaam* and *Shalom*. They embody peace as hospitality, which is structured by pragmatic rules of conduct for human encounters, with the right to shelter for travelers and strangers being paramount. Here, peace is a wholeness where all people have their material needs fulfilled, along with a wholeness of the community and oneself with God. The key distinction between this moral peace and the great moral peaces is the extent to which people merely ‘tolerate’ and attempt to ‘assimilate’ those different from them or in fact respect ‘the otherness of others’ (Dietrich 2002: 30). Dietrich (2012) terms these approaches ‘peace out of justice,’ which he defines as everyone ‘having enough.’ Alternatively, Dietrich signals the Christian Teresa of Ávila’s philosophical path as another moral peace. It is constituted through inner prayer with God but rejects the notion of a struggle against ‘evil’ and insists that such prayer and struggle must occur along with others, similar to Mahayana Buddhism.

A third example is the pre-modern German notion of *vride*. Similar to the other moral peaces, peace here is not the absence or opposite of war and conflict but is achieved through the strict regulation of conflict that protects the commoner’s

subsistence. *Vride* regulates large-scale feuds between elites to protect the commons everyone depends on. Warfare must be limited in scale and in no way violate woods, water, grains, or holy days (Dietrich 2012)—norms that are in fact found in the Magna Carta (Linebaugh 2008). Of course, with the emergence of capitalism, bottom-up *vride* as a protector of the commons has been shattered with ‘economic peace,’ accumulation over subsistence, and top-down modern state peace (Dietrich 2012).

3 *Postmodern peace*

For Dietrich (2012), the theoretical opening to conceptualize multiple forms of peace through time and space—or, as Koopman (2011b) states, “to take peace to pieces” (194)—is reflective of postmodernity. In its rational deconstruction of the supposedly universal (modern) truth, postmodernity opens space to re-think the ‘truth’ about peace as an antonym of war for ‘civil’ society.⁵² Peace studies—and the Many Peaces subfield, especially—is the fruit of the postmodern turn. *Postmodern peace* is thus peace out of truth through a ‘plurality of the peaces.’ Among its primary contributions is to re-think peace as a process rather than a fixed ‘condition.’

Challenging the idea of peace as a utopian condition, Muñoz (2001) proposes *la paz imperfecta* (imperfect peace). He stresses that peace is a process, always unfinished, and should never be seen as a utopian goal:

By using the adjective imperfect, I am able to reveal the meanings of Peace in some way. Although it is an adjective of negation—which, by the way, I greatly dislike applying to the concept of Peace, which I strive to free from that particular

⁵² Yet Microsoft Word is obviously not in agreement with the postmodern turn. ‘Knowledges’ and ‘peaces’ written in the plural provoke my spell-check to signal them as errors. Given that the modern, moral notion of the One Truth is built into our grammar, what I hear the spell-check regulator and enforcer saying to me is: “You can’t mean to say that there is more than one knowledge or peace!” Interestingly, 1492—the year when the European conquest of the peoples and worlds in the Americas began—is remarkably also the year of the first publication of grammar in a European language (Spanish), i.e., what is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ language, thus attacking vernacular speech, thinking (Dietrich 2012), and subjectivity.

orientation—it can also be understood etymologically as ‘unfinished,’ ‘procedural,’ and this should be taken as its core meaning. (in Dietrich 2012: 203)

I echo Muñoz’s discomfort with his terminology of ‘imperfect’ being too negative. It gives the sense of a never attainable peace. He tries to break with peace being an unreachable utopia, yet this concept itself seems to preclude ever reaching anything but imperfection. However, this postmodern peace as process rather than as a fixed condition—correlating with the primary framing within critical human geography (Lloyd 2012; P. Williams 2013)—can be conducive to an anti-systemic radical politics (Wallerstein 2004; Ceceña 2012), in which peace’s meaning is not fixed with one meaning and instead can be dynamically produced and re-invented through social movement.

Another contribution of Muñoz’s *imperfect peace*—that I prefer to re-phrase as *processual peace*—is how it understands conflict as integral to peace, which I cited above in the theory on violence. Muñoz stresses that humans act from a duality of cooperation and conflict; both of these are central to who we are as humans and are processes themselves. Dietrich (2012) notes how for Muñoz, “Conflict is just as inherent to cooperation as the other way around, and peace can only be defined and lived on the basis of acknowledging both” (204). Unlike modern and the great moral peace’s approaches to difference, peace and conflict are not in dialectical opposition. They are a duality, one within the other. As I argued above, this suggests that we not equate conflict with violence, unless there is a violation in the transformation of conflict. As for war versus peace, Iván Illich eloquently sums up a postmodern approach by stating that war “assimilate[s] cultures to each other, whereas peace is that state in which each culture blooms in its own, unique way” (in Dietrich 2002: 50-51).

4 Energetic peace

Beyond decentering modern peace as merely one potential form and discourse of ‘peace,’ among the greatest fruits of the postmodern ‘plurality of the peaces’ is how it has allowed for engagement with what Dietrich calls the *energetic peaces*: peace as harmony. While it is nothing new to pose peace as ‘harmony’ or ‘tranquility,’ transrational peace research has uncovered the richness of diverse forms of energetic peace.

As an illustrative example, Dietrich (2012) noted Western students’ astonishment when an Innsbruck classmate from Burkina Faso said that the word for peace in his first language was the same as for ‘fresh air.’ To paraphrase Dietrich, does not fresh air get to the beauty of the world and life? Breathing itself is the most basic and relational human experience; it is an elementary sign of life and there is an intimate connectivity with each breath in and out (2). I would argue that “fresh air” also connotes clean, life-giving, as well as new, recycled, and constantly ‘becoming.’ Michaela Soellinger, a protective accompanier I interviewed for my dissertation who studied with Dietrich and exposed me to this field, articulated an energetic notion of *transpersonal peace* with her framing of peace as “the breath of each individual in harmony with the holy one’s breath” (personal interview, 2013).⁵³

Music itself, Dietrich argues, is also indicative of an energetic peace. He points to Sufism and the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche in which music is understood as the ultimate harmony. With the combination of tones, in which there can also be breath,

⁵³ Dietrich continued, “I was to find out that in Aramaic, the language which Jesus probably used, the word ‘spirit’ is also used in the translations of the words breath, air, or wind. The Christian bringer of peace, the Holy Spirit, therefore would at least also be imaginable as ‘holy air’ and thus more closely related to the ‘fresh air’ of my later student from Burkina Faso than all his astonished classmates and I myself had initially thought” (4)!

voice, poetry, and dance movements, music is a harmonious resonance, an integrity of all. In the next chapter, I will mention the significance of the Peace Community hymn—its lyrics and how it is sung in every Community gathering—as an energetic practice of memory and politics.

The diverse types of energetic peace are too numerous to review here (see Dietrich et al. 2011). To describe just three more examples, I begin with Dietrich's (2012) interpretation of particular matriarchies, in which there is peace through the fertility of the group's Great Goddess. There may be male kings presiding over the people, but they must be sacrificed or sacrifice themselves if the balance of life and people's well-being is disturbed by not fulfilling the honor of the Great Goddess. A moral-modern perspective—rooted in a philosophy of the *individual* being—might interpret such human sacrifice as violent; when there is an 'individual' then the goal is to maintain one's individual mortality because death is the end of life. Conversely, peace as fertility is an energetic, collective understanding in which death can also be a beginning of new cycles and a renewal of life (Dietrich 2012; Gómez Correal 2015).

Two other energetic notions of harmony include the Javanese *damai* and Mayan *utziläj k'aslen*. *Damai* is from the Bahasa Malaya language, meaning harmony and peace: "Harmony reigns when every element is in its proper place. ... [It is the] interpretation of one's own existence" to find one's proper place in relation to nature, society, and the cosmos (Dietrich 2002: 51-52). The Maya-Kakchikel's word for peace is *utziläj k'aslen*, which refers to an interconnection among all beings.

It refers to mental and material well-being and circumscribes in the worldview of these people the oneness of society, nature, and the universe. Maintaining this unity requires the respect of each person towards each other, the community and the environment. In the Maya's view, this environment is not objectified and functionalized in the service of humankind. Instead, they see themselves and

everything else that exists on the material and spiritual levels as creative elements of the whole. (Dietrich 2002: 52)

Congruent with what De la Cadena (2010), Escobar (2010; forthcoming), and Blaser (2010) call “relational ontologies,” *utziläj k’aslen* is counter to the capitalist subject’s relationship with space and ‘nature’ constituted by demarcation and control. According to Dietrich (2012), “quite an estrangement of human beings from nature is necessary in order to be amazed by fresh air as a concept of peace” (3). Accordingly, Escobar (2008) argues that cultivating non-dualist ecologies of difference is the key to peace, which correlates with an energetic peace of harmony:

Peace—understood as a set of economic, cultural, and ecological processes that bring about a measure of justice and balance to the natural and social orders—is the deepest meaning of the ecology of difference that aims towards worlds and knowledges otherwise. (17)

Dietrich insists that we have to create and experience a different form of collectivity through a collective mind.⁵⁴ Of course, this is different than merely a sum of individual minds or an individual mind (along with its defense of self) applied or manifested in groups. He argues that it is

dangerous whenever the collective mind with its conscious and unconscious is attributed to an abstract larger entity like the people, the nation, the fatherland, the homeland, or similar entity. All these, however, have nothing in common with the collective mind that is meant here. They are much rather the expression of the pathology of a collective ego. (244)

An example of a collective mind is the aforementioned *ubuntu*, “I am because we are” (Daley 2014). Peace should be based on forms of collectivity that break with the (neo)liberal subject’s fear and violent defense of their individual self.

⁵⁴ New research in neuroscience is suggesting, precisely, the existence of a collective mind (Caicedo Mera 2014).

Energetic cultures welcome diverse and new elements, whereas moral or modern projects guided by a One Truth tend to attack and eliminate alternatives. The capitalist West's obsession with 'growth'—of population, territory through discoveries, and the economy, as necessary conditions for capitalism—is an antagonistic imaginary: to grow, expand, and prosper irrespective of its pejorative overcomes. The meeting of those for whom peace is material growth and individual security with either peace as hospitality or an energetic approach that “have to be open and vulnerable in order to understand themselves and in order to exist,” (Dietrich 2012: 101) is lethal:

The antinomy between these open, own, vernacular, and energetic concepts of peace (which in purely linguistic terms can be traced from northern Europe as far back as the ancient Indian *prinati*, for enjoying or relishing) and the spreading moral peace of the institutional state and Church, as imagined by Cicero and Augustine, could not be greater. A history of violence, repression, and annihilation arises from their encounter because the vernacular peaces have to be open and vulnerable in order to understand themselves and in order to exist, while moral peace is often designed in a dualistic and exclusionary manner. (Dietrich 2012: 101)

This dynamic is brutally exemplified in Christopher Columbus' conquest of the Arawak and Taínos (Chasteen 2011; Zinn 1999c) and through the ongoing colonization of Latin America. The lesson here is that there are limits to peace as hospitality or to energetic approaches. The *transrelational peace* that I propose, therefore, if it wishes to survive modernity's extermination project against anything “Other” that it cannot co-opt and commodify, is dependent upon a strategic politics that includes protection measures but not the defense of life or security for its own sake through eliminating others.

5 Transrational peace

Ultimately, Dietrich (2012; 2013; 2014) proposes *transrational peace* to integrate peace as harmony, justice, security, and plural truth peace into one multi-dimensional peace of “dynamic equilibrium” (Dietrich 2014: 49). The goal is to

neutralize the peace families' apparent contradictions towards a balance among all their elements. He borrows the term transrational from Wilber (1995) (despite rejecting Wilber's evolutionary epistemology) to reveal how peace is both internally and externally constituted and to speak to a peace rooted in external rational analysis (a la postmodern peace) while also exceeding rationality (like energetic peace). As a guide for peace workers in conflict settings, rational evaluation must be combined with energetic attunement to the multiple layers of conflict given that reason is unable to capture, express, and understand certain parts of the human experience: "the spiritual layer is principally accessible for every person but it is hard to say anything about it, precisely because it is trans-rational, beyond reason" (Dietrich 2014: 50). This framework stresses that for effective conflict transformation and peacebuilding, all elements and aspects affect one another and must be accounted for: the spiritual, mental, emotional, and cultural, in addition to sexuality, material needs, and societal structures. To quote Dietrich (2014),

No episode is ever a strictly inter-personal or inter-societal conflict, but always a transpersonal or trans-societal one – the disruption of the relational distance within a single system. ... all individual and social interrelations in the conflict system must be considered. (52)

Rather than a vague insistence upon 'nonviolence,' transrational peace provides a situated method for theorizing and practicing peace. Without using these terms, the process of dialog, reconciliation, and accords between hostile actors in the Philippines described by Woon (2014) reflects such an approach. While Dietrich (2014) argues that "elicitive conflict transformation" is the corollary methodology for transrational peace research, I find that the latter's methodological approach for peacebuilding is already embedded within the concept: a rational and non-rational dialog and analysis of

conflicts and corresponding tactics. In fact, there are parallels with Fanon's (2008) methodology of the social diagnostic, Freire's (1974) pedagogy of the oppressed, and Fals Borda and Rahman's (1991) participatory action research. For geographies of peace, transrational peace's particular usefulness is how it lends towards deeper conceptualizations of peace itself.

CONCLUSION: RADICAL TRANSRELATIONAL PEACE

Critical geographers of peace have made key contributions to peace research. In addition to enhancing the critique of modern, liberal peace (Daley 2014; Darling 2014), they have shown how peace is a spatial process that is contextually specific (Koopman 2014; P. Williams 2013; Woon 2015; Loyd 2012). They have illustrated how peace is a political discourse employed both for repression (A. Ross 2011) and liberation (McConnell 2014). I point to the transrational peace approach as a framework for further conceptualizing peace at different scales that exceed a) vague notions of harmony that ignore power relations, b) the modern, liberal 'peace' of 'security' through state order and repression, and c) a resigned moral peace of salvation in the afterlife. I share this review of Dietrich's work to inspire other peace geographers to incorporate the Many Peaces into their scholarship, as it has inspired mine.

While I appreciate the holistic approach of transrationality and elicitive conflict transformation, I believe we can conceive of and practice peace beyond conflict resolution-transformation settings facilitated by peace workers. I also remain wary of this framework's emphasis on reason and the mental sphere. Dietrich (2014) ventures to assert that "conflicts are created in the minds of human beings. ... [They] are rarely

triggered only by an imbalance of resource supply or by a clash of mere material interests” (56). Here, I think that the terminology of rationality and of the mind undermines his argument about the interdependence of the personal, societal, material, spiritual, internal, and external. And I fear there is a danger insisting that conflicts are primarily mental. This diminishes the materiality of violence and antagonism. Transrationality seems to fall into a trap it sets out to challenge: that peace and peacebuilding are not only about one personal or societal issue, but inherently about their fusion, relationality, and interdependence.

For this reason, I prefer to frame peace as *trans-relational*, similar to an energetic praxis, where the prefix ‘trans’ is used to signal not ‘beyond’ but rather *through* and *across* relational ontologies (De la Cadena 2010; Escobar 2010). What Dietrich describes as *transrational*—the fusion and interdependence of the personal, societal, mental, and material—I prefer to express with the term *dignity*, following the lexicon of my interlocutors in the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, Colombia. Dignity, as explained by member Doña Brígida González, incorporates a) material-livelihood needs such as “shelter, health, education, and land where you can farm,” plus b) sociopolitical elements and the question of conscience: “to not live with the armed actors ... or be complicit in the atrocities and demagoguery of the government,” as well as c) a personal and spiritual component of “growing stronger in yourself” (personal interview, 2011).

Yet a merely energetic-relational approach is not enough to resist the “global land grab” (Peluso and Lund 2011), the “culture of terror” in sites of neocolonial resource extraction (Taussig 1984), and the drastic imbalances of the capitalist modern world-system (Dietrich 2002; Wallerstein 2004). Transrelational peace thus requires an anti-

systemic politics, as rupture with the violent divisions and demarcations of modern warfare to cultivate alternative territories and worlds through relations of radical solidarity (Escobar 2008; Reyes 2015b).

Therefore, I argue that a ‘plurality of the peaces’ is insufficient for theorizing peace when certain ‘peaces’ function to eliminate other forms, peoples, and beings. Modernity-coloniality is an antagonism: there is gratuitous violence against the racialized other and violent subordinations even within the ‘included’ civil society, i.e., working class, precarious, non-heterosexual, women, and Leftist whites. There is only peace if there is dignity *for* but also *beyond* the group or person in question. I thus propose the spatially practiced *radical transrelational peace through and across networks of solidarity and dignity* as a referential qualifier for other peace theories and projects: Is a particular ‘peace’ constituted by or undermining dignity within as well as beyond it?

Radical transrelational peace thus questions isolating contexts from one another and argues for a more nuanced understanding of how multiple ‘locals’ function in a globalized world. It intends to inspire scholars to theorize not only *how* dominant forms of ‘peace’ manifest but also what peace ‘otherwise’ might be. Of course, unless peace is a situated politics across scales “it will never have any social power and will remain an abstraction in the brains of peace researchers” (Dietrich 2002: 55).

Here, I diverge from Wolfgang’s (Dietrich 2012) postmodern recommendation against theorists making definitive assertions of what ‘truly’ constitutes peace for them, according to the logic that universalizing claims are inherently violent (2-3). In the world, we have to act, requiring judgments and decisions regarding particular concepts and maneuvers. Therefore, I articulate *transrelational peace*, not as an attempt to fix a

definition, but to provoke critique and thus move the theoretical discussion, and particular peace practices, into new directions.

Moreover, this dissertation theorizes peace in conversation with the thought and action of people that actually use and were asked about the term. Surely, useful theory on peace has emerged from scholarship in contexts in which the term is not explicitly used by the actors involved (Dietrich 2012; Laliberte 2014; Loyd 2012). But the Colombian case—where people are directly debating what “peace” means—is especially fruitful for theorizing the term. This case-study and approach reiterate how peace is a strategic discourse (McConnell 2014) for both state and non-state actors, and prioritizes the too-often ignored praxis of social movements (M. I. Casas-Cortés, Osterweil, and Powell 2008; Gómez Correal 2011) of Indigenous and African descent in which peace is a political practice much broader than a desire to ‘finally’ achieve the supposed ‘order’ and ‘security’ of liberal democracy. These diverse understandings and practices of peace in Colombia today are the subject of my next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

“PEACE DOES NOT COME FROM THEM”: A SOCIAL CARTOGRAPHY OF THE MANY ‘PEACES’ IN COLOMBIA

If the “situation” or “contradiction” in Colombia is fundamentally one of racist and patriarchal war, then the “politics” of rupture will have to be a peace that creates an alternative to that war (Reyes, personal communication, 2013). Given that “peace” is a strategic discourse (McConnell 2014) used by a variety of actors, in this section I will proceed to analyze the array of the country’s perspectives on peace and whether or not they suggest alternatives to the war.

The “peace process” negotiation between the Santos administration and FARC guerrilla group has incited a rich terrain of debate about peace. Colombians’ and accompaniers’ frame peace at different scales, including the interpersonal, communal, and national. And these ideas and projects are diverse, with noticeable overlaps with the notions of peace reviewed above from (Daley 2014; Dietrich 2012; Megoran 2011; Muñoz 2001; A. Ross 2011).

People’s assertions as to what constitutes peace range from a) achieving the state’s monopoly on the use of legitimate force, which requires ending the “internal armed conflict” between the guerrillas and the government; b) reconciliation not only between the armed groups but also, and more importantly so, between the to-be-demobilized combatants and communities and civil society; c) achieving a social state of right through the fulfillment of state-guaranteed rights to political participation, land,

and basic services like education, health care, and housing, as well as justice to end structural impunity; d) the affirmation or rejection of the country's dominant economic development model spearheaded by large-scale mining and agribusiness; e) autonomy for Indigenous- and African-descendant communities; to f) conflict resolution through nonviolent interpersonal communication. As we will see, most of these visions reflect modern approaches to peace, through security and state order and rights, but certain reflections also speak to peace as an energetic or political process and experience, thus inspiring and guiding my notion of a radical transrelational peace.

Before I proceed to survey these voices, I would like to briefly include and analyze Juan Martínez Restrepo's framing of peace. Known as Juan Mares, he is a recognized poet and writer from the city of Apartadó in Urabá. One of his poems, published in the Apartadó-based newspaper *El Heraldito de Urabá*, was included in a book *Poesía por la paz* (Poetry for peace) delivered to the negotiating table in Havana. For Mares, "peace is having the consciousness amidst the universe to know how small we are before the incommensurability of the universe" (Martínez Restrepo 2013).

On the one hand, this statement speaks to thinking about peace beyond a specific individual experience and instead in relation to the larger universe encompassed by a multitude of beings. It reflects an "energetic" peace stressing interconnectivity and might lead towards deconstructing the supposed autonomous, liberal, and individual subject. On the other hand, this framing of peace lacks the vision of a *politics* of peace concretely created through commitment and organization. Such a peace of resignation seems counter-productive and even dangerous in a moment where actors across Colombia insist that peace is something that communities have to actively participate in and create. It is for this reason that the notion of a *radical transrelational peace*

includes an understanding of all being's interdependence but combines it with a fundamental emphasis on the political praxis necessary to break with modern state 'peace' that is actually a war. The current conjuncture reflects a situation in which resigned visions of peace are being challenged and alternative notions are being enunciated and practiced.

This chapter is organized as follows. I will begin with the perspectives of state officials, including military officers and other high-ranking officials. I will then present an array of social movement actors' ideas. Finally, I will transition to focus on the perspective of the Peace Community of San José and other racialized communities in resistance.

STATE PERSPECTIVES AND PROJECTS

It is common to hear security officers—along with many in the general public—define peace in terms of its traditional, modern understanding as the lack of direct violence and theft. A Colombian National Police officer expressed such a view in a personal interview: “Peace is living together peacefully. Where people feel tranquility, safe, and that they aren't going to be robbed” (2014). Members of the Colombian Armed Forces also described peace in terms of security and emphasize the role of the military. For instance, in an interview with a national newspaper, Minister of Defense Juan Carlos Pinzón argued that:

Peace requires an Armed Forces that are strong, equipped, and present in the entire national territory ... with the capacity to face delinquency and the criminal organizations that might arise in the future. ... Colombia is going to have peace either through reason or through force. ... Today, Colombia begins to have a

hopeful future [because of] the presence of the Armed Forces. ... With security, real peace will come to every Colombian. (*El Tiempo* 2014b).

In this newspaper interview, Pinzón asserted that, in fact, post-conflict has already arrived to the majority of Colombia's people and national territory due to the work of the Armed Forces. In so doing, the minister of defense minimized the value of negotiation talks, since state forces are supposedly already closing in on victory.

Yet all of the army officials I interviewed explicitly affirmed their support—and that of the National Army as a whole—for the “peace process” with the FARC. When asked what peace meant, one officer stated:

Peace is comprehensive security. The soldier that provides security [arm-in-arm], with the teacher, the businessman who provides work, and with the person that farms the land. And, the land is to be exploited! ... You know, exploited, where the people benefit! (Personal interview, 2014)

This statement was accompanied by two notable gestures. First, as the officer spoke about the different actors, he raised his arms to simulate their standing together with their arms embracing one another, shoulder-to-shoulder. Second, when I asked him to qualify what he meant by “the land is to be exploited,” his response included a making digging motion with his hands.

Both of these Armed Forces officers' statements frame peace as security enforced by the military. Pinzón expressed a top-down vision across the bounded nation-state, while the interviewed officer affirmed the importance of integrated relationships between military officers and civil society groups; such a view inherently rejects proposals by certain Indigenous groups and peace communities to not live alongside any armed group. In addition, the officer openly expressed support for an extractivist economic model.

These positions speak of and enact a peace as the lack of open warfare, where the state achieves a monopoly on the use of armed force. Commonly held by members of the Colombian Armed Forces and also by sectors of society at large, this view of peace through force parallels a more extreme view, the position of ex-President and current Senator Álvaro Uribe, who has opposed negotiations with guerrilla groups in favor of continued armed confrontation until the guerrillas' surrender or elimination.⁵⁵ In any case, even the very naming of the government-FARC negotiations as a “peace process” assumes that the demobilization of this non-state armed actor through negotiation constitutes a form of peace. This follows the logic of Galtung’s (1964) “negative peace”—the absence of open hostilities, in contrast to “positive peace” as the integration of human society through economic and social justice—but a form of peace nonetheless. This is not to deny that an accord with the FARC would include agreements on agrarian policy, victims, and oppositional parties’ participation in electoral politics. But what discursively constitutes this negotiation as a “peace process” is not discussions on land or congressional representation⁵⁶ but the goal of the guerrillas’ demobilization. It is for this reason that I prefer to refer to this process as the government-FARC *negotiations* and always write “peace process” in quotes. This ‘peace’ of the state’s monopoly on legitimate force is the modern, liberal view of peace critiqued by a multitude of scholars (Daley 2014; Dietrich 2012; Foucault 2003; Gelderloos 2007; Loyd 2012; A. Ross 2011; P. Williams, Megoran, and McConnell 2014); it is based on fear and mistrust, and is

⁵⁵ Nonetheless, Uribe and his Democratic Center Party’s hardline stance has seemingly softened in recent months. In April 2015, they shifted away from an insistence completely against the talks altogether and towards merely reiterating their insistence that the FARC guerrillas “responsible for atrocious crimes” do not avoid jail through the accord. Colombian Senator Armando Beneditti interprets this shift as an indication that “the process is at a stage in which there is no turning back” (*El Tiempo* 2015a).

⁵⁶ Congresses routinely legislate on land and justice policy and this is not framed as “peace.”

state-centric, top-down, militaristic, and patriarchal (Daley 2014). It is not even an effective strategy for obtaining so-called “negative peace”: Harbom, Högladh, and Wallenstein (2006) point out that most liberal peace accords fail within five years, leading some scholars to assert that “peace” or “post-conflict” is merely the time between the last and the next war (Dalby 2014; Kirsch and Flint 2011). Nevertheless, or precisely *due* to the power relations enacted through it, the conception of peace as state forces achieving a monopoly on the legitimate use of force remains a ubiquitous conception and project.

Non-military State officials tend to speak about peace in a broader sense, beyond achieving the government’s monopoly on the use of armed force. Both the High Commissioner for Peace Sergio Jaramillo Caro and President Juan Manuel Santos are indicative here. Consider Jaramillo Caro’s arguments:

The base for constructing peace is citizen participation, of the communities in their territories (*Semana* 2014). ... It is increasing the reach and strengthening the effectiveness of institutions in the territories (Vargas Velásquez 2015).

Further, President Juan Manuel Santos has spoken about peace in the following ways:

We will achieve peace with the stick or the carrot ... Peace is not limited to signing an agreement with the guerrillas (*La Nación* 2014). ... Absolute peace is eradicating misery and Colombians having dignified shelter and employment. We will progress when we are together, united, in order to overcome resentments. (*El País* 2014)

These proclamations appeal to national unity, local communities’ increased participation within state realms of politics, and for increased access to basic services. Accepting the role of the Armed Forces as security enforcers within the nation-state, these positions also speak to citizens’ rights and well-being, arguing that peace is constituted by meeting people’s basic necessities, including their rights to life, food, housing, health care, education, and employment, which are either provided or

guaranteed by the state. This reflects what Dietrich (2012) categorizes as a moral-modern peace of ‘everyone having enough.’ For Chernick (2009), “In Colombia, peace basically means the construction of a more participatory and inclusive regime and of a legitimate state presence throughout the national territory” (93-94).

Such views remain focused on the national polity and a social state of right, i.e., a welfare state in which citizens’ needs are guaranteed by the state. They are consistent with the theory that what plagues Colombia is a weak and/or absent state. They do not call into question the presence of State institutions—including but not limited to the military—as a force of violence⁵⁷ (Escobar 2008; Gómez Correal 2015; Hylton 2006). Rather, they insist that those institutions expand their reach and achieve legitimacy. They signal the persistence of Thomas Hobbes’ prescription that there is only peace through people’s submission to the sovereign, although, of course, a social state of right, a la Rousseau, in theory presumes a democratic and *legitimate* governmental system, as well. Indeed, the latter is the insistence of Santos’ administration, representative as it is of the Bogotá-based elite. As argued by Gómez Correal (2015), for Santos, such ‘peace’ will inaugurate Colombia’s arrival as a modern country, ignoring that Colombia’s violence is already indicative of the modern world-systems’ peripheries.

⁵⁷ Of course, members of the political opposition within the Colombian State challenge this hegemonic position by signaling the State’s role as the root actor in the war. For instance, Iván Cepeda and Alirio Uribe of the Left *Polo Democrático Alternativo* (Alternative Democratic Pole) Party spoke to an international FORPP delegation about how the “peace process” is fruitless without a comprehensive “social transformation” and “justice against impunity” (field notes, 2014). For their comments on the “peace process,” see also Cepeda (2015) and Uribe (2015).

NON-STATE, SOCIAL MOVEMENT PERSPECTIVES I: SOCIAL STATE OF RIGHT

Some social movement actors' perspectives will overlap with some of the above framings, such as President Santos' affirmation that peace is not constituted through the negotiations alone. But for the most part, Colombian social movements present a sharp contrast to the state officials' visions grounded in an ideology of state benevolence. Almost all of these social movement members challenge the position that the state's Armed Forces play a positive role in the production of 'peace,' however they define the latter.

The primary exception among my interlocutors was one activist's assertion that "those that don't want peace are the illegal armed groups; we the Colombians are those that want peace" (field notes, 2014). Similar to state discourse, this problematic framing leaves out the state as a central actor of violence (Gómez Correal 2015) and also infers that the members of the paramilitaries and guerrillas are not also Colombians. While an outlier among those that I interviewed and worked with, I came across this sentiment frequently in the mainstream media and everyday conversations with taxi drivers, service providers, vendors, and family members or friends of my interlocutors. It expresses a sentiment of "can't we just have peace?!" which is in fact a reluctance and refusal to critically engage with the historical, cultural, and political conditions of the war. As such, this lack of a political or ruptural peace thus perpetuates the capitalist, patriarchal, and racist modern 'peace' of state and military authority.

To proceed with a brief introduction to the other perspectives, no non-state actor that I consulted argued that a government-FARC accord would constitute peace. Most

interlocutors challenged that idea, and I include those arguments in my quotes despite the risk of overly repeating the claim. In so doing, my intention is for readers to feel the sense of a) the extent to which debates about peace turn around the negotiations; b) how strong this position is among Colombian activists, human rights defenders, and communities in resistance; and c) how from that common sentiment, there are a variety of differing qualifications about what peace is or requires.

Almost all of these social movement actors demand more profound transformations. These concern unequal distributions of land, wealth, and basic services; interpersonal conflict resolution; reconciliation with (ex-)combatants; re-subjectifications as individuals and communities; the demilitarization of institutions and minds; and finally, to the most radical view, of communities' autonomy and working towards an alternative world. Chernick (2015) notes how across the country, communities' lack of a belief in an official, formal peace process—given the failure of past state-guerrilla-paramilitary negotiations, not to mention the ongoing war—communities in resistance have attempted to counter the war-peace of paramilitarism or guerrilla insurgency by taking peace into their own hands and creating it on their own.

Of course, some of these actors welcome the negotiations to deescalate the hot war and as a political opening to write a new social agenda. Others, meanwhile, assert that the talks are merely an attempt by the armed groups to divvy up the spoils of war. For some organizations and individuals, post-conflict is on its way, while others reject such a framing. The latter position insists that any “post-conflict” period that fails to face the social and economic contradictions at the root of the war is rather the continuation of the war in a new way or “politics as war by other means” (Foucault 2003). Let us proceed to explore these different ideas in turn.

Consistent with the scholarly critiques of normative peace, one activist questions the framing of peace altogether. From the *Red Juvenil de Medellín* (Youth Network of Medellín) largely comprised of conscientious objectors, urban community activists, and feminists, he rooted his position in their philosophical position of nonviolence. For them, this is not a pacifism that “turns the other cheek” but direct action to confront capitalism, patriarchy, and sexism, and rejecting the logics of armed struggle. This member referenced one of the organization’s slogans: “No army defends peace,” adding that “you are aren’t going to solve anything killing men and women” (group interview, 2011). Such views have been categorized as “principled” nonviolence against all killing, rather than merely a “strategic” nonviolence as pragmatic action that does not necessarily preclude organized armed resistance; this sentiment of a principled or moralistic peace against all armies and killing will re-surface below among Peace Community members. Specifically arguing against “peace,” this member of the *Red Juvenil* argued:

The concept of peace is very relative. The United States lives peace internally [sic]. ... Peace is something very romantic, uncritical. Because you speak about peace when the guns are silenced. But there are other issues, like a dignified life, that people in the [poor] urban neighborhoods have the minimum, basic services, human rights. I have problems with that concept. (group interview, 2011)

This is a critique of the way peace is used discursively as an opposite of “direct” violence that in fact perpetuates violence. The statement reflects many social movement actors’ disenchantment with the term in relation to country’s mainstream “peace movement” that arose in the 1990s to insist upon a negotiated solution to the guerrilla-government armed conflict. Precisely due to the fact that this “peace movement” had generally focused on the guerrillas’ demobilization without necessarily pushing for more structural changes (Isacson and Rojas Rodríguez 2009), radical or Leftist Colombians

have commonly resisted framing their struggles through the terminology of “peace.” To the contrary, the latter have distinguished themselves as a “human rights” or “justice” movement that challenges structural impunity and inequalities regarding land, income, and political participation (Koopman 2014). In so doing, this reflects a rejection of that form of modern ‘peace’ through ‘security’ provided by the military. Further, this reasoning also rejects the “negative” and “positive” peace framework: there is no reason to call anything peace unless it is constituted by dignity for the excluded and oppressed.

However, partially due to the current “peace process” conjuncture, the majority of my interlocutors—rather than rejecting the concept of peace—look to not only interrogate the dominant modern-moral “peace,” but also re-frame and re-invent it, proposing alternative notions, arrangements, and practices.

For many, peace is constituted through the fulfillment of the promise of a social state of right (*estado social de derecho*), i.e., the state formation rooted in rights and where everyone’s material needs are guaranteed. A student activist argued, “Nonviolence and peace is the guarantee that all civil rights will be fulfilled for everyone in a city, department, or country” (personal interview, 2011). Congruently, a member of the Awasqa youth collective asserted that you cannot talk about peace until people have their basic needs met—electricity and health care, for instance—and have an appropriate education rooted in the will, skills, and knowledge that are needed by the local and national population (personal interview, 2013). Speaking to Colombia’s pervasive inequalities of land and wealth, Carmen Palencia (2012)—then legal representative of the land restitution organization *Tierra y Vida* (Land and Life)—asserted:

Peace will not be constructed with the laying down of arms. It must be constructed by making life more equal in this country. ... I speak about the

construction of a social fabric with schools, highways, health centers, all those things that would make life easy for the *campesinos*.

In other words, peace is a process through and towards more equality among Colombians, enacted through the delivery of basic rights and services. These views speak to a peace through the fulfillment of the promise of a Colombian civil society.

A congruent sentiment common in Colombia argues that unless there are economic opportunities for ex-combatants, especially rural and urban youth, they will merely form new or join existing armed groups (Chernick 2009), as occurred following the demobilizations of the paramilitary United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and the guerrilla Popular Liberation Army (EPL) in the 2000s and 1990s, respectively. For instance, another member of the organization *Tierra y Vida* argued,

The government claims that peace is achieved through demobilizations. But that is not the case. Because you demobilize one group and from them arise five new [competing] groups. That is to increase rather than diminish [war]" (personal interview, 2011).

In a conversation with an international delegation, a Black community leader in Chocó concurred, and included reparations in the list of what is required for peace in a legitimate state.

The topic of peace is extensive. For there to be peace in Colombia: the state has to recompense all the inhabitants of Colombia. It will be difficult for the conflict to end despite all of us saying that we want a peace agreement. There are some [preliminary agreements] but lots of inconformity [failure to follow through on them]. Peace is simple: education, housing, and health services. They will arrive at an accord but it will only be peace for the armed actors; they will benefit, and other groups that do not will emerge. (field notes, 2014)

It is notable how he affirms that peace is both an extensive topic but also simple, in that the state reforms and services that would ensure peace are substantial but also clearly obvious.

Defining peace in terms of a social state of right conforms to a modern-moral vision, even as it attempts to break through the Hobbesian ‘security’ state model. Of course, the promise of liberal democracy is an alluring project, as reflected here. Yet trying to ‘achieve’ the promise of justice and equality from within the system that is structurally opposed or unable to guarantee and reach them has proved to be a limited strategy. Firstly, for example, Brown (1995) warns how looking to the state for ‘justice’ actually re-entrenches the state that is responsible for the harm. Secondly, that ‘civil society’ has never been a harmonious or equal societal structure. It has always been structured by a racial hierarchy, in which the ‘good life’ of the working class and white population was always in relation to the subjugation of and gratuitous violence against blacks (Wilderson 2010; Goldberg 2009). Thirdly, finance capitalism, neoliberal structural adjustment, and the free trade agreements of past decades attempting to make such reforms irreversible have transformed the modern state into a ‘mafia’ security state in which the ability for re-distribution or guaranteeing services within the state has increasingly been made a legislative impossibility, thus precluding a potential return to the welfare state, even if desired (Estrada Álvarez 2006; Reyes 2015b). Of course, demands for reforms are crucial as part of a broader struggle for a different world, although that necessitates remaining cognizant of and pushing beyond the co-optation of struggle within those channels (Wolf 2015). Nonetheless, the current conjuncture of the crisis of capitalist reproduction suggests that an alternative peace to the modern ‘peace’ requires other visions that go beyond state reforms and access to services. In the following section, I explore visions that instead insist upon transformations of interpersonal relations.

NON-STATE, SOCIAL MOVEMENT PERSPECTIVES II: INTERPERSONAL TRANSFORMATIONS

For many social movement actors, peace is an issue of interpersonal communication and reconciliation. Take for instance, Ricardo Esquivia, Executive Director of *Sembradopaz* (Planting Peace) in Sincelejo, Sucre. A large part of this NGO's work is to organize *campesino* communities in the areas around Sincelejo, as in the Montes de María region. This area's population lived through an intense period of mass forced displacement due to guerrilla, paramilitary, and army combat in recent decades; today, attacks have largely subsided and the area is now branded by the government as one of laboratories for "post-conflict" rural Colombia, despite the tenuousness of such a proposal given that *campesino* livelihoods as subsistence farmers is undermined by the agrarian transformation to agribusiness oil palm plantations (Berman Arévalo 2016). *Sembradopaz*'s work includes small-scale agricultural projects as well as conflict mediation and reconciliation programs amongst *campesino* leaders from villages stigmatized as guerrilla or paramilitary hamlets. To a FORPP delegation, Esquivia spoke to the grassroots work of his NGO, affirming the importance of post-demobilization reconciliation:

It is good for the guns to stop for our work to continue, that the armed groups find reconciliation. But peace does not come from them. For there to be peace, communities need to be prepared to receive the guerrillas that will demobilize in order to make the peace agreements a reality. (field notes, 2014)

Esquivia is among the voices that support the peace talks and an eventual accord. However, his assertion that "peace does not come from them" is a strong rebuttal of the dominant modern peaces that position state policy and action at the vanguard of peacemaking. Rather, his idea of reconciliation insists upon transformations that have

to take place on individual and collective levels. Such a perspective speaks to the need to actually build a civil society, without which any peace accords will remain on paper and in theory. He also insisted that peace requires reparations and agrarian reform.

Also focusing on the scale of the local, a community leader from one particular *campesino* community located peace at the scale of the home. He affirmed that peace is a reconciliation process that must take place among family members. Similar to Esquivia, the following quote, without necessarily saying so, nonetheless alludes to the fact that many Colombian families include people that have fought on different sides of the war, some as guerrillas and others as paramilitaries, army soldiers, or police officers:

Peace is harmony within the family, when you are able to talk through disagreements. Peace is not constructed in Havana; there, they only leave behind the guns. Peace has to take place in families, [through] reconciliation between parents and children. (field notes, 2014)

Of course, such a comment implicitly implies that the accords *will* bring about a demobilization—although he is obviously only referring to the guerrillas. Other people and organizations, in quotes included above and some that follow below, strongly contest that such an outcome is a given.

Another *campesino* leader from that same community agreed that the home must be considered when thinking about peace. He argued that poverty is not a preclusion of peace, even if that is not to dismiss education and state rights:

Peace is when I can be in my home in tranquility, even if I'm poor. But education and granting rights is necessary. For there to be peace, we have to be prepared to forgive, and forgiveness comes from God. (field notes, 2014)

This diverges from what we might call the Marxist peace where everyone is equal.

Conversely, for him, forgiveness and the divine are foundational to peace. This reflects a

moral peace, where peace comes through God, although this idea is not one where peace is only possible in the afterlife, as Dietrich (2012) signals for the “great moral peaces.”

The idea of peace through reconciliation, and its mantra of forgiving *and forgetting*, is a widespread vision in Colombia, largely traceable to the influence of the Catholic and growing evangelical churches. Such a perspective has been harshly critiqued by scholars and victims movements as perpetuating judicial impunity at the root of the country’s ongoing violence (Gómez Correal 2012a; Gómez Correal 2015; Gómez Muller 2008). I would argue that the “reconciliation” Esquivia speaks of above is not the hegemonic reconciliation proposed by the Colombian elite, which proposes that guerrillas’ and other dissidents ‘reconcile’ by re-integrating themselves into the mainstream society and renouncing their demands for justice and social transformation (Gómez Correal 2015). Rather, Esquivia speaks about reconciliation between and within communities with respect to armed combatants’ re-integration, in addition to necessary agrarian reform and State reparations to the war’s victimized subjects.

To proceed, the idea of peace being constituted through interpersonal dynamics is also the focus of an urban student activist. Building from his comment about peace through civil rights, he argues that peace is conditioned upon nonviolent forms of communication to face and resolve differences and conflicts. On peace, he said:

It is having the ability to tell someone, calmly and not aggressively, that they made a mistake or that I don't agree with them. ... It is to not aggravate anyone physically, economically, politically, or psychologically. ... The state uses bullets to intimate and disappear [people]. (personal interview, 2011)

Such a perspective mirrors “positive peace,” a state civil society in which there is no direct, structural, or cultural violence. Additionally, he is contrasting a dominant means of resolving conflict in this society—through force and guns—to an alternative mode of

interpersonal conflict resolution, where differences in opinion are respected and debated without killing the person with whom you disagree. Considering what Gómez Correal (2015) signals as Colombia and modernity's "emotional habitus of hate" against the subordinated other, to insist that disagreements are resolved through dialog is in fact a radical proposal and rupture in the modern-colonial world. Of course, such resolution is predicated upon a situation of "conflict," in which mutual agreement is possible; the modern-colonial "antagonism" makes interpersonal communication insufficient for rupturing with the contradiction of racist and classist dispossession. Yet, the insistence on nonviolent communication is something that organizations can implement as part of their radical political praxis immediately without waiting for broader structural transformations (Gelderloos 2007), as seen in the Peace Community's reconciliation committee and its overall organizational structure.

Two of the international companions also affirmed the importance of interpersonal communication. One argued that peace is constituted by eliminating automatic weapons and by resolving conflicts through dialog rather than with weapons; this included tempering one's reactive reactions to things and instead responding thoughtfully (personal interview, 2014). Such a view corresponds with a "principled nonviolence," in which all physical harm with weapons is considered "violence." Another companion also spoke to this point, yet expanded upon it and pointed to the tensions of utopic visions given that conflict is a central part of human life. She said,

Peace is where people are able to live where they are not harmed and not harming others, but that is still so complicated! [Peace is] the possibility and opportunities to have what we need: access to food, healthy and good food, water, and education. Peace can be conceived within a utopic vision that seems possible, but humans do thrive on conflict. Peace is having empathy and understanding for one another, and communicating with one another in a way that doesn't harm

others, and opening channels of understanding given our different upbringings and ideas. (personal interview, 2014)

Such a view integrates both Dietrich's (2012) moral peace of 'everyone having enough' and Muñoz's (2001) idea of an "imperfect peace," in which cooperation *and* conflict are constitutive to human interaction. As such, conflict is also a source of possibility, of difference, of new ideas and ways of doing, albeit in situations in which such difference is embraced, cultivated, and generated. This accompanier's reflection that this "is still so complicated!" was made in reference to how capitalism has made some people's social and material reproduction come at the expense of others' reproduction (Federici 2010); this gets to the heart of the impediments to peace as dignity within the modern world-system, structured as the latter is by exploitation and dependency.

Similarly, another accompanier, departing from the theoretical position of a "positive" peace and reflecting on what he perceived as peace for the Peace Community and for himself, argued that, to paraphrase, peace is the smooth working of human interaction without resorting to physical or brute group force; it is an egalitarian social and political structure, where people are able to live the livelihood they want or that makes them who they are as a person or as a community (personal interview, 2013). What these accompaniers and the student activist whose quote preceded them are apparently calling for is a balance between people being able to live and be who they are, without that coming at the expense of others, and that this requires particular strategies of communication and conflict resolution.

To continue with the theme of a balance between people's needs, a neighborhood community organizer in Medellín pointed to peace through "equilibrium." He questioned the utility of peace as a framing for organizational projects, preferring "life,"

as an open-ended, never-ending process of construction and re-invention. In other words, I would correlate Muñoz's (2001) project of a processual "imperfect peace" with how this organization talks about "life" rather than "peace." Yet this individual did not discount peace as a useless concept, and as such reflected a "postmodern" as well as "transpersonal" peace (Dietrich 2012) constructed through relations within and between people:

Peace is achieved through a cultural transformation, where we convince each other that neither do they nor I have the only truth, but rather that we construct the truth together. Peace is not even a condition. It is something within each person. ... Many say that peace isn't the absence of war, and they are correct. Peace is an equilibrium between all of the conditions of being a human being. Peace is achieved when I'm not hungry, nor lack health or education, but also an equilibrium among those things, on an equal plane. It doesn't only have to do with me but is in the community. I can have money and all my basic needs met, but if I see my neighbor hunger, for me there isn't peace. Peace is achieved through everyone having their needs in equilibrium. (personal interview, 2011)

Therefore, peace is only possible through material well-being, but there has to be an equilibrium between the needs of everyone. Peace is also much more than everyone "having enough" with regards to material needs; there is a communal, subjective, cultural aspect as well. Dietrich's (2012) postmodern, transrational, and moral peaces are thus not mutually exclusive here; this community organizer's vision reflects a comprehensive one I might describe as a relational or transpersonal moral peace. Embedded within it is a postmodern critique of any one person owning 'the Truth,' yet there is the simultaneous insistence that there is a 'Truth' to be constructed communally, through the production of collective subjects.

Another international accompanier, Michaela Soellinger, Dietrich's former student, offered the following reflection.⁵⁸ She began by referencing a definition of peace that she heard during her studies:

“The breath of each individual in harmony with the holy one’s breath.” I think that’s something that sounds pretty cool. And peace, for me, is being centered, internally ... peace is relational ... transrational peace. I’m from that school. ... So peace is always between. It’s never mine or yours. ... And yet ... an ability or an environment ... not conflicting but creating a whole. ... In every instance you are in relation with some thing, somebody; you are creating something. Because it’s transforming. (personal interview, 2013)

Once again, we hear the idea that peace and conflict are oppositional, rather than the latter being a natural and generative process. What is most significant from this imaginary of peace is how brilliantly it describes a “transpersonal” peace, in which peace is internal to each person, yet always interdependent with all others; there is no reifying of the individual subject. This notion intimates that peace must always be thought and practiced from a relationality between all human beings in which there is constant transformation of all.

Also speaking in terms of transformation, a Colombian nonviolent trainer from *SERPAJ Colombia* (The Colombian branch of *Servicio Paz y Justicia*, Service of Peace and Justice) framed peace from the perspective of nonviolence. He argued that we must transform both ourselves—a la a “transpersonal” peace—but also sociocultural institutions.

⁵⁸ I am indebted to Soellinger for my articulation of *transrelational peace*. When I first transcribed the interview, I wrote “transrelational” rather than “transrational.” I heard the former partly because she had just mentioned how “peace is relational” and I was not yet familiar with transrational peace research. Only later when I followed up with her about transrelational peace did she clarify that she meant transrational peace. I find this to be a case of “dialogical performance” (Conquergood 1985) through the interview process (Pollock 2005a; Madison 2012), in which the back-and-forth conversation of defining and clarifying concepts can produce new knowledge, even through misunderstandings.

Peace is derived from active nonviolence and demilitarization; it is integral. Peace is not only the absence of war. We must demobilize our consciousness and institutions—schools, churches, families—and the society in general. Within the concept of peace is the empowerment of communities to be able to demand their rights to health, education, housing, dignified employment. [It is] social, cultural, [and] environmental. What will be signed in Havana is not peace but a cease of hostilities. We believe in an alternative power of the poor, the victimized, and the excluded. Nonviolence is a lifestyle. Those that look to make denunciations in this country, are eliminated. (field notes, 2014)

Similar to the student activist who in his narrative about interpersonal communication included that “the state uses bullets to intimate and disappear,” this activist integrates the same critique, insisting on its consideration when imagining and creating peace. Interestingly, he argues that the task is “*demilitarization*” rather than *demobilization*. In other words, the demobilization of the armed groups may—but is unlikely to—contribute to a widespread demilitarization of minds, bodies, institutions, and places, although the latter is the central task at hand. Here, politics is again central to peace; the latter is not an abstract concept but is linked with a set of practices, including demands of the state, community organizing, and workshops.

I will conclude this subsection with a statement from an Awasqa organizer that synthesizes much of the sentiments of the actors included here, of peace as and through interpersonal transformation. “Peace is changes. Peace is transformation. For what? For satisfaction, love, well-being, life. For our maturation and fulfillment as individuals, as subjects, and as communities” (personal interview, 2013). When we speak about dignity, this is what is at stake: collective-personal transformation and love.

NON-STATE, SOCIAL MOVEMENT PERSPECTIVES III: COMMUNITIES IN RESISTANCE

My inclusion of all of the voices above is not only to honor the perspectives that people so graciously shared with me, but also to render through the text the richness of the debate, theorization, certain congruencies, and tensions on peace in Colombia today. Among the most comprehensive conceptions I encountered was one that was composed during a workshop on peace by the *Movimiento de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado* (MOVICE, Movements of Victims of State Crimes) in Bogotá. This workshop was organized and facilitated by anthropologist Diana Gómez Correal, who invited me to participate.⁵⁹

The workshop began with participants seated together as a group offering ideas about what peace meant to them. Embedded with a critique of modern peace as security and of the discourse of Colombia's post-conflict present, one person opined, "They say that we live in peace, but if there's hunger, I can't live in peace." To the contrary, peace requires (to list a variety of responses):

Tranquility and the ability to work, the means to subsist. ... An egalitarian government, where everyone shares the same fundamental rights, equality. ... Territory, without impunity or persecution. ... We should live as if we are family, in community. ... But the paramilitary groups are not welcome for me. (field notes, 2013)

Then, Diana Gómez invited the participants to form small groups and create an artistic representation of their vision of peace. As part of the group that I joined, they drafted a statement that listed a multitude of conditions necessary for peace:

⁵⁹ For an extensive ethnographic rendering of this workshop, a picture of the material art piece that accompanied the statement quoted here, and a rich analysis of this peace imaginary from the perspective of a decolonial anthropology of emotions, see Gómez Correal (2015: 423-428).

A country without hunger, with free education, dignified housing, social justice ... [and] without discrimination. We contribute to peace in Colombia by working together in a united way, sharing ideas, in order to arrive at mutual agreements. We are in solidarity with all those that suffer attacks from the armed groups. We must participate in all the protest marches to demand what belongs to us. (field notes, 2013)

This statement accompanied their artistic piece, which depicted a circle of people comprised of *campesinos*, Indigenous, and Afro-Colombians. Imprinted on the work of art was the phrase “With Unity: Peace,” in addition to “Pueblo; Afros; Indigenous; Campesinos; With solidarity, with participation; With our human rights guaranteed; With equality of rights; With social justice.”

In one sense, these demands parallel common discourses about the importance of basic rights and services. However, in addition to the common conditions mentioned by government officials—education, shelter, and employment—MOVICE’s members also affirmed the importance of equality among Colombians, where equal rights “do not remain in theory,” as Jesús Emilio Tuberquia (Moncada Hurtado, Ossa, and Caro Morales 2011a) of the Peace Community might say; they must be guaranteed, respected, and fulfilled. They affirm territory for *campesinos* to be able to provide for their own subsistence. By mentioning “impunity” and “persecution” they signal the state’s direct, institutional role in preventing what would be peace for them. Their art piece challenges the country’s racist “emotional habitus of hate” of difference (Gómez Correal 2015), by illustrating solidarity among racialized groups, an example in practice of which I will explore through the *Campesino* University.⁶⁰ However, it is neither a utopian view of the national community, insisting that such a peace does not welcome the paramilitary groups that continue to operate across the country. This parallels Esquivia’s idea of

⁶⁰ See Chapter 6 (pp. 363-370).

“reconciliation,” which requires not only a guerrilla demobilization but also the dismantling of paramilitarism.

These are concrete ideas, proposals, and actions that combine demands of the state with a program of struggle by popular organizations. MOVICE’s statement also goes beyond *Tierra y Vida*’s conception: peace is not through “making life *more equal*” in the country (Palencia 2012; emphasis mine), but where everyone *is*, in fact, equal. Moreover, rather than a vague appeal to national unity commonly found in state officials’ statements, this perspective affirms peace through the unity and solidarity among social movements.

This sense of a shared vision and project among popular movements is also reflected in the analysis of an Awasqa youth organizer:

Peace is used as a pretext by the state to advance its political and economic agenda. Peace for the rich is war for the poor. Peace for Santos means no protest against the government, and the continuation of the development model spearheaded by multinational corporations. But what the people want is sovereignty. (field notes, 2013)

A topic that has not yet surfaced among my quotes until now, this analysis focuses attention to an elephant in the room: the link between the state-driven peace process and the extractivist political economy. Of course, President Santos himself is open about this connection. As part of his attempts to gain international and national support for the peace talks, he has insisted that the development model is not under negotiation during the “peace process,” while also arguing that an accord with the guerrillas will allow for more multinational investment, such as in agribusiness and mining that

constitute two of his administrations' five "locomotives of development"⁶¹ (*El Espectador* 2014; *El Tiempo* 2014c; *El País* 2015; Ortiz Gómez 2015).

This Awasqa urban youth activist is arguing that the guerrillas' demobilization will not mean peace for most of the population unless social inequalities and the economic model of extractivism are rejected in favor of communities' and the Colombian people's self determination. On the one hand, this declaration potentially overstates the shared demands of "the people," which in fact seem to reflect different priorities given the varied nature of people's definitions of peace. Nevertheless, this analysis importantly reiterates how "peace" is used a discourse to advance particular interests (McConnell 2014). It signals the ways that actors define concepts according to their perspectives and interests (Fernandes 2009) and how the struggle for peace reflects conflicts over space, territory, and the relationships between the state and social movements.

In a symposium on the Colombian peace process at the University of North Carolina and Duke University, *Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN)* (Black Communities Process) leader Francia Márquez Mina (2015) from Cauca province emphasized that we cannot talk about peace when Indigenous and Black Colombians' livelihoods are threatened by large-scale mining projects and state, paramilitary, and guerrilla violence. She defined peace in terms of autonomy: peace is "that Indigenous and Afro communities can live according to their traditional practices in their territories." She immediately proceeded to say,

The question is if the development model is capable of [allowing] this. I do **not** believe so. We have seen in many press releases, even of the president himself

⁶¹ The other three are infrastructure, housing/construction, and innovation.

saying that the Prior Consultation⁶² process is an obstacle to development. When Prior Consultation for us is what permits us to guarantee that we as people can continue to **be**, that we can continue to be here.

In other words, the struggle over peace is a struggle over being, and life itself: the existence of Black communities. It is an ontological struggle (Escobar 2008; Gómez Correal 2015). The divergent peace projects among and between state and non-state actors thus reflect not merely a conflict to be resolved within civil society or between the government and the guerrillas, but an antagonistic racialized contradiction between life projects and territories.

A member of another Afro-Colombian community, in Chocó, also inferred that peace for her had to do with living according to their traditions:

We want that in Colombia and in the department of Chocó that [all the violence] is ended. That the armed actors disappear. There was peace, tranquility, before. We lived without electricity, in peace, without violence. We want to live like we did before. If God helps us, we will be able to return to that peace. (field notes, 2014)

Here, peace is again imagined as a “negative peace” condition that existed in the past and hopefully can be experienced again in the future. Peace here does not require acquiring modern services like electricity; it is about a return to past conditions and practices.

Yet most of the imaginaries expressed by my interlocutors and cited here reflect peace as a process and practice, of continual construction. As I now transition to Peace Community voices, we will see that peace is less about a return to a past way of life and more about peace *as* a continually created way of life already present in such

⁶² A process of “Prior Consultation” (*Consulta Previa* in Spanish) regarding any matter affecting a Colombian “ethnic” groups’ heritage and culture—such as mining or hydroelectric development projects—is the constitutional right guaranteed to recognized Indigenous and Afro-Colombian associations with collective land titles. Afro-Colombians earned this right through Law 70 of 1993.

communities. This mirrors Márquez Mina of PCN's inference that peace is not only how we 'understand' the 'concept': It is a question of spatial practice. To repeat the phrasing of the Peace Community interviewee that opened this chapter, peace is less "*having*" and is in fact "everyone *being* together." As the Awasqa activist puts it, "It's one thing to talk about peace, another to think about it, and another very different thing to have the vocation of peace" (personal interview, 2013). Therefore, amidst a conjuncture in which peace is so hotly debated, it is to the *campesinos* of San José de Apartadó that in fact *define* themselves in terms of peace, that I now turn.

Peace according to the Peace Community

In this section, I will highlight a selection of Peace Community members' descriptions of what peace means to them. My focus here is primarily how they explain peace, although these verbal articulations are obviously mutually embedded with their quotidian practice. Directly describing and analyzing their politics of peace through their practices—specifically, memory through commemoration as well as territory through the Universidad Campesina—will be the focus of Part III.

To begin, parallel to other critics of the "peace process" negotiation as peace, the following quote from a San José Peace Community member expresses a widely held sentiment within the Community:

The peace that the government talks about is the guerrillas not attacking the public armed forces. ... However, the public forces can still attack the guerrillas if they see them. ... But surely ... there will be deaths. In the civilian population. ... The peace that [Santos] speaks about just that: where nobody denounces anything ... where there aren't attacks against the public forces, but the State forces can still attack civilians. In reality, that is just trickery. (personal interview, 2014)

This member thus affirmed that even if the guerrillas demobilize and the state loses the logic of "counterinsurgency" to attack the supposed "guerrilla sympathizers," the project

of the state is not limited to an anti-guerrilla war. It is a project ultimately against civilian protest, whether dissidents organized into armed insurgencies or whether they struggle through alternative, nonviolent methods. Another member stated during a Campesino University workshop on the “peace process” that “the people believe that in Colombia we are moving towards peace. But it is really to a peace of cemeteries” (field notes, 2013). In other words, from the Peace Community’s perspective, the Colombian government’s peace is equivalent to a modern peace of merely the violent repression of dissent against injustice (A. Ross 2011) and victory of one armed group over another (Dalby 2014; Foucault 2003).

To proceed, there is a contingent of members whose thoughts on peace reflected its modern, “negative” conception. Similar to the critiques of the concept and discourse of peace we heard from the *Red Juvenil* activist, a Peace Community member argued against peace:

Peace is that there aren’t armed groups. For the Peace Community, peace would be and [we demand] a respect of life and land. But *I don’t believe in peace. The State* will remain, who *is also an armed actor*, with its business, narco-trafficking. (personal interview, 2014, emphasis mine)

In other words, peace requires not only the demobilization of the guerrillas, and the paramilitaries, but also of the state itself (Gómez Correal 2015). This parallels the nonviolence trainer’s prescription that peace requires a mass process of demilitarization. Peace is conditioned upon true respect for the land and *campesinos*’ way of life; yet if modern peace is constituted by a lack of war, and the state remains—structured as it is in its armed forces and generally violent system against *campesino* autonomy—then, for this member, no peace is possible within that sociopolitical structure.

Another voice skeptical of the possibility of peace in this world came from a deeply religious Christian member. It overlapped with Dietrich's "moral peace" in the afterlife through suffering and salvation in this life. He remarked,

The peace of humanity is different from the peace of God. ... Peace is what Jesus Christ gives at the end [in the afterlife], there is [only] a passing peace here [in this world]. The Peace Community is a peace, but it's not a true one; it's momentary. ... We are here alive. We are not [participating] in the war ... we don't go with the state, with armed people ... [Peace is] that there is food. (personal interview, 2014)

In this vision, the only possible peace is through the divine or through forms of resistance that assure food security. Another member's conception concurred that peace as a lack of war or tranquility is only a temporary condition for them, although their action is what creates spaces for such a peace: "Peace is tranquility, but [we only experience it in certain] moments. The Community constructs a peace. Thanks to the Community, we have a level of tranquility" (personal interview, 2013).

Referencing their organization's work was a common theme among Community members. Many defined peace explicitly in relation to their life and work as *campesinos*, where peace is a lack of war in which they are able to be who they are. For instance,

What the *campesino* wants is that they let them work, allow them to work their land. That [*campesinos*] can move around without worry, to go to market and sell what they have to sell and return to their home. This is not peace here. Peace would be living without all of this, living in tranquility. (personal interview, 2013)

Peace is not running across any armed group, neither the army nor guerrilla. ... Peace is that no armed actor enters here. That there are only families. And that we work; being healthy we go to work to sow food: corn, beans, yucca, everything. (personal interview, 2013)

Significantly, in Community narratives, even peace defined through the lens of tranquility is almost always immediately joined with assertions that this tranquility is constituted by the active agricultural work of the collective.

Another member replicates the idea of peace as a lack of war to allow the *campesinos'* way of life, yet proceeds to insist upon the importance of *internal* dynamics within the Community, as well. For her, peace is “that there isn’t anything here,” referring to combats and violence. She continued:

that we do not do any harm against others ... that there are no weapons. [The members of the Community] are working hard. Resisting, men and women ... so that there is peace. Without peace, we will not live. So, God proposes that we live joyfully, help one another. (personal interview, 2014)

Again, there is connection made between peace and the divine. And, like for PCN’s Márquez Mina, there is a correlation here between peace and life. Another Peace Community member made a similar assertion: Peace is “that there isn’t violence. That the poor person can work with tranquility, and maybe even receives assistance. ... [It is] a respect of life. That we can all live” (personal interview, 2013).

To insist that peace is life reflects the racialized positionality from which the Peace Community acts and speaks. Rather than speaking from a perspective of civil society, i.e. how to strengthen or “rebuild” Colombian society, they speak from a position of “non-being” (Fanon 2008), excluded from civil society, in which life itself is anything but guaranteed. Peace as life is defined in opposition to the modern-colonial war against them. Peace as life is thus dependent upon ending the state’s war, but these members quoted until now discount any utopian hope of ending that war. They find themselves attacked precisely as a “threat” but also “threatening to” (Goldberg 2009) the state for denouncing the latter’s supposed authority to legitimately wage war against its subjects (Finn 2013).

To summarize the statements of this group of Community members, peace would be constituted by respect for *campesino* life, yet within the current conjuncture there is

an impossibility of such a peace beyond limited moments. Of course, this perspective can partially be explained by the evangelical Christian perspective from which many of these members speak from, where life on earth is one of struggle and there is only peace through God in the next life, a la Dietrich's "great moral peaces." Yet, I argue, this is also an indictment of the modern world and its concepts of peace, not only a seemingly never-obtainable "negative peace" but also the hollowness of a "positive peace" rooted in a liberal "civil society" that inherently excludes these Indigenous-descendant *campesinos*. It is as if to say, 'there is no peace in this system for us!'

Yet, the Community is not limited to critiquing the modern-state peace. For many members, peace is not merely life alone either, but a much more comprehensive process that is political and communal. I included the above framings to reflect the diversity of ideas within this collective that nonetheless commit to walking together in a peace community. Yet most members' framings diverged from the perspectives quoted above that are mostly dismissive of the idea of 'peace.' In both the naming of their community in terms of peace and the majority of its members' definitions of peace, I would argue that 'peace' is not a rejected concept but instead one that is strategically used, practiced, and re-invented beyond dominant moral and modern interpretations.

Most commonly, when asked about peace, Community members would respond by listing or at the very least inferring their organization's principles and rules. For instance, one member defined "Peace [as] the power to not be an armed group in the war, to not collaborate with any of the armed groups. It is the power to decide to not participate" (personal interview, 2013). Here, peace is described through the lens of power. Therefore, peace is not only non-participation in the war, but a refusal through which there is an active power of self-determination, as the only means to an alternative

within the modern-colonial power relations of domination and dependency. It is a peace that is not constituted by dominating or having hegemonic control over others, but instead a power of emancipation (Gutiérrez 2012), of freeing oneself and one's community in resistance from subjugation.

Other members described how such a peace is constituted not merely by the lack of violence or *refusal* to participate in the war, but rather, through the *construction* of internal unity and solidarity. One member immediately referenced both: “To neither be with one side [of the armed conflict] nor with the other. That is one part. Now, another thing is to work in a group” (personal interview, 2013). This second component specifically references their rule to be in an agricultural work group, and alludes to the weekly community work day. For more, take the following three quotes: Peace is

Working together with a tight unity. And mutual respect. It's respect, love! (field notes, 2014); ... Peace is “Everyone Together.” Imagine, when there is work, everyone goes! And always! (personal interview, 2013); ... Peace is that we are united. Because we are all children of God. White or black, we are all God's children. Because united we can work (personal interview, 2014).

The latter, while the only member to infer race, alludes to the Peace Community's core principle of plurality and anti-racism (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2005a: 13). Again, solidarity, respect, and unity are what makes collective work—and an alternative political process—possible.

Peace is thus defined not as some sort of tranquility or rest from work but *as* the work in community. One member, when asked what peace meant to him, immediately shifted to the terminology of resistance: “Resistance is good, because the Peace Community defends ... to make a very different world, without hunger, without deaths. Not like those [armed] people, a capitalist power” (personal interview, 2013). Peace is therefore explicitly about creating an *alternative world*. We might say that such a power

to resist displacement and refuse participating in and escalating the war is dependent upon and constructed through a “transrelational peace politics” of radical, unified commitment and organization that breaks with reactionary violence.

Again, it is not only about ‘acting’ but also about ‘being.’ Note how in the following definition the member inferred two community pillars of non-participation in the war and communal work, but also striving to a process of ‘being a person of peace’:

Peace for me means ... not living in the war, not being part of the war, not supporting the state, but rather, living in community. Peace comes from ... dialog. ... Truly, I want to be, a man of peace. ... I do not like weapons, [all I want is] the tools in order to work. (personal interview, 2013)

This reflects a “principled nonviolence,” of rejecting the use of weapons in one’s life and political struggle on principle, rather than merely as a strategic decision. It is a being that is not dependent upon achieving certain objective conditions but is instead about creating and cultivating a particular political process through practice.

Deceased leader Eduar Lanchero is famous for articulating this idea. As quoted by Father Javier Giraldo (personal interview, 2013), in the Community’s 2010 pilgrimage to Sumapaz, outside of Bogotá, Lanchero argued that, “Peace is not something of tomorrow but of today. There is peace because there is community.” As another member put it, “Peace is, being solidarity, with one another ... it is making community. ... What Eduar would say, we can make peace ourselves; we don’t have to wait for the [armed] groups [or a] peace that comes from Havana” (field notes, 2014).

This idea, that community itself can be peace amidst overt warfare, is a contested one. Take the following exchange during a *Universidad Campesina* workshop on land tenure in 2013:

A Peace Community leader stated that their strategy is “to keep working, and with other communities. We are an example of peace, that peace is possible.”

A former accompanier responded by saying, “But, forgive me, what peace are you living here with all these armed actors operating in the surrounding areas?” The leader responded: “We are not going to wait for the [armed] actors to come to an agreement. We are going to be an *example* of peace whether they respect us or not, that yes, *it is possible*. It’s a problem if you wait for it from them. Day to day, *we don’t need the armed actors* to come to an agreement” (field notes, 2013; emphasis mine).

Like the statement above, the Peace Community frequently describes itself as an “example” or “experience” of peace, but not a “model” of peace. They are not calling on others to replicate their strategy elsewhere, but hope that the Community serves as inspiration for others to work with them and/or create their own communities in resistance. The quote also reiterates Esquivia’s assertion that “peace does not come from them” (field notes, 2014). It calls into question the ‘peace’ that is produced through such post-conflict accords and the needed imagination to *create* and *be* peace immediately on our own terms.

Of course, the accompanier is correct: the war of the state-paramilitaries-government continues. One member when talking about peace, argued, “Eduar would say, ‘You are going to return to La Unión, but it’s not that there are not going to be blows. There will be blows, in the surrounding area’” (personal interview, 2013). This is thus not a utopian peace imaginary; it recognizes that peace requires struggle, likely provoking retaliatory attack, but that violence in no way diminishes or eliminates the reality of peace as community possible here and now.

On a side note, these comments referencing Eduar Lanchero’s ideas exemplify the co-knowledge production through the Community process between the *campesinos* and this non-*campesino* leader, who only came to San José in the wake of the mass displacement in 1996. I would argue that Lanchero came to understand peace as “something of today. There is peace because there is community” (Giraldo, personal

interview, 2013), through his experience struggling with the Community. For instance, on Eduar's (2000) learning from/with the Community, he wrote in 2000,

This historical process [of resistance] arises and develops in the communities that, from their reality of exclusion and minimal conditions of dignity, seize alternative positions where present, past, and future of the achievable are conjugated. It does not mean futuristic nor utopian positions (75). ... Achieving distinct alternatives is not an unreachable horizon; in the communitarian living of those peoples that resist [is the alternative] (74).

Considering how he would conceptualize peace ten years later—as community—I see a congruency in this notion of dignity through community resistance as an already-created and lived alternative to the modern world of exclusion and violence. In Lanchero's writings and interviews (Lanchero 2000; Lanchero 2002; Buenaventura 2011), one can feel the process in which this “organic intellectual” (Gramsci 1971) came to theorize resistance, the state, and social transformation. Furthermore, simultaneously, Lanchero's theorizations of the Peace Community's experience have resonated with and influenced the way its members understand their own struggle, illustrated by members' frequent citations of his ideas.

I find another revealing example of this dialogical knowledge production of peace in the narrative of a member who I believe became a Peace Community member after Lanchero stopped visiting due to his struggle with cancer. This newer member had family in San José but only recently came to live there at the time of the interview. I asked him what he had learned through participating in the Peace Community process, and he responded that the armed actors “speak about a peace. But they do not live it. I learned how to search for peace, and to live it. ... Peace is not about talking. Rather, it's to live it” (personal interview, 2014). In other words, a central transformation for him as a Peace Community member has been his understanding of peace as something to be

lived today, reflecting Lanchero's perspective of the quotidian life of communal work as the alternative and as 'peace.' Once again, peace is not a utopian condition, but a politically embodied and spatial process. In the words of Lanchero himself,

The logic of the system of death, of the paramilitaries, of the state, is to displace the people; they want to terrorize the people because it generates an individualism so strong that then you don't care about the life of the other anymore. (Buenaventura 2011)

Therefore, another world requires an alternative to the war-state-capitalism that individualize subjects (Foucault 1982) and undermine resistance (Lanchero 2000; Lanchero 2002). In the documentary interview cited above, Lanchero continued:

So we had to create another way of living, where we were really against the war and against death. That's why the only way was to live in a community. If you live in a community you have different ways of relating to each other, of organizing, participation, of solidarity where everyone cares about the life of the other. (Buenaventura 2011)

In other words, as I am articulating with the idea of transrelationality, peace is not constructed individually. Therefore, peace need not be limited to the afterlife or to peace within the self. Peace is relational (Soellinger, personal interview, 2013) created through relations among one another, of care-affect for life (Gómez Correal 2015). Peace as dignity requires collectivity, solidarity, and organization.

Of course, while in this section I have focused on Peace Community verbal definitions of peace, this peace project through community is made reality through a variety of practices, which I have referenced throughout the dissertation: They make decisions in village meetings and community assemblies; cultivate cash and food crops in groups, including cacao, beans, corn, avocado, and sugarcane; do weekly work projects to build homes and repair trails; commemorate massacres of their members by marching to the sites, re-narrating the events, and painting stones with victims' names;

and community teachers educate children about community history, farming techniques, and natural science through the local environment. What I find so significant is that, even for those members that do not believe in “peace”—i.e., the modern peace of state order—in their communal action, they in fact enact this other peace of community; they counter what for them is a false and violent ‘peace’ with an embodied peace practice.

Ultimately, this peace praxis is inherently at odds with the capitalist economic system’s ongoing “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey 2005) through imposed dependency and neo-extractivism (Bebbington 2009; Márquez Mina 2015; Laing 2012). Various members’ framings of peace included a rejection of extractivism and dependency, and insisted upon autonomy through food sovereignty:

Peace for the *campesino* is that their life is respected. A respect for the land, to not exploit it with mines. And a respect of freedom. We have sugarcane, *panela* so there is not the necessity to buy it from outside. We can extract butter from the pigs and coconuts as well. (personal interview, 2014)

The state wants to be in control of everything, to maintain people in a relationship of dependency. What we want is: to not depend upon the State. ... We are autonomous. We want to have our own crops, food, and our own education. And we have them: alternatives, of life. ... We have a peace amongst ourselves. If we unite, struggle, plant food, work, and have our daily bread, then there will be peace, even if we are attacked by the State. (personal interview, 2014)

In other words, peace as community is produced through political autonomy, food sovereignty, autonomous education, and internal conviviality and solidarity. Of course, these practices are not done in isolation but through a solidarity network, including Colombian and international human rights organizations as well as the *Campesino* University of Resistance. It is an attempted withdrawal from one particular “world,” that of modern-colonial-neoliberal war (Reyes 2015b), but not a peace of resignation or

parochialism. Rather, this Peace Community network is the inspiration for Koopman's (2011a) concept of an "alter-geopolitics," reflecting the production of another world and "other geographies" (Reyes 2015b).

To summarize, the overall experience of peace that I witness with the Peace Community is that peace is a) resisting the modern-colonial war by refusing to participate as an armed actor and b) creating dignity and a political alternative through solidarity relations and communal work both within and beyond the Community.

This process of peace through autonomy, self-sufficiency, and creating dignified living conditions embodies an active and empowered perspective on peace, focusing on what the Community can do immediately as an organized collective rather than dependent upon what governmental and armed groups should do. It is an anti-capitalist peace, rejecting being forced into an exploitative labor relation of wages and dependency. Here peace is the demand for and creation of self-determination and self-subsistence. Peace is about life, but not 'life for the sake of life itself' or prioritizing the defense of one's mortality no matter the costs to lives of others. The life that they defend and live is one of dignity, without which there is no peace.

CONCLUSION

The emergent pro-peace agenda in critical geography today calls for new conceptualizations of peace. This literature has generated a formidable critique of "modern," "liberal," or "negative" peace, while possibilizing theories of peace otherwise from different perspectives and places. However, whereas peace geographers have yet to propose new definitions of peace, as called for by Megoran (2011), Dietrich's "plurality

of peaces” allows us to break with the limited notions and mere critiques of modern peace through rights and state-enforced order.

Notwithstanding, simply insisting on a plurality of peaces is also insufficient. There is no ‘plurality’ of peace within modernity; there is an imposed violence of exploitation and dependency, epitomized by the state’s refusal to allow the co-existence of, let alone encouragement or support for, peace communities. The postmodern and transrational tasks of breaking modernity’s monopoly on the term “peace” must be supplemented with a theory of peace that is constituted by the non-violation of others, accounting for the dignity of all beings internal or external to a given process.

The organized and committed political praxis in and across communities of resistance points to another peace, despite the ongoing war against them. The Peace Community’s praxis thus inspires my conception of a *radical transrelational* politics of peace because it is political action across and through relations of internal and external solidarity. As such, they represent an alternative to modern politics’ limited options of “the ballot or the bullet,” to use the words of Malcolm X (2007).

Most Colombians recognize the distinction between their ideas of peace and the to-be-negotiated ‘peace’ of the government and the FARC. The latter signifies the demobilization of one armed group, which will not end the fire of war unless the air and heat that fuel it are extinguished: inequality, unemployment, food insecurity, the dehumanization of Black and Indigenous peoples, and forced displacement induced by the violence and environmental degradation of extractivism. Peace is a strategic discourse precisely because of its universal appeal. Few are ‘against peace,’ with even the most brutal warlords justifying their actions as pursuing ‘peace.’ But we have to deconstruct peace discourses and practices, because behind even undefined or vague

notions of peace are concrete political projects. Such utopic rhetoric is easily manipulated to serve and maintain particular interests and power relations, which ultimately reproduces peace's conventional significance as simply the demobilization of one group and the victory of another.

Relative to peace discourses focused on ending the armed conflict or ensuring the fulfillment of state-guaranteed rights, the peace imaginary of autonomy receives scant attention in Colombia's mainstream media and scholarly analysis. The dismissal of Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities' alternative praxes reflects and reinforces the racialized dehumanization of these groups since the colonization and modernization of Latin America. It appears that their proposals and knowledges remain ignored precisely because of the legacies of their constitution as 'non-subjects' within the modern world (Fanon 2004; Quijano 2000; Wilderson 2010). Even when such communities' autonomy is discussed, it is often in relation to the territorial ordering of particular ethnic groups' lands that are linked with projects of state building and development (Fals Borda 2000; Massiris Cabeza 2005). There is an antagonistic contradiction here, if civil society's peace through basic rights and services is funded by extractivism—even as minimal as these royalties indeed are (Torres et al. 2015)—at the expense of Indigenous and Afro *campesinos*' lives and ways of life. While communities in resistance tend to insist upon representation within state institutions and/or utilize the international framework of human rights as strategies of survival (such as the Inter-American Commission and Court of Human Rights), to argue that peace is *self-determination* challenges the idea that *inclusion* or *assimilation* into liberal civil society is the answer for these groups.

In fact, I commonly encounter how scholars and Leftist activists (both Colombian and citizens of other countries) critique the Peace Community for the latter's lack of engagement with civil society, such as electoral parties and roundtables organized around the state-FARC "peace process" negotiations, in which victims share experiences and send recommendations to Havana.⁶³ Such critiques⁶⁴ seem to ignore the way that the Community and other communities in resistance have been made "other" within modern society, racialized as an Indigenous savage to be eliminated. Of course, racialized groups should have every right to participate in such spaces. Yet the Peace Community suggests that, for them, the task is not to reform or gain inclusion within that modern system, but to create an alternative of collectivity and solidarity, where the reproduction of some does not come at the expense of others. In so doing, they infer that real peace for all is impossible in the modern world-system, constituted as the latter is by violence. The fact that the survival of this peace community experience of solidarity is conditioned upon demanding that certain state and non-state actors stay out is a reflection of the dire difficulty of actually creating peace within modernity. Yet precisely such an analysis can be the beginning of creating an alternative peace: you can build peace, you can live peace, but dignity requires political organization and a level of autonomy from that system.

We should not try to pin peace down to *either* an achieved (moral-modern) condition *or* as a never-ending, never-to-be achieved "imperfect peace" (Muñoz 2001).

⁶³ The Peace Community's Legal Representative, Germán Graciano, was among those who traveled to Cuba as part of a victims delegation (*El Universal* 2014), but the organization has never been a leading actor in the pro-"peace process" movement.

⁶⁴ I find a parallel in the Mexican Left's hostility and dismissal of the Zapatistas following the latter's rupture with the Mexican political class including its Leftist party, the *Partido Revolucionario Democrático* (PRD) (Democratic Revolutionary Party) (Reyes 2015b).

It is short-sighted and politically dangerous to affirm either a) that peace is *only* once we reach certain utopian conditions, because that is a disempowering and futuristic perspective dependent upon other actors; it leaves peace to be defined by the dominant actors; or b) that peace is always an imperfect, never-achieved process. Because the task is to build peace now, and not just an imperfect one whose ‘imperfection’ becomes an end in itself. There are certain conditions more conducive to ‘peace’ than others, and we have to try to create and cultivate those. In other words, there can be peace through both an immediate “being” but also a grander vision and guide towards or part of a transformation to different structural conditions. I would argue that for the Peace Community, “peace” is both an immediate condition of self-determination, community, solidarity, and dignity, even as it is always a “processual peace,” an indefinitely renewed experience. There is a peace that is perfectible, but you have to organize, struggle, and create solidary community.

My proposal of a reflective *transrelational peace* across and through relations is precisely towards such a politics. *Being* that peace will not always mean or require the same action or strategy. It will always remain a contextual and political question. In the case of San José de Apartadó, this has meant an organization that, on the one hand, is voluntary: only those *campesinos* committed to working communally are part of the Community; others’ decisions to work independently is respected. On the other hand, certain actors are strategically excluded, such as the state, armed actors, or folks breaking Community principles that undermine the praxis of peace. In other words, there are limits to “peace as hospitality” or an “energetic” peace welcoming all elements when faced with a so-called modern-colonial ‘peace’ of genocidal order, security, and capitalism. Even as the Community necessarily excludes, the fundamental principles of

the Peace Community are not exclusion and division, as in the modern world. Exclusion and division themselves towards order are not their ultimate goals but strategies required to continue to exist. Community exclusions of armed groups are not a dogmatic imposition on or *violation* of those actors, but rather a call for the latter to have their own subjective and material transformation into new subjects committed and contributing to a transrelational peace of dignity for all beings.

Nor is the Peace Community's peace rooted in a moral-modern Hobbesian fear of mortality, and its corollary violent defense of particular individual lives or that of 'the nation' (Dietrich 2012). Surely, individual Community members fear being killed, and I would argue that there is a community-wide feeling where individuals fear their death and that of their family and fellow Community members. Yet, this signals why radical and reflexive political organization is crucial. As a collectivity, they have committed to not letting fear be the ultimate determining element of their peace process, rejecting all forms of retaliatory violence and instead opting for an experience of dignity, no matter the consequences. As I explore in Chapter 5, I argue that their relationship with death as not merely an end to individual life but also a beginning, in which assassinated members continue to exist and inspire (Gómez Correal 2015), enables their alternative politics of dignity and pursuit of other ways of living.

From their principle of plurality, the Peace Community is thus not insisting upon their practice as a *model* to be followed by others. Instead, they frame their struggle as an inspirational experience to be in solidarity and collaboration with other experiences and organizations. Their ideas and practices suggest a hope for a world in which multiple peaces can be possible, while recognizing the antagonism of resistance to the current world-system's war as a business machine. To repeat Illich, "War tends to make

cultures alike, whereas peace is that condition under which each culture flowers in its own incomparable way” (in Dietrich 2012: 50-51). The Peace Community parallels such an imaginary, for groups to have processes on their own terms, and the Community as an ‘already-existing peace’ points to exactly how these new alternatives can blossom when people share a commitment to walk together, resist, and create community.

To conclude this chapter, I argue that the framework of thinking and enacting a radical, transrelational politics of peace enables us to evaluate different peace discourses and projects. It insists upon a relational analysis and practice of peace within movements of liberation. For instance, many groups in Colombia—Leftist, victims’, and human rights organizations—demand “peace *with* justice and dignity.” Yet, similar to the idea of “negative peace,” the phrase “peace ‘with’ justice” implies that there is also a form of peace without justice. Conversely, praxes of grassroots food sovereignty, memory, and trans-community networks lead me to argue that “peace” is dignity and justice rooted in collective work, self-determination, and relational territorialities of solidarity rather than division. It is to those embodied and material practices that are the focus of my next Part III on politics, memory, territory, and performance ethnography.

PART III

WHAT IS POLITICS?

April 16th, 2014. It is afternoon in the village of La Unión. This is a common time for community members who have finished their work for the day to begin stopping by the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) accompaniment house to say hello or chat. I am seated at a large table having an impromptu conversation with two men. I have known both of them since my first year living here in 2008. To my left is a Community member who is a resident of the village and one of my interviewees. Across the table is a man whose home and farm are an hour or so away. I am excited to see him, since we only get the chance to catch up every couple weeks when he stops by the village. Like most of the *campesinos* living on the outskirts of the village center, he is no longer a Peace Community member. Sharing smiles and cups of *tinto* (black coffee), we discuss updates about their crop harvests. Then, almost inevitably, the conversation turns to a prevalent theme in La Unión these days: who is a Peace Community member, who is not, and why.

Non-member: “I am no longer in the Peace Community. Because there are those people in the work group or in the Community that do their own thing. They fake being sick to get out of work, or whatever, and *it’s not equal like it should be.*” [emphasis mine]

Peace Community member (smiling): “Yes, what we have to do is *continue to motivate one another to work together!*” [speaker’s tone emphasis]

Non-member: “Surely! Without the Peace Community here, there wouldn’t be any solution.”

I ask what he means and he clarifies that he refers to the ability for *campesinos* to continue to live in the area. Simultaneously, I remember another non-member, as he passed through the village the night before, saying something similar: “I don’t want to work in the group when there is drama or a lack of full commitment. But without the Peace Community, none of us could be here in the surrounding areas. The army and paramilitaries would take over everything.”

Peace Community member: “Those that don’t work (collectively), it’s an issue of consciousness.”

Me: “But what distinguishes the two? Those that stay committed despite the lack of effort from others?”

Peace Community member: “It is about remembering what we’ve gone through, what we’ve suffered. You remember the past so as not to be fooled about what the state, the armed groups are up to. That memory keeps you working in community, as neutral, and autonomous. It’s about *a love for the other and working together, a love to live with the other*, remembering what you have lived, and that working alone is dangerous and not communal. It’s not about re-initiating the Community (from scratch) but *remembering* what it was like before. We are about to re-initiate our monthly training workshops, which are so useful for me because in them I have learned how to answer back to an armed actor: not being upset but rather with clarity and explaining to them what the Community is” [speaker’s tone emphasis] (field notes, 2014).

Building from its members’ *definitions* of peace, this section turns to a more direct exploration of how the Peace Community *practices* peace. The passage above exemplifies how constructing peace—as community through collective work—is an ongoing, daily struggle. Maintaining unity and a communal work ethic is a challenge every organization seems to face: people disagree on contextual analysis or what actions should be taken by the group; some individuals or sub-groups dislike or mistrust others; and frustrations can abound regarding the extent to which certain people or the collective live up to identified goals. The Peace Community faces such conflicts on an ongoing basis.

It continues to strike me how its current members, in contrast to others who respond to internal difficulties or contradictions by leaving the collective, continue to affirm the need to maintain their organization by consistently motivating one another to build this communal alternative to the war. Explaining what differentiates these two reactions, the member cited above argued that it is a question of consciousness and memory. As many members say, “memory is the strength of resistance” because it continually focuses one’s commitment and analysis “to not be fooled about what the

state, armed groups are up to.” As stated by the member quoted above, remembrance induces reflection about the necessity of “a love for one another and working together” because “working alone is dangerous and not communal.” And this memory and organization have to be continually produced, through active remembrance as well as strategic workshops on how to act amidst the war.

While the Community member inferred that non-members lack “consciousness,” which is a common assertion among members. I recall how in separate informal conversations with me, two leaders challenged such a view. They both argued that participating in the Community process is not a question of consciousness but of *commitment* itself: all of San José’s *campesinos* are conscious of their situation and the consequences of collectively organizing or not. As both members and non-members alike affirm, no *campesinos* could survive the state-paramilitary-guerrilla land grab in San José de Apartadó without an *organization* that defends their existence and way of life. Therefore, it is less about having an understanding of the situation and more about the decision-practice of commitment to building this organization and an always-ongoing peace of transrelational dignity and solidarity. In other words, both surviving the war and creating an alternative require a strategically specific politics, rooted in the cultivation of a collective, organized subject.

Another notable element of the conversation rendered above, although mostly lost in the transcription, was the complete lack of hostility or animosity between these two individuals. It was amazing the extent to which they explained their positions with smiles and acknowledgements of the other’s ideas. This is not to deny that tensions exist

among members or between the Community and some non-member *campesinos*.⁶⁵ But this conversation, in particular, exemplifies how the Peace Community is predicated

⁶⁵ One emblematic example took place in July 2008 while I was an accompanier, when the Peace Community carried out what I could be called a ‘sit-in’ to prohibit non-member *campesinos* from holding a meeting in a Community building. To set the context, the Peace Community had just recently obtained organic certification for its cacao. This meant an increased price from 4,000 Colombian pesos to 6,000 (Approximately US\$2 and \$3 at the time) per pound. The Peace Community continued to manage the Balsamar Cooperative, which they had administered since Apartadó mayor Gloria Cuartas had turned the cooperative over to the Community as the only remaining civilian authority in San José in 1997. The Community began paying its members the higher price for organically-produced cacao. They would also buy as much organic cacao from other non-member *campesinos* in the area as they could, and then ship it to their buyer, which was in Europe. But they did not have the funds to buy all the cacao available. Therefore, non-members unable to sell to the Peace Community were frustrated they could not earn the higher rate. One group of non-members living on the outskirts of the Peace Community village in La Unión thus organized a meeting to discuss, among other topics, how to obtain a similarly high price for their cacao. This group was organized into a *Junta de Acción Comunal* (JAC, Communal Action Board), a *vereda*-level organization, the smallest administrative unit in Colombia. After the extermination of the Patriotic Union party and the mass displacements of San José’s farmers from 1996-1997, the JACs ceased to exist. However, after the installation of the police post in San José in April 2005 and increased social investment by the presidential agency *Acción Social* as of 2007, the state encouraged the re-activation of the JACs as a means through which (non-Peace Community) *campesinos* would be linked to the state’s humanitarian and development assistance. When the La Unión JAC organized its meeting in July 2008, they decided to meet in La Unión’s school building within the Peace Community settlement. The JAC’s coordinator did not ask the Peace Community for permission, however, merely receiving approval from the school’s teachers employed by the municipality of Apartadó. When the JAC members arrived and began their meeting in the school, all the Peace Community members gathered together in the village’s central gazebo. One member came to the FOR accompaniment house and asked us to accompany them, as they had decided to enter the school to block this unauthorized meeting. Once inside, we heard an Internal Council member explaining to the JAC coordinator, “You have not asked for permission to use this space within the Peace Community. The JAC are state-sponsored, and the state is complicit with the paramilitaries. Therefore, given our principles, we do not approve of such a state-sponsored meeting to take place in our spaces. If you had asked for permission ahead of time, we could have vacated the village for you to hold the meeting. You are free to bring these requests to us and we will deliberate in our general assembly. But you did not, so we cannot allow this meeting to continue.” Outside the building, other members of the JAC apologized the Peace Community members, saying that they thought permission had been sought. Inside, after numerous heated exchanges, the JAC coordinator ultimately asked, “Well, what (good) has the Peace Community done over all these years, anyway????” The Internal Council member reacted, “We have paid with 140 deaths, yes, but we have earned this space.” The other JAC members ultimately cajoled the coordinator to leave it be and exit. It is worth mentioning that many of the JAC and Peace Community members are indeed members of the same families; in fact, the JAC coordinator and the member who petitioned FOR to accompany their sit-in were close relatives. This speaks to the ever-present tensions among families and communities, challenges exacerbated by economic marginalization and the pressures of the armed groups which, as Peace Community members frequently assert, serve to divide and rule (field notes, 2011).

upon a respect of individuals' and families' decisions to voluntarily participate or not. Members, non-members, and the Community's official declaration of their organizational principles (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2005a) frequently state that membership in the Peace Community is "*libre!*", a free decision. The Peace Community's voluntary politics thus makes a key divergence from the forced participation of the guerrillas, state, and paramilitaries.

To quote-paraphrase one international accompanier in San José de Apartadó, the Peace Community is concerned with its members' active and conscious work-commitment, rather than how many members it has. "They get new members, but they [do not] go on trips" to recruit new members (personal interview, 2014). On inclusions and exclusions, there are

more things that tell you "you can't be part of us" or cannot come back from. [If someone breaks the rule about] drinking, you can re-assess, take a vow, and move forward. But [monetary] reparations [for victims from the government, are a different story]: once you have accepted, you cannot [undo] accepting them. The movement gets smaller unless it actively gets bigger. (personal interview, 2014).

It is fundamentally about

consolidating who is actively making the choice to be here. ... Being conscious about everything: ... "I'm making the active choice to be here." And then externally, [that] anybody with arms ... know[s] that there are still people there making that choice. (personal interview, 2014)

In other words, it is not that 'members are conscious' and 'non-members are not.'

Rather, the Peace Community process of organizing, collective work, and workshops in response to forced displacement seems to have induced a "*conscientização* (conscientization)" (Freire 1974) among (most, if not all, of) the area's *campesinos* about the decisions they make as well as those actions' consequences and corresponding sociopolitical relations. I recall how jarred I was when I arrived for a fieldwork visit in

September 2013 to find a former Internal Council member and his family having left the Peace Community settlement of San Josecito for the town of San José following their decision to receive state reparation payments for the assassination of their son by the army.

Therefore, while the Peace Community strives to build a strong and robust collectivity, their priority is not about numbers. As stated by Lanchero, “It does not matter how many we are. What matters is that we really know and deeply live a different world” (Buenaventura 2011). Notwithstanding, is it not contradictory that they attempt to build an alternative, collective subject yet lack a concern for increasing their membership? Doesn’t the idea of a “collective subject” imply a multitude of people? And wouldn’t more members increase the Community’s ability to resist displacement and pressure the armed groups-Colombian state?

But the Peace Community embodies a “collective subject” not through quantity but of quality: a particular type of subject that is committed to collective work. As such, this reflects another type of political movement. It diverges from the Left’s traditional approach to political change focused on building a critical mass to counter-hegemonically occupy, reform, or potentially destroy dominant sites of power in order to build an alternative social order (Fals Borda 2009f; Fals Borda 2009g; Caycedo Turriago 2006; Caycedo Turriago 2008; Ospina 1997). To the contrary, their goal is a collectivity not built on imposition and hegemony but instead on principled and committed solidarity. Such a praxis parallels a number of other social movements across Latin America, rooted in autonomist-emancipatory processes, which scholars have claimed to embody an “other politics” (Grupo Acontecimiento 2012; Denis 2012), “societies in movement” (Zibechi 2012), or “revolutions in the revolutions” (Reyes

2012b) amidst the post-neoliberal conjuncture in Latin America. It is to an overview of these alter forms of politics and why they are necessary for understanding the Peace Community's peace process, that I now turn.

AN "OTHER POLITICS" OF EMANCIPATION

Politics is traditionally understood as those practices concerned with state policies, laws, citizenship, and interstate relations.⁶⁶ State politics is often a question of "the ballot or the bullet," as brilliantly phrased by Malcolm X (X 2007). And the Peace Community struggle is obviously in relation and indeed a reaction to the Colombian state. Yet it is clear to those who visit or participate in the Peace Community's struggle that its members do not see the modern state as benevolent or redeemable. Their politics does not diverge from armed struggle by re-affirming electoral reform or representation. Their statements on peace make it clear that the Peace Community demands not *inclusion* but instead *self-determination*.

Therefore, theories of political change limited to electoral party politics, reform-oriented representative democracy, or armed struggle for state control are insufficient for comprehending such autonomist movements. Instead, understanding such geographies of peace, memory, and territory requires broader and more radical political frameworks—an "Other politics" (Grupo Acontecimiento 2012)—beyond the approach of much social movement research that tends to reductively evaluate 'success' based on movements' ability to achieve policy reform or express cultural identities (Oslender

⁶⁶ This remains an ubiquitous conception, despite challenges to it by, among others, feminist movements and geographers (Hanisch 1969; Gómez Correal 2011; Dowler and Sharp 2001; Mountz and Hyndman 2006), whose contributions I will incorporate later in this chapter.

2008; Zirakzadeh 2006). Haiven and Kasnabish (2014) and Grace Lee Boggs (in Peace 2010) argue we need a “radical imagination” to imagine new worlds and new framings of what constitutes ‘success’ as well as theories-practice of emancipatory political change to break with and construct alternatives to relations of domination. This re-theorization of politics is not an exercise of abstraction, to re-think politics for its own sake as an academic exercise; rather, it is a “theoretical strategy” to interpret and potentiate political processes in movement today (Gutiérrez 2012; Grupo Acontecimiento 2012).

Precisely, a wealth of scholarship, especially from Latin America, has proliferated in recent years to theorize the current ‘global crisis’ of neoliberalism as well as potential ruptures with the violent modern-colonial world by autonomist social movements that are not limited to the typical modes of modern state politics through elections, representation, and NGOs (Reyes 2012b; Reyes 2012a; Calhoun and Derluquian 2011). Examples of such movements across Latin America abound: the Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil (Wright and Wolford 2003; Wolford 2010; Zibechi 2012); the Zapatistas (EZLN) in Chiapas, Mexico (Esteva 2005; Ceceña 2004; Reyes and Kaufman 2011; Reyes 2015b); the *Tepito* neighborhood in Mexico City (Esteva 1991); the Indigenous city of El Alto in Bolivia (Zibechi 2010); factory takeovers by the Recuperated Factories Movement in Argentina (Zibechi 2012; Klein and Lewis 2006) and by sugarcane workers in Venezuela (Denis 2012); the *Mapuche* in Chile (Zibechi 2012); the “*minga indígena*” in Cauca, Colombia (Reyes 2012b; Troyan 2015); and Black Communities Process’ (PCN) “territories of difference” (Escobar 2008) in the Colombian Pacific. And the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó reflects an additional, contextually-specific case of resistance to the rural and urban “global land grab” (Peluso and Lund 2011; Hall et al. 2015; A. R. Ross 2014), although they have been

relatively ignored by this scholarship to date, one exception being a brief mention in Zibechi (2012: 168).

These movements have emerged among those deemed by Rivera Cusicanqui (1987) to be “oppressed but not defeated”: people with little or nothing to lose in the current order. These include the precariat class (M. Casas-Cortés and Cobarrubias 2010) and especially the socially excluded, the ‘inexistent,’ ‘uncounted,’ and damned or ‘wretched’ of the earth (Badiou 2012; Fanon 2004; Newton 2002a; Rancière 2010), i.e., racialized and gendered Black, Indigenous, women, and non-heterosexual subjects.

Despite the emergence of ‘progressive,’ counter-hegemonic governments across Latin America that have nationalized key economic sectors and re-distributed national surpluses to historically exploited and marginalized populations, especially those living in urban periphery slums, Reyes (2012b) argues that the persistence of resistance and autonomist movements reflects a “revolution in the revolutions.” Export-oriented extractivism—of oil, coal, and soy, among other commodities—remains the dominant economic model and source of public income, whether under ‘neoliberal’ or ‘new-institutional,’ ‘post-neoliberal’ orders (Dávalos 2011; Bebbington 2009; Laing 2012; Reyes 2012b; Gudynas 2010; Gudynas 2015). Consequently, capitalist-state exploitation and attacks against popular movements—especially Indigenous and African-descendant communities living in areas targeted for resource extraction—persist.

Within liberal societies and democracies, much of what is characterized as ‘political action’ falls within the categories of ‘rights,’ including campaigns for re-distribution of the social surplus or the recognition of marginalized groups (Fraser 2009). Surely, as noted by Brown (1995), “being regarded by the state as if we were free and equal is an improvement over being treated as if we were naturally subjected and

unequal vis-à-vis stratifying social powers (114). But “right must not be confused with equality nor legal recognition with emancipation” (133).

Wherever a particular capitalist state falls along the Hayekian-Keynesian-Socialist spectrum, the modern state serves as a mediator between the capitalist and working classes towards the endless accumulation of capital (Harvey 2001; Wallerstein 2004). Although reform, representation, and re-distribution can constitute a fundamental part of a radical political program (Wolf 2015), re-distribution by representatives of and for the proletariat only constitutes a “minimal”—at best—rather than “maximal” revolution (Lefebvre 1976a). This is because the status quo of capitalism as the dominant political economy is upheld rather than overthrown, and no state has ever supported or worked towards its dissolution and that of its repressive apparatuses (Gutiérrez 2012).

Notwithstanding the benefits of increasing living standards, re-distributive reform nonetheless re-entrenches the state as an arbiter and agent of control. “In addition to its legitimacy, the state achieves a good deal of its power through its devious claims to resolve the very inequalities that it actually entrenches by depoliticizing” (Brown 1995: 109). Considering these hierarchical power relations inherent to the state structure illustrates how, rather than movements ‘occupying the state,’ the state ‘occupies’ the movements that ‘take’ it (Reyes 2012b; De Oliveira 2006). The still-extractivist “Turn to the Left” in Latin America, therefore, has not solved the fundamental question facing humanity today: how to create sustainable and dignified reproduction, in which the life of some does not come at the expense of the exploitation of human and non-human beings (Federici 2010; O’Connor, n.d.; Davis 2010).

Amidst the ongoing crisis of capitalism, the “revolution in the revolutions” (Reyes 2012b) speaks to new praxes of politics that a) re-evaluate the counter-hegemonic strategy of ‘taking state power’ and b) contemplate and enact alternative processes of dignified reproduction. They exceed and oftentimes refuse the liberal democratic ‘option’ of always electing the ‘lesser evil’ (Grupo Acontecimiento 2012; Reyes 2015b). Rather than a retreat from ‘politics,’ these movements should be understood as affirming “an Other politics” (Grupo Acontecimiento 2012; Denis 2012) of *emancipation*: people breaking their relations of subjugation, through transforming subjectivities and creating dignified material living conditions (Gutiérrez 2012; Ceceña 2012; Ornelas 2012).

Emancipation ... is about understanding this *common capacity* to take action and to decide for and by themselves. ... [It is] the creation, care, expansion, and consolidation of a common ability to intervene—through deliberation and execution—in the issues that are incumbent on us all. (Gutiérrez 2012: 55, 57)

For Ceceña (2012), an emancipatory politics is constituted by: “Regaining self-determination without [the] mediation” of representation and representative democracy (127). Therefore, such liberation constitutes “new ways of doing” (Zibechi in Hardt and Reyes 2012) and “being” (Escobar 2008).

These movements are not the only ones to question traditional understandings of “politics.” A diverse set of scholars and social movement actors have decentered “politics” from the “the political” realm of the state. Politics should be understood more broadly, as that which concerns the question of power to shape reality and transform it. Some assert that politics is a question of *self-transformation*, even if such transforming occurs by “inhabiting the norm” rather than intentionally transgressing it (Mahmood 2005). Or politics is *wherever* there is power, including all interpersonal relations and

the body, as in the famously astute feminist affirmation that “the personal is political” (Hanisch 1969; Gómez Correal 2011; Mayer 2004). In other words, when thinking about a politics of peace, this involves material and embodied practices that take up space, involve bodies, and are performative.

For others, conversely, politics is understood as those rather *rare* instances in which there is a *disruption* and re-shaping of the established order. Rancière (2010) argues that politics is those momentary challenges to and re-shaping of the status quo when the “uncounted” of the given society, through affirmative actions in which they presuppose their equality, disrupt the regime of “the sensible,” i.e. common sense and order. “Politics means: displacing the limits of the political by re-enacting the equality of each and all” (54). Therefore, politics is constituted not by quotidian relations but rather by those moments of “dissensus” against the society’s mainstream “consensus” and established “police” order. But for Rancière (2010), “Politics will always fail to deliver on promises to implement freedom and equality” (80) because these actions merely re-shape rather than undo the established order given the state’s ability to co-opt such movements into a newly re-shaped status quo.

Yet the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó—along with the other communities in resistance or “societies in movement” (Zibeche 2012) mentioned earlier—suggests a more radical politics in the making. On the one hand, they assert their equality and dignity, intentionally challenging and re-shaping the status quo (Rancière 2010), in which processes of self-transformation are paramount (Mahmood 2005). On the other hand, however, they are more than merely momentary disruptions that are subsequently co-opted. To repeat deceased Peace Community leader Eduar

Lanchero (in Buenaventura 2011), “What matters is that we really know and deeply live a different world.”

But how is an alternative world or worlds created? In conversation with past and present decolonization movements, the scholar-social movement literature on emancipation theory presents guides for evaluating and enacting such politics.

The first ‘step’ is indeed challenging and breaking the stasis or “consensus” of the situation of domination through acts of “dissensus” (Rancière 2010). Fanon (2008) points to the necessity of reactive action by the oppressed against their subjugation that breaks the inertia of their “non-being” or non-existence with respect to civil society. The reaction action against domination takes a form of demanding respect: “You need to retract your pseudopodia and behave like a man [sic]. The entire foundation collapses. A black who says: ‘I object sir, to you calling me “my old fellow.”’ Now, *there’s* something *new*” (16; emphasis added).

Among the most notably recognized expressions of rupture from inertia and domination are mass protests that appropriate public space and demand fundamental political, economic, or societal changes. Two examples include the Black Lives Matter movement, particularly the protests in Ferguson, Missouri, following the police murder of youth Michael Brown, or the Arab Spring uprisings, among whose most captivating moments was the occupation of Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, by people demanding the resignation of President Hasni Mubarak (Dabashi 2012; Manji and Ekine 2012). These moments reach a “transcendental consciousness” (Fanon 2008) in which the constraints of the existing “reality” (Badiou 2007) are superseded in a collective euphoria, unity, freedom, and seemingly endless possibility (Reyes, personal communication, 2012). Such reactive eruptions are often deemed ‘spontaneous’ and ‘unexpected,’ despite the

fact that they indeed reflect systemic contradictions, deep-seated sentiments, or processes of ongoing movement organizing (Ceceña 2012; Guha 1983; Wallerstein 2011; Manji 2012).

Nonetheless, the emergent unity of reactive actions often quickly dissipates. While such momentary “dissensus” (Rancière 2010) or “tactics” (de Certeau 1984) *interrupt* exclusion and oppression, alone they are insufficient for creating a real and sustained *alternative* to domination. To repeat the assertion shared by Peace Community members and non-members alike: the possibility for any and all of San José de Apartadó’s *campesinos* to resist displacement is dependent upon the creation of a counter-power to the armed groups through an organized collective. Sustained resistance as well as potential new worlds are thus predicated upon *organization* strong enough to withstand persistent attacks and *survive* over time in order to construct alternative political, economic, and cultural structures (Newton 2002b; Fanon 1965; Fanon 2004).

Yet this is not merely a question of founding a formalized institution. To counter colonial-neoliberal individualism and cultivate the organization necessary for sustained struggle, a radical politics of ‘rupture’ requires a “collective will” (Hallward 2011; Fanon 2004) or “collective consciousness” (Guha 1983). These refer to the production of *collective subjects* and their *ongoing commitment* to work together towards social *relations of solidarity* and *commoning* foreclosed by capitalism, patriarchy, and racism (Ceceña 2004; Ceceña 2012; Federici 2010; Hardt and Reyes 2012; Zibechi 2012). In addition to mere survival, fundamentally changing conditions requires the courage, self-respect, and dignity of a “revolutionary enthusiasm” for collective being (Newton 2002b). Central to dignity is material subsistence, but this self-sufficiency is not merely

a question of physical needs (Fanon 2004; Gutiérrez 2012; Ceceña 2012; Zibechi 2012).

In agreement with Federici (2010), this sort of a collective subject through

‘community’ is not intended as a gated reality, a grouping of people joined by exclusive interests separating them from others, as with community formed on the basis of religion or ethnicity, but rather [they are] a quality of relations, a principle of cooperation and responsibility to each other, the earth, the forests, the seas, and the animals (289) ... for the construction of a commons-based economy enabling us to resist dependence on wage labor and subordination to capitalist relations. (287)

Or, as Reyes (2012b) puts it, they concentrate on

strengthening their capacity to meet their immediate material needs (a pragmatism of needs that stands in sharp contrast to the *realpolitik* pragmatism of the counterhegemonic parties), and an emphasis on political bodies (neighborhood and community assemblies) outside of the liberal state system (21) ... whose main focus is the production and organization of antagonistic subjects rather than the occupation of positions within the given state apparatus (22).

In other words, such initiatives prioritize emancipation and non-hegemonic relations instead of building counter-hegemonies with a popular, critical mass that *imposes* a new order (Ornelas 2012). As the Zapatistas famously asserted, “The world we seek is one with room for many worlds” (Ceceña 2004: 361).

Further, taking into account the dangers of consolidating power among few individuals, specific strategies and agreements on making decisions are fundamental, whether that be by consensus, rotating leadership, or other methods (Zibechi 2010; Esteva 2005). Similarly, given that the conditions of struggle are constantly in flux, movements must cultivate *continual reflection, analysis, and the re-invention of strategy* (Esteva 1991; Fanon 2004; Holland and Gómez Correal 2013; Churchill 2007; Freire 1974). Integral to this recurrent strategy-action is a persistent “radical imagination” (Haiven and Kasnabish 2014). More than knowledge about the world, Grace Lee Boggs argues, citing Albert Einstein, that we need *imagination*: “knowledge

only informs us of the past ... whereas imagination opens our hearts and minds to the future, to what is possible,” unleashing our power to create beyond what we might think as possible (Peace 2010: 359). For Fals Borda (2009f; 2009g), recurrent “utopias” necessarily denounce the exploitations and contradictions of the current world as well as possibilize the construction of a new order. Put another way, “there are no ideas without a utopia” (Lefebvre 1976b: 35). In other words, emancipatory power is constituted through creativity and new forms of producing knowledge (Ceceña 2004; Ceceña 2012; Zibechi 2012; Gómez Correal and Pedraza 2012; Gómez Correal 2015; Holland and Gómez Correal 2013).

To counter a common misinterpretation of *autonomy*, I argue that these movements for self-determination are not isolationist but in fact interconnected through *solidarity networks*. They plant the roots of an “intercommunalism” (Newton 2002a) where the oppressed seize control of their communities and then mutually support one another’s resistance in order to collectively build a humanized culture where people don’t kill each other (Newton 2002a; Naglar 2001; Gandhi 2007; Escobar 2008). In other words, these places are separate communities but they reflect how space is never fully bounded; rather places are produced through a node of relationships (Massey 2005). In so doing, they build allies across multiple people and organizations (Fanon 1965; Newton 2002c; Routledge 2008). This increases “visibility and draw[s] in actors from outside the immediate area of struggle” (Froehling 1997: 292), such as the “alter-geopolitics” of counter-hegemonic security for threatened activists by protective companions (Koopman 2011a) Moreover, they create spaces amongst themselves to *share knowledge* about the conjunctural terrain plus specific strategies regarding education, health care, production-subsistence, and communication, as we will see in

the *Campesino* University of Resistance. In sum, this emancipation framework re-defines politics as material and subjective transformations that challenge domination and produce alternative relations and structures in the process.

MEMORY, TERRITORY, PERFORMANCE RESEARCH

Peace Community members' affirmations that peace is a) refusing participation in the war along with b) dignity and solidarity through community organization inevitably pose the question of politics and power, of shaping and transforming reality. Given its importance for an emancipatory politics, this section began with an ethnographic rendering of the challenges of cultivating an organized and solidary Peace Community subject: Some *campesinos* respond to internal tensions and contradictions by exiting the organization. Others face such challenges as opportunities to re-energize and motivate one another for a collective process. I am unable to explain *why* certain individuals respond in these divergent ways, but it is clear that a key constituent of the Peace Community is precisely this commitment to building a *campesino* alternative *where they are*, and to do this *together*. In other words, rather than an ethnic, religious, or national identity, the Peace Community's identity is explicitly political: those committed to and actively creating peace.

Nevertheless, *how* do they nurture this togetherness in resistance, so poetically rendered in Lancho's (2000) narration of their 1998 re-settlement of La Unión?

Terror was not superior to their desire to struggle for life, and the *campesinos* returned the same way they had left, that is to say, *together*; they knew that justice and the historical truth was with them. (69, emphasis mine)

To what extent do particular Peace Community practices and places produce this “collective subject,” an “Other politics,” and an alter-peace of radical transrelationality?

This section includes three chapters. Chapter 5 explores the role of memorial commemorations in the creation of peace. In Chapter 6, I analyze the territoriality of the Peace Community through its experiments in food sovereignty and engagement in the trans-community *Campesino* University of Resistance. Finally, Chapter 7 discusses my own role as a critical and performance ethnographer-geographer in the Peace Community’s memory project. Together, these chapters explore the Peace Community’s politics of peace in practice through memory, work groups, and solidarity networks.

CHAPTER 5

“EVEN THE STONES SPEAK”: AN “OTHER POLITICS” THROUGH EMBODIED AND MATERIAL COMMEMORATION

What does *memory mean*,
and why is it so important in *Colombia*,
in the *Peace Community*,
and for you?

Memory, for me, is the strength of our resistance. *Why* is memory the strength of *resistance*?

Because when **you** *lose* memory, you are condemned to repeat the **same as before**.

We maintain memory and we always feel that someone that has **passed away**, all those very **IMPORTANT** people that we have lost in the Community, continue to be with us.

It's as if **they didn't leave**. They **continue** to be here.

They continue to be here, from the **[GREAT] BEYOND**. Their spirit is with *us*. And I believe that this has been what characterizes our *Community*, and that which gives us *strength*.

(González, personal interview, 2011)

Thus began in August 2011 my first research interview in the Peace Community with one of its most recognized members, Doña María Brígida González. Her immediate response affirmed not only memory's importance, but also that, indeed, it is “the strength of resistance.” She then asserted that the dead remain present: “their spirit is with us,” stating not only once but twice that “they continue to be here,” almost as an affirmation that it is really true and to ensure that this would be heard. We proceeded to speak about the significance of memory for most of what became an 85-minute interview. Most of the poetic transcriptions in this chapter come from that conversation.

Her opening statement immediately made clear that memory for the Peace Community is not something of the past or done for its own sake. It is about today and completely integral to their political project. Memory as an ongoing practice is essential in order to *not* “repeat the same as before” but instead create something new.

This interview convinced me to make memory practices and objects a focus of this dissertation, and to continually question how memory is the strength of the Peace Community’s resistance. If members define peace as refusing to participate in the war and cultivating community work and solidarity, then what is the role of memory work in the production of this peace?

Of the twenty interviewed Peace Community members with whom I addressed the topic of memory, only one person had no response when asked about it. The rest either brought up memory on their own, or immediately responded to my inquiry by affirming its importance and explaining how. This reflects the deep meaning that memory has for the Community; their internal work to create and maintain it; and how various members claim that memory is a fundamental part of what makes the Community what it is. Further, it was reading Gómez Correal’s (2015) work on the “agency of the dead,” which is deeply reflective of a feminist politics (Gómez Correal 2011), that I finally began to engage with Peace Community members’ comments on the active, present role of the dead, rather than simply people’s remembrance of or ‘belief’ in or about them.⁶⁷

The Peace Community practices memory in a variety of ways. These include painting stones with victimized subjects’ names, which are often placed together in

⁶⁷ For this realization, I am also indebted to a personal conversation with Diana Gómez and Marisol de la Cadena at the University of California, Davis, in June 2015.

‘monuments to the victims.’ In addition, they organize various commemoration gatherings each year: a) the June anniversary of leader Eduar Lanchero’s death at his tomb in San Josecito; b) the anniversary of their founding on March 23rd, and marches during Holy Week around the village of La Unión and along the Apartadó-San José road, during which they stop at sites to re-count specific cases of assassination, nail crosses with names written on them into trees, and speak about the significance of those people; if their anniversary on March 23rd does not fall during Holy Week, they organize separate events; and c) the February pilgrimage to the sites of the 2005 massacre in Mulatos and La Resbalosa. Another recurrent act of memory is the frequent singing of the Community hymn during event gatherings. Additionally, Doña Brígida creates folk paintings of Community places and history, which are then gifted to people from all over the world that support the Community’s struggle. Internally, as part of their elementary education curriculum, children have a weekly class on memory in which they learn Community history. And finally, the Community periodically releases *comunicados*, or press release communiqués, through their website that document their history and ongoing human rights violations.

Focusing on the forms of embodied and material commemoration that I have witnessed to the greatest extent, this chapter will explore Peace Community memory practice through their painted stones, signing of the hymn, pilgrimages to massacre sites, and folk paintings. Cumulatively, these are an integral part of what I understand to be the Peace Community’s production of an alter-geographer and alter-territory (Reyes 2015b): its series of spatial practices, places, and values that produce a particular subject, as I will explore in Chapter 6, before discussing my own role in the Community’s memory project, through photos and performances in Chapter 7.

Like peace, the topic of memory has garnered increased attention within contemporary human geography. While these two literatures are not in direct conversation, they in fact share parallel insights on these concepts. Similar to geographies of peace signaling peace as a *process* rather than condition (Loyd 2012; P. Williams, Megoran, and McConnell 2014; P. Williams and McConnell 2011), other geographers have argued that memory should be understood as a politicized and spatial *practice* in the present (Hoelscher and Alderman 2004; Legg 2007; Mills 2010; Till 2005).

Yet the interconnection between memory, peace, and politics has thus far been mostly ignored in human geography's subfields of peace and of memory, despite the importance of memory work a) to speak to past and present realities of intersectional violences, and b) as an integral action to create alternative forms of peace, justice, and social transformation. Unwittingly, this lack of mutual engagement parallels discourses of post-conflict reconciliation state-building, in which 'justice'—and memory—is often considered mutually exclusive with 'peace.' One exception within geography that integrates a critique of peace, justice, and memory is the work of A. Ross (2012), who argues that in Guatemala, "The rich won the war, and the poor victims get to paint the memorials" in which 'post-war' 'peace' and memory work can serve as an obfuscation of persistent impunity and injustice.⁶⁸ According to the dominant logic of transitional justice and post-conflict peacebuilding, you can have one or the other: a) either 'victims' insist that war crimes be prosecuted, inducing armed actors to resist demobilization and

⁶⁸ This is not to underestimate that Guatemala is the first county in history to bring to trial and convict a former head of state, General Efraín Ríos Montt, for genocide and crimes against humanity in a *national* rather than international tribunal. Nevertheless, the Guatemalan Constitutional Court overturned the May 10th, 2013 conviction ten days later (Nairn 2013).

ending their offensives, or, b) armed combatants agree to lay down arms to achieve (modern) ‘peace,’ but upon the condition of amnesties and forgetting; the country in question can must move ‘forward’ towards reconciliation and not ‘backward’ with vindictive and stagnant memory. These ideas problematically conform to the dominant, modern notions of peace as a lack of open warfare, of justice as retributive punishment, of memory as something of the past, and of ‘victims’ as stuck in the past (Gómez Correal 2015; Gómez Muller 2008).

Therefore, this chapter integrates scholarship on peace and memory, following contemporary Colombian social movements’ insistence upon the importance of memory for peacebuilding (Hijos e hijas por la memoria y contra la impunidad 2009; Hijos e hijas por la memoria y contra la impunidad 2012). I will build from the notion of a *radical transrelational peace* and how the Peace Community produces such a peace through their spatial, material, and embodied practices of memory. If peace for the Peace Community is both a) refusing to participate in the war as well as b) constructing dignity and solidary community, then how does their memory work contribute to those processes? How do memory practices specifically cultivate their “Other politics” of autonomy from capitalist-state dispossession? What is the role of memory practices in the production of a relational, collective Peace Community subject? Might Community memory suggest alternative forms of anti- or non-state justice?

Therefore, this chapter will begin with an overview of scholarship on memory, drawing selectively from geography, performance studies, anthropology, and history. I will then proceed to different forms of Peace Community memory work and their significance for their political organization, defense of land, relationships with their solidarity network, and practices of justice. In the process, I trace how memory work is

the strength of the Peace Community's resistance given how these forms of memorialization a) serve as a means for them to exert their existence as a racialized community amidst the modern world-system; b) challenge war and impunity by enacting their own justice through pilgrimages, stones, and folk paintings, which additionally spread their history to a broad solidarity and diplomatic network, thus dissuading armed groups' attacks; c) mobilize bodies across space to defend their land and livelihoods; and d) cultivate ongoing community reflection, education, knowledge production, and motivation to continue the struggle, both internally and with allies, that strengthen their cohesion, collective consciousness, and organization.

I argue that by integrating place-based and performative memory, peace geographies, and radical autonomist politics, we are able to both understand as well as produce these alternative situated knowledges and practices. By exploring Peace Community commemorations through pilgrimages, stones, and folk paintings, this chapter illuminates the ways they embody and materialize an emancipatory politics and geography of peace through memory.

MEMORY, PLACE, PERFORMANCE, AND AN "OTHER POLITICS"

Scholars have signaled how memory is a spatial, embodied, and political practice in the present, in relation to the past and future. Neither determined nor static, memory is fragmented, continuously modified, and contested through space (Legg 2007; Mills 2010; D. Mitchell 2000; Till 2005; Till 2008) and time (Bal 1999; Trouillot 1995; Tyner, Inwood, and Alderman 2014). Rodríguez and Fortier (2007) define memory as "the capacity to remember, to create and re-create our past" (1). We make memory in the

present as a re-making of the past and struggle for the future (Bal 1999; Halbwachs 1992; Gómez Correal 2012a; Ricoeur 2004; Till 2005). Ricoeur (2004) distinguishes between a) memories as the object of intention, and b) and memory as an intentional act; Gómez Correal (2012a) terms the latter “memory as verb” (243): the practice of memory. Thus, rather than a possession people *have*, memory is something people *do*.

Memory and place are inextricably linked (Hoelscher and Alderman 2004). Events, recollections, and memory making occurs in specific spatial contexts, where places can shape and invoke particular memories, and vice-versa. People often create what Nora (1989) calls “*lieux de mémoire*,” sites, realms, and places that serve as material, non-material, symbolic, and/or functional memory. Memorials, monuments, and museums are common examples, but these memory realms also include immateriality, such as narratives, feelings, and the dead. Till (2005) writes:

Being in a place where one experienced violent events may cause a person to relive memories of one’s pasts, even if only for a moment. Rearticulating what happened through narrative form may be too difficult for some individuals due to the intensity of the event(s) experienced. ... In these instances, people may make places to supplant narrative and locate their loss. (16)

Memory is also enacted and performed through and in our bodies (Taylor 2003; Till 2005; Till 2008). Performance scholars show how rituals, commemorations, and protests are embodied performances through which collective memory can be created and transmitted (Taylor 2003; Madison 2010; Rodríguez and Fortier 2007). Taylor’s (2003) concept of the “repertoire” describes the realm of embodied and performed acts that generate, record, transmit, and teach knowledge and memory. Commemorations are one example of such gestures and movements, along with song and theatre. The dynamic and relational realm of the repertoire elucidates the power of performance to

express and transmit memory and truth not only among a group but to other sectors of society.

Rather than J. Butler's (2004a) "performativity" in which people recurrently re-enact—and in rarer instances potentially subvert—gender roles and identity positions, I use "performance" in the sense of staged and vernacular acts before a witness through which meaning is collectively created (Madison 2010; Madison 2012). Following Oliver (2001), this "bearing witness" is not to dichotomously divide 'performers' and 'witnesses' into 'subjects' and 'objects' but rather to signal their relational role in the co-production of memory. Rather, there is a "dialogical performance" of mutual conversation and meaning-making between both (Conquergood 1985). Of course, this remains congruent with J. Butler's (2004a) recognition that gender (or memory politics) "is real only to the extent that it is performed" (161).

Thus, memory is both individual and social. It is experienced on an individual level but is social and collective because it occurs relationally through our interactions with others (Halbwachs 1992). In the process, it produces identity and collectivity (Said 2000). For example, many scholars have written about how national memory produces and glorifies 'a people' (Ricoeur 2004; Till 2005; Anderson 2006). Yet creating, refashioning, and reclaiming identity through memory is not limited to dominant collectives such as states; many groups' cultural memory stores wisdom and serves as a carrier of (ever-changing) traditions through doctrine, stories, myths, creeds, symbols, experiences, and everyday moral decisions (Rodríguez and Fortier 2007).

Such practices sometimes constitute counter-memory through activist work (Till 2008; Nyong'o 2009) that challenges dominant narratives and subordination (Hoelscher and Alderman 2004). But this is not to claim that memory is laudable in its

own right; it can be mobilized for dangerous, reactionary ends, resulting in reactionary violence and genocide (Bal 1999; Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert 2000; Benjamin 2007a). Tyner, Alvarez, and Colucci(2012) note how the genocide museum and killing fields in Cambodia silence both a) the ongoing everyday memory and violence experienced by Cambodians today as they move through unmarked spaces where violence occurred, including dams, reservoirs, and roads constructed by the Khmer Rouge, as well as b) a potential analysis of the parallels between the Khmer Rouge's modernization project and that of other governmental regimes around the world.

Memory is, therefore, socially constructed and imbued with power relations (Legg 2007; Gómez Correal and Pedraza 2012). Mills (2010) notes that memories “not only describe physical space but also tell a social history” (6). For instance, social struggles are reflected and embedded within places and landscapes, despite attempts to erase those histories (D. Mitchell 2000; Dwyer and Alderman 2008); places are produced as processes of contested meanings (Massey 2005).

Of course, memory is not only contested between different actors (Legg 2007), but also within groups, as in the split within the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* (Mothers of May Square) movement in Argentina. Although not reducible to disagreements over commemoration practices per se, what became known as *Línea Fundadora* spun off from *Asociación*. Bosco (2004; 2006) documents their divergent approaches to memorial landscapes, modes of memory transmission, and engagement with the state. Focused primarily on their immediate loved ones that were forcibly disappeared under the dictatorship (1976-1983), *Línea Fundadora* transmits memory by evoking disturbing incidents, asserting the innocence and creating picture collages of the dead in public spaces; they also support the creation of material memorials including a State-

sponsored national monument and museums in renovated torture centers. Conversely, *Asociación* has a broader, revolutionary, anti-capitalist objective: they transmit memory through educational spaces and programs with new activists, focusing on building affective relationships among themselves rather than pursuing change through state institutions; they reject memorial landscapes, do not use pictures, have stopped using their children's names, and "began interpreting their disappeared sons and daughters not merely as innocent victims of state repression but rather as militant revolutionaries who died in their struggle for a socialist revolution in Argentina" (Bosco 2004: 388). As we shall see, the Peace Community combines the symbolic and commemorative practices of *Línea Fundadora* (the use of pictures and names) with the political vision of *Asociación* (an anti-state struggle), while employing both groups' tactics of memory transmission, including evocative narrations and education. Thus, commemoration practices both reflect and influence the composition and direction of social movement organizations. That is not to say that a given practice (such as evoking names or using pictures) has an inherent result, but this speaks to the way that memory is simultaneously produced by and producing political subjects as a fundamental part of such alter-territories.

To use Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert's (2000) terminology, memory can be both a "strategic practice" and "difficult return." "Strategic practice" describes how memory can be a pedagogy or political deployment of traumatic history deployed for sociopolitical goals; this is indicative of Peace Community denunciations of political violence through communiqués as well as commemorations, stones, and folk paintings. A "difficult return" refers to bringing forth the presence of people and past events into the present through naming, images, sound, and/or symbols, as in Peace Community

stones and massacre commemorations. Memory is always already material, especially in cases of violence, where memory is integrated with the dead and their bodies (Gómez Correal 2012a).

Through performance and reenactment, an individual may use his or her body to communicate memories of the past, to connect with the dead, to confront guilt or anger, and to work through past traumas in the present. (Till 2005: 16)

Particular forms of material and non-material memory can also speak silences and absences. As Bernard-Donals and Glejzer (2001), Depelchin (2011), Nyong'o (2009), and Oliver (2001) argue, there are particular things that are un-conveyable, such as genocide and slavery. Any renderings are necessarily partial and incomplete. Yet making physical objects can challenge potential disconnection from or uncertainty about the reality of that past, whether for that person, group, or before others. “We try to preserve memory by creating traces of a past that by definition can never be present” (Till 2005: 14).

I posit that the notion of “difficult return” of *living with* loss subverts Freud’s (1917) false dichotomy of “melancholy” (never-ending attachment to what or whom is lost, prohibiting rehabilitation back into society) versus “mourning” (Freud’s healthy response, ending in ultimate detachment). Freud’s view is predicated upon a fully-constituted liberal subject that recovers in the wake of a particular aggression; yet racialized subjects like the Peace Community experience neither ‘exceptional’ nor ‘periodic’ attacks but rather systemic violence, in which memory work as ongoing resistance that engages ongoing loss sustains, rather than undermines, the production of political subjects. Correspondingly, memory as a “strategic practice”—which I argue in the Peace Community’s case is not limited to demands of the state but is also a nonviolent enacting of their own justice—provides an alternative to what Brown (1995)

imagines as the insufficient yet only possible recourses for victims: a) forgetting, which is cruel and reinforces impunity; b) vindictive retaliation à la Nietzsche's (2008) *ressentiment*, the moralizing revenge of the powerless, which fails to end violence; or c) capitulation to institutional state justice that re-entrenches the very state responsible for harm.

For Todorov (2010) memory can be a “remedy for evil” if it is an ongoing practice that creates a livable present and future. And Till (2012) argues that memory work as a “place-based ethics of care ... might sustain more just possible futures” (5; see also Alderman and Inwood 2013). These assertions beg the following questions: Which ‘just future?’ For whom? And *how* might particular forms of memorialization contribute to such futures and to ‘peace?’ Numerous scholars have deemed mainstream peace and justice mantras of “Never Again” insufficient as long as structural conditions of capitalist-racist-gendered violence persist (Acevedo 2009; Depelchin 2011; Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert 2000). We must question both a) the ends towards which particular memory practices are deployed and b) the extent to which particular memory practices buttress or undermine transformative knowledge and organizational practice towards more just possible futures and peace.

Therefore, theorizing memory and peace requires a specific and corresponding theorization and situated approach to politics in order to understand and evaluate particular memory or peace projects. And in cases such as the Peace Community and other communities in resistance, I argue that memory and peace geographies require an engagement with radical political frameworks to guide theorization of the limits and possibilities of particular projects and practices for the construction of an “other

politics” of emancipation beyond state-centric elections of the ‘lesser evil’ (Grupo Acontecimiento 2012; Gutiérrez 2012; Ceceña 2012; Reyes 2012b; Reyes 2015b).

Scholarship on and for emancipation from domination signal the necessity of a) reactive action against the inertia of oppression (Fanon 2004; Fanon 2008; Rancière 2010); b) survival strategies in order to withstand persistent attacks of extermination against racialized, oppositional, and autonomist groups (Newton 2002b; Koopman 2011a; Fanon 2004); c) the cultivation of collective subjects committed to solidarity and communal work (Fanon 1965; Fanon 2004; Hallward 2011; Guha 1983); d) an organizational structure in which reflective contextual analysis, means of decision-making, and concrete programs for self-subsistence are determined and nurtured (Fanon 2004; Federici 2010; Ceceña 2012; Hardt and Reyes 2012; Zibechi 2010; Zibechi 2012; Holland and Gómez Correal 2013); and e) the creation of solidarity networks with allied organizations, in which spaces of mutual encouragement as well as knowledge production across communities are crucial (Fanon 1965; Newton 2002a; Routledge 2008).

Nonetheless, for the most part, the scholarship on emancipatory politics in Latin America has yet to directly theorize the link between these “other politics” and embodied-material memory practices. One notable exception is Gómez Correal (2012a), who argues that “memory for social transformation” requires long-term memory of the histories, resistance, and trajectories of indigenous, Afro-descendent peoples, women, and other activist actors, as well as “critical memory: learning through memory is possible if you allow it to touch and transform you through the emancipatory possibility that the past contains” (249).

Therefore, what is the role of memory practice for an emblematic peace community struggling for dignity and self-determination amidst the global land grab? To what extent do San José's particular practices nurture or undermine their autonomy; the production of a collective consciousness; solidarity within and beyond the community; a refusal to enact retaliatory violence; and a place-based ethics of care towards peace? It is to three specific forms of commemoration—stones, commemoration pilgrimages, and folk paintings—and their significance for the Community's process of an "other politics," that I now turn.

EMBODIED AND PLACE-BASED MEMORY: MASSACRE COMMEMORATIONS

The Peace Community organizes various commemoration gatherings each year: the June anniversary of leader Eduar Lanchero's death; their March 23rd anniversary; marches during Holy Week; and the February pilgrimage to the sites of the 2005 massacre in Mulatos and La Resbalosa. I will focus on the latter, oftentimes their largest annual gathering, in which Community founder and leader, Luis Eduardo Guerra, along with seven other *campesinos*, including three children, were assassinated in a joint military-paramilitary operation. Every February 21st, members converge from all of the Community's settlements at the sites (Figure 47). They are joined by representatives from other Colombian *campesino* communities as well as accompaniers, lawyers, researchers, filmmakers, and journalists from Colombia and around the world.

While in Mulatos in 2013, Father Giraldo (personal interview, 2013) described how it has become an annual event:

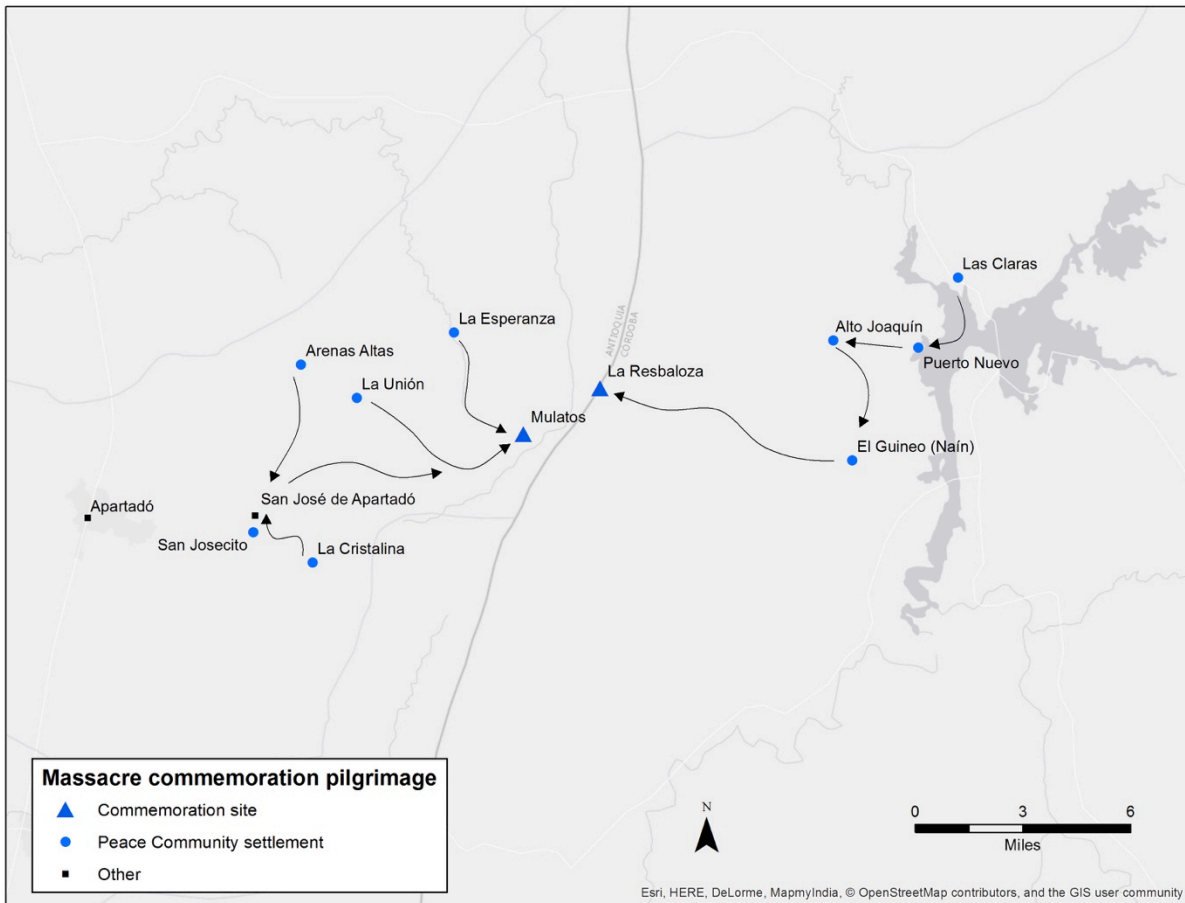


Figure 47. Mapping the massacre commemoration pilgrimage. From their respective villages, Peace Community members converge every February 21st in Mulatos and La Resbalosa to commemorate the 2005 massacre. Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

Each February, ... on the 20th we hike up from San José, La Unión, etcetera ... The 21st, at the same hour when Luis Eduardo was assassinated—it was 7:30 or 8am—we say mass in the same site of the assassination. And after the mass, we go to La Resbalosa. We arrive at 12pm and we have a commemoration there where the other part of the massacre took place. ... At that site there is another chapel, a site where [the army and paramilitaries] put the graves with the bodies ... And, these eight years, we have never missed it. ... Three months after [the massacre in 2005] ... there was a pilgrimage ... and the first chapel was inaugurated and, since then, the beginnings of recuperating this site. (Figures 48-49)

In the spirit of performance ethnography to creatively re-present ethnographically derived notes (Alexander 2005), I will proceed with an account of the commemoration compiled from my audio recordings, field notes, and photographs from 2008, 2010, and 2014.⁶⁹ To render the scene (figure 50):

The humid jungle air is filled with sounds of Spanish but also overlapping Italian, English, and German coming from the mix of brown, black, and white faces present. Do we number one, two, or three hundred who have walked hours through dirt, streams, mud, and rocky river paths? We are in La Resbalosa, named for the ‘slippery’ and lush green hillsides we climbed to arrive here. The ground is covered with light green grass-like weeds, on which most of us stand or sit. Above a dark and dry brown dirt floor, the chapel around which we crowd stands with its grey tin roof and brown wood wall and posts. A foot-long wooden cross and five half-foot crosses hang there. Below is a rainbow-colored flag ranging from purple to yellow to red; just above its white Italian letters spelling PACE is a picture collage of eight people. As Father Javier Giraldo solemnly takes the microphone, the sounds of dogs shuffling, and insects and birds chirping, fade away into the tropical forest...

“ ... The workers cautioned him that if he returned, they would kill him, **immediately.**

Then, around two in the afternoon, they heard *how* the arms became silent; you couldn’t hear any more shots.

And Alfonso decided to return, to find out the fate of Sandra, and the *children*, and to face their same fate.

The workers waited, that night, he **DIDN’T** come **BACK.**

The next day, through the entire morning, he **DIDN’T** come **BACK.**

And so they moved towards the house, slowly, with much caution.

They saw that there wasn’t any movement in the house.

So they began to enter.

In front of the house they encountered a lot of blood ...

⁶⁹ For the performance script of this poetic transcription, see Chapter 7 (pp. 414-420).



Figure 48. Memory materialized: Altar in the stone chapel in Mulatos. Prepared for the 2014 commemoration mass, notice a) the stone with the names of Luis Eduardo, Bellanira, and Deiner, the three Community members killed at this site; b) photographs of deceased leaders Luis Eduardo Guerra (center) and Eduar Lanchero (background to the right); and c) the postcards that show photographs of the eight victims of the 2005 massacre. Source: Author photo.



Figure 49. Commemoration with crosses and flowers: Chapel in La Resbalozza. Freshly cut 'birds of paradise' flowers accompany wooden crosses that hang with the names of the five *campesinos* killed at this site in 2005:

“(Alfonso) Bolívar, Sandra, Natalia, Santiago, and Alejandro.”

Source: Author photo.



Figure 50. Narrating counter-history: Father Giraldo narrating a commemoration of the 2005 massacre in La Resbalozza in 2010.

Source: Author photo.

And in *this site*
they found *dried up cacao shells* piled up
and they began to suspect that maybe they had been buried.

...

And they sent a delegate to the Community
to announce what had happened.
And the Community immediately began to organize a search commission.
More than one hundred people signed up to go up the following day.
And they came first to this site, because they knew that **HERE**,
they were buried.”

Father Giraldo proceeds to narrate their arrival to the sites. Military soldiers and lawyers from the Attorney General’s office arrived simultaneously:

“Military soldiers began to call them guerrillas
all the community members that were *here*
and take their *photographs*, make *jokes of them*.
And the lawyers began the task, of **exhumation**.
And one of the international companions was able to **FILM**
Some scenes of the exhumation, which are
horrifying
When they go pulling out the pieces of bodies
And a lawyer
PROHIBITED her, he told her that that was prohibited and that she could no
longer continue filming
And, she had to turn off, her **camera**.

*There remained here a **MYSTERY**, about what happened*
when Alfonso returned to his **home**,
his death, and the death **of the children?**

In the first two years afterwards, the Attorney General office’s investigations
deviated towards a false account that attributed, this **crime** to the **FARC**.
Two years later, the Attorney *General’s office*,
Due to **PRESSURE** from a group of senators from the United States
who had done their own investigation
changed the course and, began to investigate the military soldiers
and the **paramilitaries**.”

Citing declarations by demobilized paramilitaries, Father Giraldo then begins
recounting details of the massacre.

“One of the paramilitaries, recounted that he *saw* the moment
when Alfonso **returned**, here to the house.
He came with the machete that all campesinos use.
At the moment when he returned, the soldiers hit him,
they made him kneel down on the floor

and insulted him.

But at the same time, the children, that were still alive

They moved towards him, to **HUG him**

Then, in that moment, the army soldiers and paramilitaries were discussing if they would kill the children.

They were communicating by phone or radio with officers of the Brigade, to consult about, what to do with the children?

The arguments that they put forth were that those children, when they grew up, could become *guerrillas*.

Others said that later,

they would be able to ***IDENTIFY, AND RECOGNIZE***

those that had committed the *massacre*.

And therefore, it was better, to eliminate these possible *witnesses ...*”

My eyes water every time I hear, write about, or re-count him talking about the killing of the children, a five-year-old girl and 18-month-old boy, and how they cut the bodies into pieces.

“... *This was* the terrible massacre that took place, at this **site**.”

From portable speakers, Father Giraldo plays a Catholic song whose lyrics sing: “When pain comes to your door, and sadness and oppression invade you, think about your pain, and that the Son of God also suffered ... ”

He then asks me to read from the Bible’s Book of Wisdom. References to the ‘struggle of good against evil’ reverberate through my voice.

A Community leader had handed out postcards listing all 210 victims in San José de Apartadó, including photos of those killed in the 2005 massacre. After the mass, one man from Córdoba who had recently joined the Peace Community remains there, holding his postcard. We speak as others drift away. His eyes water, holding and looking at the postcard. “The Colombian State has to be the most murderous of them all: it persecutes *campesinos*, but if we struggle in community, we can resist. ... If I could write, I would write in a book all of the atrocities, the things that have happened in this area; one day, I will have the opportunity to recount them.”

We walk down the hillside from the massacre site. Community members take visitors to see their recently installed sugarcane processing station. We smile as we look, and Community members tell us that the sugar we are consuming during the gathering was produced here. A community leader asks Father Giraldo to bless the place, which he does with water and words: “from the beginning, the Peace Community has demanded and struggled for freedom, self-sufficiency, and solidarity.” (Figures 56-57)



Figure 51. Co-performative witness.
Reading from the Book of Wisdom during the 2014 commemoration in La Resbalozza.
Source: Gale Stafford, with permission, from RAIS photo archive.



Figure 52. An “other politics” of autonomy: Sugarcane processing station in La Resbalozza.
Source: Author photo.

A Community communiqué released in 2010, the day after the fifth annual commemoration of this massacre, ended with the following words:

In the midst of such sorrow, we are encouraged by the accompaniment of numerous groups from all the over the world, that share our unshakeable decision to not be crushed before death and shame, and share our love of life. (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó, 2010)

This rendering is but a glimpse of what violence means and looks like against those resisting what Taussig (1984) terms the “culture of terror” in zones of resource extraction and colonization. Through this performance of memory, the Peace Community levies its denunciation and at the same time enacts an autonomous form of justice through a “social sanction” (Giraldo, personal interview, 2013) of shaming the state’s violence and impunity. A Community member stated that commemorations, precisely, “serve for other people to learn about what we have experienced and what war is like” (personal interview, 2014).

J. Butler (2004b) argues that “the fate of the reality of certain lives and death [depends upon] the ability to think critically and publicly about the effects of war” (xxi), and this commemoration epitomizes her assertion that “these stories have to be told, and they are being told” (7). Moreover, the Peace Community reflects Fanon’s (2004) reflection that amidst resistance to modern-colonial violence, “the question is not so much responding to violence with more violence but rather how to diffuse the crisis” (33).

Brown (1995) insists upon care with *how* stories are told given the consequences of particular forms of grieving and vulnerability. She warns of memory work as *ressentiment*, Nietzsche’s (2008) term for reactionary or essentializing identity politics:

It produces an affect (rage, righteousness) that overwhelms the hurt; it produces a culprit responsible for the hurt; and it produces a site of revenge to displace the hurt (a place to inflict hurt as the sufferer has been hurt) (68). ... Politicized identity thus enunciates itself, makes claims for itself, only by entrenching, restating, dramatizing, and inscribing its pain in politics; it can hold out no future—for itself or others—that triumphs over this pain (74).

Despite the fact that Brown admits that “the council of forgetting ... seems inappropriate if not cruel” (74), her view of memory dangerously reinforces the stereotype of victims as pathologically only capable of vengeance (Gómez Muller 2008; Gómez Correal 2015). Conversely, J. Butler (2004b) infers that not all forms of remembrance replicate retaliatory violence and the projection of suffering onto others:

Whereas some forms of public mourning are protracted and ritualized, stoking nationalist fervor, reiterating the conditions of loss and victimization that come to justify a more or less permanent war, not all forms of mourning lead to that conclusion (xix). ... Ethics is precisely a struggle to keep fear and anxiety from turning into murderous action (xviii).

Writing about Afro-Colombian communities in the Pacific region, Oslender (2007) states that “narration itself, the message sent out into the world ... is also resistance against the cultural elaboration of a generalized fear among local populations and breaks the silence that terror imposes as strategy of domination” (126). This is a deliberate process of memory making, which not a ‘normal’ reaction to violence, especially given the intense emotions and continued threats associated with retelling that can just as likely induce the person to want to ‘move away’ from the harm, emotions, violence as much as engage them (Gómez Correal 2015; Ahmed 2004).

Through its voicing of its own history, the Peace Community harnesses the power of any production of history (Trouillot 1995) to reject the imposed state of dehumanization and “non-being” where racialized groups are deemed ‘other,’ sub-human, and expendable (Fanon 2008). Like *Línea Fundadora* of the Argentinian

Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, the Peace Community evokes the killings and the names of those killed, but not as a means to pressure State officials for official monuments; rather, à la the Madres' sub-group *Asociación*, this “difficult return” is part of an anti-state struggle.

Integrated with this difficult return of recounting the massacre details, the Peace Community re-asserts the principles for which they have been attacked and continue struggling: “freedom, self-sufficiency, and solidarity.” In so doing, they identify what members call their “project of life” in dialectical opposition to the State’s “project of death,” as a reverse Manichaeism of defining what you are against as a necessary step towards building an another world (Reyes 2012a; Fanon 2004). As Eduar Lanchero argued in his closing statement at the 2010 Peace Community caravan pilgrimage in Sumapaz, “Hope is when we no longer hate the murderer. Hope is when we build collectively. When we make life, from wherever we are” (Buenaventura 2011).

Further, this autonomist politics is not isolationist: it brings people together to communicate across multiple organizations towards a collective struggle. The commemorations are thus a co-performance among community members *and* allies, in which Father Giraldo plays a central role, through which they simultaneously write and spread their history. However, before expounding on these “alter-geopolitical” and “intercommunal” networks (Koopman 2011a; Newton 2002a), I wish to turn to a second means through which the community writes their own history: painting stones.

ABSENCE AND PRESENCE THROUGH MATERIAL MEMORY: STONES

Another way Community members commemorate the dead is to take a rock from the river, cover it with paint, and write the person's name.⁷⁰ In San José, prior to the Peace Community's displacement from the town, they had constructed a monument of 'stones arranged into three peaks to symbolize the [region's] mountain ranges. And with different colors, they had written the names of all of the victims, one on each stone' (Giraldo, personal interview, 2013) (Figures 53-54). State forces destroyed this monument following the police's occupation of the town in 2005. But the Community continues to arrange stones in 'monuments to the victims' in their new gateway village and at massacre sites (Figures 55-56⁷¹). By continually re-making these monuments, they materially mark the landscape with their history, manifest their commitment to "denounce injustice and impunity," and thus continually challenge the State's project of erasing such traces of army-paramilitary violence.

Yet the stones, like recounting massacres, are not directed at the State alone.

Father Giraldo discussed the role of stones in founding a new village:

When the displacement [from San José town] was immanent, in Holy Week of 2005 ... we picked up all the stones and marched towards San Josecito, which at that time was merely a field. We did this to bring the memory of the dead first. And we began to construct the village around the space where all the stones of the dead were. It was ... the symbolic center of the Community's memory, no? We build the life of the community around that center. (2013, personal interview)

In other words, if peace for the Peace Community is not merely a question of non-collaboration with armed groups but also about creating community, then memory with

⁷⁰ Stones are used as objects of commemoration in different parts of Colombia and beyond, such as the "Ojo que Lloro (Eye that Cries)" monument in Lima, Perú (Moraña 2012).

⁷¹ See also Figure 38 (p. 140).



Figure 53. Archived memories of the monument:
FOR accompanier overlooks the central square of San José de Apartadó town in 2004,
when the first victims monument (bottom left) still existed.
Source: Photo by Sarah Weintraub, with permission, from RAIS photo archive.



Figure 54. Memorial art of the memory monument:
This art piece of San José town's memory monument hangs in Brígida González's home.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 55. "Even the stones speak."
Source: Photo by Julia Nelson and Moira Birss, from RAIS photo archive.



Figure 56. Embodied memory.
Peace Community member painting the names of the 2005 massacre victims onto stones during the commemoration at the site in Mulatos in 2010.
Source: Author photo.

stones is central to nurturing that solidarity and connection. A community member expands upon their significance:

*And, the monuments, of the **victims**.
In San José you constructed, *stone, upon stone*.
And here it is in a *circle*.
And in the commemorations you put down the stones.
Why the stones, and why the distinct ways,
of arranging and showing them?*

Because... these stones have a deep meaning,
they, you can't destroy a **stone**.
A stone always remains intact.
You paint it and later it stays the same.
And in those stones *rests*,
all the historical memory of *compañeros y compañeras*,
children, and adults that have fallen,
for the construction of this world, **alternative world**.

...

We say that, even *by themselves*, the stones *speak!*

...

Therefore, we believe that, maintaining memory,
for example the emblem of the *community*. The memory *museum*.
The memory *monument*.
In them rests all of this remembrance,
of our **compañeros**.
That... brought us *together* in meetings.
That *spoke to us* about our *construction*, about our *organization*.
And how to *obtain*, *international* support.
And I believe that, as for us,
this memory is as important for those that come from **elsewhere**.
That look at how, we always maintain,
that *memory* is what *strengthens us*. (González, personal interview 2011)⁷²

In what ways do “the stones speak?” I have held and painted such stones during commemorations in San José and in classroom and conference presentations about the Peace Community. After holding stones, fellow participants and I commonly express how we feel their weight. There is also a coldness and a silence to the stones. You see the name of the individual person written on it. This is a power of absence that can testify to

⁷² For the script of the performance of which this poetic transcription is part, see Chapter 7 (pp. 420-423).

particular realities—such as un-representable slavery, genocide, and massacres—with more meaning than a verbal articulation (Bernard-Donals and Glejzer 2001; Nyong'o 2009; Oliver 2001; Till 2005). Painted with the names of victims, these make memory into material matter (Saltzman 2006) in a way that makes an absence visible. Words definitely *do* something (Austin 2007), as in recounting the massacre, but objects and silences *do* things as well (Conquergood 2002).

The stones spatially imprint those people that have died upon the landscape, evoking their presence, wisdom, and contributions to the community, which serve as the material, symbolic, and ethical base for communal life. They are material creations as a form of permanent remembrance against forgetting, yet reflect memory as always practiced in the present. I have noticed how painted stones, rather than staying the same, in fact change: the paint fades with time, weather, and humidity. This necessitates adults and children painting new stones. This speaks to how objects intended to be fixed or permanent are never fully so, but by fading can induce ongoing action and remembrance.

Another way the stones speak is by communicating history to others:

Monuments testify to the fact that those people lived and struggled, for others to see and tell the truth about that reality. Those remains that are preserved there ... are so that someone who comes from elsewhere looks and says “oh, yes, they were massacred *campesinos*. They were people that struggled for peace, for life.” (personal interview, 2014)

Similar to the pilgrimages, the stones materially both denounce these assassinations and present their principles of life, peace, and small-scale farming that distinguish them from the armed groups. One man from Córdoba mentioned the stones when he described his first visit to San Josecito during the discernment process of deciding whether or not to join the Community:

In the meeting, I didn't understand (the idea of being) "neutral." And, seeing the *gringos* [white foreigners], [I thought] "it must be that they bring in lots of money." But I believed that this Community was good. They told me: "the Community isn't about money;" they have had many deaths. And they showed me the stones. ... [I thought,] "I'm in." (personal interview, 2014)

This quote speaks both to the anti-capitalist nature of the Peace Community process—focused on rupturing with subjectivities driven by accumulation and individualism—as well as the educative role of memory performance. In addition to honoring the victims, the stones and commemorations serve to a) educate children and new members about the history and ongoing stakes of the struggle, and b) integrate them into the collective process. Similarly, another member from Córdoba who had recently joined spoke about the significance of his first commemoration: "I went to Mulatos, and wow, to see all of that about the massacre, the way that you don't forget, and how Luis Eduardo Guerra also died for me; it is similar to the death of Christ" (field notes, 2011). This comment also signals the lens through which Father Giraldo and many Community members understand and frame their victimization: as corollary to the unjust yet necessary crucifixion of Jesus towards an alternative world. Another said, "Even though I didn't know him, I realized that Luis Eduardo died for me, too. I owe the benefits of being a Community member to him and other leaders" (personal interview, 2014). Therefore, the commemorations—in addition to their elementary school course on memory—serve to bridge new members with those that came before them.

If an emancipatory politics requires the construction of collective rather than individualistic subjects, as necessary for sustained organization (Fanon 2004; Hallward 2011; Reyes 2015b), then the material-embodied pilgrimages and painting of stones are means through which a collective Peace Community subject is produced, both among older and newer members, and children and adults, as well as between the living and the

dead. It is to the production and reinforcement of this community's "collective consciousness" (Guha 1983) that I now turn.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND COMMITMENT

Peace Community members tend to emphasize three themes when they talk about memory's significance: 1) the duty of remembering and honoring the dead; 2) its role in maintaining their commitment and strategy; and 3) the importance of sharing this history with others. On commemoration as a duty, Doña Brígida González stated, "To not commemorate means that the Peace Community is finished" (personal interview, 2011). Another member said, "If we forget, we don't do anything. It is important that we have gone through difficult times. We cannot forget or go back to the same point" (field notes, 2012). This is consistent with how "individuals and groups recall the past not for its own sake, but as a tool to bolster different aims and agendas" (Hoelscher and Alderman 2004: 349). Yet, while commemorations occur in specific moments, they are not something 'extra' added onto the Community's daily farming, as merely a 'bolstering' or means towards a goal. Memory is a constitutive element of their consciousness: what defines their struggle and who they are.

At marked and unmarked sites throughout San José where people have been killed, it is common for community members to talk about those events. Being in those places evokes those people and stories about them (Till 2005). "On the commemoration pilgrimages we are reminded of the paths that people walked by walking those same paths. You are reminded that you might face the same fate" (personal interview, 2014). The act of walking in a pilgrimage re-enacts the life path and struggle of those people,

which induces reflection and can re-enforce one's commitment to continue the struggle. Moreover, when former companions return to visit San José, community members frequently say upon seeing them, "Ah, you remembered [us]!" Companions often respond, "But I remember you every day, whether I am here or not!" What community members seemingly point to is how space, memory, and politics are mutually constituted: there is something about memory—and solidarity—that requires being there, where returning evokes remembrance but memory also requires returning to particular places.

Members describe their emotions associated with going to the massacre sites:

We feel happy, because we are remembering that person that walked with us. ... A joy ... It is a delight for us. Because we know that we went, we fulfilled that duty that we had, because it is duty ... to remember, in a walking caravan, go there with Father [Giraldo]. ... I feel sadness, when we arrive there. Because ... we go to see where they killed them, what they did, but later, we have that memory here. (personal interview, 2012)

Personally, when I go on a commemoration, to where they have killed people, I feel bitterness, anger! I mean, how is it possible that we are living peace, struggling, and ... [the government and guerrillas] that speak about peace [in the Havana negotiations] are killing us that are living it? (personal interview, 2014)

Speaking to the intensity of the "difficult return," these emotions—notably sadness, anger, as well as joy and fulfillment—are harnessed towards reflection about those individuals and the Community's history and ongoing work. At the 2014 gathering, a leader stressed the difference between commemoration and celebration:

February 21st is not a celebration. It is a *commemoration* to reflect upon the work of the Peace Community. When you don't want to work collectively, in work groups, ... this is throwing away the sacrifice of these people. Have their lives and blood been lost? ... Those that died did not do so in vain, but because they believed in this. This is a time for reflection about the great difficulties and strength of this process. It is to feel the sorrow, those that have been tortured and assassinated, and to keep walking. (field notes, 2014)

Similarly, many organizations in Colombia and across Latin America talk about memory as connecting current struggles to past resistance: its people, strategies, art, and culture (Gómez Correal 2012b). Memory is not a limited ‘remembering’ but rather an act of integrating struggles. By evoking fallen leaders’ presence and principles into the present space as a continual guide, the Peace Community embraces the “agency of the dead” (Gómez Correal 2015) and their speaking through the stones. In other words, this radical transrelational peace is constituted through a relationality between the living and the dead, in which there is peace as dignity and solidarity not only among the living but with the dead. Here, the death is not an end point but a political beginning (Gómez Correal 2015) of an emancipatory “other politics” of self-determination and dignity.

Moreover, the commemorations result in regular gatherings throughout the year among community members that live in dispersed settlements. For instance, relatives that live in different villages re-unite, such as grandparents and grandchildren spending time together. Also, members and accompaniers sing the Community hymn together and share communal meals. “The pilgrimages are good because you gather with many people and meet new folks, which is especially nice for those of us that live more far away and secluded from the rest” (personal interview, 2014). In addition, following the 2014 Holy Week pilgrimage, women played a soccer match, with music blasting in the background and the entire community cheering them on. In other words, while recounting the massacre details is very solemn, people tend to be happy during and after the gatherings, through which Community members, despite the ongoing war, nonetheless live ‘peace as community’ in the present.

Also, as a testament to the immense work involved with memory practice (Muzaini 2013), the pilgrimages require extensive pre-planning and organization. In

advance, Community members build or renovate chapels, as well as gazebos for meetings and to hang hammocks for sleeping. They organize visitors' arrivals and the transportation of food and supplies on people's backs and horses during and prior to the gatherings. The commemorations are thus manifestations of their commitment to "participate in community work."

Of course, maintaining a collective work ethic over time is challenging. As illustrated in the opening transcription of this Part III, a common response to internal disagreements and external threats is to leave the Peace Community. As described by deceased leader Eduar Lanchero:

It is very difficult to get up every morning and stay coherent in building a different world. There are so many things that attack us, so many ways of being discouraged. Even if the resistance is getting smaller, and many people get tired, it is up to all of us to help each other to carry on, to walk together through all difficulties. (Buenaventura 2011)

This is a core constituent and challenge of an emancipatory politics: maintaining collectivity and commitment amidst changing and seemingly insurmountable conditions. If the commitment to collective work possibilizes a non-state politics of autonomy, then I argue that memory practice is precisely one way this cohesion is sustained. Community members frequently reference the strength they channel from the dead. "Memory is *important*. If you have a *fallen* relative [or] ... leader, it gives you strength to continue" (personal interview, 2013). Similarly, it is worth repeating a quote from the introduction to this Part III. Commenting on people who have left the Community to work independently or have been kicked out for breaking community rules, one member affirmed that maintaining one's commitment:

is about remembering what we've gone through, what we've suffered. You remember the past so as not to be fooled about what the State, the armed groups are up to. That memory maintains you working in community, as neutral, and

autonomous. It's about *a love for the other and working together*, ... remembering what you have lived, and that working alone is dangerous and not communal. (field notes, 2014)

This passage signals two key elements: commemorations provide a space for historical and contextual analysis to guide the Community's work moving forward, and they inspire renewed motivation to work collectively. It speaks to how spaces of denunciation induce a space for new subjectivities to emerge (Ceceña 2012); "inhabiting the norm" (Mahmood 2005) of communal remembrance produces and nurtures this collective subject. And as noted by J. Butler (2004b), "Perhaps mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation (perhaps one should say submitting to a transformation)" (21). It is part of a subjective shift towards a "re-existence" (Porto Gonçalves 2006; Porto Gonçalves 2008; Hardt and Reyes 2012; Zibechi 2012).

These themes emerged in another quote, when I asked a community member whether she perceived stronger commitment following the pilgrimages:

Yes, in the Community rules mm hum! You work with more zest, and with more strength, more definition. Because [during the gatherings] you can sketch many goals. That memory helps you awaken with more goals to continue building. (González, personal interview 2011).

The following quote signals outside witnesses' role in this co-performance of memory:

When you go to Mulatos you feel like, wow, there is so much life. There is so much life even in the midst of so many threats, so much adversity, but there is so much life. And even more so, when there are many people from around the world, you feel that joy. ... It gives you a lot of strength. (González, personal interview, 2011)

This renewed energy is something I have frequently witnessed over the years: more "revolutionary enthusiasm" (Newton 2002b) in the weekly *comunitario* workdays and meetings. Again, memory here is not about recovering or going back to a nostalgic past,

as is often the case in fascist or genocidal politics (Benjamin 2007a), but to simultaneously write another history and produce another present and future.

Moreover, the commemorations are frequently followed by general assemblies—in which they analyze the context and make collective decisions—as well as sessions of the Campesino University. In this university, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 6, the Peace Community, its partners in the Network of Communities in Resistance, and other visitors conduct workshops about community health, education, media, and human rights. Commemorations are “so useful because there is a sharing with other communities that have close relationships with us” (personal interview, 2012).

Hence, the commemoration pilgrimages are spaces of cultivating collective cohesion but also contextual analysis and strategic direction. Such “reflexive dialogues within the movements that permanently look at and rethink their objectives, analyse reality and reinvent their action” (Holland and Gómez Correal 2013: 155) are indispensable for a liberatory politics’ sustainability and effectiveness. The commemorations thus reflect and produce the collective consciousness and “collective will” (Hallward 2011) integral to members’ ongoing politicization and emancipation.

DEFENDING LAND

In addition, the commemorations are an essential part of the construction of this “alter-geopolitics” (Koopman 2011a) of transnational solidarity networks. They induce national and international witnesses to spread information about past violence, current threats, and the Peace Community’s alternative project. They also increase security prior

to, during, and potentially after the pilgrimage. Beforehand, the Community and companions send letters to governmental authorities and human rights networks to raise the profile of the gathering. This focuses attention on San José de Apartadó, increasing the potential repercussions of armed groups' attacks committed amidst so many national and international witnesses. Members talk about how the armed actors tend to "retreat a bit" (field notes, 2013) during such gatherings: "Right now, it is so calm! Because of the pilgrimage. Maybe the paramilitaries will enter on a later date, but not for the time being" (personal interview, 2013).

Therefore, memory work is deeply embedded with their defense of their land and livelihood. Returning to the 2011 interview with Doña Brígida González, on the significance of the painted stones, I noted that:

[A stone] is also something from the earth.
For you, land is part of the *resistance*,
and of the alternative.
It's resisting being displaced again,
and the alternative is working the *land*,
and the stones come FROM **THERE!**

Of course!

So it's showing through things that you *have* here,
and specifically a stone,
as you say, it lasts forever.

Well, the stones come from the land.
They are in riverbanks, and they are in the soil.
But at the same time we **STRUGGLE**
to take care of the land.
To **DEFEND** the land.

Because of another intense war against the people. Why? Because in the land there are many mineral resources. There are so many national and international interests. In one form or another they want to take the land away from the people, and leave the people disadvantaged, without a place *to work*.
(personal interview, 2011)

This member veered from my question about stones and land to affirm their land struggle. And the pilgrimages, by mobilizing bodies across space, contribute to the

defense of land in a particular way (Figure 57). The following is an extended excerpt from a field note that I wrote following the 2014 massacre commemoration:

Walking down from Mulatos, that military helicopter hovered in front of us. As we slid down the mountain and our boots got stuck in the wet mud, the helicopter lingered above, so close. Would they fire? Those that want this land (for oil palm plantations, hydroelectric power, coal or gold mines) can see us, in different ways. The helicopter physically sees our bodies, but they also see us through the letters, embassy meetings, and accounts we spread before and after.

It's less about the immediacy of the presence and dissuasion network, and more about constantly walking, continually having our bodies make the territory.

People converged upon Mulatos from villages to the west, north, and east. In that movement, there is not only a different type of visibility that is created, but also transformations as people (Ceceña 2012; Fanon 1965; Mahmood 2005): working together in solidarity, caring for one another, with food or horses, as well as reflecting on the immensity of the struggle, our place in it, our bodies pushed to certain limits, our bodies worn down, made to ache and feel pain, but also strengthened.

Like Father Giraldo said as we walked: "you can't explain what it's like to walk these trails; you have to experience it to know what it's like."

It's both a) the internationals accompanying the Community in terms of encouragement, re-legitimizing the struggle, letters to authorities, and being ready in case of confrontation with State forces on the trails, and also b) the members accompanying us, not letting anyone fall behind, getting horses for people that can't walk, and cooking the meals in Mulatos.

Again, of crucial importance to the pilgrimages: you walk to those sites. It is not only about what happens there, the "difficult return" in those specific places, plus the "strategic practice" (Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert 2000): the assemblies, Campesino University, and people's conversations made possible by the memorial gathering. It's also about the *going there*, that transformational process of pilgrimage. Again I'm convinced: "memory is the strength of resistance."

[One international visitor] stated that she was not very impressed with or inspired by the commemoration pilgrimage: "Father Giraldo does almost all of the talking." Wow, that really jolted me. The Peace Community mobilized people from every one of its settlements, and has refused to be silent for nine years about such a horrific massacre. Just the act itself of all these people moving in the land is amazing, attempting to build community across settlements during the assembly, and the level of organization, commitment, and consciousness required for everything to take place.

To defend life and land, you have to walk and be the land, and live the transformation as our bodies, women, men, children, horses, and dogs move through it. This is a territorial practice: our bodies are in motion.



Figure 57. Memory in movement.
Walking among the *veredas* of San José de Apartadó.
Source: Author photo.

Through the commemorations and re-settlements of these villages, they are converting spaces of death into spaces of life. This is epitomized by the inauguration of the Luis Eduardo Guerra Mulatos Peace Village (Figures 58-59) in 2010, two years after they returned to re-found a Community settlement there. The families that have re-settled the area grow corn, sugarcane, vegetables, and raise animals; they store their crops in a communal building and there is a communal kitchen and library. This food sovereignty and commoning (Federici 2010) reflect and sustain their autonomist politics through an alternative economy. Many call the settlement the new 'heart' of the community, not only because it lies at a midpoint between dispersed settlements "where we have gatherings and community assemblies" (2013), but also as a spiritual core.

In [Mulatos], there are so many people, invisible but they are there, because of a struggle. They are buried, where Luis Eduardo gave his life. ... This land is so productive, and today Mulatos is the site of the Peace Village experiment. (González, personal interview, 2011)

Luis Eduardo himself said that we have to struggle for the land. When they killed him, I came here and anyone could see the fertile, productive land. So we had to return. ... A site where there was death, [now] there is life. (2013)

Many of those forcibly displaced from San José de Apartadó in the 1990s never returned to live there. Some have never even gone back to visit. One such relative of various Community members, now living in a city, told me that he has terrible memories of the place and is too scared to return (field notes, 2014). For him, as astutely noted by an international accompanier (field notes, 2013), the area remains a place of death, but the spatial practice of the Peace Community has created new memories and places. As one member argued, "Sharing those stories with other people, the massacres and also joys, is like re- living them, and then to continue forward" (personal interview, 2014). The Mulatos Peace Village is a testament to the brutal violence they have suffered and



Figure 58. Recuperating and producing space.
Entrance to the Peace Community settlement in Mulatos, San José de Apartadó:
“Welcome to the Luis Eduardo Guerra Peace Village. Neutral zone.”
Source: Author photo.



Figure 59. From a space of death to a space of life: View overlooking the Mulatos Peace Village.
Source: Author photo.

continue to face, but also to their determination and alternative of communal work, food sovereignty, and remembrance.

Memory is thus part and parcel of the way this community recuperates and produces spaces. This occurs both through material objects, such as stones and chapels, as well as the embodied movement of the pilgrimages across villages. To use the terms of Deleuze and Guattari (1988), there is a “reterritorialization” amidst an ongoing “deterritorialization” by the war.⁷³ The Peace Community thus insists that it is not through forgetting or repression that a culture of terror’s power relation of control is subverted or reversed. Conversely, the “difficult return” (Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert 2000) of their memory performance signals how the “spectacle” of death through victims’ and spectators’ bodies and consciousness (Taussig 1984) can in fact be re-performed in a way that counters that “space of death” with spaces of memory and life.

As Gómez Correal (2012b) puts it, memory is a “political verb” (248). Correspondingly, a Kankuamo elder in Colombia observes that memory “does not need to be reconstructed by you. You have to be reconstituted by it” (in Maestre 2012: 111). In other words, through stones and pilgrimages, the Peace Community creates memory narratives and objects to testify to their reality, but that memory practice also *produces* the Peace Community itself.

CREATING AND SPREADING HISTORY: FOLK PAINTINGS

Doña Brígida González’s paintings of Peace Community places and events are another material memory form that creates and spreads their history. Glued to a piece of

⁷³ I am grateful to an anonymous journal article reviewer for this insightful framing.

wood and using a folk aesthetic, each painting depicts a particular scene, such as of a massacre, displacement, Community village re-settlement, or the geography of Urrá dam region in Córdoba where *campesinos* from four villages joined the Peace Community in 2009 and 2010 (Figure 60).⁷⁴ Doña Brígida has created hundreds of these paintings, gifting them to individuals and organizations part of their solidarity network. For example, during my most recent to her house in July 2014, Doña Brígida was sketching a painting featuring cacao trees, work groups, and the Community's chocolate processing machinery for an international researcher whose thesis explores the Peace Community's social, political, and economic project through the cacao production process.

This art is a means for her to contribute to the general Community process creatively through an activity that has particular meaning for her and for those that accompany the Community. Like the stones, the paintings materialize their memory and history. And like visitors' accounts and photographs of a commemoration, the paintings can be shared and gifted, and thus physically move beyond the Community.

And all these *art* projects!!! (smiling, *laughing*)

Because,
in the art,
although I don't write very well—I read well but I don't write well.
In the drawings I tell *everything*, all the work done in the *Community*.
And what I feel in my *heart*, I feel in order to make these *drawings*.
I make these drawings with **deep love**.

So the art **projects**

Why are they important,
and how are they useful?
The drawings and handicrafts.

⁷⁴ For González's other paintings included in this dissertation, see Figures 1 (p. 2), 24 (p. 74), 25 (p. 79), 33 (p. 122), 35 (p. 132), 36 (p. 136), and 37 (p. 138).

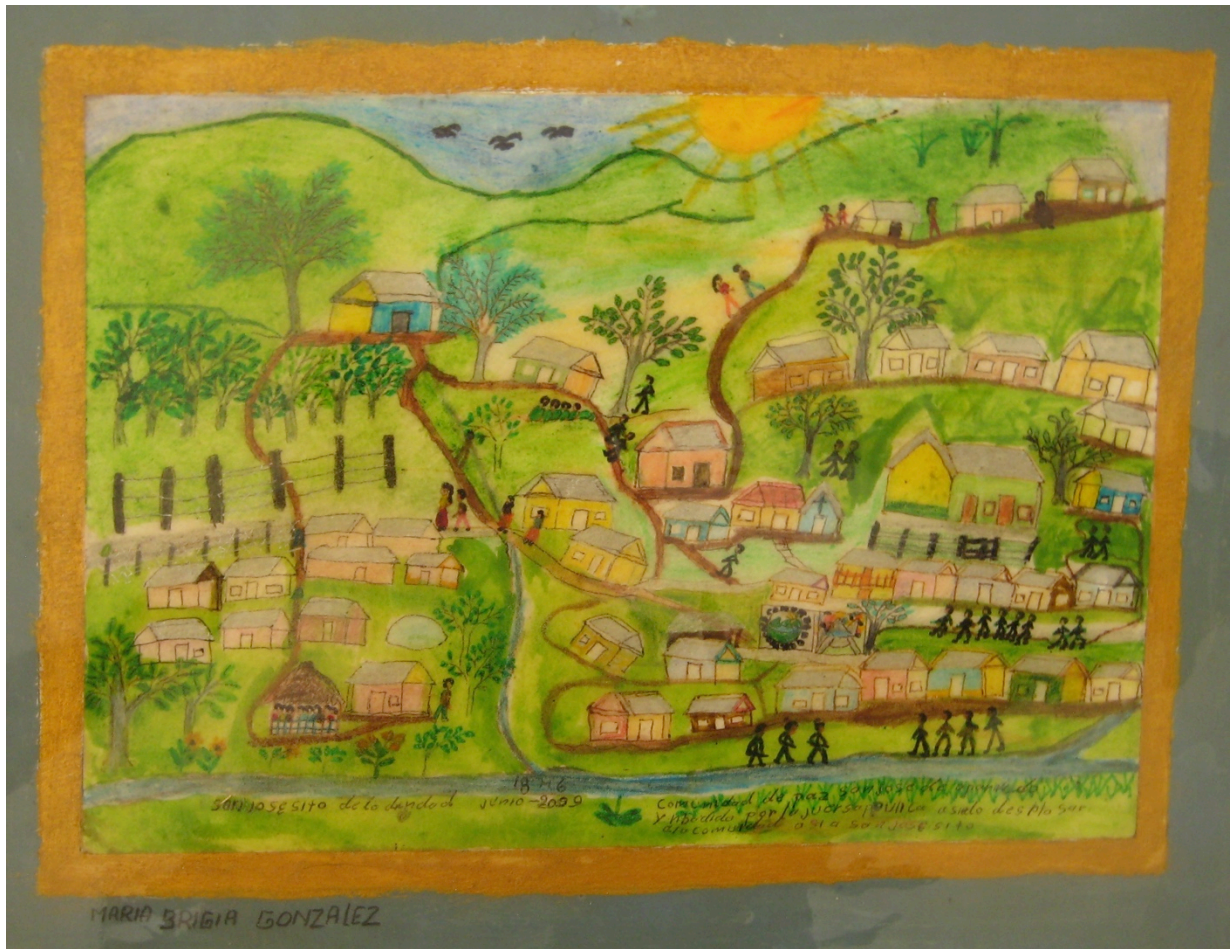


Figure 60. “Alter-geopolitics” through the counter-memory of folk paintings
This is the painting gifted to me by Doña María Brígida González in 2010, whose caption reads:

“San Josecito of dignity. Peace Community of San José de Apartadó invaded by the Public Forces causing the community’s displacement to San Josecito.”

Source: Author photo.

I put in all the *dedication*, love, and... *service* because I know that these drawings *are going to go*, to other places where people haven't been to the Community. And where, through these drawings they are going to learn about the **Community**.

These paintings are all over, in Canada, Italy...

How? How do these drawings communicate DIGNITY?

Because... *many PEOPLE* have given their lives in *service*, of this... **struggle**, of this... *resistance*.

But they remain *with us*, they continue giving us strength so that we continue moving **forward**, and that's what is told in these *paintings*.

(A MERENGUE SONG BLASTS: "**¡¡POR UN MOMENTO, UN REMEDIO!!**")

To speak the truth, correct?

To speak the **truth**.

To speak the truth of what is going on, even though... the government goes to Europe or to the United States to say that in Colombia what exists is simply... *terrorism*, *narcotrafficking*.

We say, something *else*.

YES. *Narcotrafficking*, but because the State itself *is okay* with *narcotrafficking*. Because if not, *narcotrafficking* wouldn't exist.

(González, personal interview, 2011)

Along with their communiqués, painted stones, and commemoration pilgrimages, Doña Brígida's folk paintings are part of the Peace Community's struggle for truth. Enacting their commitment to 'reject injustice and impunity,' the paintings and the artist's corresponding interview narrative about them contest dominant discourses that Colombia's war is reducible to drug trafficking, 'illegal' armed actors, or anti-state terrorism.

Moreover, these paintings are representations of space that "say something else" in a particular and purposeful way. They are intentionally directed to their solidarity network. They present Community allies with a material piece of artwork that serves to remind that person or organization of the Peace Community and that individual or group's time in San José de Apartadó. Hanging in homes or offices, viewing such paintings might induce more frequent communication with Community members by

phone or email, or serve as reminders and motivation about political organizing, to speak from my own experience. Further, the paintings “go to other places where people haven’t been to the Community. And where, through these drawings they are going to learn about the Community.” Therefore, they are a means for the person gifted the painting to remember, and through which those allies can educate others about their experience and Peace Community history.

For instance, I have used the painting she gifted me in academic and activist spaces, and in informal conversations at my house about San José and my research. In formal presentations, I typically begin by asking participants to look at the painting and create a narrative about what they see. Common observations reference the country folk and rural landscape (rivers, trails, and farms); the prevalent presence of what people identify as police officers or army soldiers; civilians moving away from the armed actor in different directions; and community members meeting in a gazebo. Participants often say it depicts a scene in Colombia or Guatemala. Starting from their own interpretations of the painting, I then proceed to fill in details about Colombian politics, the Peace Community, and the specific details of the event depicted in the painting, which in this case, is the displacement from San José to San Josecito upon the installation of the police post in 2005.

The paintings are not only a way for this Peace Community artist to tell her stories even without being physically present. They also allow others to engage these stories through an alternative, performative medium to reading or listening. In the process, they can construct their own narrative about what the painting reflects and its political importance. They are another means of materialized and embodied memory practice, through which their history is produced and moves through their alter-

geopolitical solidarity network, fundamentally integral to their political strategy. As Doña Brígida stated in an impromptu interview that began one afternoon when I passed by her home and saw her weaving, “Here I am making this handbag because weaving is also resistance. I am also making bracelets. I am making paintings. Because all of this is resistance. And it is important, because one’s creativity strengthens the Community” (personal interview, 2014).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has investigated the role of memory in this “other politics” of emancipatory autonomy from state-paramilitary-guerrilla violence. I agree with Peace Community members that “memory is the strength” of this peace process framed as both refusing collaboration with armed groups and constructing community. The commemoration pilgrimages, stones, and folk paintings are central to their autonomist politics because they 1) assert their existence, write their own history, and enact their own justice in the face of state impunity and racialized dispossession; 2) create material and symbolic traces in the landscape to honor and connect with the dead; 3) bring the community together on a regular basis to contemplate and perform their history and present; 4) cultivate internal cohesion and motivate continued work; 5) serve to educate and integrate new members and children into the Community; 6) create spaces of strategic planning and solidarity building with allies; 7) mobilize those bodies across space to continually return to and defend their land; and 8) facilitate the spreading of their history nationally and internationally through solidarity and media networks, which re-legitimizes their struggle and increases security. Hence, these memory

practices and objects create this radical trans-relational peace of dignity, autonomy, and solidarity among Community members, both the living and the dead, and between the Community and its alliance network.

This is not to argue that memory or peace are somehow an ‘essence’ of these individuals or of Indigenous-descendants; rather, I am arguing that this peace is produced through the *practice* of this memory. These are dialectically relational: their struggle for what they understand as autonomy and peace also shapes the particular forms of memorialization they practice. Of course, I do not claim that these or any other particular practices *inevitably* induce cohesion and emancipation, as evidenced by the disagreements, struggles, and organizational ruptures over memorialization in Argentina (Bosco 2004). Yet in the Peace Community, these memorializations produce both a) analyses that reject reactionary and vindictive counter-violence, and b) spaces in which they fully enact their principles of communal work, internal and external solidarity, non-participation in the war, and rejecting impunity.

In contrast to claims that ongoing remembrance and denunciation dangerously tend towards subjective stagnation (Freud 1917) or retaliatory vindictive violence (Brown 1995), Peace Community commemorations enact their own justice in a way that both denounces political violence and re-asserts an alternative politics through autonomy and collective work. They emphasize war’s embodied reality and reinforce the Community’s anti-violence ethic and practice, illuminating an alternative form of justice to retributive and restorative state justice models.

Memory is not a reactive political act anchored in the past. Rather, it is a dynamic and forward-looking political discourse and practice. Memory is constitutive to the Peace Community’s affirmative political project of peace: if peace for them is understood

as building community and refusing to participate in the war, then it is through commemoration that the Peace Community in fact creates this alter-peace of transcommunity self-determination, solidarity, and dignity. By thinking memory, peace, and politics together we can understand the extent to which particular practices nurture solidarity, a refusal to enact retaliatory or offensive violence, and place-based ethics of care that are constitutive of a “more just possible future” (Alderman and Inwood 2013; Till 2012) or, more accurately, I argue, this already present emancipatory politics.

CHAPTER 6

“LAND IS OUR MOTHER”: ANTAGONISTIC TERRITORIALITIES OF EXTRACTIVISM AND AUTONOMY

Making (our own) *panela*⁷⁵ honey gives me so much happiness. There have been many difficulties. People said that “*no*, that is very difficult. You won’t make sugarcane honey or blocks.”

But some older men told me, “*Yes! It will work!* I worked with cane when I was a kid.” And we began.

Indigenous people came here to show us how make *panela*.

The first batch, was a failure.

Many people, you have to show them that YES things are possible. That they *see* because they don’t believe: “*I won’t use that. No way.*” And the people are now happy, making their own *panela*; it has a *good flavor*.

The Agricultural Center has enlivened many people ...

It is important for communities to not depend on the outside world, to not depend upon money. We are very far behind, but we have to *WORK really HARD!* The first thing is being self-sufficient with our food.

It makes me so happy when people [from other villages] tell me, “I have a fish pond and I learned how to make it in the *Agricultural Center*.”

That gives me a lot of strength to press on, looking for more alternatives.⁷⁶
(personal interview, 2012)

⁷⁵ *Panela* refers to condensed raw sugarcane. The production process involves extracting the juice from the cane and boiling it into honey, which is then dried and formed into blocks (brown and white sugar require further processing). *Panela* is used throughout Colombia as a sweetener.

⁷⁶ This interview was not audio recorded. Therefore, the emphases of the ethnopoetic transcription reflect my written notes and recollection of the interview.

I begin this chapter with the passage above because it speaks to two core elements of the Peace Community and creating an emancipatory politics: a) self-sufficiency and b) solidarity. As I will argue in this chapter, such practices constitute a fundamental part of Colombian resistance communities' alter-territories, which counter the hegemonic territoriality of the modern state.

Building on an emerging critical subfield on territory (Reyes and Kaufman 2011; Reyes 2015b; Reyes 2015a; Porto Gonçalves 2006; Escobar 2008; Raffestin 2012; Delaney 2005), I understand the term beyond mere 'bounded spaces controlled by a particular group.' Rather, to articulate the notions of these scholars, *territory* is better understood as a series of spatial practices, places, and values that produce a particular subject. In other words, the modern nation-state is but *one* type of territory, which reflects a particular *territoriality*, the relationship subjects have with space (Reyes 2015a). In other words, territoriality, as it has been typically understood, as the control or defense of an area a person or animal perceives as 'its own,' is only one subject-space relationship. This theoretical re-opening of these terms provides a framework for analyzing the potentially different territories and territorialities in the world.

Precisely during today's conjuncture of state-corporate neo-extractivism across the world, communities such as San José de Apartadó insist upon their self-determination and are working against monoculture. This chapter analyzes these contrasting territorial projects, the political subjectivities embedded in and produced by them, and how they reflect an antagonism between different territorialities. Therefore, when I refer to alter-territories, I am referring to these political series of places, values, and practices, whereas alter-territoriality refers to contrasting relationships themselves that subjects have with space.

The Peace Community has been producing its own *panela* in the village of La Unión since 2010-2011. This Agricultural Center is a site where they preserve seeds, harvest fish, and grow and process sugarcane. They have sugarcane-processing stations in other villages, too. I mentioned one of them in Chapter 5, when Community members took visitors to see their cane-processing station constructed just down the hill from La Resbalozá's massacre commemoration site, informing us that the *panela* we were consuming during the gathering was produced there.

San José's farmers have provided for much of their own subsistence since they settled the area in the 1960s, by growing food crops and building homes. However, in recent years, certain Community members are increasingly working towards being more self-sufficient: to produce as many of their basic necessities as possible. While they previously purchased *panela* in municipal and town stores, Community-produced *panela* now provides a large portion of local consumption (Figures 61-66).

The Peace Community first began to intentionally pursue a project of food sovereignty following a series of paramilitary economic blockades of the Apartadó-San José road between 2002-2004, in which their access to food and supplies in Apartadó were cut off. Moreover, many members have re-focused their attention on subsistence food crops and medicine given a) the Community's abandonment of a baby banana export project by 2012, following its failure to sustain shipping and sales agreements with European buyers, and b) their participation in the *Universidad Campesina de la Resistencia* (Small Farmers' University of Resistance) since 2004. The latter includes workshops on community health, medicinal plants, food sovereignty, media, and human rights.



Figure 61. An alter-politics through food sovereignty.
Sign at the sugarcane processing station in La Unión's Agricultural Center:
"Welcome. Machinery for cane honey and *panela* blocks processing.
Food sovereignty."
Source: Author photo.



Figure 62. *Panela* production #1: Extracting juice from the cane stalks.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 63. *Panela* production #2: Concentrating the raw juice from the stalks.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 64. *Panela* production #3: Boiling the cane juice into syrup.
Notice the wood pieces added for additional nutrients and flavor, with a community member removing the film that concentrates at the surface.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 65. *Panela* production #4: Community member tending to multiple pots of boiling cane juice.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 66. *Panela* processing complete: Blocks ready for consumption. Community members enjoy *panela* after the honey has dried into blocks. 70% of La Unión's *panela* consumption is met by production in the Agricultural Center.
Source: Author photo.

Self-sufficiency in a given community is not only a question of local practices. It also the product of solidarity between different organizations. The Community member cited in the opening passage to this chapter inferred the importance of mutual collaboration and training workshops in the *Campesino* University: “Indigenous people came here to show us how to make *panela*.” Additionally, initiating and sustaining such programs is challenging, reflected by his allusion to contrasting subjectivities among community members. Some are skeptical about new ways of doing and the possibilities of self-sufficiency: “*no*, that is very difficult. You won’t make honey or blocks. ... *I* won’t use it.” Conversely, others embody a “revolutionary enthusiasm” (Newton 2002b) by harnessing their own knowledge and power: “*Yes! It will work!* I worked with cane when I was a kid. ... Many people, you have to show them that YES things are possible.”

It is interesting to note how this member’s idea of being “very far behind” parallels the modern discourse of progress. It reminds me of Escobar’s (1995) argument about the ‘Development Project,’ how “many in the Third World began to think of themselves as inferior, underdeveloped” (52). Yet, counter to the dominant discourse of development (Escobar 1999), the Peace Community is clear that they are not trying to ‘catch up’ to industrial capitalism and development. Rather, they concur with critical scholars (Escobar 1995; Fals Borda 2009b; Galeano 1997) that what has set them back is forced displacement and the capitalist social relations of imposed work and dependency, inducing them to struggle for self-sufficiency and dignity.

The Peace Community’s *panela* production reflects a broad trend among today’s social movements to increasingly provide for their own subsistence (Federici 2010; Zibechi 2012). It is difficult to break with material as well as subjective dependency on capitalist markets and state services. Constructing such an emancipatory “other” politics

requires continual work and experimentation, not to mention passionate visionaries to motivate new projects.

In my previous chapter, I traced how the Peace Community creates an emancipatory politics through embodied and material memory practice. In this chapter, I turn to the relationship between an “other” politics and territory. “Territory” is commonly understood as a bounded space controlled by a particular group or person, most often associated with the nation-state. Yet scholars and social movements today increasingly challenge this limited understanding, re-theorizing and creating territory beyond the nation-state.

In recent decades, Latin American social movements—especially Indigenous groups—have increasingly demanded ‘territory’ rather than merely ‘land.’ I will trace the significance of this discursive shift for re-thinking territory amidst the conjuncture of advancing state-corporate extractivism. While such communities obviously demand control over their lives and spaces, I argue that more expansive theorizations of *territoriality* and *territory* beyond bounded spaces of control are necessary to understand these autonomist movements.

My approach is thus situated as building from the emerging alter-territory subfield theorizing these terms from the perspective of radical Latin American social movements (Reyes 2015b; Reyes and Kaufman 2011; Escobar 2008; Porto Gonçalves 2006). My understanding of territory and territoriality are thus informed by my time learning from and with these scholars at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

To repeat, I use *territoriality* to refer to the relationship between subjects and space, and *territory* as a series of spatial practices, values, and places that produce a particular political subject (Reyes 2015a). Following an overview of the scholarly

debates about these concepts, I trace how the Peace Community produces a particular type of territory through solidarity caravans, participation in the *Campesino* University of Resistance, and food sovereignty projects.

LAND, TERRITORY, NEO-EXTRACTIVISM, AND TERRITORIALITY

In this subsection, I will proceed to review the dominant understandings of territory, before proceeding to discuss current disputes in Colombia over not only ‘territories’ themselves but also what I argue is in fact a struggle that reflects divergent praxes of territory and territoriality.

Dominant conceptualization of territory

Territory is most often conceptualized as a bounded extension of area, upon which a particular group exerts control or sovereignty.⁷⁷ Most scholars differentiate territory from mere space or land. For Cowen and Gilbert (2008), territory is space or land that “has been acted upon” (16). Territory is commonly associated with governance: Ince (2012) defines territory as “a spatial concept linked to bounded systems of governance, through which a governing body and its various bureaucratic and coercive apparatuses regulate and control those settled in, or passing through, a defined geographical region” (1647). For Soja (1971), territory is a question of a sense of belonging by subjects and particular places. Delaney (2005) specifies that a territory is a social product *with particular meaning*, “a bounded social space that inscribes a certain

⁷⁷ Of course, different disciplines theorize territory from distinct angles. International relations approaches territory as state sovereignty; anthropology points to territories as expressions of collective identity; environmental psychology traces the promotion of privacy and emotional security; and human geography focuses on the workings internal to and between nation states, and more recently, non-state spaces (Delaney 2005).

sort of meaning onto defined segments of the material world” (14). Congruently, for Corner (1999), “space only becomes territory through acts of bounding and making visible” (222).

The repeated assertions of boundedness point to territory being constituted by an ‘in’ and an ‘out.’ Such territories thus spatially mark (through signs and other means) *who* is included and who is not, based on who is *where*. In so doing, they suggest consequences for those that trespass (Delaney 2005; Sánchez Ayala 2015). Foucault (2007) follows this framing: “*Territory* is no doubt a geographical notion, but it’s first of all a juridico-political one: the area controlled by a certain kind of power” (176). As expressions of power, territories mark how power is manifested in the social and material world. Although they are often taken for granted or naturalized, they both reflect and make the social order (Delaney 2005; Sánchez Ayala 2015).

Since the prime form of this “spatial expression of power” (Cowen and Gilbert 2008 16) has been through the borders of a sovereign nation state, people commonly equate territory with the space of the nation-state or sub-sovereignty within states (Agnew 1994; Reyes 2015a). Note how this understanding of “territory” as a bounded space is central to Weber’s (1946) theory of the state: Conceptually, the state is that which

has been successful in seeking to monopolize the legitimate use of physical force as a means of domination within a territory. To this end the state has combined the material means of organization in the hands of its leaders, and it has expropriated all autonomous functionaries of estates who formerly controlled these means in their own right. The state has taken their positions and now stands in the top place. (4-5)

From the point of view that territory is a bounded space of control, the scale at which we define or demand territory thus determines the *authority* in or of that particular power

relation (Fernandes 2009): i.e., at the state level, in a particular place or community, or, as feminist movements have insisted, at the personal scale of the body (Hanisch 1969; Dowler and Sharp 2001).

This understanding and practice of territory also shapes how we conceptualize “territoriality.” Territoriality is most commonly defined as the making, taking, and controlling of a territory (Liffman 2011). While biology scholarship on animal behavior has researched territoriality through the lens of instinctual protection of areas perceived to be one’s own, Sack (1986) approaches the concept from a human perspective. For Sack, it is not as a basic vital instinct but a geopolitical strategy: “Territoriality for humans is a powerful strategy to control people and things by controlling area” (5); it is “the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographical area” (19). Yet Delaney (2005) pushes further, again stressing the importance of meaning: territoriality is more than a mere ‘strategy’ to control space, but also the assignment of meanings to bounded spaces, borders, and the crossing of those borders; territoriality thus refers more to the *relationship* between a territory and some other phenomenon (Delaney 2005; Sánchez Ayala 2015). In these conceptual framing presented thus far, we are repeatedly presented with an understanding of territory as giving meaning to space as well as spatially controlling and dominating space. Yet is territory reducible to this understanding? How does this conception relate with contemporary social movements’ increasing use of the term?

Neo-extractivism and land vs. territory in contemporary Latin America

The current conjuncture in Latin America is profoundly shaped by a confrontation over resource extraction. Composto and Navarro (2014) frame this

contestation as “territories under dispute.” Over the past few decades, given ever increasing demands for new sources of capitalist accumulation and energy, as well as technological improvements in fossil fuel extraction techniques (such as hydrologic fracturing, known as *fracking*), state-corporate enterprises have moved into new, previously difficult to access resource frontiers across the world (Escobar 2008; Harvey 2011). These include sites with petroleum, natural gas, coal, and gold reserves, as well as places rich in biodiversity, water, and land suitable for agribusiness (especially soy and oil palm), hydroelectric dams, conservation parks, and tourism (Composto and Navarro 2014; Peluso and Lund 2011; Hall et al. 2015; A. R. Ross 2014). Despite political rhetoric dividing Right and Left governments in Latin America, this model of export-oriented development is dominant across the region, whose commodity royalties are seen as the prime source of public income, whether that be in “neoliberal” Colombia and Mexico or “post-neoliberal” Bolivia and Ecuador (Bebbington 2009; Dávalos 2011).

Certain scholars have deemed this “neo-extractivism.” This process is not merely the *extraction* of resources, but a political and socioeconomic movement, rooted in colonial-modernity’s division between humanity and nature. A continuation of colonial economics, “neo-extractivism” refers to the new form of exploitation that a) maintains a rate superseding the environment’s ability to regenerate such resources, in addition to b) the dismissal of local needs and subsistence in favor of extraction zones of sacrifice to serve the consumer needs of people elsewhere (Machado 2014; Gudynas 2015).

At the same time, many people living in these areas have mobilized resistance to the forced displacement induced by such projects. Moreover, these movements, of primarily Indigenous and African-descendant *campesinos*, began to frame their struggles with a new terminology. Brazilian geographer Porto Gonçalves (2006) noted a

shift when he heard a Bolivian *campesino* tell him: “we don’t want *land*, but *territory*” (167; emphasis mine).

While Colombian, Latin American, and Leftist struggles from the 1960s to 1980s reflected the logic of modern production and were primarily defined in terms of *land* and ‘*campesino* users’ (Zamosc 1986), the contemporary lexicon tends to frame struggles in terms of the defense of *territory* and *community* (Escobar 2008). For two Colombian examples:

- a) Black Communities’ Process (PCN, *Proceso de Comunidades Negras*)
- b) The “Living Rivers” Colombian Movement for the Defense of Territories and Those Affected by Dams (MRV, *El Movimiento Colombiano por la Defensa de los Territorios y Afectados por las Represas “Ríos Vivos”*) (Movimiento Colombiano Ríos Vivos 2014)

Escobar (2008) cites don Porfirio Angulo from PCN in Tumaco, Colombia: “*Tierra puede tener cualquiera, pero no territorio*. (Anybody can have land, but territory is another matter.)” (52). For PCN, territory is beyond land, referring to collectivity: a space for life, culture, and harmony with nature (Escobar 2008).

These movements’ re-affirmation of community self-determination and difference is precisely in contrast to claims that “Globalization” and the Post-Cold War New World Order meant an “end of history” (Fukuyama 1992), which in practice has meant global institutions’ attempt to incorporate or eliminate any alternatives to market economics or liberal democracy (Lanchero 2002; Fals Borda 2000). Of course, forced displacement and attacks against Indigenous and African descendants are not a ‘new’ development of the neoliberal era but are traced back to colonization (Lame 2004), reflected in how many groups define their struggles as anti-colonial rather than merely anti-neoliberal (Laing 2012).

This is not to say that movements no longer talk about and demand “land.” “*Tierra*” in Spanish and “*terra*” in Portuguese are still used, as we will see in the Peace Community itself. But the discursive trend towards “territory” reflects broader changes in the global economy and the nature of social movements’ political projects. It is precisely in the moment when the “Globalization” era proclaims the ‘end of borders’ and capitalism expands into these supposedly ‘empty’ and ‘backward’ regions that many in those areas articulate their struggles using the terminology of “territory,” with its connotation of borders, limits, and self-determination.

The late 1980s and early 1990s was also a time in which Colombia drafted a new constitution, completed in 1991. The Constitutional Assembly included the participation of many groups previously excluded from the realm of state and civil society politics, including Black and Indigenous groups, as well as demobilized guerrillas (Hylton 2006). The term “black communities” emerged at this time, as part of demands for Black spaces of autonomy and their own counter-development “life projects” in the rural Pacific region (Wade 2009; Escobar 2008; Asher 2009). The identity “Afro-Colombian” also emerged at this time, reflecting an incorporation of Black people into the identity of a Colombian nation. (This differs from indigenous identity in the country, which is not expressed in the national rubric, i.e. as Indigenous-Colombian.) Through the state Constitutional Assembly process, Black groups earned the right to collectively owned and managed territories with Law 70 of 1993. They would be defined following the model of Indigenous reserves, constituted by a distinguishable ethnic group (based on customs, beliefs, etc.) living in a delimited area whose title would not be held by individual owners but rather by an association. Since the colonial era, Indigenous communities in Colombia had been demarcated as *resguardos* (“reserves”), while also

being violently attacked and expropriated (Lame 2004; Castillo-Cárdenas 1987; Castillo 2004; Rappaport 2004; Fals Borda 2009b). This emerging lexicon of “black communities” with the right to ethnically-defined “collective territories” was a co-constitutive process involving many groups, including movements such as Black Communities Process (PCN), NGOs, and state and development agencies (Asher 2009).

Of course, “community” and “territory” are racialized terms. “Community” has been used to signal the persistent particularity of non-Western groups vis-à-vis the supposedly universal, liberal, and individual (white) subject. The fixity, tradition, and uncivilized nature of “community” is an “Other” through which the West defines itself as progressive, modern, civilized, and universal (Said 1979). And territory’s dominant conception is that of the sovereign area of modern states: the civilized practice and property of a state and ‘civil society’ that can dominate land and population, in contrast to Indigenous and Blacks defined by their inhumanity and living in a ‘state of nature’ (Elden 2013; Fanon 2008; Wilderson 2010; Reyes and Kaufman 2011). In other words, the non-Europeans were perceived to not have a modern, human relationship with space, i.e., in which humans control, dominate, and thus separate themselves from space.

For Delgado-P. (2014), the European conquest of the Americas functioned “to appropriate and administer land, and to parcel and fracture territory, above all, to de-ontologize it” (127). In other words, earth beings and territory as life (Ballvé 2013a; De la Cadena 2010) lose their existence once ‘humans’ and ‘nature’ are divided. Delgado-P. (2014) continues: once ‘territory’ is destroyed and “‘land’ becomes the thing to claim and possess” (127), it is “only good for ‘development’” (128). Therefore, for Indigenous and then Black *communities* in Colombia to demand *collective territories* is both to re-assert

their difference, self-determination, as well as life projects and worlds counter to capitalist development (Escobar 2008).

According to the dominant conception of territory as constituted by sovereignty (Fernandes 2009), the scale at which we define or demand territory thus determines the authority of that particular power relation. The fact that Indigenous and African descendant *campesino* communities demand *territory* thus challenges the state: it is an attempt to shift authority and sovereignty to the community and away from the state and extractivist corporations.

Yet is the praxis of territory of these communities in resistance one of *controlling* and *dominating* space, as in the traditional notion? Or is there a different understanding of and relations with territory and space? Might this be an example of “friction” (Tsing 2005), where groups use the same terminology but with quite divergent meanings?

Employing territory is politically strategic but also indicative of these movements’ praxis in the current conjuncture. Fundamental for creating a new world of dignity and solidarity, Zibechi (2012) reiterates that one of the constitutive trends among contemporary Latin American social movements is territorial rootedness and autonomy from the state, political parties, NGOs, and unions. In the words of the Peace Community, “If we remain on the land and support ourselves on the land, neither the assassins nor the system that generates death and hunger will be able to eliminate us” (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2005b: 20).

Interestingly, note how the Peace Community’s lexicon in the quote above references “land” rather than “territory.” On the one hand, many Community members use land and territory interchangeably. One member said, “The struggle is based in the

defense of territory. ... When we and other communities talk about land and territory, we are talking about the same thing” (2014), while another explained that “we struggle for the respect of life, for territory, that human rights are respected, for a number of things that all lead the same point” (2012). On the other hand, certain Peace Community leaders distinguish between the two terms, based on “territory’s” legal implications. Unlike other communities that have pursued the legal titling process of becoming state-registered territories, San José continues to demand and defend *land*. The continued emphasis on land is common among ‘*mestizo*’ *campesinos* in Colombia, traceable to their movements’ historical demands for land titles, most notably by the National Association of Peasant Users (ANUC) created in the late 1960s (Zamosc 1986). But many non-ethnically identifying *campesino* groups have their own proposal for collectively administered territories recognized by the state. Known as *Zonas de Reserva Campesina* (ZRC, *Campesino Reserve Zones*), they are modeled after Indigenous and Afro-Colombian collective territory associations (Fajardo Montaña 2002). Conversely, the Peace Community insists upon autonomy from the state but does not pursue state-recognized ‘territory zones’ as a strategic goal.

The Peace Community’s divergence from the trend allows us to analyze the potentials and limitations of territory and land as frames for resistance and autonomous politics, as well as the practices whereby land is materially and symbolically constructed as an alternative form of non-state organization. Two Peace Community Internal Council members explained why they turned down proposals to declare themselves a collective territory:

We don’t believe that it’s legal, the way the *territory* is administered. It has to do with the Colombian government’s management of the sub-soil. Because they go with their own interests. In contrast, we are not doing exploration or exploitation

of mines. ... The land, I compare it with the *body* of the human being. ... If we strip it of minerals ... we are stripping it of *life*. Like the Indigenous say, Mother Earth. ... So we have thought about having collective territories, because it is a way of strengthening yourself, to resist more. But governments are treacherous. They say, *yes*, ... and you get the collective land. But ... they now have a window through which to enter. (group interview, 2014)

If we talk about territory, then the people are going to go work with the state. There are going to be those that grow coca. And the armed actors are always going to be in the zone; they need the territory and don't want us to prohibit them from passing through. But since it will be a territory, the Peace Community will be responsible. To get involved in [state-sanctioned] territory is dangerous, the law of extension and dominion. So we talk about *tierritas comunitarias* (little communal lands) and members' individual properties. ... In different communities this might play out in different ways. ... It is up to each to make their own strategic decisions on what to do and how to name themselves. (field notes, 2013)

These two quotes signal a variety of issues, which I will address in the next few paragraphs.

First, the Peace Community, like some other Colombian *campesinos*, already has official state land titles. These include individual property titles as well as plots acquired under the name of the organization—the Peace Community's so-called *tierritas comunitarias*—that are owned, managed, and worked communally. Therefore, the Community's 'rupture' with the state has not meant renouncing these state titles.

Second, however, they fear that this new round of state titling in the form of Indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and *Campesino* "collective territories," with their entanglements with state law and armed forces, actually *undermine* rather than strengthen community resistance and autonomy. They note the links between collective titling for ethnic groups with state militarization, development projects, and extractivism. Precisely, this is a dynamic I encountered in the Chocó department. Collective Afro-Colombian (as well as Indigenous) titles are contingent upon continuing to meet certain conditions, including 'taking care of nature.' Take the case of

COCOMOPOCA, an Afro-Colombian *campesino* association with a collective title outside of Quibdó. As expressed to an international delegation, leaders feared that as pollution from non-authorized medium-scale gold mining with mercury and other chemicals increased within their zone, their ability to meet the condition of “*cuidando la naturaleza*” would be threatened (personal communication, 2014). To repeat a phrase from the second Peace Community quote above, “the [association] will be [held] responsible” for environmental contamination, coca, and armed actors’ movements. This might give the state legal justification to dispossess associations of their collective land titles, while ‘ironically’ opening the path for (even more degrading pollution by) large-scale, multinational mineral extraction consistent with the state’s mining locomotive of economic development.

Third, the Peace Community also reminds us that state-sanctioned territories do not guarantee that communities can determine alternative forms of ‘security.’ The state continues to insist upon the presence of its armed forces throughout its national territory, including in these supposedly ‘autonomous’ territories. One exemplary example is the continual struggles against the presence of the National Police by the Nasa in Toribío, Cauca, which forms part of the Association of Indigenous Councils in Northern Cauca (ACIN) (Viera 2011; *Semana* 2012b; Espinosa 2015). Additionally, territorial ordering can also induce new conflicts among and between communities. Oslender (2007) points to the “multiple territorialities” in Colombia’s Pacific region among now-ethnically identified and supposedly ‘distinct’ ‘Indigenous,’ ‘Black or Afro-Colombian,’ and ‘*Campesino*’ communities. Since Blacks and *Campesinos* joined Indigenous groups with the right to collective titles, these groups’ respective land claims frequently overlap and compete with one another, despite the fact that such ethnic and

spatial divisions are also products of a multicultural state and titling process itself, rather than purely the existence of prior notions and practices of such identities (Wade 2009). Land restitution in the area surrounding the city of Río Sucio in Chocó is but one case of such overlapping and contentious property claims (field notes, 2014). Parallel to the Peace Community's position, Bocarejo (2012) insists that,

Many activists, especially those working within legal circles, tend to forget and silence the long and violent history of the strong association of indigenous peoples to “their” place in Colombia. A few instances of this history are the colonial mandate, the marginality of ethnic groups in state-making, and the intricate processes of internal migration and displacement associated with the state, guerrilla and paramilitary groups’ fight over sovereignty, all of which would be hard to pass off as minor. (666). ... [The] celebration of territorial ethnic recognition tends to gloss over the violent history in which states have historically rendered ethnic populations legible by creating fixed associations between *an* ethnic group and *a* territory. ... [T]hough territory is mobilized as one of the primary means of achieving autonomy and self-determination, it is at the same time a mechanism that spatializes and encloses difference. (664)

Fourth, despite these critiques, it is important to reiterate from the quotes above that the Peace Community, according to its principles of solidarity with and respect for other communities’ self-determination, is not calling for other communities to either relinquish their legal territorial claims or follow San José’s strategy. In fact, the second Peace Community comment above took place during a *Campesino* University session on land titles and law, precisely a space of sharing and analysis to inform each community’s strategies according to their specific context and decisions.

Fifth, despite the persistence of official land titles in San José de Apartadó, albeit not in the form of a “collective territory,” there is a sense in the quotes that their resistance to state-sanctioned territories is rooted in a critique of the dominant notion of territory, i.e., to re-quote the Internal Council member above that “the law of extension and dominion”—the state demarcation of space—“is dangerous.” These leaders express

that they have a different relationship with the earth than the state does, as manifested by their disagreement over extractivism. This suggests contrasting human-space-environment relationships. I argue that it would be a mistake to confuse the Peace Community's hesitancy to make demands using the terminology of "territory" with a lack of 'territoriality' altogether. Surely, they are 'territorial' in the traditional sense of raising signs to demand that armed groups stay out of their villages and farms. But is Peace Community reducible to another form of 'dominating, controlling, and giving meaning to space,' albeit as an anti-state form? To answer this question, I argue, we need broader conceptions of territory.

Broader conceptions of territory

Fortunately, it is less and less true that "territory is all too often seen by geographers as a relatively straight-forward concept, something that can be understood as a bounded space under the control of a group, perhaps a state, or an outcome of territoriality" (Elden 2010: 238). More and more scholarship interrogates this term, beginning with the argument that the dominant notion of territory associated with "fixed boundaries, exclusive internal sovereignty, and equal external status is *historically produced*" (Elden 2013: 18, emphasis mine).

The etymology of "territory" traces the term to a number of potential roots. The most obvious is "*terra*" (land, earth, nourishment, and sustenance), of which territory signals a control over that earth. Yet scholars reveal that territory is more likely derived from the words "*terrere*" (to frighten, terrorize) and "*territorium*" (a place from which people are warned) (Connolly 1994; Delaney 2005; Elden 2009; Elden 2013). Connolly (1994) thus concluded, "To occupy territory is to receive sustenance and to exercise violence. Territory is a land occupied by violence" (24). This describes precisely what the

Peace Community attempts to resist in relation to official state “territory,” which it has experienced as—and thus associates with—terror and violence.

The term itself emerged in the Western world as a way “to describe a particular and historically limited set of practices and ideas about the relation between place and power” (Elden 2013: 7). It is rooted in modern epistemology’s division of humans from ‘nature’ and the environment, in which humans master and control space; privatized space and demarcated state territories reflect modernity’s approach to political space as an abstract, universal space, in which society imposes itself *onto* space (Galli 2010; Porto Gonçalves 2002b; Reyes and Kaufman 2011). It is thus a social construction with a history,⁷⁸ particular functions and effects, but also the potential to be re-theorized and practiced otherwise.

Colombian resistance communities’ rejection of extractivism speaks to a different understanding of territory and land as not mere spaces to be controlled and exploited, i.e., as the basis for a capitalist mode of production. To not fall into the “territorial trap” (Agnew 1994) of equating territory with the state, it is useful to consider broader theorizations of territory and territoriality. To do so requires conceptualizing these terms in relation to space, place, and land.

Space refers to the amorphous, always changing, and unfixed ‘environment’ and the relations permeating all practices and places (Raffestin 2012; Fals Borda 2000). Space can be physical, absolute, conceived, relative, or relational (such as a given area, links and interaction between spaces or forms of space, and how we interact with one another and construct places). The idea of relational space evokes how space is

⁷⁸ For an in-depth conceptual history of territory in Western political thought, see Elden (2013), *The Birth of Territory*.

constituted through social relations and materially embodied social practices (Massey 2005; Tyner 2012). For Raffestin (2012), space has no beginning and no end: It “cannot be defined absolutely or permanently” (123); the only permanence is action, not space itself, because action is what constitutes the space. Of course, any *space*, even ‘prior’ to its structuring as specific yet fluid forms, is still always-already socially constructed (Massey 2005). It is important to stress that space is not merely a ‘container’ *in* which all else is and takes place. Rather, as we will see, space, place, and territory are co-constitutive.

Nonetheless, *place* is more specific. Place is space that is embedded with specific meaning by and for particular people or other beings (such as a city, ‘the world,’ an erected monument, an office, a river crossing, or a nest). Places are the product of multiple and potentially contested processes and relations, as in conflicts over the built environment related with memory, to mention but one example (D. Mitchell 2000). Escobar (2008) defines place as “the engagement with and experience of a particular location with some measure of groundedness (however unstable), boundaries (however permeable), and connections to everyday life, even if its identity is constructed and never fixed” (30). Places are thus fluid processes (like absolute or relative space itself), but they connote specific meanings in a given time and space.⁷⁹

Territory is also a particular type of space, but it refers to something more complex than place. And it is not merely adjacent places or controlled land. Elden (2013) points out how *land* is already embedded with the question of controlled space:

Land is a relation of property, ... a political-economic question. Land can be bought, sold, exchanged; it is a resource over which there is competition. ... It is

⁷⁹ Note that this is the opposite of how “space” and “place” are used by de Certeau (1984).

both the site and stake of struggle. In this it differs from conflict over other resources. (9)

Likewise, Elden (2013) asserts that territory should not be used as a cognate for *terrain*. Territory is more complex than the “political-strategic question” of terrain, which constitutes the field of power relations and spatial-political conditions in relation to which strategic decisions are made (9). In other words, it is not territory but, rather, *terrain* that refers to space that is ‘acted upon.’

Therefore, from the theoretical contributions of a variety of scholars and social movements (Reyes and Kaufman 2011; Reyes 2015b; Reyes 2015a; Escobar 2008; Porto Gonçalves 2006; Liffman 2011; Delaney 2005; Sánchez Ayala 2015; Raffestin 2012; Murphy 2012; Ballvé 2013a), I articulate the following definition: *Territory* is a series or set of *places, practices, and values* produced by certain *subjects* that cohere to produce a particular political subjectivity and life world. I will briefly describe each of these elements in turn.

On *spatial practices and places*, Liffman (2011) points to how the Huichol territory in Mexico is not merely a given extension of area, but is constituted by a fluid and shifting set of connected and relational places that are created through both discourse and practice; their territory has been produced through rituals, kinship, and Indigenous forms of land tenure, but also through interactions with the Mexican state as well as and national and international NGOs through protest, demonstrations, demands, and court cases for indigenous rights. Territory, therefore, implies not mere places, but a broader network of relational places and spatial practices (Raffestin 2012; Murphy 2012; Delaney 2005).

These spatial practices and places are integrally tied to particular *ethics* and *values*: “The production of territories by means of territories is an operation of the creation or recreation of values in both senses of the term: economic values and cultural, social, and political values” (Raffestin 2012: 131; see also Sánchez Ayala 2015). These ethical values lead to the question of politics: “Territory should be understood as a political technology, or perhaps better as a bundle of political technologies” (Elden 2013:322). Rooted in particular values, practices, and places, *territories* are more than each of these alone, as a territory is a particular shaping of space that produces and is produced by certain *political subjects* (Ceceña 2012; Porto Gonçalves 2006; Zibechi 2012). Therefore, territory is not necessarily space that “has been acted upon” (Cowen and Gilbert 2008: 16, emphasis mine), although it is space that is shaped in a particular way by political praxis. Surely, a particular ‘territory’ (say, a country or the Peace Community) might have meaning as an individual ‘place’ for certain people. Sack (1986) claims that some places can be territories and vice versa, but the concept of *territory* should be conceived of beyond place: it gives us a focus on a particular structure of sociopolitical relations and subjectivities.

This brings us to the theoretical question of *territoriality*. In a broad sense, *spatiality* refers to the condition or property of space. *Territoriality*, then, has to do with the condition of territory, rather than the act of making territory itself (Elden 2013). Territoriality is best understood as the relationship humans, other animals, and other beings have with “exteriority (the physical environment) and alterity (the social environment)” (Raffestin 2012: 129). In other words, how do particular people relate with space and their environment? Do they view themselves separable from space or integrally embedded with their environment? Is *land* reducible to its modern usage as

controlled area, something to ‘exploit,’ or might it be understood and engaged as an extension of oneself? *Territoriality* is thus not necessarily constituted by the attempt or achievement to ‘control’ space; that merely reflects *one* form of territoriality. Elden (2009) adds, “boundaries only become possible in their modern sense through a notion of space, rather than the other way around” (xxvii).

Put in simple and more abstract terms by Reyes (2015a), *territoriality* is best understood as “the relationship between subjects and space.” *Territory* refers to “the series of spatial regularities that arise as an expression of the necessities of nurturing this subject.” Finally, *territorialization* describes “the ways in which this subject inhabits and takes hold of that space.” In other words, *territorialization* is the act of creating territory. Of course, territories themselves are always processes that are continually made and re-made. Therefore, I argue that distinguishing ‘territory’ and ‘territorialization’ is a question of emphasis, rather than signaling fundamentally different dynamics.

From this framework, we can trace different territories and territorialities by exploring the particular places, practices, values, and relationships with space that constitute them. In so doing, we can explore territory beyond the modern state, because the latter is only one spatial form of organizing space and producing subjects. Territory is not reducible to physical space or mere places of meaning. It concerns values, subjectivities, imaginaries, and life projects that shape material-symbolic-relational space. Territory is ultimately about politics: what types of people create and are nurtured by such a collection of places, practices, and values? What types of social relations are created by and for a particular group and its territory? Individualistic, communal, solidary, and/or entrepreneurial subjects? Horizontal and/or vertical

relations? To use Ceceña's (2010) lexicon, is there a "predatory culture" that sees nature as merely an instrumental object or a "non-predatory culture" where people are harmoniously and respectfully embedded with the environment?

When speaking about communities in resistance's alter-territories, this is not to say that they are not bounded. However, the subject-space relationship appears different to that of the boundedness of the nation-state. In the latter, the boundaries themselves are what gives the political subjects their identity and values, i.e., to be a citizen of a particular nation state, which tends to be the dominant identity within the modern world. Of course, these boundaries are then foundational for the production of a nationalistic subject who understands themselves as part of a 'people' that is different from the 'others' (Cowen and Gilbert 2008; Reyes and Kaufman 2011; Reyes 2015a). However, when the Peace Community or other communities in resistance erect boundaries such as signs or indeed have land titles, is their political subjectivity similarly defined by an 'us' and 'them' between themselves and other people as well as 'nature?' Or might there be an alternative subject-space-'other' relationship in these territories?

Using this approach to territory, I will now proceed to analyze a set of Peace Community practices, places, and values, and their relationship with the political subject produced in the process. While the Peace Community continues to speak about 'land,' I do not believe that their understanding conforms to a merely instrumental and 'mode of production' relationship with land. Indeed, I argue that in their rejection of the dominant notion of 'territory' (state demarcation of national borders and limited sub-sovereignty for ethnic groups), the Peace Community in fact embodies an alter-territoriality.

CARAVANS, CAMPESINO UNIVERSITIES, AND SELF-SUFFICIENT FARMS

In this section, I explore the Peace Community's production of territory. I will begin with a selection of quotes about land, nature, and agricultural work to illustrate members' territorial imagination. Then I will trace three practices central to their process: a) annual caravans that supplement their explicitly commemorative anniversaries and pilgrimages; b) their participation in the *Campesino* University; and c) Community initiatives for food sovereignty through agricultural centers and self-sufficient farms.

On land, nature, and farming

The selection of quotes that follow speak to the Peace Community's territorial practices and values. I begin with a 2013 field note excerpt, which speaks to *campesinos'* understanding, embeddedness, and relationship with land.

[With a group of companions] we hiked up to get some un-ripened, green, baby bananas, to be food for the pigs. We asked [one of the young men we were with] about a gigantic tree that we could see from up there (what a beautiful tree, and the view, too!). He said, "that tree is very wet on the inside, not sturdy. If you cut it down, it does not fall to one side but rather straight down. For that reason, *campesinos* don't cut it down. Look at how nature goes about teaching you what to cut down and what not to." One of the companions asked, "But why do you go cutting down all the trees except for those that you 'shouldn't cut down'?" He responded, "Surely. The problem is that *campesinos* just want to cultivate one thing, and that's it. But I tell them, "If a person only eats bananas, that is going to be bad for their health. Well, for the land it is the same. You have to plant many things, and in the same way, it feeds the land." (field notes, 2013)

In other words, this *campesino* expresses a relationship with land that is communicative; land is not merely an inert object but is rather an actor in itself. Similar to the Internal Council cited earlier in this chapter, this individual sees the land as a living being that requires nourishment and a 'varied, healthy diet,' just like humans.

Of course, counter to racialized stereotypes of Indigenous descendants as ‘stewards of nature,’ *campesino* production is not inherently ‘sustainable.’ The member quoted above explicates that many *campesinos* in fact prefer degrading monoculture. Therefore, the Peace Community’s Agricultural Center and Self-Sufficient Farm initiatives discussed later are designed precisely to create a *particular type* of *campesino* territory that is dignified and food sovereign. This is not due to an essence of particular individuals or groups, but rather the production of particular political subjects through ongoing practice, places, and values, i.e. the production of a particular territory.

On values, quoting another member evokes the community’s anti-capitalist ethic, in which he described the process of gathering his neighbors to discuss the possibility of joining the Peace Community:

I called a meeting of about 180 people (in my hamlet). We didn’t understand. People said: “I don’t understand with that is,” referring to the Peace Community. We had three more meetings. On neutrality, people said, “in that community there isn’t any money, and they are killed, stigmatized.” Others that were growing coca said, “that’s how I earn money.” My response was: no, no coca. Later, others said, “coca is (now) a problem.” They ask me, “what do you do?” I say, “I plant my food crops. I give food to the land every day. I don’t work with (any armed group). And that’s how I live.” (personal interview, 2014)

In other words, we see how a community territory is rooted in particular values. In this case, food crop production produces and is produced by particular political subjects that work for self-sufficiency over accumulation, and of autonomy over dependence on the market and armed groups who control the coca trade.

Similar to two other Peace Community members previously cited in this chapter, note how this member also referenced ‘giving food to the land.’ Another member pointed out that this relationship goes both ways, where land makes and gives food to

humans: “Land is our mother. From her we were made. We were made from the dust of the land. And she gives us our food” (Moncada Hurtado, Ossa, and Caro Morales 2011a). He then continued to contrast this land relationship with that of other actors, speaking to today’s conjunctural antagonism over extractivism:

These lands are *very* rich. And for that reason they are fighting over this land and would like to kick us out because of the properties and richness that we have. Especially: pure air, pure water. And the *Serranía de Abibe* [The Abibe Range, where San José is located] is very rich in terms of coal, gold, many minerals. And they are already (legally) handed over to a multinational corporation. (Moncada Hurtado, Ossa, and Caro Morales 2011a)

Similarly, member Doña Brígida González also affirmed that life comes from the land, of which people are merely a part. Thus, she insisted that we expand our analysis of the war in Colombia beyond its effects on humans:

We are at war in *every* sense. With nature ... People are killed as if they were any old animal. Animals *also* have a right to live. But as human beings, I believe that ... the value of life has been lost, incredibly. ... Without land we couldn’t live ... From what air would we breathe? ... Mother Earth gives us *everything*. She has water that is life. She has plants that are our daily food. (personal interview, 2013) (Figure 67)

In other words, without using the language of “earth-beings” (De la Cadena 2010), Peace Community members infer a territoriality that is not about separating humans from space and land, but rather, continually appreciating and re-integrating oneself with the environment. They speak about nature and land as something in which they are an integral part. To repeat, this is not due to an ‘essence’ of ‘living in a state of nature’ but, instead, the production of particular relations and values through political organization. These *values* are thus fundamental to the type of territory they produce.

Among this territory’s specific *places* are Community-run schools. A community member described changes in students’ artwork over time: “The children have lived all of the aftermath of the war. They wouldn’t draw anything but helicopters and armed



Figure 67. Relational territoriality: “Nature looks upon death.”
2006 painting by María Brígida González.
Source: Author photo of insert within the book *Sembrando Vida y Dignidad* (2007).

groups shooting. Dead people. ... They are injected with it ... [but] now they draw the environment, rivers, nature” (Moncada Hurtado, Ossa, and Caro Morales 2011b). One of the teachers expounded upon this by talking about the relationship between nature, the curriculum, and Community vs. state education:

We are with the children in the countryside, in the school, teaching them about the rivers, plants, the territory of the Community, the sites of memory. So the children are always in contact with nature. ... They have a garden in which they work two days each week. ... They like this education more, ... they gravitate more to what they are learning. Which seed is from which tree, ... they gain a love for it. ... The land, the rivers, “let’s go fishing” with the family, and they get their hands dirty because they know how. ... [But the traditional education of the State] tells the children: ‘you should be a lawyer, an engineer.’ And they plant that idea in the children. (personal interview, 2014)

In other words, they are working to produce a subject that does not see land as something to be engineered or legislated. And they counter the dominant state discourse that a ‘better future’ is to be founded in the city rather than the countryside. These schools are thus a key place of political subjectivity formation for the Peace Community territory.

To continue, one accompanier reflected on how struck he was by “common land” in San José de Apartadó:

There is land over there that technically someone owns, but in reality, no one owns it. It’s just there and people can use it. I never really appreciated how important that would be, in another way of forming an economy, another society. This society wouldn’t work if there wasn’t common land, ... if people didn’t have collaborative projects. (personal interview, 2013)

In other words, there are land titles and people definitely know whose plots are where. But the socioterritorial practice is one of common access and use, which is an integral part of a solidarity and communal Peace Community subject. This accompanier proceeded to contrast common land with spatial norms elsewhere. For him, outsiders’

fascination with San José's social relations are mostly a reflection of their societies' lack of commons rather than the Peace Community being particularly exceptional:

Take the 'tragedy of the commons,' the loss of the commons, [and] enclosures in the UK, when people built fences and said, "this is my land." But that's not a natural way, that's a human construct. Commons are the base level at which we live, in which animals live. ... I think, we [as companions] come from societies, and [deceased leader] Eduar [Lanchero] came from a society as well ... where commons didn't exist. The closest you can come to is, 'not unproductive spaces' ... public parks, and places like that. ... Whereas here, commons can be productive spaces, work space. ... I think this Community ... has maintained that reciprocal relationship between the land and the community as a whole. As opposed to 'the land' and 'landowner.' Having said that, they also have their own individual plots, so it works in tandem. But yeah, I do think it's more of a cultural shock for *us* ... and [what] we've lost, that is more about our cultures than the Peace Community particularly. (personal interview, 2013)

This alludes to today's antagonism between extractivism and alternative territorialities, which some analyze as a crisis to preserve and re-create commons (Federici 2010).

From this overview of Peace Community understandings of land and nature, I now proceed to other practices through which they create a particular form of territory: solidarity caravans, the *Campesino* University, agricultural centers, and self-sufficient farms.

2013 caravan to Rodoxalí

The Peace Community supplements their March anniversary and February massacre commemorations with other annual gatherings. Typically organized in the latter half of each calendar year, they also tend to march further afield than the Peace Community itself. For example, while in October 2008 they hiked across five of their settlements within San José de Apartadó, the 2010 caravan began in Bogotá and proceeded to nearby Sumapaz, another place of recurrent armed conflict in recent decades.

I will begin this section with an extended ethnographic rendering of a caravan⁸⁰ in which I participated, the October 2013 march to Rodoxalí.⁸¹ I will then transition to discuss the *Campesino* University and self-sufficient farm initiatives.

“*Caminando la palabra*,” or “walking the word,” is how participants from Indigenous Cauca and Guajira communities described what we had done on our recently completed peace and solidarity caravan to the village of Rodoxalí, one of the thirty-two small hamlets of the rural district of San José de Apartadó.

Organized by the Peace Community, it was named a “Pilgrimage for life and against displacement and forced disappearance.” Rodoxalí’s farmers are not part of the Peace Community. Yet more than 150 people converged upon the village to confirm and confront the presence of death-squad paramilitary groups. The pilgrimage was organized in response to reports that four people had been killed in the area, and that paramilitaries had kidnapped and disappeared a young man as well as demanded that the area’s *campesinos* give them information and supplies. An estimated 28 families subsequently fled their homes in fear.

Regrettably, such incidents are nothing new: paramilitaries in conjunction with government army and police forces, as well as guerrilla groups, have killed and displaced hundreds of people and communities in the Urabá region since the 1990s. Additionally, the paramilitary group operating in the zone, who identify as the *Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia* (AGC: *Gaitanista*⁸² Self-Defense

⁸⁰ For clarity, I use ‘pilgrimage’ to refer to commemoration hikes to massacre sites and ‘caravan’ to refer to these solidarity marches further afield. I use these terms to signal to the reader the motivating rationale for different types of marches, but Peace Community members do not make this distinction, using both terms interchangeably, with the term ‘pilgrimage’ being the most common.

⁸¹ The following ethnographic narrative is an adapted and extended version of an article titled “This is Peace: ‘Walking the Word’ in Colombia” originally published in 2013 by the online magazines *Upside Down World* (Courtheyn 2013a) and—in Spanish—*Las 2 Orillas* (Courtheyn 2013b). An edited Spanish version also appeared in a 2014 print edition of the monthly newspaper *Periferia Prensa Alternativa* published in Medellín. For a journalistic account of this caravan, see “Un río de vida buscando la muerte” in *El Espectador* (Segura Álvarez 2013).

⁸² The *Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia* are neo-paramilitary group that announced its formation with an armed strike on October 15th, 2008, in which all ground transport in Urabá came to a halt. In their first communiqué, they claimed to be victims of the state’s failure to fulfill its promises made towards the demobilized paramilitaries of the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC: United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia). Their current name evokes the former Liberal and populist presidential candidate, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, whose assassination in 1948 spurred the *Bogotazo* uprising and era of *La Violencia*. I was there when the AGC’s armed strike occurred in 2008, and the fact that this right-wing paramilitary group would name themselves after a Leftist politician surprised many local residents and analysts; it seemingly reflected a strategic effort to appeal to the popular classes (*El Espectador* 2008; Aparicio 2012).

Forces of Colombia), reacted with a press release dated September 28th, 2013, rejecting such accusations and affirming their commitment to land restitution and social justice for *campesinos* (Figure 68).

As part of its 16 years of community struggle to defend the survival and self-determination of the area's civilian and *campesino* population in the face of the country's warring armed groups, the Peace Community invited journalists, members from its 11 villages, delegates from other Colombian *campesino* and Indigenous communities, and international protective accompaniment organizations to join the caravan. I was the only academic.

On October 7th, three groups took different routes to reach Rodoxalí. Folks from La Unión left early in the morning, hiked four hours to the Peace Community farm in La Esperanza, picked up additional hikers, and proceeded for another four hours to the town of Nuevo Antioquia⁸³. There, they waited for another contingent that had left San Josecito, took a public jeep to Apartadó, met up with visitors arriving from other parts of Colombia, and then took a bus to Nuevo Antioquia; those two groups then marched together to Rodoxalí, another four to five hours.

I was part of the third group. The previous day, we made the five-hour walk from La Unión to the Mulatos Peace Village. After staying the night, we departed for Rodoxalí with residents of Mulatos and other *campesinos* who had arrived from neighboring La Resbalosa and villages in Córdoba. Soon after we set out, a young woman who I had known since she was a kid, asked me, "Why are we doing this?," referring to our caravanning through this rough and rocky river trail. I responded, "To demand respect, and for dignity." "Yes," she replied, "solidarity. Resistance." I thought, "the consciousness of the youth about why we are doing this!" A bit later, when my boot became stuck in the mud and she lent me a hand to pull me out, I said, "And this is solidarity also!" (Figures 69-71).

Our group was the first to arrive to Rodoxalí. The place was largely abandoned. The FORPP accompaniers and I set out with a Peace Community Internal Council member to speak to the village's six remaining families. He proposed that we accompany them for a few days. They happily accepted, noting that such a large contingent of people had not been seen there for two decades. They revealed that, even before the most recent displacement of people, the village had been a skeleton of its previous self since the mid-1990s. It was once a thriving settlement that hosted local soccer tournaments before paramilitaries and the national army displaced the local population, potentially linked with operations in preparation

⁸³ Similar to how the town of San José de Apartadó is the small 'urban center' of the *corregimiento* (rural district) of San José de Apartadó within the municipality of Apartadó, Nuevo Antioquia refers to the comparable small town and 'urban center' of the rural district of the same name located in the neighboring municipality of Turbo. Nuevo Antioquia has been notoriously denounced as a base for paramilitary fighters and operations, as well as state police and army forces' collusion with them (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2014c).

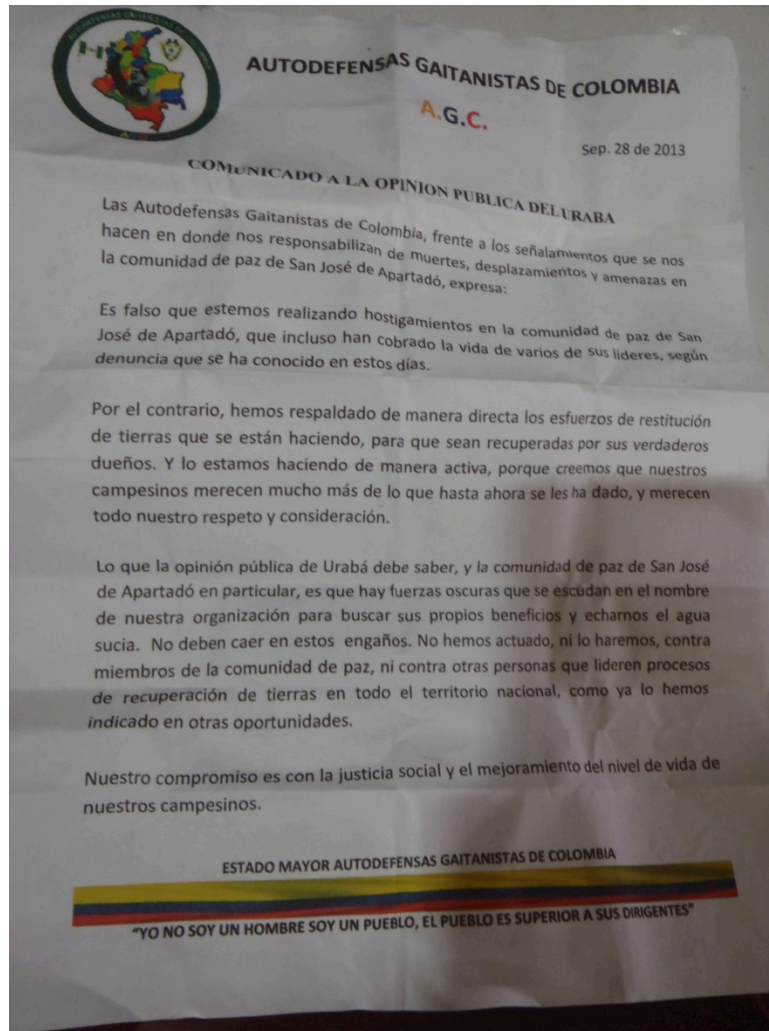


Figure 68. *Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia* Press Release, September 28th, 2013: “Communiqué to the Public of Urabá. The *Gaitanista* Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, in response to statements accusing us of killings, displacements, and threats in the peace community of San José de Apartadó, express: It is false that we are carrying out hostilities in the peace community of San José de Apartadó, which have cost the lives of various of its leaders, according to a recent communiqué. To the contrary, we have directly supported the efforts for land restitution that are being carried out, so that they are recovered by their real owners. And we are doing this actively, because we believe that our *campesinos* deserve much more than they have received until now, and they deserve it with all our respect and consideration. What the Urabá public should know, and the peace community of San José de Apartadó in particular, is that there are dark forces that hide behind the name of our organization looking for their own benefits and place the blame on us. You/they should not fall for these tricks. We have not acted, nor will we ever, against members of the peace community, nor against other people that lead processes of land restitution in all of the national territory, as we have indicated in other opportunities. Our commitment is to social justice and the betterment of our *campesinos*’ lives.”

Source: Photo from FORPP archives.



Figure 69. Caravan to Rodoxalí #1: Leaving the Mulatos Peace Village.
Source: Photo by Luke Finn, with permission, from the RAIS photo archive.



Figure 70. Caravan to Rodoxalí #2: Arriving to Rodoxalí.
Peace Community members, *Campesino* University members, and FORPP
accompaniers “walking the word” together on the October 2013 caravan.
Source: Author photo.

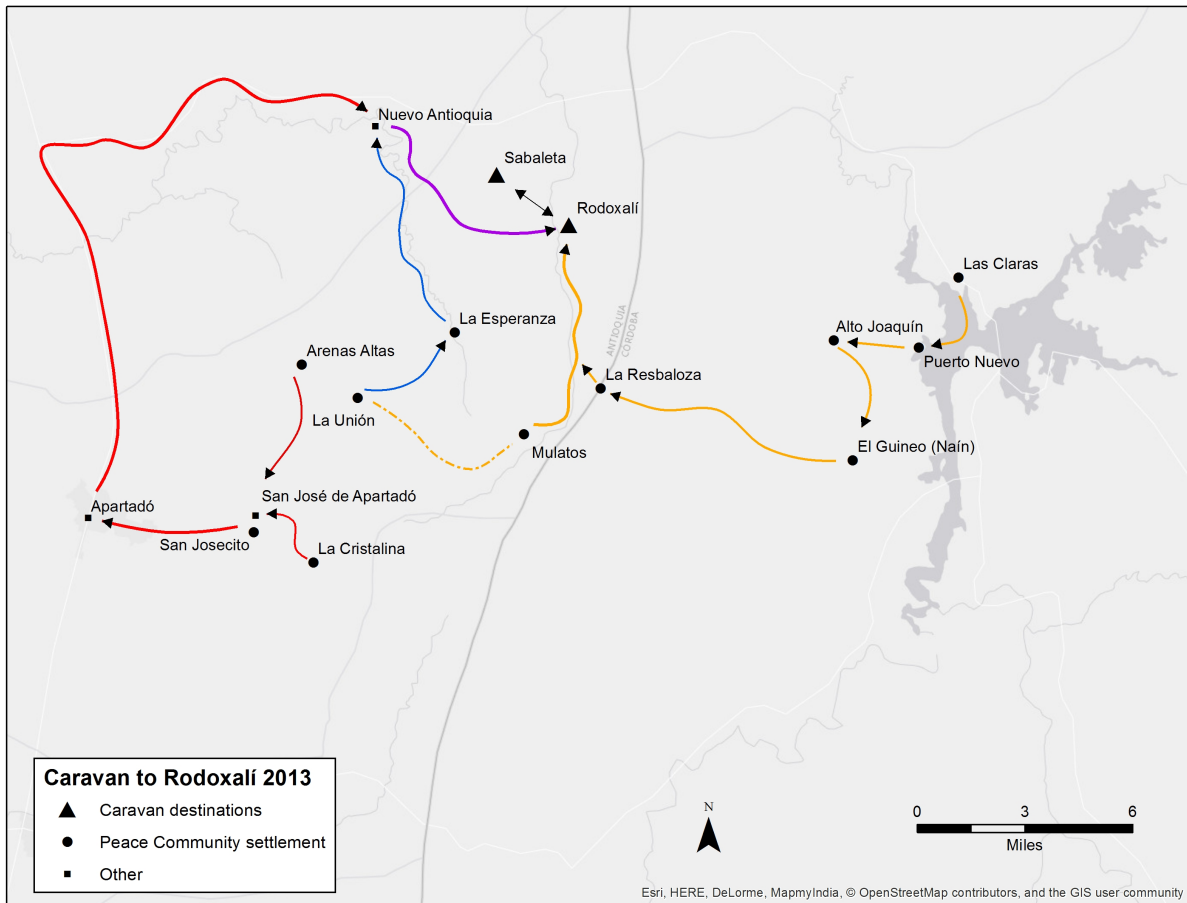


Figure 71. Caravan to Rodoxalí #3: Mapping the caravan of October 2013. People converged in Rodoxalí from three directions, from San Josecito and La Esperanza (who met in Nuevo Antioquia) and the third contingent from Mulatos. Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

for the nearby Urrá hydroelectric dam project, killing many residents and burning down most of the houses in the process.

Rodoxalí's residents mentioned the heavy paramilitary presence currently in the region and the recently distributed paramilitary press release pamphlet claiming to support the *campesinos*, despite widespread beliefs in the region that they are in fact carrying out a land grab. Our caravan would later encounter army soldiers comfortably camped between villages, as if they were on vacation. They said they had no specific knowledge of any paramilitary kidnapping or presence, suggesting at the very least a tacit collusion with the death squads.

Those of us who had arrived from Mulatos began to prepare the site for the others' arrival. As we fetched water from the riverbank, one of the members mentioned folks who would arrive from an Indigenous community in Cauca. "They are part of the network," referring to RECORRE, the Network of Communities in Rupture and Resistance, which founded the *Campesino* University. "That network is very important because the problem in the country is not only in San José. We also do universities in their communities. This caravan shows the (armed) actors our strength and solidarity."

By late afternoon, the other caravan groups began to arrive from Nuevo Antioquia. People converged to sit down on fallen trees placed for seating and rest around the large pot of boiling water, covered with banana leaves. People shared stories of their respective walks; a group of young Indigenous women from southern Colombia expressed their exhaustion: "We had no idea it would be so far! [*Laughter!!!*] We were told we needed hiking boots and we wondered, 'For what?' We live in a rural area, but it's nothing like this!"

It was almost nightfall, and a lot of work was still to be done to accommodate everyone's sleeping arrangements. We accompanied a Council Member as he and a small team struggled to cut down large, dense bamboo trees at dusk. They then nailed them into a large, open-air abandoned building, from which people would hang their hammocks. We were marching, back and forth, from one side of the settlement to the other, carrying bamboo trunks. People set up tents and hammocks in other vacant buildings. And a group cooked dinner: rice and lentils brought on horses, plus yucca, plantains, and pork from a pig purchased from local families. People gathered to eat and talk around the central water pot, illuminated by the coals underneath and people's flashlights. I later wrote in my notebook: "Resistance is hard work. All the organization: invitations, coordinating everyone's arrivals, horses, food quantity, supplies, hammocks. Long walks. Taking care of everything, both people and the mules that can fall over on the trails. Then talking with the local residents, announcing our arrival, setting up accommodation in unoccupied homes, hanging hammocks and mosquito nets. *All this at night.*"

The FORPP companions and I were informed that we would stay with Father Javier Giraldo in the one house with a bedframe, albeit with no padding. This

recently abandoned house was particularly chilling. In two rooms, clothes that had been left behind were scattered and molding on the ground (Figures 72-74). In the kitchen, there was a rotting box of spilt flour, and small ducks and chickens wandered outside under the lemon and cacao trees scavenging for food. One of the accompaniers became distressed, stalling to hang his hammock, and said, “You don’t imagine that someone was tortured here, do you?”

When families are forcibly displaced, they take whatever they can carry on their backs and horses, which often means they bring only themselves and their children, plus any large animals, such as pigs, which serve as the primary savings for small-scale farmers. What is left behind is likely destroyed or lost forever. This unarmed pilgrimage of peace and solidarity with these families was organized to confront the paramilitaries and complicit state forces and to assert the rights of the area’s *campesinos* to work their farms as they desire: without threats and killings by armed groups that compete to control the land.

However, the paramilitaries were nowhere to be seen. The following day, we walked to the adjacent settlement of Sabaleta where they were reportedly camped (Figure 75). But they had retreated into the surrounding hills. Pilgrimage participants believed that this revealed the paramilitaries’ own recognition that they lack a valid verbal defense before such a civilian delegation. Participants also suspected that national police and army officials in nearby Nuevo Antioquia—through whose checkpoints the delegation had passed the day before—informed the paramilitary groups of the caravan so that they would hide their presence.

Officially, the Colombian government claims that such “paramilitaries” targeting civilians do not exist. It asserts that, in addition to guerrillas, there are only drug trafficking “criminal bands,” known as BACRIM. Our large contingent of people from other regions and countries served to testify to the witnessed realities to our support networks in the diplomatic corps and human rights organizations. In the words of a Peace Community member, the state officials probably told the paramilitaries, “If they see you, we’re screwed.”

After returning to Rodoxalí by the afternoon, a heavy rainstorm hit. We huddled under roofs and some of us took a swim in the river. While swimming, *campesinos* from La Vega, Cauca, invited us to their upcoming November workshop meeting on water protection given the threat of contamination from gold mining; each year they host an international gathering organized around the topic of water or seeds.

During the early evening, a group of people convened for Father Giraldo’s Catholic mass in Rodoxalí’s decrepit but still standing chapel. He said mass in the dark, with only a flashlight to illuminate the Bible and a small altar. Rainfall continued to pour down outside. He opened by saying,

We are here, in solidarity with those that were displaced and threatened by the presence of the paramilitaries. This violence has destroyed lives, and



Figure 72. Caravan to Rodoxalí #4: Rotting remnants of forced displacement. Clothes left behind in Rodoxalí house where we stayed during the solidarity caravan in 2013.

Source: Author photo.



Figure 73. Caravan to Rodoxalí #5: In the wake of paramilitarism. Ducks scavenging for food outside an abandoned home in Rodoxalí. Source: Author photo.



Figure 74. Caravan to Rodoxalí #6: Abandoned homes or abandoned hopes. Bible verse drawn onto an abandoned house wall in Rodoxalí:
“Call and I will respond. Come and I will teach you grand and hidden things that you do not know.”
Source: Author photo.



Figure 75. Caravan to Rodoxalí #7: RECORRE marching to confront paramilitarism: Members of the Network of Communities in Rupture and Resistance march to Sabaleta in search of paramilitaries on the October 2013 Peace Community caravan. Source: Author photo.

for that reason the Peace Community with its companions within and outside the country have come here. Today we searched for the paramilitaries to confront their truth with our truth, to ask them why they are doing this. We could not find them because they hid, unable to face and reconcile their truth with ours.

He read from the Book of Isaiah and Gospel of Luke. In his homily, he professed,

These are very symbolic texts, when Isaiah returns from exile and Jesus begins his mission in the synagogue. There is much work ahead: come together to break chains, open paths, and that the ideas of humanity that we have elaborated will come to be reality one day.

To preface the mass's 'sign of peace' ritual, he said: "Peace is a commitment of all Christians, that they be creators of peace. However, not a peace of resignation but a peace of justice. Let's share this peace." When mass had ended, people retreated under umbrellas and plastic sheets to their hammocks and tents.

On my walk back, I ran into a Peace Community leader making a call, since near the house I was staying in was the one place with a faint cell phone signal. He said,

I was just approached by an unknown man who asked me what I was doing, if this was a state organized commission. I told him, "No, we are here accompanying these *veredas*." The man responded, "Walking through all these *veredas*?" to which I replied, "That's what we do, it's our work." I suspect he was a paramilitary sent by the larger group.

The next day, as we packed our backpacks and hammocks for departure, a Community member again pointed out the "poor little chicks and ducks" meandering around the grass adjacent to the house. She began to recount her own stories of forced displacement, which I would later render in a field journal entry, titled "Being in those houses triggers one's own history." She described an occasion when her husband and daughters fled their home as paramilitaries approached, and in a frantic rush to leave, they actually left their baby daughter in a hammock, having to return to find her. Her elder daughter, who was also there with us, began to share her version of those events a decade prior. The mother said, "Walking and visiting makes you remember what you lived through. You wonder, was it the same here as it was for us [during the mass displacement] in 1997? And if those times will return." Her daughter added, "or be even worse." The mother continued, "In the past, when you would hear about a massacre, you would say 'that happened far away. It won't happen here.' But it does." I commented, "Everything is connected. Well-being and violence here affects everyone else, and all lives matter." "Yes, we must be in solidarity," she concluded.

When we departed, Rodoxalí's residents said that they were energized by our visit, felt accompanied and not alone, and invited the Peace Community to return. A few hours after departure, we heard three gunshots back in the area towards Sabaleta and Rodoxalí. People in our caravan said, "It's as if the paramilitaries are saying, 'You did not see us, but we are here'." At the conclusion of the pilgrimage in the Community's Mulatos Peace Village, we reflected on what had occurred and what we had done. With local accounts, we had unfortunately confirmed the tragic forced displacements induced by the paramilitary presence, with apparent government forces' backing.

Additionally, though, the visit provided relief to those families who continue to resist fleeing their homes and laid the groundwork for future visits. We intended that the paramilitaries and the army would respond to this act of civilian solidarity by abstaining from future killing and forced displacement, knowing that their actions will be reported to the outside world. Through greater visibility and a wider support network, including the Peace Community, journalists, and international human rights organizations, Rodoxalí's farmers could draw on a greater array of resources in their struggle.

To put it bluntly, our group of unarmed civilians caused an armed death squad to flee into the hills. People commented that, without the accompaniment of organizations like FORPP—which the Peace Community positioned at the front of the caravan to demonstrate international observation and lead the line in any encounter with an armed group—the paramilitaries probably would not have retreated. The pilgrimage demonstrated that the collective action of walking and presence of unarmed civilian *campesinos* joined by solidary companions can open space for people to resist displacement and harvest the fruits of their agricultural labor with dignity. As stated in the Peace Community's subsequent press release: "Weapons will not intimidate us, and before the sowers of death, we will always choose life" (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2013).

Just as significant was our walking itself. Parts of the path were brutal. There were long stretches of thigh-high mud, in which people's rubber boots got stuck. Others would move near to help pull them out of the ground. We had to cross rivers multiple times, which became more challenging after the afternoon of heavy rain and thunderstorms raised the water level. People locked hands while leaping from rock to rock. At one deep crossing, a senior Community member immersed himself in the three-foot deep water, literally pulling horses and people across to the other side. Peace Community leaders made our commitment explicit at the outset: "We are in a war zone, but no one will be left behind." (Figure 76-77)

One of the main lessons of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó is to re-think and practice *peace*. This concept usually refers to some future and idealized attainment of 'harmony.' Yet, as the vaguely or un-defined utopia that is the opposite of an equally vague *violence*, peace as such is a fairly useless term. Even the most brutal warlord justifies their actions as in the pursuit of 'peace.'



Figure 76. Caravan to Rodoxalí #8: “Walking the word.”
People helping one another cross the river on the return from Rodoxalí to Mulatos.
Source: Luke Finn, with permission, from the RAIS photo archive.



Figure 77. Caravan to Rodoxalí #9: This is peace.
Community member guiding horses to tread on higher ground across a river.
Source: Luke Finn, with permission, from the RAIS photo archive.

If we limit our understanding of peace to an abstract and utopian opposite of open warfare, we relegate the possibility for safe, clean, and meaningful lives to the actions and negotiations of states and armed groups. We forfeit our own agency. The Peace Community illustrates that even as the war rages on, we cannot cede our power to create the lives we deserve to groups of oppression and domination. The task is enacting peace as dignity and community self-determination here and now.

This pilgrimage pointed to a more profound praxis of peace, signaled by some participants as “*Caminando la palabra*.” we walked the word. We did not merely profess to support some vague notion of peace, but actually generated relationships of care and love amongst ourselves as we marched in solidarity with the threatened families of Rodoxalí. One of the Colombian journalists said, “many of the big time university academics study violence, conflict, but they do so from books; they have never walked with the communities in a pilgrimage like this.” Hopefully, the caravan opened more possibilities for civilian *campesinos* to live outside the domination of the paramilitaries and the state. Moreover, as we walked together, we actually lived the peace we want to live, rejecting the logic of competition and individualism while affirming that everyone’s life must be defended by a collective political project. As a Community leader said during the closing reflection, “We are constructing the world that we want.” We can do it, and do it *now*, walking and working together in solidarity, as *campesinos*, Indigenous communities, academics, journalists, and international accompaniers. In the words of a Peace Community member: “Peace is everyone working together with the same goal. Peace is community.” (field notes, 2013; Courtheyn 2013a)

Nine months later, members of the Internal Council, accompaniers, and I reflected on the situation in Rodoxalí in a July 2014 meeting. My subsequent field note read:

Paramilitaries built a highway from Nuevo Antioquia, which passes through Sabaleta. I can barely believe it, those villages are now reachable by *road*?!!! The paramilitaries then built many homes in Rodoxalí. A Council member reported, “The people are happy. They say that the paramilitaries are good now.”

We reflected on the effects of the Peace Community caravan in October 2013. During the march, it pushed the paramilitaries to hide in the mountains. It then induced discussion with the Catholic Church to rebuild the chapel in Rodoxalí and create a neutral Humanitarian Zone, implying some type of relationship with the San José Peace Community. Subsequently, the paramilitaries began funding productive projects and house construction.

It is intriguing, because one theory is that the paramilitary development projects were a response to the caravan. This is not provable, of course, but it is logical to infer that the paramilitaries feared losing legitimacy and control given the possibility of a Humanitarian Zone linked to the Peace Community, and thus

reacted with projects to legitimize their authority. This parallels the notion that large institutions only reform when presented with concrete, competing reforms, à la the United States government instituting the Head Start school breakfast programs after the Black Panthers created their Breakfast for Children Program (Nelson 2011). While the Peace Community and myself are obviously weary of such relations with the paramilitaries, for Rodoxalí's residents, they received what they wanted: housing and funding for economic projects. You might say that the Peace Community caravan helped them earn those, even if that was not what the Peace Community wanted or intended to cause.

In my article for *Upside Down World* and *Prensa Rural Periferia*, I wrote that the farmers of Rodoxalí could now draw on a wider network of organizations (human rights groups, the Catholic Church, and the Peace Community) in their struggle for survival. Indeed, they have a wider 'support network,' but with the paramilitaries! An Internal Council member said, "I don't think we can go back there (now), but we might organize another commission in the future." (field notes, 2014)

I argue that these caravans exemplify the Peace Community's territoriality and practice of territory. Rather than a relationship with space rooted in control and domination, the Peace Community did not demand or impose anything on Rodoxalí's farmers. They marched to express support and to open space for dialog about future interactions, which initially included the possibility of forming a "Humanitarian Space." When Rodoxalí residents ultimately favored roads and housing construction, the Peace Community respected their decision even if it is wary of such projects. This contrasts with the common treatment by Colombian state agencies; groups such as *Bienestar Familiar* (Family Well-being) often offer services to such communities upon the *condition* that they accept the presence of the state armed forces. This again speaks to how the Peace Community's territory and 'community' to follow Federici (2010), are "not intended as a gated reality" defined by ethnic or religious identities but are instead about building trans-community networks of solidarity in defense of commons and non-capitalist social relations (287-289).

If territory is a question of spatial practices and values, we see how the Peace Community's movements are not limited to their marked villages. In the walking itself, the vision of peace as community is created. And these caravans create a territory beyond official Peace Community places that stretches to other areas where they express their ethical value of solidarity with all *campesinos*, whether or not they are part of the Peace Community. This is a territory of networks, not about a fixed control of one space by one group. Another prime way this territory of solidarity is manifested and organized is the *Campesino* University, to which I now turn.

The Campesino University of Resistance

The day following the completion of the caravan to Rodoxalí, participants held a session of the *Campesino* University. This involved a day and a half of workshops. It began with a general conversation about the history of the university and individual communities' introductions. People then split up into three groups on juridical land titles, communications, and health and medicine. The entire group then re-convened to share what each sub-group had done and conclude the session.

The Network of Communities in Rupture and Resistance (RECORRE), formed in 2003, inaugurated this university with a month-long meeting in the Peace Community village of Arenas Altas in 2004. It has subsequently been held in other communities, such as San Vicente de Caguán in March 2005. Some of its planned meetings, i.e. one in the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, fell through due to lack of funds (Aparicio 2012), but various sessions have been held since 2008. For example, a meeting in the Sierra Nevada was held in 2015. In the Peace Community alone, they gathered in La Unión in 2007, in San Josecito in 2008 and 2014, and the 2013 meeting in the Mulatos Peace Village following the Rodoxalí caravan, which I describe below.

In an interview, one Peace Community member described the university using the metaphor of bees as opposed to flies:

Like honey bees ... because ... you always see a bee with flowers. Where it extracts its nectar. It then takes it to the hive. There, they make honey. Honey is medicine, it's everything. It is healthy. I compare these people to honey bees. They bring new and good things so that we learn. And they also take from here to other places. Making creams for pain, powder for bad smelling (feet), solar energy stations. Those knowledges that are so important. That way of behaving, that fellowship. It is sweet – I compare it with honey. This is different than flies ... that all they bring and take is pure dirt, contaminating. The university serves as a journey of bees. Since it is *different* from other universities, we have made good use of it. (personal interview, 2014)

Therefore, this university is organized to share and produce tangible knowledge and products useful for people's health, energy needs, and general well-being. Yet like the solidarity caravans, much of what constitutes the *Campesino* University is not only its explicit, practical objective. It is also about the form of fellowship nurtured in these spaces, i.e. the type of spatial practices and values that constitute such a territory.

Moreover, what makes this university 'different' from others? To open the 2013 session, Father Giraldo described its history and principles. He recounted how, after a series of discussions about forming a university among communities resisting forced displacement and political violence, they discerned that:

It is only worth it if it is completely different from the universities that we are familiar with. 1) To not treat knowledge as merchandise, where one enters, registers, and pays for knowledge; afterwards you graduate with a diploma, which you also sell as merchandise. That [this alter-university] refrains from being merchandise and becomes a sharing of knowledge. There is no payment or salaries, but, rather, people that want to share. 2) No professors or students. To turn this scheme upside down, where everyone can contribute. 3) Rather than a fixed site, to rotate it among different communities. And to be focused on the most affected and important sites: Afros, Indigenous, and *campesinos*. (field notes, 2013)

In other words, this university rejects the idea of education as a commodity. And it attempts to create horizontal social relationships: rather than teachers, there are

“facilitators,” and different organizations take the lead on facilitating each gathering. Further, it should be grounded in rotating community sites and experiences to address those groups’ most pressing needs (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2004; Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2006). Journalist Ruiz (2005) remarks, “It is called a university (and not school or college) to recover the primary concept of the word. It is universal, humanist, and helps to transform reality.” This speaks to the values of the Peace Community and this network’s territory: collaboration, horizontality, human dignity, and anti-commercialism.

Consequently, the university addresses a variety of themes central to *campesino* resistance: agriculture and food sovereignty; juridical questions and human rights; health and medicinal plants; education; and media communications. Cartographic mapping and memory have also been proposed, although not yet realized as of 2013.

In the 2013 session’s opening statements, representatives from different groups shared ideas. The following quotes provide a sense of common comments made in such sessions, which tend to express gratitude and solidarity for one another, as well as speak to each community’s particular challenges and achievements. One person explained the relationship between autonomy and the university:

The Resistance University is to create another education that is more loyal to our needs as peoples, and change the system we are in. In our community, we have taken steps for autonomy in that we are now almost an (official Indigenous) reserve. More practice, rather than theory. Sovereignty. Without food there is no life. Our own law and education. (field notes, 2013)

A member of the *Guardia Indígena* (Indigenous Guard) from the ACIN opened with gratitude: “I give thanks to Mother Nature for allowing me to walk and to our *compañeros campesinos*. ... The *bastón* (baton) that I bring is to provide a message of

the Nasa ethnic groups.” A representative from another region stated how these communities face similar circumstances and affirmed future solidarity:

In my territory, we live the same violence that we all experience. The guerrilla doesn't want us to be organized, either. We must organize in another, more strategic way. Let's move forward. We should accompany you here with more people from my region. I will not leave you alone as long as I am alive. (field notes, 2013)

Referencing the caravan we had just completed, one said, “The fear that we felt to come here (because of the reports about the paramilitaries), we have converted into energy.”

Another man opened his statement in his own language, Wayúu, before ultimately speaking in Spanish: “Spirituality is very important. *Uniting* ourselves to resist, and listen to one another. This University of Resistance is to protect and respect our territories.” A representative from a *campesino* community emphasized a national struggle and the importance of water,

To traverse territories is an act of sovereignty and dignity. Thanks to these gatherings, the coming and going of leaders, we are constructing a space for a popular mandate of the people. In dialog, we build friendship and the future of our nation that has been at war for so many years. This is a nation that deserves something different, with its tolerance, courage, and wisdom. ... We must protect the water at whatever cost. Water is a right of all; it is not sold. (field notes, 2013)

While the lexicon of the representatives often differ—with Indigenous communities talking about their “territories” and *campesinos* more often speaking of “the people” (*el pueblo, lo popular*) and “the country/nation” (*el país, la nación*)—all express a sense of shared struggles, goals, and commitments to transforming the realities of their individual communities and of those in the network.

The workshops are designed to cover specific themes. Participants split into three groups, and organizations with multiple representatives would divide themselves to join all three workshops. One group met to discuss the legal situation of each community's

land titles (or lack thereof in some cases) in preparation for a report on land challenges facing RECORRE's members amidst the "peace process" conjuncture.

A second group, on the topic of health, took a walk outside the Mulatos Peace Village to collect medicinal plants. They then processed the plants into a variety of a) medicinal syrups, b) anti-inflammatory and pain creams, and c) perfume and anti-fungus powders. They put them in containers for delegates to take with them (Figure 78), and put them to immediate use, treating one man who had cut his leg with a machete.

The third group did a workshop on community media communications. Led by the Bogotá based *Colectivo Sónica Sinfonía* (Symphonic Sonic Collective), the group brainstormed goals, rationale, and strategies of community-generated media. A Peace Community member argued that such communication is to "manage our own image, to show the work we are doing, since television sells an image of what we are not" (field notes, 2013) while a representative from an Indigenous Chocó community alluded to media's role in the struggle against their erasure as racialized people,

To tell the government that, yes, we exist. That *campesinos* are the ones that provide everything to the cities. That if we focus on bettering the economy, we will destroy the world. We should focus on culture, peoples' survival, and information about myths, legends, information that can change reality. Such as medicinal plants: to show that you can plant and harvest where you are, to not buy pharmaceutical drugs. (field notes, 2013)

The group then did an interview and camera training. We learned practical skills, such as how to stand, look at the interviewee, ask questions, which buttons (written in English) to push on the camera, and how to position the camera stand. It was fun, as we learned. And then people went to conduct and record interviews with folks from the



Figure 78. The *Campesino* University of Resistance. During the 2013 gathering, the health subgroup hiked around the surrounding forest to gather medicinal plants and then processed them into ointments, creams, and powders for autonomous community health. Source: Author photo.

other groups. I wrote in my notebook, “There is so much LIFE, people sharing what they had brought back and made, plus the interviews” (field notes, 2013).

In the closing roundtable, each workshop sub-group shared with the entire group what they had done. Then, there was a closing round of comments. It is striking how many opportunities these gatherings set aside to sit as a group and listen to any words or ideas anyone wishes to share, as an implicit alternative to the silencing of these racialized subjects by the dominant society. We heard “Thank you” over and over, as everyone expressed their gratitude for the invitation to participate in the caravan, with some acknowledging the international accompaniment. One Peace Community member noted that we learned how, “Armed people are also capable of running from victims. Arms are very potent when we as people have stopped seeing one another as brothers, when we lose our humanity” (field notes, 2013). And a representative from a Chocó community summed up the gathering’s spirit and praxis: “We have to keep walking to continue struggling” (field notes, 2013). The *Campesino* University of Resistance thus provides practical knowledge to prevent future displacement.

Asking participants what concrete things they have learned in the university, one man from Chocó told me, “That displacement is bad. We have never been displaced, but we can take precautions now to not displace in the future.” I responded, “such as not accepting offers to buy the land, for instance?,” to which he replied, “right. Someone comes to buy a plot with a wad of bills, but in our conversations with other communities, we learn that such bills are not much money, really. In the city, it runs out quickly” (field notes, 2013). The latter alludes to San José folks’ stories of displacement to nearby cities in 1996-1997 and their subsequent commitment to re-settle their

villages. In other words, these gatherings serve to generate collective analysis that helps inform each community's strategy.

A Peace Community member explained things she has learned from other communities:

How to cure yourself with plants, to stop using pharmacy medicines. You use these remedies later. They are plants that we recognize (but did not necessarily know their properties or uses). Others have learned how to use an electronic drying system for cacao. Solar energy also. (personal interview, 2013)

When I asked her what she thinks others learn from the Peace Community, she said:

About resistance and living together. Collaboration. We have differences but learn to live together (*convivir*) with these differences. To be solidary: to take people down the hills (in hammocks when they are sick). To cook for a large group of people, go bring firewood together. (personal interview, 2013)

In addition, these gatherings are not merely instrumental. They are just as much about enjoying life and spending time with and making new friends. "In the caravans, you have fun. You stay up late, meet new friends and go to new places. Indigenous people come and sometimes they teach you words in their language; that is learning, as well" (personal interview, 2013).

The traditional notion of territory as a bounded space controlled by a particular group is unable to capture this alter-form of territory that is not limited to one place or even the sum of the Peace Community's villages. Thus, a broader theory of territory allows us to see how the *Campesino* University is a core part of the Peace Community territory created through multiple, fluid sites rooted in friendship, learning, and solidarity.

The Agricultural Center

One of the ways the Peace Community has replicated the *Campesino* university format within their own community is in Agricultural Center in La Unión.⁸⁴ Located next to the village's cemetery, it stretches across various hillsides (Figure 79). It was inaugurated in 2009 with the construction of the library, named after Rigoberto Guzmán, the Internal Council member killed in the 2000 paramilitary massacre in La Unión. They also created an adjacent *vivero* (nursery-garden in which to store seeds) and built fishponds. In 2010, they added the Peace Community's first sugarcane processing station, described in this chapter's introduction. They planted sugarcane within the Center and constructed a series of meeting places in the form of thatched-hut gazebos, an architectural design members say they learned from Indigenous groups.

The Community now constructs its new common spaces in the form of such gazebos, such as meeting spaces and schools in Mulatos and San Josecito. Their circular and unenclosed form notably contrasts with the square, cement buildings erected by the state. It is a reminder that places, values, and politics are integral: to create and be a community requires building places that reflect such communalism. In these gazebos, people can sit on the edges to face inward, where each person can see everyone else. And they are built from locally harvested wood and straw, rather than purchased cement, thus reflecting the Community's growing effort to be as self-reliant as possible.

The Peace Community frequently showcases La Unión's Agricultural Center to visiting delegations. During a 2012 visit by two members of the Catholic diocese in Apartadó, the bishop said mass in the Center's library. Afterwards, community members

⁸⁴ Other agricultural centers are also found in other settlements, such as San Josecito.



Figure 79. La Unión's Agricultural Center #1: View from the highest gazebo. Notice the sugarcane processing station (left), village cemetery in the background (middle), and circular, thatch roof meeting-space gazebo (right). Outside this frame, cane grows to the right and the library is located further below towards the left. Source: Author photo.

took us on a tour of the nursery-garden, sugarcane processing station, fishponds, and meeting gazebos.

Beginning in the library, community members explained that it has a variety of books, including educational children's books as well as ones on agro-ecology. "This supports the Agricultural Center. People are now copying things from books and then doing them" (field notes, 2012). During our stop in the garden, community members pointed out the different crops and seeds preserved there (Figures 80-83).

Where the Agricultural Center is, the land was really depleted, just a grazing area. But now it is productive. It gives *lulo* fruit. Aloe. Amazonian wheat, it's beautiful! It grows more and more! The land liked it. Sorghum, as well. We have 19 seeds of plantain and bananas, and different varieties of yucca. Cacao. Coffee. We plant seeds to then transplant them, including medicinal plants. Many medicinal plants grow wild, but in the past, when a person was sick, someone would have to hike up the hills to find the appropriate plant. Now, they are all grown here, for quick and easy access. ... From a seed exchange, I brought squash seeds, huge squash! And people said, "give me a seed, so I can plant one!" (field notes, 2012)

We proceeded to pass by the fishponds, stop at the sugarcane-processing center for a taste of freshly made *panela*, and visit the different gazebos. Members described the philosophy of having an Agricultural Center:

The fishponds are also an important food base for families. And we planted sugarcane, from which we have begun to make honey and *panela* blocks. About 70% of the *panela* consumption in La Unión comes from here and not from outside. We have observed that birds have come to the Agricultural Center and stay.

We also looked to have gazebos. In them, there are trainings. We choose a topic, say, coffee or *panela*, and amongst ourselves, we train ourselves. To learn from one another, where there aren't even [expert] teachers. The primary objective is that people can replicate what they learn in their own communities. Sometimes people say that they know how to plant, but we have seen failures; so, you have to not do like before, but adapt to the times. (field notes, 2012)

In other words, the Agricultural Center serves as an even more localized and communitarian version of the *Campesino* University. Its spaces are built as part of their



Figure 80. La Unión's Agricultural Center #2: Rejecting extractivism.
"Agrarian Center Farm. Private Property. Free from Mineral Megaprojects and
Exploration."
Source: Author photo.



Figure 81. La Unión's Agricultural Center #3: Polyculture over monoculture. Displaying a large species of squash during Apartadó's Catholic diocese's visit to the Agricultural Center in 2012. Source: Author photo.



Figure 82. La Unión's Agricultural Center #4: Cultivating biodiversity.
Four species of yucca in the plant nursery.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 83. La Unión's Agricultural Center #2: Nurturing medicinal plants.
Penca sávilas (aloe) growing in the agricultural center.
Source: Author photo.

food sovereignty project, but also to reflect and produce a communal political subject. It is predicated upon a premise to experiment, share and create knowledge, and create a new world (or alter-territories) for *campesino* life.

Self-Sufficient Farms

Applying lessons learned in the *Campesino* University and Agricultural Center, as of 2014, there were at least two efforts to create totally self-sufficient farms (*Granjas auto-sostenibles*) within the Peace Community. The following narrative is composed from a series of conversations, interviews, and a visit to a self-sufficient farm between 2013 and 2014 with one of the Community's food sovereignty pioneers.

He began by situating the farm within the broader work and network of the Community.

The idea behind this farm is very simple. This is a project that stems from the trajectory of the Peace Community these 16 years. I have had the ability to visit many other places in and outside Colombia. And the truth is that I have been able to look and learn. ... Going to Cauca, Indigenous communities, and Cali, for instance, I bring seeds and we exchange. I bring back other seeds. ... This small farm that I am constructing with my family is the fruit of learning in other places. (personal interview, 2013)

This speaks to the concrete effects of such solidarity networks: the sharing of seeds, and the production of knowledge, in which *campesinos* learn from, with, and inspire each other.

He goes on to emphasize the farms' goal—total self-sufficiency and food sovereignty—and why this is so important for *campesinos* in today's era of neoliberal 'free' trade agreements and toxicity:

The fundamental idea is to make it self-sufficient, as a family, which, in this region, I venture to say, does not yet exist. ... That we have alternatives ... to have our own food. To not depend on the outside world. This is a very complicated question today, now that there are the FTAs [free trade agreements], and the

problem of genetically modified organisms. Because of the multinationals, our food is more and more poisoned. (personal interview, 2013)

Despite these challenges, he also sees many opportunities for organic alternatives: “The idea is cultivating without chemicals and genetically-modified seeds. Our advantage here is that we have so much land. And it is so fertile, producing almost without any fertilizer.”

We proceeded on a walking tour of the farm, including the thatched-roof house, water collection-storing site, fishpond, vegetable and fruit garden, and animal feeding stations (Figures 84-85).

Look here, the house’s roof. The straw reeds are so simple. I have the tree that they come from planted right here. I will not have the problem of ‘I have to go buy...’, no. This is an alternative. It doesn’t cost me anything. Besides, it is a tradition of our grandparents. It is an alternative because, this keeps the house cool, and you can sleep, no matter how hot it is. (personal interview, 2013)

I reacted by saying,

It is so interesting that your grandparents’ technology is an ‘alternative!’ Modern technology has become so dominant, to where you need money to buy everything, and a self-made and sustainable thatch roof then becomes an alternative, when it was a norm in the past. (personal interview, 2013)

He responded, and we continued on:

And I love it. Look here, these plants, including bamboo, they hold together the hillside, and protect the water. We have about 500 bamboos planted. It can also be used to build houses.

What I need is a biogas system: you put animal excrement in a tube where it passes to a tank where it ferments, and you have biogas. It is an alternative because you do not need to cut down wood to burn for cooking food. But to buy all the materials costs 2.5 million Colombian pesos,⁸⁵ which I don’t have. So we are going to work with what we have.

⁸⁵ Equivalent to approximately US\$1,300 at the time of this interview (US\$1=COP\$1,900).



Figure 84. Touring a Self-Sufficient Farm #1: An alter-roof for an alter-politics. The house's locally-harvested and built thatch roof.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 85. Touring a Self-Sufficient Farm #2: *Boré*. Plant leaf used as fish food, after and before being fed to the fishes.
Source: Author photo.

This is '*boreh*.' I feed it to the fish and have it planted right here. The fish like to eat it. What I need is more fish, to have enough for our consumption.

And this plant here, I brought it from an Indigenous community in Cauca, to use as feed for chickens; it is a special food (Figure 86). And look at this portable pen for chickens to stay in; after a while, you move it and plant something there, since the chickens' manure fertilizes the land. So simple and useful! (Figure 87).

There are many fruit trees here: papayas, pineapple, tangerines, and oranges. ... Look, a type of squash! Yucca. Beans. And up on that hillside I am going to plant food. I will rotate crops: yucca, rice, maize, and beans. ... And this is the garden. Tomatoes, aloe, coffee, *lulo* fruit and medicinal plants: basil, ginger, lemongrass. See how wonderful coriander leaf smells! (personal interview, 2013)

At one point, he couldn't contain his enthusiasm, expressing that love of rural life that continues to drive the Peace Community's struggle, as well as his relationship with non-human beings:

I love the countryside. I love to plant. Look at all the wild animals around here. I take care of them, too, planting food for them, fruits, so that they enjoy themselves and come to sing in the surrounding area. I have fun along with them. (personal interview, 2013)

While it is an individual family farm, the project is intended to be space of shared learning and inspiration for other *campesinos* to follow suit. He signaled that many of the area's farmers, despite the ongoing war, still have access to large areas of land. But most resign themselves to monocropping, day-labor, or the coca economy:

A project like this, which is also being carried out in other parts of the Peace Community, I conceive of as a little school. Because various people come and learn, to then put in practice what they see here. It makes such a difference for people to see new alternatives.

Even here, in this region, there are people and families that have 50 or even more than 100 hectares of land. But oftentimes you see that those youth merely work as day laborers on someone else's farm, or even, harvesting coca. Why don't they have enough food, despite so much land? It is a shame. (personal communication, 2013)

He continued, addressing the question of size:



Figure 86. Touring a Self-Sufficient Farm #3: Fruits of the *Campesino* University. Plant brought from Cauca and used as animal feed in San José de Apartadó. Source: Author photo.



Figure 87. Touring a Self-Sufficient Farm #4: A mini-place of an alter-territory. Portable chicken pen that also serves to fertilize a patch of soil. Source: Author photo.

This farm is 4 hectares. According to what I have seen and learned, you only need about four to five hectares to be able to be self-sufficient. Everything you see was constructed over the past two years. With this project, people are going to realize that they do not need such large amounts of land to survive, even in the middle of a conflict like ours. We only need a small space, but we need to know how to work. And we have to know how to think.

Some think that it is all about going to the market. I have always said that communities need to think about food sovereignty. We have to change the mentality, the mentality of *everyone*, little by little, including community leaders. This is a cacao-growing area, and some people live off of cacao alone. They sell it and with those earnings buy everything else they need. Last year, there was a good cacao harvest. But this year, it isn't producing. I spent three years in the baby banana project, which at the time sold for a good price. But that ultimately ended and I returned to cacao. But we have to learn from those experiences and have another strategy.

I love talking about a space that is small, but sustainable for a family. You notice that no one is investing money. This is to see what one family can do on their own. Without those moneys that finance projects, which sometimes do so much damage, because there is money in the middle of everything. (personal communication, 2013)

In other words, his goal is to provide an example of what anyone can do if they have just a small piece of land, regardless of funding. His comments infer a critique of external financing, how internal divisions often arise over money from such 'development or productive projects.' In other words, if you are working for *campesino* dignity, autonomy, and community, then your political and financial strategies have to be consistent with those practices, subjectivities, and values, which can cohere into a particular territorial process. Here, the self-sufficient farms attempt to shift people's imaginary of what is possible, that they not look to external funders for solutions, but instead to their own creativity, effort, and collaboration.

In the following quote, he explained the importance of food sovereignty, providing a more direct critique of capitalism and the state:

The idea is to think and act differently from a state. A state that all the time has trampled, killed, displaced us. It wants to exterminate us. I see that they want to

make all of humanity submit to them. The grand capitalists, who run this planet. You are at their mercy if you have to, say, buy clothes or a car. In the city, you have to buy everything. If I am able to stop going to the market, I would say that I am not supporting the state. Because everything that happens in cities is managed by the state; (there, you are) always a slave to the state. I want to be independent and different from the state. (personal communication, 2013)

For him, like for so many Peace Community members, the state is understood as a capitalist institution that undermines self-reliance and autonomy. This is the system to which these farms are imagined as an alternative, in which there is a re-thinking of money and what constitutes the ‘good life’:

I think that with my thatched home and all the crops, it is a good life! A rich person that has lots of money and many things lives in fear that they will be kidnapped or that others will steal from them; that’s not a good life. Because people are still interested in money. The fact is, people live in this world [*He points over his shoulder, towards San José town and Apartadó, as contrasted with where the farm is*]. Also, you work so much that you don’t even have time to spend with your children. For me, that’s not life! We have to live another world, another way of living. (personal communication, 2013)

Here, the World Social Forum’s slogan of “Another World is Possible” resonates. For *campesinos* to live dignified lives, reforms to state policy are insufficient. For the Peace Community, there has to be a *rupture* with the state system, and the creation of “another world,” i.e., an emancipatory “other” politics.

For this member, key aspects of creating this other world are being open to new ideas, making mistakes, and learning amongst the family and the community. As another window into the spatial practices that create the Peace Community territory, he describes working with his pre-school age son:

Hopefully I will make mistakes so that I can learn; you have to error in order to learn. ... You make your path by walking. ... My son, he wants to do everything I do. ... And he has an advantage: he asks questions. For instance, chopping down plants, he asks, “And this one?” I say, yes. “And this?” No, that one is used for such-and-such. (personal communication, 2013)

In other words, there have to be multi-generational and inter-family collective work and learning.

Near the conclusion of the tour, as we sat above the farm and reflected, he said:

This is a hidden place. It is like a secret place, because you can't see it (from other farms or trails). You only see it when you come here. And even if you just stumbled upon this place, you wouldn't see all the things that are cultivated. But if they are shown to you, you begin to see. It's like entering into another world. (personal communication, 2013) (Figure 88)

Remarkably, these places remain relatively “hidden” even in Peace Community media communications. Persistent human rights violations continue to feature most prominently in their communiqués. I have never seen these farms mentioned in a press release. In this final quote, this member alludes to how seeing this “other” politics or imagine the possibility of another world distinct from capitalist dependency and militarism, you have to experience the innovative work in these “secret places.” These places are an invitation to reflect on how they need not be marginal or exceptional, but rather inspirations to practice such alternatives in our own lives and work projects (Gibson-Graham 2006).

It should be stated that not all Community members are currently taking up the initiative to experiment with their own self-sufficient farms. Most grow a variety of food crops or continue to focus on harvesting cacao, to then use their earnings to buy the goods they need. Yet I argue that these self-sufficient farms are indicative of the type of territory created in San José de Apartadó: the Peace Community opens a space for experimentation, in which *campesinos* are organized as part of a local community that is linked with national and international networks with whom to exchange ideas and seeds. These farms are among other Peace Community places built to support their struggle for autonomy and dignity, such as the Agricultural Center, *Campesino*



Figure 88. Touring a Self-Sufficient Farm #5: A “hidden and secret place” of an alter-peace. View overlooking a self-sufficient Peace Community farm.

Source: Author photo.

University meetings, and Community work groups' food and cash crop cultivation. Through this written tour of a self-sufficient farm, we get a glimpse of the types of places, practices, and values that make up the Peace Community form of 'territory.'

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored how the Peace Community produces territory in solidarity caravans, inter-community networks, and food sovereignty projects. I have argued that a broader understanding of territory beyond bounded spaces of control by a particular group is necessary to understand the spatial practices of an autonomist movement like the Peace Community, regardless of whether or not they strategically use the term "territory" itself. We open our lens for analyzing spatial processes—to include but not limited to the nation state—by theorizing a) territoriality as the relationship between subjects and space, and b) territory as a series of spatial practices, values, and places that produce and are produced by particular political subjects.

If *peace* for the Peace Community is actively refusing to participate in the war and building community, then we see this political process of peace through their territorial practices of solidarity caravans, knowledge production networks with other *campesino* communities, food sovereignty initiatives, as well as the pilgrimages and stones explored in the previous chapter. Specific places of this territory include the stone and chapel victims monuments, the sugarcane processing stations, the self-sufficient farms, Community schoolrooms, and circular gazebo meeting spaces. Practices include community workdays, collective decision-making, plus the multiple pilgrimages across and beyond Peace Community villages each year, which commemorate and connect with

the dead, analyze the context, and build solidarity and knowledge with other groups. All of these are driven by and produce a particular type of political subject, rooted in the values of life over accumulation, of collaboration over individualism, of a reciprocal and embedded relationship with the land rather than as an object to be exploited.

In the following quote, an accompanier reflects on ‘peace’ in the Peace Community context, inferring that imaginaries of peace are integrally related with one’s relationship with land and one’s territoriality:

I think peace for them—obviously I’m not speaking for them—is more than just not fighting. Because they could go to Bogotá, where there isn’t a war going on at the moment.⁸⁶ They could go to Medellín. But it’s not about that. It’s about how they live together, and their relationship with the land. I mean, [to] define *campesino*, it’s about a relationship with the land. It’s more than just “engaged in agriculture.” It’s about how your life and work cycle are engaged with the natural elements. ... They are *campesinos*. And [the] peace they produce, a *campesino* peace, [is] why they aren’t in Medellín [or] Bogotá. Because the peace they want is specific to their lifestyle and their social construct. (personal communication, 2013)

In other words, the Peace Community ‘peace’ is not to merely live anywhere, but to re-create a dignified *campesino* way of life or life world.

Contrast this sentiment with a quote from a Colombian policeman. He agreed that displaced *campesinos* should be able to return to where they previously lived. But notice, first, that he fails to mention anything about autonomy, and, secondly, how his conception of *territory* equates with a piece of land that is controlled. In the interview, I asked, “How do you understand those communities that demand ‘territory’?”

The issue of community territories, here in Urabá, is a problem about the dispute over land. Here, there has been follow up about land restitution. Those that had

⁸⁶ While the dynamics of Colombia’s war differ between rural and urban contexts, I insist against forgetting that the war permeates cities: Police and army forces conduct *batidas* (street round ups of young men to force them to settle their military service status) (Gil 2013), whereas paramilitary, guerrilla, and police forces also compete for socioeconomic control and legitimacy, often brutally so, in the urban peripheries.

possession of their territories and have been displaced. Restitution is a mechanism to obtain that possession. Some landowners, people between a rock and a hard place, having to displace due to threats. We are all affected, because we are all one family. Land restitution is a process to resolve that problem. That people present their titles and receive legal possession of the land. (2014)

I agree with his assertion that the emergent discourse of “territory” is related to land disputes. Yet for him, ‘territory’ is something that is possessed, reducing resistance communities’ demand for territory to a question of legal titles. Sánchez Ayala (2015) provides a similar, albeit more nuanced, analysis: when “different political and social scales in [a certain place] do not know with certainty the dimensions of their territoriality ... not knowing exactly where their territories begin and end ... it affects the daily life of those” (178). Therefore, this scholar proposes, “a better understanding and harmonization of the territorialities of the inhabitants with the territories constructed by the State ... To understand a territory it is necessary to recognize the existence of the borders and limits that concretize it” (179).

Yet I do not think people lack ‘certainty’ about “the dimensions of their territoriality” even if they do not always explain spatial-political relationships in those terms. During a presentation to an international delegation visiting Chocó, Father Albeiro Parra from the Catholic *Pastoral Social* in Quibdó described his understanding of the meaning of ‘territory’ for Indigenous and Black groups:⁸⁷

For both Indigenous and Black communities: “There is no life without territory.” For the Indigenous, territory is *everything*. It is not a piece of land but rather a concept of everything: water, air, fauna, flora, themselves. They don’t divide. Mother Earth, *pachamama*, from which everything comes. Their uses and customs include rituals, spirits, and sacred land. When armed groups operate or there is mining, that is a violation.

⁸⁷ This quote is derived not from an audio recording but from my written notes as I translated from Spanish to English for the delegates. Therefore, the quote is not an exact copy of his words but instead reflects the keywords and phrases I noted as I translated; please excuse the incomplete sentences.

For Afro-Colombians, there is also no life without territory. But due to the history of slavery and interactions with slave masters and the outside world, they don't have same rituals, beliefs in spirits, or sacred places.

Yes, many leaders of these groups have been co-opted, bought off. But the majority of the communities maintain that another world is possible, building other networks, such as the Chocó Solidarity Forum. Indigenous communities are very divided within Colombia, but Chocó is an exception: there is unity. (field notes, 2014)

In other words, these resistance communities' praxes of territory are far more complex than traditional notions. Like Black communities, *campesinos* such as the Peace Community do not necessarily talk about territory in the same way or have the same cultural practices as Indigenous groups, i.e., consistent with the terminology of "earth beings" (De la Cadena 2000) But that is not to deny commonalities between the territorialities of the ethnically diverse groups that meet in the *Campesino* University of Resistance and other solidarity networks across Colombia and the Americas. Of course, this is not a question of ethnicity or ancestry: It is about nurturing particular relationships with space through political practice and places. The *Colectivo de Sentipensamiento Afrodiaspórico* (Afrodiasporic Feeling-thinking Collective) provides one of the clearest declarations of the divergence between Black communities' and the state's understandings of territory:

The notion of territory for the black population in rural areas and that which has been forcibly displaced to the large cities is distinct from the conceptualization that emanates from State institutions. Territory is conceived as an ancestral setting indispensable for the production and recreation of life and culture. Land is not a resource for capital investment but instead the space of relationality for collective being. (Colectivo de Sentipensamiento Afrodiaspórico 2015)

Therefore, when Black Communities Process leader Francia Márquez Mina (2015) denounces military "helicopters bombing territories," this is much more significant than bombing a space or place. It is to bomb the series of spatial practices,

places, and values that constitute particular life worlds. Whereas state or liberal actors propose solutions to spatial conflict through land titling and demarcation, these communities in resistance call us to re-think that dominant modern territoriality. For example, a representative from a Nasa community in Cauca named Carlos expressed this beautifully in his intervention during the Abya Yala Agrarian Collective's 2013 seminar on territorial ordering⁸⁸: "It is our *thinking*, and not *territory*, that should be re-ordered (*no había que ordenar el territorio sino el pensamiento*)."

Like the dominant notion of 'peace' as security and order ensured by the state, the hegemonic framing of territory is rooted in the modernity project. Therefore, this chapter is an attempt to push beyond claims that

To control territory is to exercise terror; to challenge territorial control is to exercise terror. ... Creating a bounded space is already a violent act of exclusion and inclusion; maintaining it as such requires constant vigilance and the mobilization of threat; and challenging it necessarily entails a transgression. (Elden 2009: xxx)

Surely, resistance communities' create or re-produce certain boundaries, whether they be a) individual and community land titles in the Peace Community as well as signs marking their villages, or b) Indigenous and Black associations' insistence upon state-recognized "collective territories." Precisely in the moment of neoliberal globalization, when traditional political state borders are supposedly losing their fixity and relevance, these social movements in Latin America re-capture and re-shape the meaning of territory. But in no way are these boundaries *violence* towards, i.e. a 'violation' of

⁸⁸ For more information on this seminar consisting of five sessions between April 11th and June 19th, 2013, titled "*Seminario Campesino Conflictos de Ordenamientos Territoriales en Colombia: Herramientas Para El Debate (Campesino Seminar on Territorial Ordering Conflicts: Tools for Debate)*," see: <http://colectivoagrarioabyayala.blogspot.com/2013/04/seminario-campesino-conflictos-de.html>

(Naglar 2001; R. Williams 2007), the armed groups they intend to exclude. Such borders are not spaces of oppression but rather of encounter and humanization of interpersonal and people-space relations (Fals Borda 2000), epitomized by the *Campesino* University.

Indeed, communities in resistance struggle for control of their reality; they struggle with and for power. Yet I believe it is important to distinguish between ‘self-determination’ and a territoriality of controlling or dominating space. To control one’s *reality* is not necessarily the same as controlling *space*. In fact, a core constituent of many emancipatory movements today is decision-making practices that break from horizontal power relations, i.e., to open discussion through assembly consensus or rotating leadership so as not to concentrate power and control in particular individuals (Zibechi 2010; Esteva 2005).

If *territory* is reducible to ‘places occupied by violence to be fled from’ (Connolly 1994; Elden 2009) – like *peace* as ‘state security, order, and repression’ – then the term is obviously not one to guide an emancipatory politics. Yet Latin American communities in resistance suggest territory otherwise.

My conceptualization of *territory* in a broad sense is not to deny the term’s historical genealogy in Western political thought. However, to understand its usage by and significance for Colombian communities in resistance, we have to not limit ourselves to that historical understanding and production of territory. Resistance communities’ practices of an alter-territory are crucial precisely because they reflect an alter-*politics* amidst the crisis of the modern world-system’s reproduction.

Today’s neo-extractivism poses not merely a *conflict* resolvable through dialog, but an *antagonism*, in which state-corporate projects of large scale mining and

agribusiness are mutually exclusive with *campesino* survival and subsistence (Tierra Digna, field notes, 2014). Yet this question, which I argue should be more central to the debates on the current Colombian “peace process,” is not merely a contestation over space, i.e., between subsistence and extractive economies. It is about the relationships to space, politics, and life that those entail. To confuse these struggles as issues to be solved through mere territorial ordering (Fals Borda 2000; Massiris Cabeza 2005; Fajardo Montaña 2002; Sánchez Ayala 2015), political participation, or ignoring them altogether, reinforces the state project against these groups’ resistance and alternative knowledges (Lame 2004; McKittrick and Woods 2007).

Through a broader understanding of territory and territoriality, we can trace this antagonism through its contrasting spatial relationships and subjectivities. Neoliberal territoriality trumpets the values of individualism, competition, and accumulation. The modern state of Colombia enacts a relationship with space of control that is produced through private property; salaried work; top-down and export-oriented development projects; monocultures and homogeneous landscapes; mechanized production with the use of agro-toxins and transgenetic seeds (Fernandes 2009; Torres et al. 2015); and the increasing presence of police and army forces throughout the country to enforce those arrangements (Tierra Digna 2015). For the state, ‘peace’ is a terminal project, while territorial integrity is the terminal point of territory for it. To social movements talk of land, territory, or autonomy from state violence, the Colombian state reacts with violence, given that the modern state interprets such movements “as a rival plan for division [rather] than to see division itself as the problem” (Elden 2013: 1).

The Peace Community, along with other racialized communities in resistance, has a more fluid practice of both peace and territory, enacting both as an always-unfolding

process, with no terminal point. Indeed, the Peace Community's rejection of the dominant notion of 'territory' as state-sanctioned bounded spaces of control suggests a territoriality not constituted by division and violence but conversely, by relationality with space, where community and space are integrated through communal land, work groups, and solidarity networks. In the process, their alter-territory pushes us to conceptualize land, territory, and politics anew.

CHAPTER 7

“IF WE REMAIN ON THE LAND”: CRITICALLY PERFORMING THE FIELD IN AND BEYOND THE FIELD

ACT I. “IF WE REMAIN ON THE LAND”

(A group of performers congregate together. They stand within a circle marked on the ground with tape. On the wall next to them, hangs the sign “LA UNIÓN VILLAGE.” From there, there are strips of tape on the ground, in a curving, snake-like trail, that lead from that village to another, o - - - - o, where another sign reads “SAN JOSÉ TOWN.”

Before the performance begins, I take three volunteers aside to play specific roles. In private, I explain to them how the group will move through the performance and what their particular parts entail. Volunteer #1, the Community Narrator, will read the script and lead the processions from one village to another. Volunteer #2, the Movement Leader, will embody the acts being read with spontaneous body movements or following suggestions I give them ahead of time. Volunteer #3 will be pulled away from the group; I instruct him/her to physically resist before finally allowing him or her to be taken away.

Now, with the entire group, I explain:

“We are about to re-enact the founding of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, located in the Urabá region of Colombia. This piece uses a selection of quotes that I translated from the document ‘*La historia vivida* (Lived history),’ written by the Peace Community (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2005b).

You all are Community members. [Name of volunteer #1] will be the narrator. Please follow her/him when s/he moves. [Name of volunteer #2] will lead the movements; the rest of you, as you are comfortable, feel free to follow her/his lead, mimicking or creating your own movements as we proceed. I will act as the military.

Let’s begin:

‘*IF WE REMAIN* on the land.’”

(I move to the opposite circle marking San José Town. I assume a rigid posture, my feet apart and arms raised as if I were holding a rifle, with my index finger on the trigger. I aim my gaze and posture out into space, not directly towards the group.)

The Community Narrator begins to read:

“San José, the small town of our rural district, was empty.

The majority of the families had fled due to the massacres perpetrated by the army and paramilitary soldiers in September of 1996 and February of 1997, in which the district’s main leaders had been wiped out.

We still lived in the villages, like La Unión, and with the declaration of being a Peace Community, we hoped to be respected and stay on our lands.

But we were wrong.

Army troops in conjunction with paramilitaries carried out operations in the villages, assassinating people of our community.

They gave us three days to abandon our land.

Those that did not comply would be killed.

This threat was real.

In three days, they entered and killed those that they met on the trails.

In the meantime, military helicopters and planes bombed and fired guns.”

(I move towards the community members.)

The Community Narrator begins to lead the group away from La Unión along the trail.

I grab Volunteer #3 by the arm, pulling her/him away from the group. S/he resists, before giving in to being taken away. I hear another member scream and attempt to intervene, to grab and save their fellow community member. As I pull Volunteer #3 away, the other community members huddle together.

I occupy La Unión Village and re-assume my gun-holding pose. I point my gun towards the group, who have now moved to San José Town. I make eye contact with one member, holding my pose for a moment. Then I shift my gaze and point my gun away from them and out into space.)

“Those of us that were able to get out, took shelter in the town of San José, and from there, we started to resist.”

(Community members huddle together, in a disorganized fashion.)

“With our declaration of being a peace community,
we assumed the only possibility of survival,
and living with dignity in the middle of the war.

The Community Freely:

- Does Not Bear Arms, Or Participate Directly or Indirectly in the War
- Does Not Pass Information to Any of The Armed Groups
- Says No To Injustice and Impunity
- And Participates in Community Work Groups.”

(The Movement Leader stands tall and extends the palm of her hand towards me, as if to say ‘stop.’ Other community members follow suit, raising their palms in my direction.)

I approach San José Town. Community members look at me, their eyes open and fearful; some start to crouch away as I move closer.)

“The guerrilla told us that we were with the paramilitaries,
and the paramilitaries and the army accused us of being guerrillas.”

(I grab a member by the arm, pulling them away from the group.)

“15% of our population, over 210 community members, have been killed.

By being together we had the strength to face them and tell them that
they would have to kill all of us
because we wouldn’t let anyone tell us what to do.

This was one of the first forms of resistance.

We had to cook with one, single community pot for everyone,
because there wasn't much to eat.”

(The Movement Leader begins to mimic stirring food in a large pot, and passing out tastes from a spoon to the community members, who receive them and/or begin to stir the pot and serve others as well.)

“It was sad to find the zone abandoned.
All that we had built for decades had been destroyed.

We set out to return to the first village, La Unión.”

(The Community Narrator begins to lead the group back to La Unión Village.)

I relocate to the middle of the path in between La Unión and San José. I hold a steady pose.

Upon the return to La Unión Village, the Movement Leader gets on her/his knees, making gestures as if s/he were planting crops or nailing nails to build a building. The others respond with similar movements.

The Narrator resumes the script.)

“We planted big quantities of beans, yucca, and corn.

We were more than 150 people working with zest,
with the accompaniment of religious and lay people
and organizations
that helped us in this process.

We began re-cultivating cacao, and planting plantains and bananas.
We want to live outside the logic of the market.
We began to think about an alternative economy,
apart from capitalism and exclusion,
an economy of solidarity
for the good of all.”

(The Movement Leader stands up and gathers the group. They form a circle, facing each other.)

“If we remain on the land
and support ourselves on the land,
neither the assassins nor the system that generates death and hunger
will be able to eliminate us.”

(I lower my arms from my gun-holding pose, step towards the group or audience, and conclude by saying:)

“Today, the Peace Community now spans *eleven* villages.
Thank you.”

I created “If we remain on the land” in a performance ethnography seminar taught by Renee Alexander Craft at the University of North Carolina in 2012. My goal was to generate an embodied piece about forced displacement that re-enacted the founding, principles, and ongoing struggle of the Peace Community. It is an example of Glesne’s (1997) form of “poetic transcription,” to create a poem from a longer text. I

composed the script by selecting and translating particular quotes from the Peace Community's written historical narrative titled "*La historia vivida*" (Lived history), published in 2005 (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2005b).⁸⁹ It is an attempt to not only translate the words from one language to another, but also to communicate the meaning and feelings of San José's resistance, for both Community members and outsiders alike. In addition to the sensations of being forcibly moved and then actively return from one side of the stage to another, co-performers and audience members frequently comment on how intense it is to be taken or see others taken from the group, plus seeing the group's numbers drastically decline as more and more folks are pulled away by the military, thus reflecting the high percentage of assassinations in San José de Apartadó.

I have performed "If we remain on the land" in a variety of places. I performed it as my final presentation in the critical and performance ethnography graduate seminar in which it was created in 2012. I have also performed the piece in academic conference panels co-organized with fellow performance ethnographers Pavithra Vasudevan, Helen Orr, and Seana Monley.⁹⁰ I have used this and other performance pieces in individual conference paper presentations⁹¹ as well as in different graduate seminars. With my undergraduate students and as a guest lecturer, I have incorporated "If we remain on the land" into my lectures on forced displacement, extractivism, and Colombian politics.

⁸⁹ For another example of generating scripts and screenplays from archives or oral history interviews, see Conquergood (1994) and Pollock (2005b).

⁹⁰ Specifically, the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry in Urbana-Champaign and the Critical Geographies Conference in Chapel Hill, both in 2012.

⁹¹ These included the 2011 Duke-UNC Consortium of Latin American and Caribbean Studies Conference in Chapel Hill; the 2011 and 2012 Association of American Geographers' conferences in Seattle and New York, respectively; and the 2014 With/Out ¿Borders? Conference organized by the Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership at Kalamazoo College.

In addition, I used it in an accompanier training in Bogotá as part of a thread on Peace Community context, doing the same for an international human rights delegation to Colombia that I co-lead with FOR Peace Presence in 2014. At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on November 2, 2015, “If we remain on the land” was the opening act of a public campus event that I organized to present four of my performance ethnography pieces together, including “Even the stones speak,” “We will stay if...,” and “Peace does not come from them.” Furthermore, at the conclusion of my dissertation fieldwork in July 2014, I organized events in two Peace Community villages to perform my pieces with community members and accompaniers for feedback. In so doing, these pieces serve to both perform the ‘field’ *in* the university as well as perform my academic creations *in* the field.

Counter to dominant ethnography’s logical empiricism rooted in the participant-observer ‘looking over the shoulder’ of the research subject-object, critical ethnography is rooted in participatory research (Conquergood 2002; Conquergood 2006). Critical performance ethnography is a theory-method to challenge modernity’s “textocentrism,” which privileges the written and spoken word over emotions and bodily movement (Conquergood 2002), as well as hegemonic academia’s segregation of analysis from action (Conquergood 2006). Rather than detachment, its epistemological point of departure and return is the “proximity” of “dialogic performance” (Conquergood 1985; Conquergood 2002; Vasudevan 2012). “Dialogical performance” refers to the always-in-process collaboration between researchers and interlocutors, in which both the similarities and differences between them are explored and affirmed, rather than falling into dangerous appropriation, exotification, or failing to truly build ethically-grounded and collective political projects (Conquergood 1985). This requires individual and

collective reflection about the (potentially dangerous or emancipatory) political effects of such proximity, and how research should indeed be a theory-method against injustice and for dignity (Vasudevan 2012; Conquergood 2006; Madison 2012; Madison 2010; Pollock 2005a; Vasudevan and Kearney 2015).

Performance can serve as a creative and effective means of internal community reflection and education. One example is Conquergood's (1988) role as a co-creator of a performance health outreach troupe in a Hmong refugee camp in Thailand, which succeeded in being appropriated by residents and increasing knowledge about health practices. From another perspective, Fanon (2004) describes the role of the storyteller in political struggles:

The storyteller responds to the expectations of the people by trial and error and searches for new models, national models, apparently on his [*sic*] own, but in fact with the support of his audience. ... By bringing faces and bodies to life, by taking the group set on a single social socle as creative subject, the artist inspires concerted action. (174-175)

In other words, the artist-performer serves the role of depicting reality as they see it. These depictions do not function as authoritative representations but rather induce the group's continual determinations about what the reality indeed *is* for them and what is to be done.

The performative projects described in this chapter were designed, therefore, as "critical theory in action" (Madison 2012: 16) that both ethically and effectively conduct and present research. This chapter explores how my role as a former accompanier and now performance geographer contributes to the Peace Community's memory project.⁹²

⁹² Of course, protective accompaniment is itself a political performance before armed actors and states to create more space for the struggles of human rights defenders and peace communities (Koopman 2011a; Koopman 2014; Mahony and Eguren 1997). As a researcher, my body effectively functions as an accompanier: Neither the Peace Community nor the armed actors

The chapter is organized to follow the program of my November 2nd, 2015 event. Accordingly, subsequent sections provide the performance scripts for “Even the stones speak” and “We will stay if...”, which I will follow with reactions by participants, fellow critical ethnographers, and Peace Community members upon witnessing or acting in these performances in university spaces and in San José de Apartadó, respectively. Before rendering these performance pieces, however, I will detour to an “interlude” that describes the photo memory project I co-developed with a group of fellow ex-accompaniers of FOR.

While I understand myself to be in a shared struggle with the Peace Community against militarism, I am not a Community member and instead play a different and particular role through my research. Being an effective ally to the Peace Community has been a priority for me since my arrival in San José de Apartadó in February 2008: to spread their stories respectfully, ethically, effectively, and affectively. Surely, I do not venture to infer that my research is without problems or contradictions. However, I argue that critical performance ethnography, precisely, forces these essential questions to the forefront in a way that does not foreclose ongoing action and intervention. Congruent with an “other politics of emancipation” (Grupo Acontecimiento 2012; Denis 2012; Ceceña 2012; Gutiérrez 2012), we have to continuously and simultaneously act and reflect on that action for a more informed politics. Critical and performance ethnography is thus my point of departure for a *critical, performance geography* that acknowledges that geographers not only write about but also produce space and power

stop seeing me as an accompanier or differentiate me from FORPP, PBI, and Palomas. Nevertheless, rather than explore these dynamics, which have been theorized elsewhere (Mahony and Eguren 1997; Koopman 2012), this chapter focuses on my performative and material interventions in and beyond the Peace Community.

relations. Therefore, this chapter describes certain ways that I have attempted to produce particular spaces in both the university as well as San José de Apartadó. I offer this chapter to show one set of ways that my collaborators and I have produced knowledge through our bodies, minds, and emotions in order to create new ways of doing as critical and performance ethnographers-geographers.

INTERLUDE DOCUMENTING AND PRODUCING HISTORY: RAIS PHOTO PROJECT

The memory photo project was designed to deliver to the Peace Community copies of photographs taken by companions during their time in San José, for the Community to be able to utilize these photos in its ongoing memory projects. The genesis of this photo project had its roots in a gathering of former FOR Peace Presence companions in Colombia in 2011, during my first pre-dissertation research trip. At least as far back as 2007, prior and current companions as well as Peace Community members had floated the idea of an FOR companioner reunion to converge in La Unión, where the Peace Presence home and office within the Community was placed in 2002 and continues to be located. For years, the idea circulated in personal conversations as well as over emails, cell phones, and skype, until a group in 2010 made the decision to finally bring this return to fruition. A date was set: August 2011. Not only intended as a return visit to Colombia, our goal was to organize ourselves as ex-companions in a way where we could continue to a) visit and work in solidarity with the Peace Community and FOR's other partners, b) support FORPP's ongoing project, and c) provide moral support for one another after folks leave the team. Agreeing to a name articulated by one

member of our group, we organized ourselves as RAIS (*Red de Acompañantes Internacionales en Solidaridad*, or Network of International Accompaniers in Solidarity). In Spanish, *RAÍS* is pronounced the same as the word *raíz*, or root.

Two FOR Accompaniment Program staff members, three current members of the team at the time, and nine of the thirty ex-FOR accompaniers to date participated (Figure 89). Many of us had worked together in the preceding few years. Others' time in San José took place years earlier, in the initial years of the project. Therefore, it was both 1) a reunion for certain ex-accompaniers who had worked together as well as 2) the first time some individuals had personally met one another after years of hearing countless stories about one another from Peace Community members and fellow accompaniers. Moreover, for many of these individuals, this was the first and remains the only time they returned to visit San José de Apartadó following their departure from the team. In addition to our weeklong trip to the Peace Community, we also traveled to meet with representatives from two other organizations we had accompanied. At the conclusion of the two-week trip, we held a retreat amongst ourselves to debrief, share more stories, laugh, cry, and plan next steps.

Over the course of the ensuing year, one group member proposed a *Memory Photo Project*.⁹³ She suggested that we compile all of our photographs taken as accompaniers in San José and deliver them to the Peace Community. Since I would be returning to Colombia for future research, she and I began to compile people's digital copies for me to eventually deliver. During my second pre-dissertation visit in the

⁹³ RAIS no longer holds monthly Skype calls as it did in the year following our trip. But true to its name, it remains a *network* through which ex-FOR accompaniers can continue to communicate and propose projects.



Figure 89. Returning in solidarity.
FOR accompaniers and staff during the 2011 RAIS reunion in San José de Apartadó.
Source: RAIS photo archive.

summer of 2012, I sat down with the Internal Council to present my dissertation research plans with the Community. Also acting as a representative of RAIS, I had developed ten large prints of the two or three hundred photos we had gathered until then. I gave them to the council members and presented our proposal for a memory photo project using the pictures. As I began to mention how we might organize photo viewing and collage-making sessions, one of the council members interrupted me, “*That’s* what we wanted to ask you for. The photos!” The other council members seemed to stop listening to my presentation as they looked and commented on the pictures. These included photos of leader Eduar Lanchero, who had just died of cancer one month earlier. They held up the pictures and said that such-and-such photo could be hung in Community libraries or in the memory museum under construction.

After I returned to the United States, the RAIS photo project co-organizer and I set up a Dropbox folder where people could upload their photos. We made a follow-up call to everyone who had worked or was currently working at FOR Peace Presence. Eight people, including FOR staff, eventually submitted photos, which I downloaded to my newly-created Peace Community photo archive on my computer. One of the former companions had taken over one thousand pictures during her time in San José, but many were not in digital format. Some were in her photo albums but whose negatives had been lost. Others were 35mm slide film. In June 2013, the summer before I began my dissertation fieldwork, I traveled from North Carolina to her house in California for a RAIS reunion. I scanned the print photos into digital files and she passed me 277 slides. I then sent the slides to a slide-processing company that scanned and digitized them so I could include them in the digital archive. The photo project co-organizer

attended that gathering and brought six photos—most of which were of groups of kids—that she had printed and pasted onto medium-sized poster boards for me to deliver.

During this RAIS meeting, we also came up with the idea of complementing the delivery of our photos with a *RAIS Saludos* (greeting) video. We made a video of our own and posted it to our RAIS listserve. We reminded folks to upload photos and invited them to submit a short video ‘saying hello’ to the Peace Community. We prompted folks that they might share where they are living, who they are living with, how they are doing, and to recall any memories or lessons from their time in San José de Apartadó. In this invitation video message, one of the RAIS members observed,

Without fully realizing it at the time, we have been like historians. For these first eleven years of the FOR accompaniment project, we have often been the only people with cameras. And in our collections are the only photos of certain events and deceased Community members. (personal communication, 2013)

In the coming weeks, people sent digital videos electronically to my fellow project co-organizer. She then complied and edited them into one video, which she sent to me by mail on DVD. To close the video, she included a series of photos that featured a variety of accompaniers, including folks who were not able to submit a greetings video of their own.

By the time I returned to San José in the fall of 2013, we had compiled over 2,500 photographs going as far back as 2002, to the beginning of FOR’s accompaniment in La Unión. I began preparing for my eventual presentation of the photos and our RAIS *Saludos* video in January 2014 in La Unión. I purchased a USB memory stick and copied the photos into folders organized by year. Then, I created a PowerPoint slideshow with a selection of about 200 photographs. I made an effort to include a diverse array of individuals, incorporating members from across the different villages. However, I

prioritized the oldest photos from 2002-2004 that had only recently been digitized. I arranged the photographs to begin with the most recent images: photos from their latest community gathering in October 2013 (the caravan to Rodoxalí and subsequent *Campesino* University meeting).⁹⁴ Then, the photos progressed further and further back in time, ending on a photo publically available online taken soon after their founding as a Peace Community in 1997; the majority of those visible in that photo, such as Rigoberto Guzmán, Eduar Lancheros, and Rafael Correa, are no longer alive.

I hosted the first presentation on January 29th, 2014, whose subsequent field note began as follows:

Tonight I conducted the RAIS greetings video and Photo presentation in La Unión. It was amazing! People were laughing and really taking in the videos and the photos. Calling out people's nicknames, laughter from pictures of certain members when they were kids, [so-and-so] looking at the camera seriously without his shirt on...

Community members were content but said that “there were too few pictures!” They called for a longer slideshow. Therefore, we agreed that I organize another presentation in the subsequent months. I also wanted to present the photos and RAIS video in San Josecito, one of the other large settlements. Therefore, I continued to collect photos from the current FOR team members and copied them to the flash drive. By the time I coordinated with the Internal Council to present in San Josecito and for the second time in La Unión in July 2014,⁹⁵ the slideshow included more than double the original number of photos, now around 500. I added their most recent anniversary celebration

⁹⁴ This event is described in Chapter 6 (pp. 347-370).

⁹⁵ The San Josecito event incorporated the RAIS video, photo slideshow, and my performance pieces. In La Unión, there were three separate events: the first RAIS video and photo showing, an expanded photo presentation, as well as a performance showcase. I describe the performance presentations on pages 428-444.

in March and Holy Week commemoration pilgrimage in April as the opening slides. Following the first showing, one member commented to me that “there was no picture of me in there” (personal communication, 2014), so I also did a better job of locating photos of living members not featured in the first slideshow.

The following narrative integrates field notes about these video-photo presentations:

In the morning, I began inviting people to the video-photo presentation to be held in the evening. I purchased Community-manufactured chocolate and then asked around until finding a Community volunteer to prepare it as hot chocolate. I also went to the city of Apartadó to buy bread to serve. In the afternoon, I walked around the village making final preparations, such as setting up the projector and reminding people to attend. People would stop me with smiles and questions, seeing that I had brought bread to eat and chocolate to drink. At sunset, a Community member announced the invitation over the loudspeaker inviting folks from across the village to gather in the central gazebo.

To begin the event, I explained that tonight’s presentation was the realization of an event long in the making by RAIS. When the first ex-FORista⁹⁶ appeared in the RAIS *Saludos* video, community members cheered. Three of the ex-accompaniers were accompanied in their videos by their partners or nieces. Seeing them provoked hoots and haws, and happy laughter. For instance, one FORista’s partner, who has yet to visit San José, shared his own verbal greeting to the Community. He thanked them for their role in his partner’s development as the beautiful person who he loves. Across the gazebo, I heard Community members say, “He’s handsome! And he talks loudly!” (Figure 90).

I noticed a contrast in the reactions and recognitions of folks between the two places where I screened the video. There were especially strong reactions in La Unión, where all its residents know every one of those ex-accompaniers very well. It was different in San Josecito, where FORistas frequently visit but only periodically spend the night. Apart from a few people like Doña Brígida González and Internal Council members who tend to communicate with every accompanier irrespective of where that organization is based, most community members only recognized and cheered for the most recent FORistas. FOR Peace Presence accompanies the Peace Community at large, periodically visiting all of its settlements, but it remains fundamentally an accompaniment of La Unión. As FOR accompaniers, we are consciously aware of this, how this was the intention

⁹⁶ *FORista* is a neologism in Spanish commonly used within FORPP and with those that it accompanies, meaning ‘FOR member/accompanier.’ Similarly, *Brigadista* refers to the members/accompaniers of Peace Brigades International (PBI).



Figure 90. Performing solidarity: RAIS *Saludos* video.
Peace Community members watching the *RAIS Saludos* video during its screening in La Unión on January 29th, 2014.
Source: Author photo.

of FOR's original project: a permanent international presence in the first village that the Community returned to. But I've never felt, seen, or appreciated this so strongly as in the reactions to the greetings video. There is also the generational aspect: many of the folks in San Josecito are young kids who simply didn't meet those 'older' FORistas. There, many burst into laughter when the clip of me speaking in the video began! This speaks to how accompaniment (and critical, performance ethnography) are politically intimate, in which personal and organizational relationships are the central current for the way most people experience this "alter-geopolitics" (Koopman 2011a).

When the RAIS video concluded, I introduced the photo slideshow and announced the official delivery of the flash drive to the Internal Council member in charge of communications. We then proceeded with the slideshow of 500 or so pictures (Figure 91).

People would laugh at funny pictures, like a child with her/his hair frizzed up. But mostly, members laughed at the images of those people they know best. It is important to remember, given that the Community spans eleven villages and hundreds of people, that not all members know each other well. Like [one of my accompanier interviewees] said in a personal interview: the Peace Community is "an internal solidarity to live by shared rules even though not everyone personally knows everyone else" (personal interview, 2013).

But there are definitely Peace Community members that everyone knows: Internal Council members; other high-profile leaders, including certain deceased members; members with disabilities; long-standing members that never seem to miss a community gathering and are thus well-known by all; or folks with quirky personalities. Images of these individuals evoked calls, laughter, and cheers in both La Unión and San Josecito. Moreover, certain events provoked more reactions than others. For instance, pictures of building gazebos, which I find incredibly beautiful and moving as embodiments of their collective work and creation of circular meeting spaces consistent with nurturing communal political subjects, evoked little reactions unless viewers identified particular people and named them out loud. Conversely, the 2008 march along the highway to the regional army brigade evoked lots of reactions; many of today's young adults or adolescents were children at the time and feature in the photos (Figure 92). During the video-photo presentation, fellow ex-accompanier and now researcher Gwen Burnyeat said to me, "Wow, you really have everyone's attention! Even the kids, which is the hardest" (personal communication, 2014). She also commented on how great it was that we served hot chocolate, given how important cacao is to the Peace Community process and conviviality (Burnyeat 2015).

When the slideshow finished, I asked if anyone had any comments. In San Josecito, a member reiterated the importance of accompaniment for the Peace Community. In La Unión, the place was becoming pretty loud by that point, but a couple members offered brief comments over the noise: "We never expected to



Figure 91. Critical ethnography: RAIS photo slideshow. Community members in San Josecito watching the slideshow from the RAIS photo archive on July 17th, 2014. Source: Author photo.



Figure 92. Documenting history: Photo from the RAIS photo archive: Peace Community commemoration as part of their 2008 caravan along the highway to the headquarters of the Colombian National Army's 17th Brigade in Carepa, Antioquia. Source: Photo by Julia Nelson and Moira Birss, from the RAIS photo archive.

get this type of presentation, thank you;” “these memories are really important;” “we really have always passed through difficult moments, lived difficult moments;” and “we have to think more about what to do with those pictures, such as selecting certain ones to print out in larger-sized prints.”

At the end of the slideshow, I also showed the photos that the photo project co-organizer had printed onto medium-sized boards. Afterwards, one of the kids asked to take home the board that featured him and the other kids. And [one of Luis Eduardo Guerra’s sons] asked to have the picture of his brother, Deiner. I told him he could take any of the remaining pictures, and he picked up the photo envelope with all of the 2005 massacre victims and left... *That was really intense.* It makes me think that he might have not even had a picture of his brother. Or maybe he had a copy once, but no longer, I’m not sure. Once again I’m reminded of the power of those photos, of those loved ones. After the event, Doña Brígida walked with me as I carried the projector and its accessories to the accompaniment house. She said, “You see people that died of natural causes. But they look alive, and you remember them,” to which I replied, “Of course, with the photo, they are alive here with us” (field notes 2014).

Father Javier Giraldo was not present in the Community for these presentations, but I showed him the slideshow one evening during Holy Week in 2014. He requested copies of the photos, organized by event, which I subsequently created and delivered on a flash drive to his office in Bogotá.

In April 2014, Doña Brígida González approached me to say that she was one of the members in charge of creating the interior to the memory museum under construction in San Josecito. She told me that they planned to include one collage for each organization that has accompanied them. Over the years, accompaniers ending their service in San José have often left photos with Community members so as to be remembered. However, Doña Brígida said that she did not have a picture of everyone. She asked if I could deliver a collection of FORista photos to her. I immediately thought, “This is exactly why we compiled all these photos, to be able to respond to petitions like this!” I subsequently went through the RAIS photo archive, copying pictures of the accompaniers and placing them into a new digital folder. There was only one person of

whom I did not find a picture; I emailed him and he replied with a couple photos. By July, I had selected a group of pictures so that all the FORistas to date were included in at least one photo. I then printed out and gave them to Doña Brígida. We sat down together, in the same site as our interviews. She named accompaniers as she looked through the photos.

Originally, I had hoped to organize small group sessions with Community members. The proposal was for members to look through a series of digital and printed photographs, select certain photos, potentially write captions for them, and then paste/print the photographs onto poster boards that could be used in Community libraries, schools, and events. While certain members expressed interest in reviewing the photos with me in such sessions, this project never materialized during my dissertation fieldwork. However, it remains a possibility for future visits. In any case, I have noticed that the Peace Community is increasingly using photographs in their memory projects in buildings, on postcards, and online, such as for the eventual FORista college in the memory museum. The Peace Community now has a greater array of photographs to draw from, especially raw photos from the early 2000s.

ACT II. "EVEN THE STONES SPEAK" PERFORMING THE COMMUNITY IN THE UNIVERSITY

This section returns to my performances with the script of "Even the stones speak." It has two parts. The first part is a staged commemoration of the 2005 massacre by re-enacting Padre Javier's narrative in the annual commemoration in La Resbalosa. The second part is an excerpt of an interview with Doña Brígida González on the

significance memory in the Peace Community. Respectively, the two parts give people a sense of a) what it is like to participate in a massacre commemoration, including the weight of death, resistance, and life through narration and stones, as well as b) what my interviews in the field look like, to performatively transcribe the back-and-forth conversation of dialogical performance (Conquergood 1985; Vasudevan 2012) in the personal interview (Pollock 2005a).

This piece is the origin of Chapter 5's poetic transcriptions of the 2005 massacre commemoration and interview excerpts with Doña Brígida. However, the script below includes performance and prop cues as well as certain parts that are left in Spanish for live performance. While the majority of the script is in English, some of the more emotionally charged or graphic parts remain in Spanish, so that even English-only speakers can hear and feel the original intonations of the Spanish words. Moreover, the sections interpreted into English or left in Spanish were chosen so that the general story is apparent in both languages. After presenting the script in full, I will include commentary from audience participants and fellow critical ethnographers about witnessing or acting in my performances in university classrooms and conferences.

ACT II. "Even the Stones Speak."

(In preparation for this piece, I speak with five volunteers, to whom I explain that I will call them up one-by-one to receive a stone, which they will take back to their seat and then return to the front when I instruct them to.)

To begin, I face the audience, standing behind a small three-foot-high table, which is covered in cloth. On the table are five stones, each painted yellow, green, or blue, with a different name written in black on each stone.)

“ ‘Even the stones speak.’

One of the ways the Peace Community commemorates the dead is by taking a stone from the river, covering it in paint, and painting the person's name."

(Using both hands, I pick up one of the stones, hold it in front of me, and focus my gaze on it.)

"Natalia Bolívar"

(I make eye contact with Volunteer #1, who stands up and walks towards me on stage. I hand her/him the stone and [s]he proceeds to return to her/his seat. Motioning towards this stone now among the audience, I resume speaking:

"This is a stone that UNC graduate Katie Akin and I made to use in presentations on the Peace Community and U.S. policy in Latin America.⁹⁷ Natalia Bolívar's assassination was ordered by Colombian army officers trained by the U.S. military. She was five years old at the time, and died with seven others, including Peace Community leader Luis Eduardo Guerra.

(I hold up a second stone.)

"Luis Eduardo Guerra."

(I make eye contact with Volunteer #2, to whom I give the stone.)

"This massacre took place in 2005.

I will proceed to recount a commemoration of this massacre, held annually, every year since, at the site. This commemoration is led by Father Javier Giraldo, a Jesuit priest and lawyer, one of Colombia's most renowned human rights defenders, and who was part of the founding of the Peace Community, which he has accompanied ever since.

'Even the stones speak': Part 1.

To render the scene:

The humid jungle air is filled with sounds of Spanish but also overlapping Italian, English and German coming from the mix of brown and white faces present. Do we number one, two or three hundred who have walked hours through dirt,

⁹⁷ For example, we used these five stones when Peace Community leader Jesús Emilio Tuberquia gave a public talk at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill during a 2011 speaking tour I co-organized with FOR. Before the talk, Tuberquia saw the painted stones and had us gather many more unmarked stones from below the staircase in the Global Education Center. He opened his presentation by having everyone in attendance gather in a circle at the front of the room, each person holding a stone, and said, "Let us take a moment of silence to commemorate all those people that are killed in wars all over the world" (field notes, 2011).

streams, mud and rocky river paths? We are in *La Resbalosa*, named for the “slippery” and lush green hillsides we climbed to arrive here. The ground is primarily covered in light green grass-like weeds, on which most of us stand or sit. In the chapel around which we crowd hangs a foot long wooden cross, from which five half-foot long crosses also hang. Below is a rainbow-colored flag ranging from purple to yellow to red; just above its white Italian letters spelling PACE is a picture collage of eight people.

As Father Javier takes the microphone, the sound of dogs shuffling, and insects and birds chirping, fades away into the tropical forest.”

(I hold up a third stone.)

“Deiner Guerra.”

(Volunteer #3 comes up to receive the stone and return to their seat.)

“Los trabajadores
lo convencieron de que si él se regresaba
lo matarían
inmediat**amente**.”

Then, around two in the afternoon, they heard *how*
the arms became silent; you couldn’t hear any more shots.
And Alfonso decided to return, to find out the fate of Sandra, and the *children*,
and to face their same fate.

Los trabajadores esperaron, esa noche
no vol**VIÓ**
he didn’t come **BACK**
al otro día, en toda la mañana
no vol**VIÓ**
entonces ellos se fueron acercando
a la casa
lentamente, y con mucha prudencia

Veían que no había ningún movimiento en la casa
entonces
fueron entrando
ahí
en...frente de la casa ya encontraron mucha sangre
y empezaron a sospechar que tal vez los habían enterrado

Y ellos entonces ya, mandaron a
un delegado a la comunidad para que
le
anunciara lo que había pasado

And the Community immediately began to organize a search commission more than one hundred people signed up to go up the following day and they came first to this site because they knew that **HERE**, they were **buried**.

But when they arrived, also simultaneously, the army arrived as well as *lawyers from the Attorney General's Office* the day before it had been reported to the Vice-Presidency's Office that here there had been a massacre

The military soldiers began to harass all the community members that were *here* to call them guerrillas. to make fun of *them*, take their *photographs*, make *jokes of them* and the lawyers began the task of **exhumation**.

And one of the international accompaniers was able to **FILM** some scenes of the exhumation, which are horrifying when they go pulling out the pieces of bodies and a lawyer

PROHIBITED her, he told her that that was prohibited and that she could no longer continue filming And, she had to turn off, her **camera**.

*aquí quedaba un **MISTERio***
de que pasó
cuando
Alfonso regresó
a su **casa**
y como fue, la muerte de él
y la muerte **de los niños?**

en los dos primeros años
las investigaciones de la fiscalía
se desviaron
hacia
una falsa versión
que le atribuía a las **FARC**
esta, este crimen.

Two years later, the *Attorney General's office*, due to **PRESSURE** from a group of senators from the United States who had done their own investigation

changed the course and, began to investigate the military soldiers and the **paramilitaries.**”

And in the first queries
one of the paramilitaries
begins
to *describe* and accuse
members of the army
that participated in this.

GRACIAS, a varias de estas versiones
hemos *conocido*, lo que pasó, esa tarde del veintiuno de febrero
aquí en esta **casa**
fueron realmente, cosas, estreme**cedoras**
uno de los paramilitares
contaba, que, el presenci**ó** el momento
en que Alfonso regres**ó**
aquí a la casa
venía con, el machete que usa, todo campesino
en el momento en que él regres**ó**
los militares
lo golpearon
lo hicieron tender en el piso
y lo
humillaron y lo impulsaron
Pero al mismo tiempo, los niños, que aún estaban con vida
Se le abalanzaron, para **abraZARlo**
Then, in that moment, the army soldiers and paramilitaries were discussing
if they would kill the children
and
Alfonso managed to hear
part of the **discussio**n****.
They were communicating by phone or radio with officers of the Brigade,
to consult about, what to do with the children?
The arguments that they put forth were that those children, when they grew up,
could become *guerrillas*.
Y otros decían que
más tarde
ellos podrían **IDENTIFICAR**
Y RECONOCER
A los que habían cometido la *masacre*
Y por lo tanto
era mejor
ah, eliminar a esos posibles **testigos**

*(My eyes water every time I hear, write about, or re-count him talking
about the killing of the children...)*

Cuando Alfonso, escuchó esas discusiones
Les suplicó, a los militares y a los paramilitares que no fueran a cometer ese
crimen que no mataran a sus niños.
Que más bien lo mataran a él, pero no a **los niños**.
Y... en ese momento él les dice a los niños que, se tenían que preparar, para un
viaje
muy largo
Y ahí, Natalia, entra, y busca, un poquito de ropa, la mete en una bolsita
Se le entrega a Santiago, para que,
para ese viaje
Del cual le estaba hablando, **su papá**

But, then a couple seconds later
The girl was seized by, a *paramilitary*
And, with a machete, **he cut her little head**
And... afterwards
They would, **cut her up in 'pieces'**
The same, they did with Santiago
And the same they did with **Alfonso, minutes afterwards**
And they buried them, in this, grave
In, in pieces, the bodies were really cut up **into pieces**

Esa fue
la terrible masacre que se dio, en este **sitio**.

(I pick up the fourth stone.)

“Santiago Tuberquia.”

(Volunteer #4 comes up to the stage to receive the stone.)

“Father Javier asks me to read from the Bible’s Book of Wisdom.
References to the ‘struggle of good against evil’ reverberate through my voice.

We walk down the hillside from the massacre site. Community members take
visitors to see their recently installed sugarcane processing station. We smile as
we look, and Community members tell us that the sugar we are consuming
during the gathering was produced here. A community leader asks Father Javier
to bless the place, which he does with water and words:
‘From the beginning, the Peace Community has demanded and struggled for
freedom, self-sufficiency, and solidarity.’”

(I pick up the fifth and final stone.)

“Beyanira Areiza.”

(Volunteer #5 receives the stone and returns to their seat.)

“A Community communiqué released in 2010, the day after the fifth annual commemoration of this massacre, ended with the following words:

‘In the midst of such sorrow, we are encouraged by the accompaniment of numerous groups from all the over the world, that share our unshakeable decision to not be crushed before death and shame, and share our love of life’. ”

(Pause)

“Those of you holding the stones, please return and place them on this table.”

(Once all of the stones are returned, there is a moment of silence.)

“ ‘Even the stones speak’: Part 2.”

(I move slightly to the side towards a folk painting placed on a stand.)

“After an hour and half walk down from La Unión through tropical hills, I reach the Peace Community settlement of San Josecito. I have made this walk many times before, and like every other, it leaves me tired, and my back and socks sweaty. It will feel good to sit down...

I head to the house of a Community member in order to have an in-depth conversation about memory and dignity in the Peace Community. I arrive at the house, recognizable by the flowers at its entrance — pink and red petals hovering over green stems. I go inside, and she greets me with a hug and smile. She proceeds to show me some of her recent pieces of art: a painting about Community villages threatened by the nearby Urrá dam projects, and beaded bracelets that spell *Comunidad de Paz*.

The village was calm and quiet when we began to talk, with the only noise an intermittent rooster crow or Community member stopping by to say hello. Soon, however, someone started pumping merengue music SO LOUD, to the point that I had to lean closer to hear her words. I am nervous, hoping my voice recorder is still picking up her voice...

‘When I go *there* and I, say to **people: dignity.**
How, do you want me to explain it?’

‘Bueno.

What is a life of dignity?

for the **Peace Community.**’

‘¿Para la Comunidad *de Paz*?’

Bueno.

Es tener... *shelter... health*, which is part of *life... education...* and land where you can **farm**.

and *to grow stronger, in yourself...* para **RECHAZAR**, todo lo que está en contra de la **dignidad**.’

A MERENGUE SONG IS BLASTING ‘**¡VAMOS’AHORA, VAMOS’AHORA!**’

‘dignity is, being in settlements that don’t allow the armed public forces *here*.
And *we are here*.

For example, this, ¿why is it called San Josecito *of Dignity*?

Because when we came,
from San José

we came to **BUILD**
here.

We are constructing *dignity*. To not live alongside the armed actors.
Eso ES, dignidad.’

‘Not giving into the system, *correct*?’

‘Not *giving in* to the **system**.

not...

Not, **NOOOT**,
not **COMPROMISE YOURSELF**, not

be complicit.’

yes. and not be complicit. In
the atrocities, and in all the demagoguery of the **government**.

THAT is dignity.’

(I gesture towards the folk painting at my side.)

‘So the art **projects**

‘And all these *art projects!!!*’ (*smiling, laughing*)

Why are they important,
and how are they useful?
The drawings and handicrafts.’

‘*Because,*
in the art,

although I don’t write very well—I read well but I don’t write well.

En los dibujos yo cuento *todo*, lo que se trabaja en la *Comunidad*.

Y lo que siento desde mi *corazón*, siento para hacer estos *dibujos*.

Yo estos dibujos los hago con **todo el amor**.

Les pongo *toda la dedicación*, el amor, y... *el servicio* because I know that these drawings *are going to go*, to other places where people haven't been to the Community.

And where, through these drawings they are going to learn about the **Community**.

These paintings are all over, in Canada, Italy...

How? How do these drawings communicate DIGNITY?

Because... *many PEOPLE* have given their lives in *service*, of this... **struggle**, of this... *resistance*.

But they remain *with us*, they continue giving us strength so that we continue moving **forward**, and that's what is told in these *paintings*.

'To speak the truth, correct?'

'Como contar la **verdad**.

To speak the truth of what is going on, even though... the government goes to Europe or to the United States to say that in Colombia what exists is simply... *terrorism*, *narcotrafficking*.

We say,
something *else*.

SÍ. *Narcotráfico*, but because the State itself *is okay* with *narcotrafficking*.

Because if not, *narcotrafficking* wouldn't exist.

And doesn't our memory remind us, that Alvaro Uribe Vélez was one of the *most sought after*, by, the United States for *narcotrafficking*.

And now *who is he?*

A MERENGUE SONG BLASTS: "**¡¡POR UN MOMENTO, UN REMEDIO!!**"

'Now who is he?'

'He received a medal from the president of the United States.'

'Ah, *Imagine that. Imagine that.* And now he is giving *lectures* in universities of the United States.'

Pero eso ya no más, por toda la bulla que se hizo.

(*laughter*)

And, the monuments, of the **victims**.

In San José you constructed, *stone, upon stone*.

And here it is in a **circle**.

And in the commemorations you put down the stones.

Why the stones, and why the distinct ways,
of arranging and showing them?

Because... these stones have a deep meaning,
they, you can't destroy a **stone**.

A stone always remains intact.

You paint it and later it stays the same.
And in those stones *rests*,
all the historical memory of *compañeros y compañeras*,
children, and adults that have fallen,
for the construction of this world, **alternative world**.

We say that, even *by themselves*, the stones *speak*!

Therefore, we believe that, maintaining memory,
for example the emblem of the *community*. The memory *museum*.
The memory *monument*.
In them rests all of this remembrance,
of our **compañeros**.
That... brought us *together* in meetings.
That *spoke to us* about our *construction*, about our *organization*.
And how to *obtain, international* support.
And I believe that, as for us,
this memory is as important for those that come from **elsewhere**.
That look at how, we always maintain,
that *memory* is what *strengthens us*.⁹⁸

[A stone] is also something from the earth.
For you, land is part of the *resistance*,
and of the alternative.
It's resisting being displaced again,
and the alternative is working the *land*,
and the stones come FROM **THERE!**

Claro!

So it's showing through things that you *have* here,
and specifically a stone,
as you say, it lasts forever.

Well, the stones come from the land.
They are in riverbanks, and they are in the soil.
But at the same time we **STRUGGLE**
to take care of the land.
To **DEFEND** the land.
Because of another intense war against the people. Why? Because in the land
there are many mineral resources. There are so many national and international
interests. In one form or another they want to take the land away from the
people, and leave the people disadvantaged, without a place *to work*.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ My other performance acts tend to end on a 'positive' note, such as, "... If we remain on the land, neither the assassins nor the system that generates death and hunger will be able to eliminate us. ... [T]he Peace Community now spans *eleven* villages." However, I end "Even the stones speak" on a different note, without any resolution, as an attempt to convey communities in resistance's ongoing struggle for dignity that remains anything but guaranteed. I find it

To proceed, I would like to include comments from fellow academics about witnessing or co-performing these pieces. I remember how a fellow Colombianist researcher attending my 2011 AAG presentation shared with the group how much the 2005 massacre meant to her and her appreciation for the care with which I presented those events and their meaning. I also remember non-Spanish speakers saying that hearing the Spanish words evoked a deeper feeling than if it had been all translated into English. In other stagings, Spanish speakers often ask how I chose which lines to leave in Spanish and which to translate; one fellow Spanish-speaking performance ethnographer said how the most moving lines were in Spanish (such as the part in “Even the stones speak” when I re-count Father Giraldo describing Alfonso returning to his home, coming with the machete that all *campesinos* use). I respond that my intention is to have a balance between both languages where speakers of either language can follow the main story. Yet I think there is also an emotive reasoning, where I do leave most of the most graphic and intense lines in Spanish. Another Spanish-speaking attendee said that switching between the languages reminded him that this is all taking place in *Spanish*. Moreover, reading one of my undergraduate student’s analysis of the performances, I realized that this switching between the languages also performs how I am constantly switching back-and-forth between the Spanish and English when I am accompanying-researching in Colombia.

Moreover, I was able to debrief my November 2015 UNC campus performance with fellow members of the Critical Performance Ethnography Working Group. People

revealing that two of my performance’s titles include the word *if* (“If we remain on the land” and “We will stay if...”). This speaks to how contingent and grueling resistance truly is. As Father Giraldo explained in an interview, “*La resistencia es dura, pero bonita*” (Resistance is extremely difficult, but it is beautiful) (personal interview, 2013).

shared a number of reflections. Regarding people being taken from the group during “If we remain on the land,” one participant noted that, “I felt sense of loss when someone was pulled away.” Another said, “When I yelled upon the first person being pulled away, it was kind of spontaneous because it was [my partner] who was the one taken.” And participants-audience members commonly recognize the jarring effect of the group’s numbers drastically decreasing throughout the course of the piece.

However, I admitted to my fellow ethnographers that I was disappointed upon viewing the video recording of the performance. I was hoping that I could post the video online and provide readers of my work with a link for them to watch for themselves. But the intensity of performance seemed lost and the performers often moved outside the range of the camera. We recalled Taylor’s (2003) concepts of the “archive” and the “repertoire.” Trying to ‘archive’ the ‘repertoire’ is impossible precisely because the repertoire of performance is about ‘being there.’ Of course, there are professional filmmakers that are skilled at embedding themselves into the performance without being intrusive. Even so, we posed questions about ‘representation’ and how technology affects it, noting that it is useful to outline what the challenges of performance are, in general.

We also discussed the Q&A session following the performance. Many asserted how powerful it was, with one ethnographer saying the Q&A was more powerful than after any other academic presentation she had seen. “And people were asking theoretical questions. But since it was a performance, there was immediately a deeper engagement.” We reflected on how I had asked people, to prompt responses in the Q&A, “What did you feel?” Initially, no one responded to that question. A fellow performance ethnographer intervened with a follow up, “Let’s give Chris a break from talking for a

second. And let's respond to his question about what we felt." In this debrief, we reflected on how difficult it is to articulate what those feelings are, i.e., how hard it is to express those emotions. One person said, "There is no vocabulary for it—especially in the academic space. You have to work to create a space where it is okay for people to respond with 'my body felt such and such'." One of the attendees revealed that she had a question to ask me, but that she was sweating and thus didn't want to ask or know how to ask. "Then I saw your sweaty shirt, Chris. I thought, 'Ah, it's okay to be nervous here.' And I asked the question." In other words, the sweat shows a vulnerability. If the presenter—who is supposed to be fully composed, in control, confident, and not nervous—shows that vulnerability, it communicates that others can also embrace being vulnerable. This allows different engagements, questions, and comments. It validates these "visceral and analytical interactions that are part of who we are," as one working group member put it. Another said, "This is research that *has* to be performance. It has to be performed." Performance ethnography is an attempt to communicate a better sense of resistance and struggle, in which approaching its true meaning requires feeling it, hearing what it sounds like, including the spontaneous yells as well as rhythm of the language.

Finally, on the question of our subjective positions as academics, one person observed,

It gets to the richness of the relationship of the researcher with the community in dialogue with a live audience. We talk about the importance of 'reflexivity' as critical ethnographers. But oftentimes that discussion of 'reflexivity' occurs in such a stale manner of dry conversation about positionality. But here, through the performance, 'This is why do I do what I do.' And it shows how I am there in the community as a person and researcher.

I will now proceed to render my experience performing these pieces in San José de Apartadó, beginning with the script of “We will stay if...”

ACT III. “WE WILL STAY IF...”
PERFORMING THE UNIVERSITY IN THE COMMUNITY

“We will stay if...” re-enacts a series of events that I experienced as an FOR accompanier in San José de Apartadó in 2008. It is a solo performance, in which I shift between acting as myself and two Community members. I created it as my final performance for Renee Alexander Craft’s performance ethnography seminar in Fall 2010 at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. It puts into motion the story I usually tell to illustrate how protective accompaniment works. It speaks to the dynamics of dissuasion or deterrence provided by citizens from the Global North while accompanying threatened human rights activist in Latin America and elsewhere. This performance also demonstrates the ‘encouragement’ aspect of accompaniment, i.e., the types of solidarity, mutual legitimization of our struggles, as well as tensions produced through these accompanied-accompanier relationships (Mahony and Eguren 1997).⁹⁹

⁹⁹ For example, as you will see in the script, I intentionally include a Peace Community Internal Council member’s frustration with accompaniers’ protocols stalling a trip to a nearby village under threat. This is a common dynamic between accompaniers and those they accompany, which I include here to reflect those tensions. During the performance, this comment often provokes laughter in the audience. Conversely, one attendee questioned me afterwards about including such a humorous moment within a performance about such intense dynamics. He said that the laughter reminded him he was in a university room, thus breaking his engagement with the events being performed. My initial response to him was that I find it important to include humorous moments, which are a core part of my accompanier-researcher experience in Colombia, to demonstrate how Peace Community members and accompaniers retain a sense of humor despite such overwhelming situations. Of course, I appreciated and continue to consider his critique, which is central to critical performance ethnography’s never-ending process of reflexivity.

Therefore, this section includes three sub-parts that speak to my accompanier-researcher relationship with the Peace Community. First, I include the script of “We will stay if...” Then, I proceed with an ethnographic description of my performance events in San José de Apartadó in July 2014, followed by Community members’ reactions.

ACT III. “We will stay if...”

(Two signs signal the polar edges of the stage: LA UNIÓN VILLAGE and LA ESPERANZA VILLAGE. Props are situated throughout the stage. There is a trekking backpack underneath La Unión Village, a cloth campesino poncho hanging adjacently from a stand nearby, and a copy of La Biblia Sagrada (Holy Bible) on a stand near La Esperanza Village. I am dressed in a grey short-sleeve shirt with the FOR emblem in blue letters. The bottom of my jeans are tucked into my black campesino boots. The video screen behind me is blank as I introduce the scene to the audience:)

“This performance explores international protective accompaniment in Colombia. It re-enacts a series of events I experienced as an accompanier in San José de Apartadó in November 2008, a scenario which has been repeated in recent years.

‘We will stay, if...’”

(I move from the center of the stage to LA UNIÓN VILLAGE. The blank screen behind me transitions to a picture of an FOR accompanier smiling at the camera as she is seated in front of a desk and computer in a small room with wooded walls)

“After a day spent writing reports, playing with the kids, sharing meals with community members, and writing more reports, I was in our office with my teammate, getting ready to shut down the computer, and go to bed.”

(RING, RING! I pull out a ringing cell phone from my pocket.)

“Look, Mario from the regional UN office is calling.

‘Aló, this is Chris at FOR.

(Pause)

A massacre in La Esperanza?

No, we haven't heard that. Who did you hear that from?

(Pause)

Yes, people would probably displace through here in La Unión, but we haven't seen anyone coming through.

(Pause)

Alright, let us know if you hear anything else. Chao.'

Hmm, who can we call in La Esperanza to see what's going on?"

(I look down and begin scanning through numbers on my phone.)

"Dona Marta!"

*(I raise the phone to my ear, calling.
Pause...)*

"Hmm, straight to voice mail. Well, they don't have electricity, so maybe their battery isn't charged, or they don't have signal..."

(RING RING!)

"Oh! PBI is calling!

'Aló, soy Chris.

(Pause)

Yes, we heard about a possible massacre and displacement in La Esperanza but don't have any more information.

(Pause)

We called someone there but couldn't get through.

(Pause)

Okay, if you hear anything new, let us know, and we'll do the same. *Buenas noches*'."

(I hang up the call, putting the phone back into my pocket. I then raise and tilt my head to the side to look out into the village.)

“Well, it’s 10pm, and everyone else has already gone to bed, so there’s not much we can do now. Let’s go to bed and try to get more information in the morning.”

(I crouch down and place my head on top of my hands whose palms are joined together to symbolize a pillow. I hold this pose for a moment and then stand up. The background image slide changes to the central square of La Unión. [Figure 93¹⁰⁰])

“In the morning, we went to seek out Peace Community leader Danilo.

‘Hola, ¡buenos días! ¿Cómo está?’

Last night we heard about a possible massacre in La Esperanza?’ ”

(I step to the side, picking up the poncho. Like Colombian campesinos often do, I place the poncho over my shoulder and then begin to speak as Danilo:

“ ‘A massacre, no. At least, not yet.

Paramilitaries operating (in Nuevo Antioquia) to the north stopped and threatened a young man walking towards the settlement. They told him that that they are going to take over the area, have a list of people they are going to kill, and the people should leave now while they have the chance.

When news reached La Esperanza, most of the families immediately began to displace. Some already passed through here early this morning on their way to San José, with their backs and horses loaded with as much as they could carry. The Peace Community families from La Esperanza are still there.

So we are going to organize a commission to evaluate the situation and we want you to accompany us.’ ”

(I step one foot away, removing the poncho.)

“ ‘Alright, just give us some time to do our security analysis and send our Notification Letters to the government and diplomatic authorities so the military and its paramilitary allies will be aware of our presence and that our support network will be paying attention.’ ”

(I shuffle back and return the poncho to my shoulder.)

“ ‘Okay, but we need to leave QUICKLY!

Ay, que frustración, esos gringos demoran mucho...¹⁰¹’ ”

¹⁰⁰ Note that some but not all of the photographs that accompany this script were taken during this actual series of events. Others come from other accompaniments and are of other people.

¹⁰¹ ‘How frustrating, these foreigners take forever...’



Figure 93. “We will stay if...” slide 1: Central square in La Unión, San José de Apartadó.
Source: Author photo.



Figure 94. “We will stay if...” slide 2: Hiking the trail from La Unión to La Esperanza with members of the Internal Council in November 2008.
Source: Photo by Julia Nelson, in RAIS photo archive.

(I step aside and crouch down towards backpack placed underneath the sign LA UNIÓN VILLAGE. I pack the poncho inside the backpack along with a water bottle laying alongside. As I pack with my left hand, with my right I pull the phone from my pocket and raise it to my ear.)

“ ‘Bogotá team: you have sent the Notification Letters?

(Pause)

Great, thank you. We are just about to leave. Talk to you when we arrive.’ ”

(I stand up, put on the backpack, and begin to walk to the other side of the stage.)

“On the four hour walk to La Esperanza,
my boots got stuck in the mud,
I rode a horse for a bit,
and we ate oranges growing along the way.
Passing by a vacant Peace Community house along the path, we saw AUC written beside its front door.
Danilo pointed out fresh army boot tracks in the muddy dirt below.”

*(I look down at the ground, and proceed walking with caution, slowly, and watching each step.
The slideshow transitions quickly, depicting fellow companions and me walking in campesino boots, eating oranges, and a close-up shot of AUC¹⁰² written in charcoal on a wooden building [Figures 94-96].
I have now moved to the other side of the stage, below the sign LA ESPERANZA VILLAGE. I place the backpack on the ground, take out the poncho, place it on my shoulder, and resume speaking.)*

“Upon arrival in La Esperanza, Danilo called a Community meeting:

‘So, you are the only ones left in the way of the paramilitaries fully taking control of this area. What are you going to do? Are you going to displace like the others, or are you going to resist?’

(I remove the poncho, placing it at my side, and pick up La Biblia Sagrada, holding the book closely in front of me with both hands.)

¹⁰² AUC stands for the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia), a paramilitary organization that demobilized in 2006 but many of whose members subsequently splintered into neo-paramilitary groups with a variety of names, such as *Águilas Negras*, the *Rastrojos*, and *Los Urabeños/Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia* (Human Rights Watch 2010). When I perform this piece, I include this description of the AUC and another about PBI on the program and when I verbally introduce the piece.



Figure 95. “We will stay if...” slide 3: An engraved threat. *AUC* engraved into the stove of a vacant home on the way to La Esperanza in 2008. Source: Author photo.



Figure 96. “We will stay if...” slide 4: The marking of state-paramilitary territoriality. *AUC* written in charcoal on the outside of a vacant Peace Community house located between La Unión and La Esperanza in 2008. Source: RAIS photo archive.

“ ‘We will stay... if... we have permanent, international accompaniment.’ ”

(I put the Bible down, and place the poncho over my shoulder one again.)

“ ‘Alright, we will organize a rotation. FOR can you stay for a few days?

(Pause)

Yes? Okay. We will need FOR back in La Unión soon, but then we will bring in PBI, and rotate.’ ”

(I pause, and then crouch down to pack the poncho into my backpack, before standing up straight.)

“After hanging up our hammocks and mosquito nets, and eating dinner, my teammate and I sat down to talk with Doña Marta.”

(The PowerPoint slides in the background shift to close-up images of me, a teammate, and a Community member together at a table with a candle burning, its yellow and orange flames barely illuminating our faces.)

“ ‘Wow, that was such a delicious meal!
Beans, rice, and yucca, grown in the fields right here! Thank you!

(Pause)

So, Doña Marta, how did you originally come here to La Esperanza?’ ”

(I move slightly to re-position my body towards the side. I pick up the Bible, holding it closed with both hands in front of my chest, and begin to speak as Doña Marta.)

“ ‘I would say we came here *displaced*...

We were from a region to the south of here. When that area became more and more violent in the mid 20th century era of *La Violencia*, and lands became more and more scarce, we migrated here.

This was all *jungle*!

The land was so fertile. We planted corn and beans, and more and more families moved here to live here and farm.

But then violence arrived here too. Paramilitaries and the army fighting the guerrillas, but mostly killing the civilian population.

We were forced to displace in 1996.

As part of the Peace Community, we returned here in 2007, and we now have plantains, rice, chickens, and pigs. And now the threats are escalating again.

If it weren't for the accompaniment, we'd be killed.

The armed groups respect the presence of internationals.

I'm not willing to be displaced again.

... I'm *just not willing* to be displaced again.' ”

(I open La Biblia Sagrada, and look upwards.)

“ ‘God, please protect us, protect our family.
Jesús Cristo, por favor, protéjanos, proteja a nuestra familia’ . ”

(Pause.

I return the Bible to its stand and put on my backpack. Still facing LA ESPERANZA VILLAGE, I begin to move towards the other side of the stage.)

“ ‘Thank you for everything, Doña Marta!
PBI will be here shortly.’ ”

(Now walking in the middle of the stage, the slideshow transitions to images of accompaniers and Community members walking across streams and up hills. I begin to slow down and stop.)

“ ‘ Hey, look, there's PBI up ahead!
Hello, how are you all?’ ”

(Pause)

“ ‘No, we didn't see any of the armed groups during the visit, but we did see AUC graffiti written onto a Community house’ . ”

(Pause)

“ ‘How are the Community members doing? Well, they are scared, but very determined. And, you will eat good food, too!
Chao...’ ”

(I resume walking to the other side of the stage. Arriving there, I remove my backpack and place it on the ground under the sign La Unión Village. The slideshow ends on an image of girl holding a picture of me in one hand and talking into a cell phone [Figure 97]. I pull out the cell phone from my pocket.)

“Soon after these events, I left the team.
Back in the United States, I called the team in Colombia.

‘Hola, soy Chris! How are you all doing? I miss you, I miss the community.



Figure 97. “We will stay if...” final slide: Photographs of alter-geopolitical friendship. Community member ‘talking to me’ by phone while holding a picture I had left with her family upon my departure from San José in February 2009. Source: RAIS photo archive.

Do you have any updates about La Esperanza?’ ”

(Pause)

“So the tensions seem to have subsided a bit...

And the people that displaced have gone back, and are living there again?
Wow! All because of those few Peace Community families that resisted...’ ”

(Pause)

“Alright, keep up the good work, and tell everyone else I miss them.’ ”

(I lower the cellphone from my ear and step forward to the middle of the stage to conclude by thanking the audience.)

I will move to describe my performance events in San José de Apartadó. The following narrative integrates various field note excerpts about my two performance events conducted in July 2014. These took place in two of the largest Peace Community villages: San Josecito and La Unión. My primary intention, as a critical ethnographer, was to get feedback from the Community about the appropriateness of my representations of them in other places (Madison 2012). As I was to realize, these performance events were less about ‘getting feedback’ and instead served as educative memory events in and for the Community itself (Conquergood 1988).

In the afternoon, I obtained my props and coordinated my co-performers. I went to the house of a member who I know reads the Bible to ask if I could borrow it for “We will stay if...” I also asked some children if they would help me collect stones, telling them that I was going to use them in the presentation of “Even the stones speak.” Four children and I went down to the river adjacent to the village. We gathered a bunch of stones in a variety of shapes pleasing to the person finding it. We then placed them together, washed them, and I asked them to each choose one stone, since we were five people and this was the number of stones we needed. Ultimately, after I had set up the stage, people offered a *poncho campesino* to use as my prop in “We will stay if...” In addition, I asked a fellow accompanier to lead the movements in “If we remain on the land.” She had done so one year earlier during the FORPP training in Bogotá, when we performed it there. After we reviewed the script and movements, she went around the village

inviting people to attend and encouraging folks to be co-performers as I finished setting up the stage.

It was awesome how various people ‘appropriated’ “If we remain on the land” in La Unión. The person who would be the narrator, when she finished reading the script said, “We need more time! You should have informed us about this two days ago so we could have prepared it really well.” Afterwards, various people said, “There shouldn’t just be one armed actor, all the groups should be present!” The narrator said that they should prepare such a performance for the anniversary gathering of the Peace Community: the children “usually do a short dance and that’s it, which is not even about the Peace Community itself!” Rad.

Furthermore, upon hearing the narrator do an initial practice run-through with the script of “If we remain on the land,” another co-performer went to bring a large pot—the type they use to cook for large gatherings and was used as a communal pot in San José after the mass displacement of 1997. Knowing that I was going to act as the military, she also brought clothes for a more effective wardrobe: black sweatpants, a green shirt, and a wooden ‘gun’ to make me look more like a soldier (Figure 98).

Not everyone in the village attended – I was saddened when I heard that a particular member, one of my main interlocutors and who I had first asked to be the narrator, was not going to attend because he had come back late and tired from working all day. But many people were there.

When we did “If we remain on the land,” the children co-performers laughed at me in my soldier pose and when I pulled the first community member from the group. As the group displaced from La Unión to San José and I pulled away this member, a Community leader in the audience said “Respect! This is not funny!”

Performing “Even the stones speak” felt very strange, to be re-narrating Father Giraldo’s re-counting of the 2005 massacre. The narration seemed to drag on as if I couldn’t get through the act fast enough. It felt awkward to re-perform something the way they perform it, even if my piece has its own elements, such as holding up the stones and reading the names intermittently during the commemoration. The performance seems more appropriate in non-Community spaces. For audiences outside the Peace Community, the stones are among the aspects that generate the most comments: about their weight, the names written on them, and the emotions evoked while hearing the massacre details.

After I had performed all three pieces, I invited folks to share reflections and feedback. One man, among my main interlocutors, stood up. He said he liked it, noting how much he appreciates international accompaniment, so that other people really learn about what the Community has suffered. Then the Community leader who had called for “respect” from the audience said, “These pieces were very beautiful. But they do not cause laughter for those that have lived through these events,” referring to the kids that laughed during the performance of “If we



Figure 98. Critical performance geography: “If we remain on the land.”
Co-performing the ‘field’ *in* the field with Peace Community members and international
accompaniers in La Unión, July 2014.
Source: Author photo.

remain on the land.” She then quickly began to give an analysis against the electricity installation in the area as preparation for mineral extraction. She also said, “It really gets your attention that someone who is not even in the Community sets out to create these performances, while the actual Community members do not. It is an act of solidarity so that the Community receives more support. And we know that you, Chris, will leave soon and who knows when you will return.”

A group of people remained there talking as the sunset transitioned to nighttime. I sat down with the leader quoted above, who continued talking about the installation of electricity, “The electrical installation workers themselves say that this is to facilitate mining and that, ‘what a shame, because it is so pretty here, but this is our job’.”

The man who made the first comment following the performance also came to join us. He said that tears began to fall down his face when the performance began, because of all of those things that have happened to him: the displacements. He also said that he had so many details written in a notebook. He said that the act about La Esperanza, “We will stay if...”, was what I had lived but that series of events was merely the tip of the iceberg. He said, “everything that has occurred there should be told, such as the history of when the FARC had [Community leader] Eduar Lanchero face down on his knees there.”

Then, another man, who had loaned me a Bible for “We will stay if...”, came and said that what I had done—grabbed people by the arms and taken them away—had happened to him, when paramilitaries grabbed him and took him away once. “What saved me was that the people knew that I was just a worker (and not a guerrilla).”

Later that evening, one of the men stopped by the accompanier house, repeating his gratitude for international accompaniment. In the nights after the performances, I also debriefed with fellow accompaniers and researchers. Gwen Buryneat said, “It gives them a concrete showing of what you do elsewhere, which allows for a new type of relationship with the Peace Community. I was particularly impacted by ‘We will stay if...’ because I experienced the same dynamic in rotating accompaniments in La Esperanza in 2011, which is when I really fell in love with the Peace Community.”

Moreover, I thought to myself, “I expected people to provide me with feedback on the pieces, like Renee [Alexander Craft] and the other critical ethnographers do: what worked well or what was inappropriate. I am so surprised that no one has offered any critiques about the thematic foci of the acts or my use of props, etc. People’s engagement with these performances here is so different than in an academic setting!” (field notes, 2014)

In the following days, I asked people about their reactions to the performance. Most people's comments were limited to "Very good!" with one Internal Council member adding "It is a very good way to show these things" (field notes, 2014). Even without asking, Doña Brígida immediately brought up the performance during my visit to her house the following day. She said,

The presentation last night was very good. It was very good because the adults remember and the children learn the history of the Community. This animates the people to continue working! That form of spreading information is also useful because it is difficult for people to realize what the Peace Community is doing, despite our speaking tours abroad that catch people's attention and make them want to visit or accompany us. (field notes, 2014)

This was similar to comments made by other members following my first photo slideshow, "Our kids see what we looked like when we were young, and we have to maintain that memory" (group interview, 2014). This makes me realize that I was not merely showing the Peace Community how I present about them elsewhere; these performances were also education for new members and children.

As Doña Brígida continued to reflect on the performance, she mentioned, "The part [in 'If we remain on the land'] about the principles, that we do not bear arms or pass information directly or indirectly to any armed group" (field notes, 2014). It is interesting because those were the only lines that were not actually part of the written document that the piece is derived from; I added them into the script so that the audience learns these core organizational commitments. The extent to which those lines stick out to Community members speaks to the power of those committing principles, which Community members frequently recite verbatim in everyday conversation and interviews. Peace Community members truly believe in those principles. The way they were articulated in 1997 was such a powerful way of organizing this 'community in

resistance.’ To paraphrase one of my accompanier interviewees, the Community has to keep re-affirming and showing the rest of the world that they are affirming their peace community position, principles, and project; their lives depend upon it.

Another notable follow-up conversation occurred with one of the newer families to join the Community from Córdoba. Upon entering their house, the wife said, “The performance last night was great!” When I asked why, she said, “Because it shows people what life here is like.” Her husband was one of the people who held a stone in “Even the stones speak.” I asked him what that felt like, and he responded without many words, “Uff, yes...” as if to express its intensity (field notes, 2014).

Talking with him, I was to find out that my performances were not the only way my work was sharing knowledge within the Community. I was pleasantly surprised to see him reading a document called “Lessons from the Peace Community,” which I wrote for the Internal Council to review my dissertation’s primary arguments. He said he found the document in a village gazebo and had read it so that we could talk about it. I thought, “He must have picked up a copy left behind by an Internal Council member. It is crazy how written documents leave a trace and how my reflections spontaneously ‘circulated’ within the Community...” Asking him his reactions, he said, “Yes, as it’s written here is what we do: collective work.” I thought, “While it is good that he doesn’t have any concerns about my interpretation-representation of the Peace Community, I wonder if this also reflects the hegemony of written knowledge (Conquergood 2002), i.e., ‘if it’s written, it’s true’.” In any case, he continued by saying, “But there were two words I didn’t understand: Hip Hop and praxis.” So I explained what those meant and we proceeded to share ideas about pedagogy, as he is one of the Community’s teachers (field notes, 2014).

In the wake of my follow-up conversations, I continued to be surprised that no one had offered any specific feedback about the content of the performances. Community member's engagement with these acts was so different than academics' critiques and suggestions for improvement regarding props or movement. Of course, I had my own reactions, which included feeling strange performing "Even the stones speak" in the Peace Community. It felt weird to re-perform Father Giraldo's 2005 massacre commemoration; I thought, "They do this every year, it does not add much to re-perform it again." In fact, whereas Community members' subsequent comments mentioned "If we remain on the land" and "We will stay if..." no one brought up "Even the stones speak" on their own.

The night before I departed San José de Apartadó, upon the completion of one year of dissertation fieldwork in July 2014, I sat down for one final conversation. Seated with two Peace Community Internal Council members (abbreviated IC below) and two international accompaniers (IA), we spoke for two and a half hours by candlelight—the electricity had been out for days. We reviewed the document I composed for the Internal Council to review my central observations and arguments about the Peace Community for the dissertation.¹⁰³ During our meeting, one of the council members brought up my performance event in the village three days earlier.

Internal Council Member 1: On Saturday, the *presentation* and pictures. I was *there* watching at the same time as I was *reading* [your summary of your research about the Peace Community]. What happened here in La *Unión*. Working *together*, in huge groups. ... Some people say that things have *changed*; "the paramilitaries don't kill anyone anymore." ... What Chris (performed) made me **remember**. Really.

¹⁰³ For the English version of this document later published by the online magazine *Upside Down World*, see Courtheyn (2015).

Me: The performances give people elsewhere an idea – to hold a stone, its weight. The idea is to look for *different ways* of presenting. It was so beautiful to perform them *here*.

IC2: I didn't think (the other Community members) were going to act *at all!*
[laughter!]

IC1: To **REMEMBER** those times, which happened in the past. *Some remember*, but some do not. For example, back then, my children *weren't yet born*. And now they are **seeing**. And (as a parent), you help them out, saying, that it was **real**. And they go on **learning**. I liked what happened in the event. (An *elderly woman* who doesn't leave her house much¹⁰⁴) was there. Great.

Me: And [International Accompanier 1], enlivening the people, because they are *scared* to perform. Thank you for that!

...

IC1: **Memory** is the strength of **resistance**.

IC2: And (in the other village), who participated?

Me: A large group ... but they *didn't act* out the gestures. Someone called out "Go on! Work! (As the performance says to!)" [laughter]

IC1: So it went *really well* here?

Me: *Excellent*. With (IA1) leading the movement gestures.

IC1: And bringing out the *community pot!* [laughter]

Me (asking the two accompaniers present): What do you remember about doing these during the accompaniment training?

International Accompanier 1: It was interesting because, beforehand it was difficult to imagine the *geography* of the *Community*. (The performance) helped me, to walk from one village to another.

IA2: From one side of the room to the other.

IA1: There was a *path*, with tape on the floor. ... It is a way of spreading information, to feel it in your body. There is a stronger *reaction*. To listen to the *words*...
(group interview, 2014)

¹⁰⁴ This refers to the same member who I quoted on peace to begin Part I.

CONCLUSION

I believe it is important to stress that critical and performance ethnography-geography is not performance for the sake of theatre. It is a “decolonial aesthetics” (Palermo 2009; Rojas Sotelo 2011; Lockward et al. 2011) that links theory and praxis for a clear and effective *politics* against injustice. It is an attempt to materialize “historical reflection in live representation as both a form (a container) and a means (a catalyst) of social action” (Pollock 2005a: 1). Congruently, performance ethnography is a simultaneously a mode of *politics*, *theory*, and *analysis*.

As a mode of analysis, performance contributes to reveals truths that might otherwise remain ignored or under-analyzed. In my case, it continues to strike me that my eyes still water every time I re-count the killing of the children in “Even the stones speak” even though I did not know those individuals. By re-performing the Peace Community’s performance of memory, it evokes particular emotions that illustrate the extent to which the Peace Community, through its affective commemoration, indeed builds cohesion and nurtures an anti-violence ethic across organizations, thus cultivating this alter-geopolitical solidarity network, as my graduate study is but one part.

In addition, the feelings I experienced while performing in San José de Apartadó were especially revealing. For example, I felt awkward while performing “Even the stones speak,” the re-enactment of their commemoration of the 2005 massacre. And no local residents offered any verbal reactions to the piece afterwards. While I definitely shape this particular re-enactment by adding my own elements (i.e. holding up stones and saying the victims’ names out loud), my act of re-performing the massacre

commemoration *within* the Peace Community is more of a mimesis (mimicry) and potentially less evocative. Of course, this is not to deny any and all aspects of kinesis, “the embodiment of symbolic knowledge in social action” (Pollock 2005a: 3) in that piece, either. Nevertheless, my feelings were quite different performing *my choreographies* of a) my personal experiences (“We will stay if...”) and b) their experiences from a written text (“If we remain on the land”), which added new elements to the space and to the performance of memory. This re-focused my attention to the question of *who* performs *whose* story. Paying attention to my own feelings with performing, reveals that I was most comfortable performing my own experience as an accompanier. As is central to critical ethnography’s continual self-reflection, this made me question once again the ethics of performing their stories or archives. Ultimately, I still find it valuable to perform “Even the stones speak” with other audiences, for whom it is usually an intense confrontation with the realities of resistance to political violence through memory. This reiterated to me how the meaning of a particular performance depends upon how and with whom one performs. A protective accompanier in training on her/his way to San José de Apartadó will have a different experience witnessing “We will stay if...” and performing “If we remain on the land” than an academic will have, with both engagements being valuable in their own ways.

The extent to which the two events within the Peace Community played out differently was also revealing. In San Josecito, less members volunteered to participate as co-performers in “If we remain on the land” and even those that did, did not do many embodied movements along with the narrative. Conversely, in La Unión, members acted out the movements and offered more comments afterwards. I suspect this is due to a couple of factors. First, La Unión’s residents are precisely those that lived through the

events that are performed in the piece: the mass displacement in 1997 and subsequent return to La Unión; only certain people living in San Josecito today share that experience. Second, the differing levels of engagement as performers might also parallel my respective personal relationships in the two villages. In La Unión, everyone knows me on a personal level very well. They also knew the accompanier who led the performance's movements and encouraged them to join her. People's willingness to embrace the vulnerability of performing in front of their peers is often a question of how comfortable they feel in the space and with the facilitator. Therefore, in hindsight, it makes sense that La Unión's residents would embrace the embodiment of my performances to a greater extent. Surely, there was a similar dynamic when I screened the *RAIS Saludos* video. Not everyone in San Josecito recognized all of the ex-FORistas whereas, in La Unión, the appearance of every accompanier was met with cheers and comments.

Of course, I would still argue that doing these performances in San Josecito was valuable in its own right. On the one hand, I was able to share my work and open a space for feedback with a larger contingent of Community members than had I only performed in one village. On the other hand, however, members' post-performance comments made me realize that these events did not only serve to give members a window into what my academic and activist work looks like in university classrooms, academic conferences, accompanier trainings, and human rights delegations. While I organized the performance events in San José de Apartadó to 'get feedback from' the Peace Community about the 'appropriateness of my representations' of their history, stories, and use of protective accompaniment, the events served a much greater purpose than 'presenting and sharing my findings with my interlocutors.' The performances

became educational memory events within and for the Community itself, in which newer members and children had an additional medium through which to learn about the organization's collective principles and history.

Then again, I was surprised that I did not receive any critique or suggestions for altering the performances in any way. I have to recognize that Community members' engagement with me and my performances are mediated by particular power relations, in which I am an accompanier and researcher they find to be a useful ally. They seemed to be less concerned with the theatrical details than with the fact that I was sharing these stories with diverse audiences in the first place. Certainty, performative choices (which voices, props, and movements to employ and how) are political choices and affect the impacts of our "proximity" as critical ethnographers (Conquergood 2002; Vasudevan 2012). But critical and performance ethnography is less about the theatrical aesthetics themselves. What seemed to be of ultimate concern to the Peace Community is that I remain committed to working with them, whether through theatrical performances or the deterrence to armed attack the international accompaniers and I provide merely through our presence and political outreach.

Therefore, performance ethnography is not only a mode of analysis but of politics. When I share my performances with audiences elsewhere, my aspiration is to spring people into a political response, which Madison (2010) describes as "invoking a response-ability in others . . . that will lead to . . . something of larger philosophical and material effects" (10-11). She terms this a shift "from a *sense of being present* toward the *aim to provoke*," whose intention is to induce the audience to make judgments and begin "to feel oppositional to/with the polemics being performed" (145). Critical and performance ethnography can be particularly adept at inviting the audience to

experience seemingly distant events and processes in an intimate way without feeling like voyeurs or intruders, so as to not “feel like fools or feel ashamed for *being there*” (138), without erasing the differences between certain peoples and places, either. The goal is to engage emotions-theory-the body in a way in which there is a simultaneous vulnerability as well as safety through performance to deeply engage the problems of today’s world. This offers an alternative to a common performance in academia: the affect of command over theory joined with a corollary superiority of the speaker-writer over the audience-reader. Of course, I am not saying all academics perform such an affect or that performance necessarily provokes empathy and action. This will obviously depend not only on the performance itself but the people doing the performance. However, at its best, critical performance ethnography is able to produce a space where people are challenged on emotional and theoretical levels for a more profound engagement with theory and praxis that produces more horizontal rather than hierarchical engagement.

Therefore, my performances—and this dissertation as a whole—are meant as a means through which the Peace Community’s counter-history and geography is produced. At their best, they contribute to telling the “true truth,” to use the concept that emerged from Gómez Correal’s (2015) workshops with the Colombian Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE). A true truth refers 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” (383). To quote two Peace Community members, hopefully these performances of my own subjective witness indeed contribute to show “people what life

here is like” (field notes, 2014) in order to challenge “the atrocities and demagoguery of the government” (González, personal interview, 2011). As another member remarked,

It’s not that we can’t defend ourselves without accompaniment, but we need that hand, that light. A big part of the memory is internationals spreading that memory to the international community, in relation to State pronouncements. The Community is now recognized in many countries. (group interview, 2014)

In other words, performance ethnography is not a question of mimicry or an “alternative recording of the past” but rather about creating an ongoing “ethical imaginary of the future” (Pollock 2005a: 7).

To conclude, I have to admit that while my performances were designed to provoke action, I do not have any evidence that they have in fact contributed to any major transformations. I am not aware of any students or colleagues being politicized through them or that the Peace Community followed through on certain members’ post-performance comments that *they* should be creating *their own* performances. Notwithstanding, maybe the most significant aspect of these performances is how they continue to motivate *me* to persist in my scholarship, activism, and accompaniment of the Peace Community as a researcher and board member of FOR Peace Presence. At the very least, I hope that my performances and photo memory project both a) reinforce the ‘encouragement’ aspect of accompaniment, in which accompaniers, those they accompany, and researchers provide each other ongoing strength for our anti-militarism struggle, as well as b) provoke reflections among academics about the multiple ways we present our research and their often unexpected effects and implications. Precisely, these are the fruits of *performing the field* in the university as well as performing *the university in the field*.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has analyzed a community with a radical understanding and practice of peace. While peace is typically understood passively as ‘tranquility’ or ‘no war,’ the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó defines peace actively as both withdrawing support for armed groups and building community. They practice such peace through agricultural work groups on common land; making decisions in assemblies; participating in human rights and seed-sharing networks; and commemorating the dead with pilgrimages and stones. Peace is often associated with state diplomacy or military victory, as in the current Colombian “peace process” between the government and FARC guerrillas to end a half-century of ‘internal armed conflict.’ Yet the Peace Community demonstrates how peace is a spatial process that can be produced by non-state actors through everyday ethical practices and places that cultivate dignified living conditions.

Given the current negotiations between the Colombian state and FARC, discussions and debates about what real ‘peace’ entails are pulsating across and beyond the country. These imaginaries and projects range from a) the state achieving its monopoly over the legitimate use of force by demobilizing the guerrillas, b) the society achieving a social state of right in which the population’s rights to education, housing, health care, and justice are guaranteed by the state, to c) communities in resistance’s insistence upon self-determination amidst the state’s development model of extractivist

mining, agribusiness, and hydroelectric projects that threaten such Indigenous and African descendants' land and life.

Interestingly, two of these contrasting approaches to peace turn around one date: March 23rd. This is the date by which the Colombian government and FARC negotiators were set to reach a final agreement for the latter's demobilization after over three years of talks beginning in 2012. In September 2015, the state and FARC reached preliminary agreements on four of their major agenda topics, including agrarian development, political participation for opposition parties, illicit drug production, and victims. They announced they would have a final agreement six months later, i.e., on March 23rd. Coincidentally, March 23rd is also a significant date for peace in Colombia for another reason. Nineteen years ago, this was the day when the country's first "peace community" was founded in San José de Apartadó by *campesinos* attempting to remain in their lands amidst civil war. March 23rd thus represents two approaches to peace: a "peace process" between the state and guerrillas through a negotiated accord with a proposed 'completion date' versus a "peace community" that has a 'beginning date' and ongoing practice of community work. In fact, as this dissertation goes to press in April 2016, the government and FARC have not yet reached a final accord, illustrative of the fact that, as I argue, 'peace' does not work that way. Conversely, this March, the Peace Community recently celebrated its 19-year anniversary with a gathering of its members, an example of lived peace regardless of what state and armed actors should do. As written in their subsequent press release,

Nineteen years living in Peace Community has taught us that guns are not necessary to construct internal democracy and solidarity. Our project of life has been rooted in hope and not in tyranny, and therefore, walking in dignity every day has permitted us to live these years without turning to subjugation. These 19 years are a light of hope before a world that is further and further from the

minimal felling of humanity that should emanate in society. (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2016)

Furthermore, I argue that the two divergent approaches to peace through a “peace community” versus a state-guerrilla “peace process” reflect contrasting territorial projects. Territory is typically understood as a ‘bounded area controlled by a particular group,’ with the dominant form being the nation-state or sub-sovereignty within states. Yet I argue that a broader conception of territory is necessary to comprehend what contemporary Latin American social movements mean when they demand ‘territory’ rather than merely ‘land.’ Building from emergent critical scholarship on territory from Latin Americanist scholars and social movements, I understand territory as a moving series of spatial practices, places, and values that produce and are produced by a particular political subject. In other words, territory is a coherent political structure that is a particular shaping of space that includes but is not reducible to mere places of meaning. This conceptualization of territory allows for analysis of the different political subjects producing and produced by a particular production of space by analyzing its set of places, practices, and values.

We are familiar with the places and politics of the territory of the liberal democratic nation-state. It includes cycles of electing representatives through parties; public and private education buildings; the values of competitiveness, wealth generation, and nationalism; private property; top-down development projects including industrialized-commercial agriculture and mining (from strip coal mining to hydraulic fracturing for natural gas); and police and military forces that enforce those arrangements across a given area. This territory produces capitalist and nationalist subjects.

Are the Peace Community and other Latin American communities in resistance merely another form of creating bounded spaces of sub-sovereignty controlled by these groups? To the contrary, the Peace Community in fact refuses the common practice among ethnic rural communities in Colombia that petition to become state-registered ‘collective territories.’ Rather, San José de Apartadó has *tierritas comunitarias* (little community lands) that are held in common plus individual members’ plots. In their rejection of state proposals for ‘more demarcation of land,’ I argue that their practices of peace reflect a different form of territory altogether, not guided by the law of sovereign extension and dominion.

This alter-territory is reflected by the political subjects produced through their set of places, values, and practices. Rooted in values of resistance and dignity, through agricultural centers, self-sufficient family farms, the weekly community work day, and meeting places constructed in the form of circular gazeebos, the Peace Community nurtures a collective and relational subject that seeks communalism, self-determination, and sustainable agriculture rather than top-down ‘exploitation’ of the ‘environment’ in pursuit of accumulation. In periodic caravans in solidarity with other non-member *campesinos* threatened by paramilitary-state-guerrilla forces, the Peace Community shows territory to be a moving practice, which is not about ‘controlling space’ or imposing particular organizational rules on neighboring farmers but rather about creating solidary political subjects by “walking the word” of peace. Moreover, in the Network of Communities in Rupture and Resistance—epitomized by the *Campesino* University of Resistance—the Peace Community and its fellow ‘Indigenous,’ ‘Afro-Colombian,’ and ‘*campesino*’ participants implicitly reject the divisions of the racialized underclass meant to dehumanize these groups as well as undermine collective resistance

to racism and forced displacement. This is the condition in which the Peace Community emerged and continues to resist, a racist war against difference and *campesino* autonomy advanced by state, guerrilla, and paramilitary forces. As explained by deceased leader Eduar Lanchero,

Paramilitarism is a way of life where power is above life. And therefore it exterminates life in many ways. In the same respect, all forms of resistance have to be extinguished. The resistance of civilian communities are extinguished. Human rights activists are threatened and murdered. There is a total control over society, so, there is something which they call a *limpieza* [cleaning], which means to kill everyone that does not fit within their scheme. (Buenaventura 2011)

Moreover, I agree with Peace Community members that “Memory is the strength of our resistance” and the production of this alter-territory. Every February, the Community marches to the sites of the Mulatos-La Resbalozza massacre committed in 2005 by army and paramilitary forces, who beheaded and cut up the bodies of eight farmers, including Community founder Luis Eduardo Guerra and three children. The Peace Community hikes to the sites, re-narrates those events, and paints stones with the victims’ names. To these pilgrimages and stones, member Doña Brígida González also creates folk paintings of community history, which are gifted to individuals and organizations working in solidarity with the Peace Community in order to further spread this counter-history. As such, these places and practices of memory are fundamental to the larger territory. Whereas for modern epistemology the living and the dead are assumed to be separate and the death is the end of life, San José’s forms of commemoration cultivate relationality with the dead. Through the ongoing performance of memory, they also continually re-affirm their ethic against retaliatory violence and reinforce their cohesion and commitment. To quote González,

I believe that those that have fallen, they have given us that example, and they continue giving that example ... constructing something different, a different

world, a world without violence, a world without war, a world where we truly see each other as brothers and sisters, where we can work together, unified, and all share the fruits of our work. (personal interview, 2011)

In other words, if peace is defined by Community members as a) refusing to collaborate with the armed groups and b) building community, then I argue that is through their practices of memory that such peace is most fully created.

To complement other studies of the Peace Community that interpret its significance as small-scale farmers ‘surviving’ amidst civil war through momentary-localized ruptures, this dissertation traces how this movement enacts a coherent political structuring of space in its places, practices, and values. I signal how the Community’s initial rationale of remaining alive and returning to their villages amidst war has transformed into a politics of “rupture” with state violences through food sovereignty initiatives and solidarity networks. In the words of former Internal Council member Wilson David, the Peace Community is not reducible to survival but is about creating another type of world: “We do not endure, we resist ... because resistance means generating the possibility of another world different from the logic of death” (Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó 2007: 80). To the frequent critiques I encounter among scholars and activists of the Peace Community’s autonomist politics as ‘parochial’ or ‘unrealistically utopian,’ I respond that the extent to which the Peace Community is (un)able to shift the policy of nation-states and global institutions should be analyzed less as an indication of this community’s ineffectiveness and more as an indictment of the modern world-system’s incapability of achieving its supposed guarantee of universal human rights, wealth, well-being, and freedom. Along with other contemporary communities in resistance across Latin America and beyond, the Peace Community parallels critical feminist-indigenous-black scholars and social movements

that call us to think beyond the typical notion of politics as that which occurs in the 'halls of governance.' Rather, we ought to look to and be inspired by such groups struggling to create new social relations, new political subjects, and most importantly, alternative structures in the form of alter-territories.

The Peace Community's alter-territory of solidarity and community is not derived from an 'essence' but is produced through continual practice. Indeed, rather than nationalist or ethnic, its identity is an explicitly political one: those people actively committing to and working towards communal peace. I call this *radical trans-relational peace*: dignity and solidarity through trans-community networks. According to members' definitions, peace for the Peace Community is not reducible to 'security' or tranquility. For them, peace is a question of dignity, which member Brígida González explained as a question of conscience and truth; one's basic materials needs being met without compromising the dignity of others; and personal-collective transformation through resistance. This peace is trans-relational because it is created *across* and *through* relations of solidarity both within the Community and with other organizations; between the living and the dead; and through a non-instrumentalist relationality with 'land.' And it is radical by breaking dependency upon the state and guerrillas for peace, by creating dignified living conditions and solidary—rather than competitive and capitalist—political subjects. In so doing, there is the production of an alternative form of politics that transcends the dominant approaches to social change in the modern world, i.e., electoral party politics and armed struggle to reform or 'take' the state.

I offer *radical transrelational peace* as my theoretical contribution to the emergent subfield of peace geographies. Whereas geographers have contributed to peace research by a) showing how peace is spatial process and political discourse as well as b)

deconstructing the racist, patriarchal, and classist violence embedded in what is typically called 'peace' by modern society, few have responded to Megoran's (Megoran 2011) calls for new definitions of peace 'otherwise.' As it has inspired my own re-thinking of peace, I invite geographers to engage with and be inspired by the Many Peaces framework pioneered by Wolfgang Dietrich's school of transrational peace research. This subfield's exploration of "energetic," "moral," "modern," "postmodern," and "transrational" peace(s) through time and space is an especially fruitful point of departure for re-theorizing peace in conversation with but beyond the more widespread notions of "positive" and "negative" peace. Even so, while Dietrich's notion of the "plurality of the peaces" is useful for considering diverse approaches to peace, I argue that it is misguided to deem anything 'peace' when certain peace projects look to exterminate others. Therefore, I articulate radical transrelational peace as a means to evaluate such processes in relation to the extent to which they nurture dignity, relationality, and political formations that create alternatives to the intersectional violences of the modern world.

Moreover, this critical theory of radical trans-relational peace is derived from and complementary to critical research methods for a just present and future. Precisely, I propose *critical and performance geography*, which integrates structural analysis and political action research, as a methodology appropriate for advancing the emerging "pro-peace agenda" in critical human geography. First, this approach is rooted in critical race theory, world-systems analysis, and feminist geopolitics that look to analyze the nexus of the state, political economy, militarization, and resistance through the embodied practices of state-making and social movements. By unmasking systems of power, domination, and emancipation, such structural analysis is crucial to inform and

guide alternative political-ecological formations. Second, my other point of departure is critical and performance ethnography. Through deeply reflexive, embodied, and collaborative work, critical-performance ethnography calls our attention to the political implications of our presence and publications as researchers, while also providing a dynamic toolkit of performative methods of participatory fieldwork and creative ways of presenting our ‘findings’ that complement written work for ethical and effective scholarship. One way I have mobilized these methods is with staged performances of Peace Community archives and my experiences there. I use performances such as “If we remain on the land” in classrooms to cultivate embodied understandings of displacement, territory, and peace, whereas co-performing these pieces in San José de Apartadó served as memory events in and for the community itself. Another example is how I consciously used my body as a researcher as a form of deterrence to armed groups’ attacks and as solidarity through my interviews with state officials and by marching in Peace Community pilgrimages. In other words, *critical and performance geography* combines critical geographical theory and performance methods into a comprehensive methodology to mobilize how geographers not only analyze but also might more consciously and politically produce space through their research.

To conclude, I will end with the words of Eduar Lanchero (Buenaventura 2011):

The logic of the system of death, of the paramilitaries, of the State, is to displace the people; they want to terrorize the people because it generates an individualism so strong that then you don’t care about the life of the other anymore, right? So we had to create another way of living, where we were really against the war and against death. That’s why the only way was to live in a community. If you live in a community, you have different ways of relating to each other, of organizing, participation, of solidarity where everyone cares about the life of the other. ... It doesn’t matter how many we are. What matters is that we really know and deeply live a different world. And we cannot build this different world tomorrow or in the past or something. We do it now.

APPENDIX 1

HISTORICAL TIMELINE

1963: Migrant *campesinos* from the Dabeiba region of Antioquia to the south (and from other regions) begin to settle in what would become the village of La Unión. Subsequently, the town of San José would be founded by Bartolomé Cataño in 1967, becoming a *corregimiento* (rural district) within the municipality of Apartadó, Antioquia.

July 19th, 1977: The first documented massacre in San José de Apartadó takes place: eleven *campesinos* are assassinated or forcibly disappeared by the National Army in La Resbalosa.

May 17th, 1992: The first massacre in the village of La Unión takes place when Army soldiers kill three *campesinos*.

1995: There are mass displacements of *campesinos* in the neighboring municipality of Tierralta to the east, in the department of Córdoba, clearing the area for the impending Urrá hydroelectric dam and reservoir.

1995-1996: Mayor of Apartadó Gloria Cuartas continues the Patriotic Union party's social investments in San José de Apartadó, including health centers, schools, and the first installations of running water and electricity.

June-September 1996: Ordered by paramilitaries, *campesinos* from the majority of San José's villages forcibly displace from their lands.

June-July 1996: Over 800 *campesinos* march and occupy the stadium in Apartadó to denounce forced displacement and state crimes. A subsequent Verification Commission documents 91 crimes, yet all remain in impunity.

August 16th, 1996: Bartolomé Cataño—San José de Apartadó's founder, organizer of the June '96 Apartadó march, and Patriotic Union councilor to the City Council of Apartadó—is assassinated.

September 7th, 1996: Paramilitaries acting with army soldiers massacre four people in San José town.

February 27th, 1997: Paramilitaries massacre four more *campesinos* in San José town, including most of its remaining leaders, inducing most of the town's residents to flee.

March 23rd, 1997: The Peace Community is formally founded in the town of San José de Apartadó by 630 *campesinos* from over ten of the district's villages. Their "*declaratoria*" as "non-combatant *campesinos*" draws from the support of

the regional Catholic bishop, the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission as well as the Research and Popular Education Center (CINEP).

In so doing, San José de Apartadó's residents reject then Antioquia Governor Álvaro Uribe Vélez's proposal that San José become a *Convivir*, a so-called 'neutral' zone (yet later documented to be paramilitary-controlled) that would inform state forces of guerrilla movements.

March-July, 1997: Beginning the week after the Peace Community declaration, military and paramilitary operations forcibly displace the remaining *campesinos* from the villages of San José. Only 500 remain, taking refuge in San José town. The International Red Cross provides humanitarian aid.

October 6th, 1997: FARC guerrillas massacre three Community members during a community work day in La Linda, including Internal Council member Ramiro Correa.

December 1997: The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights adopts "*medidas cautelares*" (an interim relief injunction) in favor the Peace Community and recommends that the Inter-American Court of Human Rights take the case of San José de Apartadó.

1997: Paramilitaries carry out mass eviction campaigns across Urabá, notably of Black communities in the neighboring Chocó department to the west. Those lands are subsequently transformed into mass oil palm plantations. Other "peace communities" are founded across Urabá, such as San Francisco de Asis.

1998: Nominated by the Colombia Support Network, the U.S. branch of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) awards the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó its annual Pfeffer Peace Prize.

Peace Brigades International (PBI) begins to directly accompany the Peace Community in San José.

1998: The Urrá dam is built in the neighboring municipality of Tierralta, Córdoba, following years of army and paramilitary evictions of that area's *campesinos*.

March 1998: On the Peace Community's one-year anniversary, a group returns to re-settle the village of La Unión. Arenas Altas is re-settled soon after.

June 1998: Return to La Esperanza village.

April 4th, 1999: Aníbal Jiménez—Internal Council member, head of *formación*, and composer of the Community hymn—and two others are assassinated by paramilitaries in the town of San José.

February 19th, 2000: Paramilitaries and military soldiers massacre five *campesinos* in the town of San José.

May 2000: *Campesinos* abandon La Esperanza due to fears of impending attack.

July 8th, 2000: With an army helicopter hovering overhead, paramilitaries massacre six Community leaders in the village of La Unión, including Rigoberto Guzmán of the Internal Council. This causes another mass displacement from the village to San José town, before returning one and a half months later.

After this massacre: a) the Community stops meeting with military officials; b) a Special Investigation Commission is organized to document the systematic attacks against the Peace Community, although it never leads to any judicial sanctions or convictions; and c) the Peace Community begins a petition process with the Fellowship of Reconciliation to provide protective accompaniment in La Unión.

November 2000: The Inter-American Court of Human Rights ratifies “*medidas provisionales*” (provisional measures of protection) and opens a case about violations against the Peace Community.

September 2001: Following the assassination of a Community youth by the military, the village of La Unión displaces again.

January 2002: The Fellowship of Reconciliation’s Colombia Peace Program (later re-named FOR Peace Presence) begins its protective accompaniment of the Peace Community with a team in La Unión.

March-June 2002: Paramilitaries blockade the Apartadó-San José de Apartadó road, including the assassination of three jeep drivers that worked the route. The blockade is broken by a Peace Community caravan—supported by an archbishop of the Catholic Church and accompanied by PBI—that marches, drives, and brings supplies from Apartadó to San José.

October 2002: In a period without FOR accompaniment—the program was transitioning from one team to another—paramilitaries enter La Unión and abduct a *campesino*. The entire village displaces but returns when the next FOR team arrives two months later. La Unión has not been abandoned since.

September 2003: The Network of Communities in Rupture and Resistance (RECORRE) is launched in a gathering in San José, comprised of *campesino* and Indigenous communities in Colombia. They declare their refusal to participate in the Colombian judicial system until systemic impunity is addressed.

2003: *Campesinos* in neighboring Tierralta, Córdoba—who years later would join but at this point are not yet in contact with the Peace Community—begin to resettle un-submerged lands from which they had displaced in 1995.

August 2004: The first session of the *Campesino* University of Resistance, an expression of RECORRE, is held for one month in Arenas Altas.

September 2004: Paramilitaries erect another blockade of the Apartadó-San José de Apartadó road.

February 21st, 2005: During a paramilitary-military operation, eight *campesinos* are massacred in Mulatos and La Resbalosa, including three children and Internal Council member Luis Eduardo Guerra, who had only recently attempted to re-settle the area. Families in surrounding villages displace.

March 20, 2005: President Álvaro Uribe, in a public address during a visit to Urabá, claims that FARC guerrillas—rather than state forces—are responsible for the Mulatos-La Resbalosa massacre and affirms that that the San José Peace Community is an auxiliary to the FARC.

April 4, 2005: On orders from President Uribe, a police post is installed in the town of San José de Apartadó. Given Peace Community members' refusal to live alongside armed actors, they abandon San José and construct a new village fifteen-minutes away by foot. Named San Josecito, its early years are plagued by malaria and dengue outbreaks before adequate sanitation infrastructure is built. Given the initial lack of health and school services, many *campesinos* leave San Josecito and the Peace Community in subsequent years to return to live in San José town, although the latter becomes plagued by frequent combat between the FARC, army, and police.

The Peace Community announces the creation of Humanitarian Zones (mostly located in schools, where civilians can take refuge during combat) in different villages across the district. The Peace Community demands that the armed groups respect the Humanitarian Zones, even through their residents are not active Peace Community members. The Humanitarian Zones eventually cease to exist after many of their coordinators are assassinated in subsequent years.

In the wake of a) the February killing of Luis Eduardo Guerra, who was the Community's lead negotiator with the state, b) President Uribe's defamatory comments in March, c) the installation of the police post in San José in April, and d) no progress in any of the judicial investigations about human rights violations in San José de Apartadó, the Peace Community articulates four conditions for ending their "rupture" with the state. These include:

- 1) An apology from Colombia's president for stigmatizing comments against the Peace Community
- 2) Removal of the police post from San José town
- 3) An end to military-paramilitary killings and harassment in the district's Humanitarian Zones and Peace Community settlements
- 4) A Truth Commission comprised of national and international agencies to investigate why impunity persists for human rights violations in San José de

Apartadó, including why the 2000 Special Investigation Commission failed to lead to any justice

Subsequent rulings by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Colombian Constitutional Court back the Peace Community's stance, calling on the state to make the first steps towards reestablishing dialog. As of 2016, the latter three of these four conditions remain unmet.

February 21st, 2006: The Peace Community commemorates the one-year anniversary of the massacres in Mulatos and La Resbalosa with a pilgrimage to the sites, a tradition repeated every year since.

2006: An anticipated Peace Community return to La Esperanza is aborted due to FARC threats.

2007: A planned Peace Community return to Mulatos is aborted upon the insistence of the Colombian Armed Forces that they accompany a state-sponsored re-settlement.

Peace Community members return to La Esperanza.

The San José de Apartadó Peace Community is nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by the American Friends Service Committee. The prize is ultimately awarded to Al Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

January 2008: The Colombian Constitutional Court issues a ruling that upholds the Inter-American Court of Human Rights' "*medidas provisionales*."

February 21st, 2008: During its annual commemoration of the 2005 massacre, the Peace Community officially returns to Mulatos and La Resbalosa.

2009: The Peace Community expands beyond the *corregimiento* of San José de Apartadó. After a mutual discernment and initiation process, *campesinos* in the village of El Guineo (Naín) in neighboring Tierralta, Córdoba, join the Peace Community. Additional *campesinos* in Alto Joaquín, Las Claras, and Puerto Nuevo join later.

The Italian-Catholic organization Operation Dove begins protective accompaniment in the Peace Community.

The Peace Community inaugurates the Agricultural Center in La Unión village.

February 2010: The Peace Community inaugurates the *Luis Eduardo Guerra Peace Village* in Mulatos during the fifth-year anniversary of the 2000 massacre.

2011: The Peace Community is comprised of 1,162 people across eleven villages, according to an internal census.

June 22nd, 2012: Peace Community leader Eduar Lanchero dies from cancer. A native of Bogotá, his family respects his wish to bury his remains in the Peace Community. A mass contingent of community members await the arrival of his casket and subsequently build a tomb in the village of San Josecito.

December 2013: President Juan Manuel Santos offers an official apology for stigmatizing comments made by previous President Álvaro Uribe against the Peace Community, thus meeting one of the conditions set by the Community for exiting its “rupture” with the state. The other three conditions remain unmet.

March 23, 2016: The Peace Community celebrates its 19th year anniversary.

APPENDIX 2

MAPPING THE PEACE COMMUNITY BY YEAR

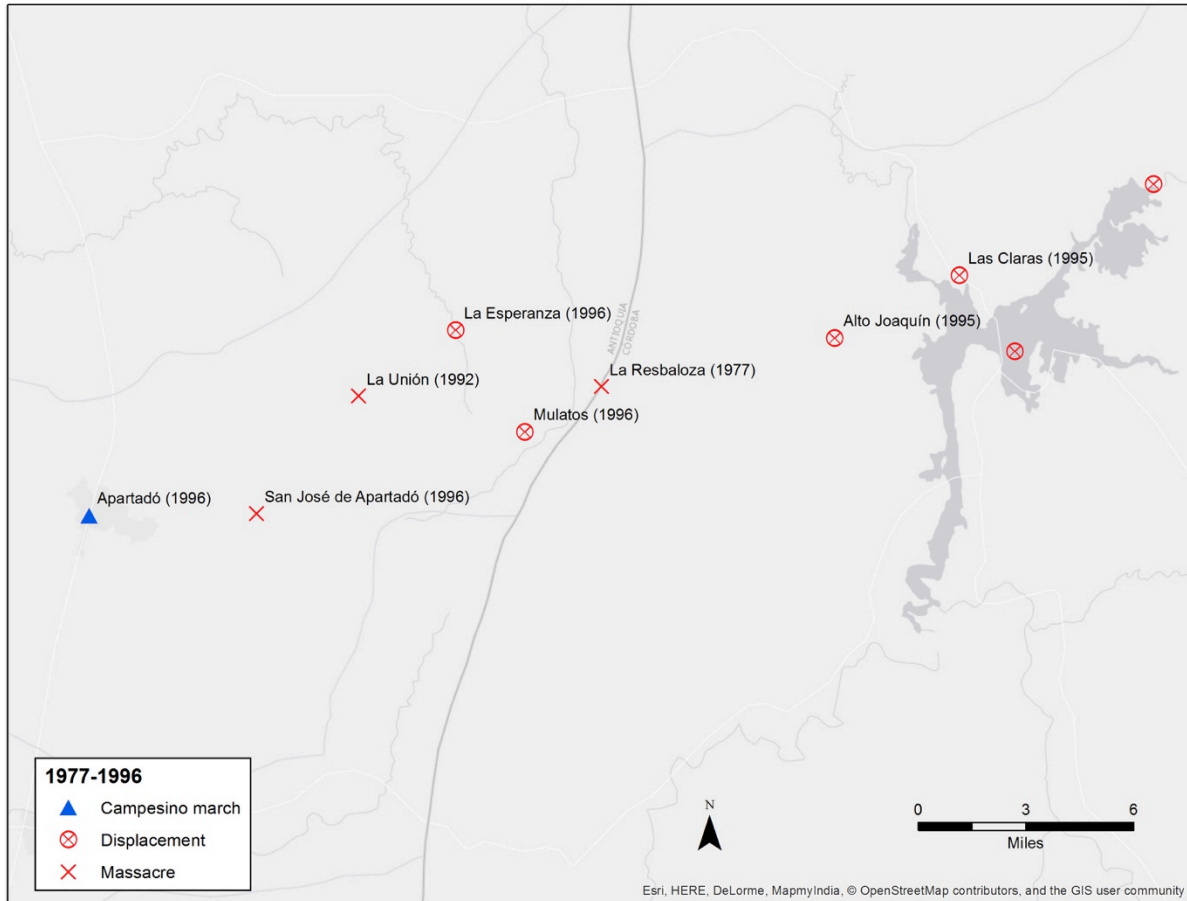


Figure 99. 1977-1996.

Massacres and forced displacements take place across San José de Apartadó, beginning with the July 1977 massacre in La Resbalosa. From June to July 1996, *campesinos* march against displacement and occupy the stadium in the city of Apartadó. The march's leader, Bartolomé Cataño (also the founder of San José), is assassinated in August 1996. *Campesinos* in Córdoba department to the east are forcibly displaced leading up to the Urrá dam project – note that the reservoir depicted on this map did not yet exist.

Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

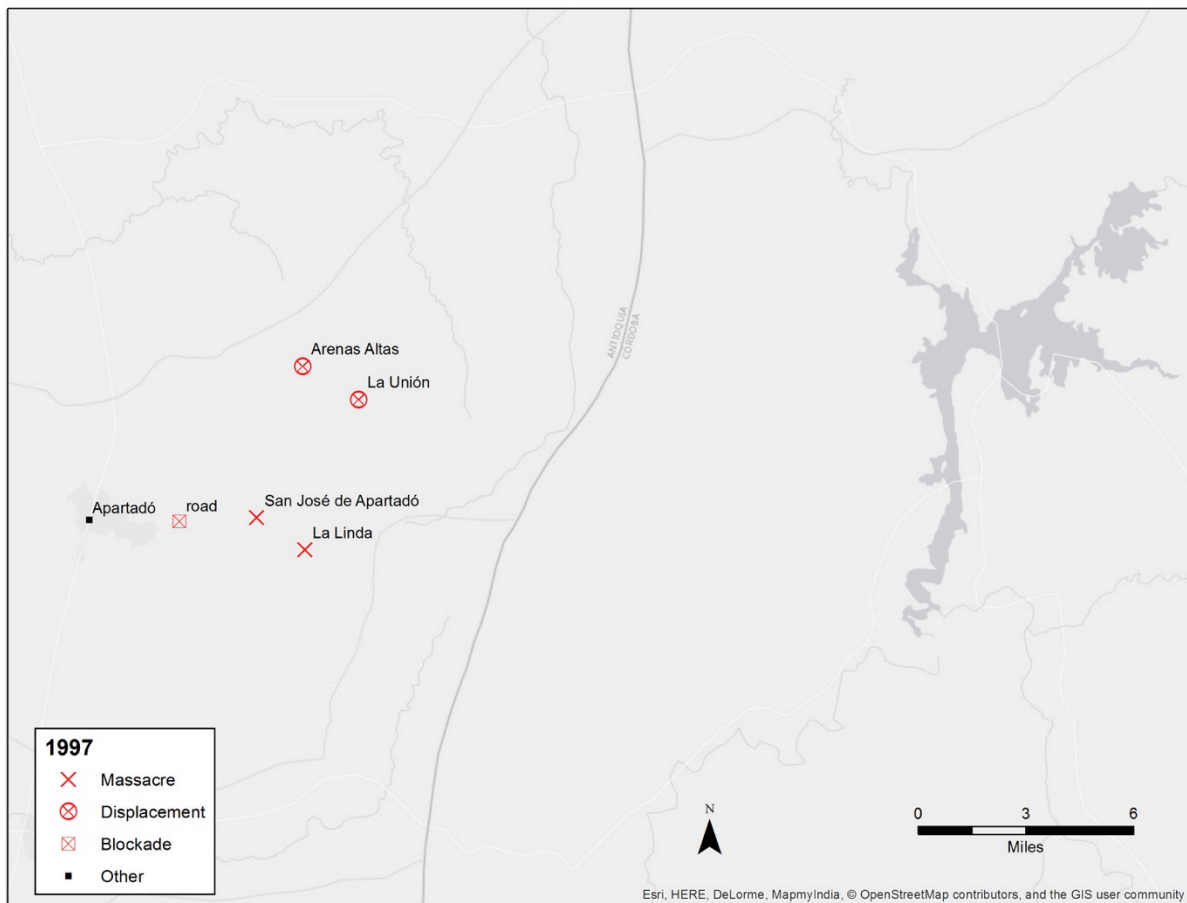


Figure 100. 1997.

After a paramilitary massacre in the town of San José de Apartadó in February, the Peace Community is founded on March 23rd, 1997. Subsequent paramilitary-army operations displace the remaining *campesinos* living in the villages and paramilitaries blockade the Apartadó-San José road. The FARC massacres three Peace Community members on a community work day in La Linda in October. Also, in the Chocó department to the west, paramilitary-military operations displace thousands and subsequently plant mass oil palm plantations.

Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

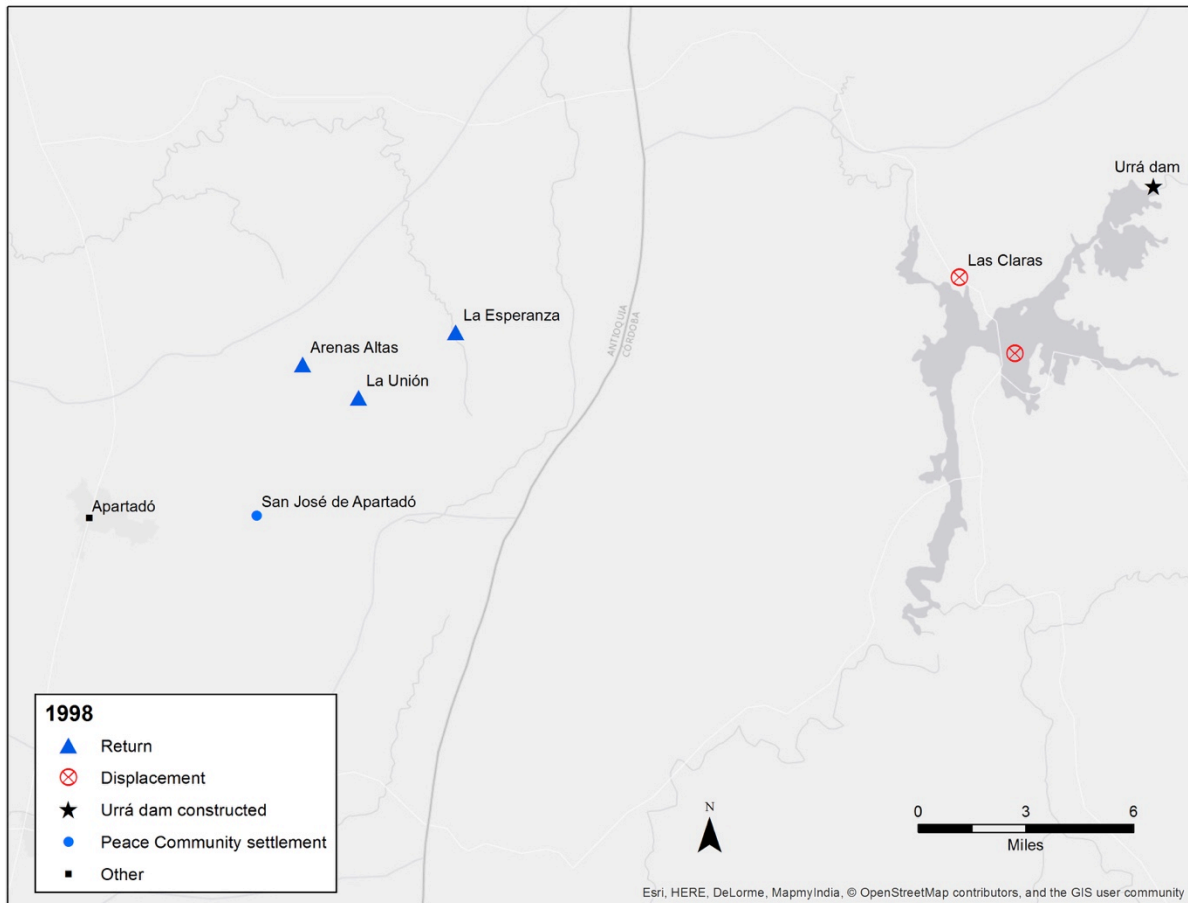


Figure 101. 1998.

On its one-year anniversary, the Peace Community returns to La Unión village, with subsequent returns to Arenas Altas and La Esperanza. The Urrá dam is built in Córdoba, whose rising reservoir induces further displacements.

Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

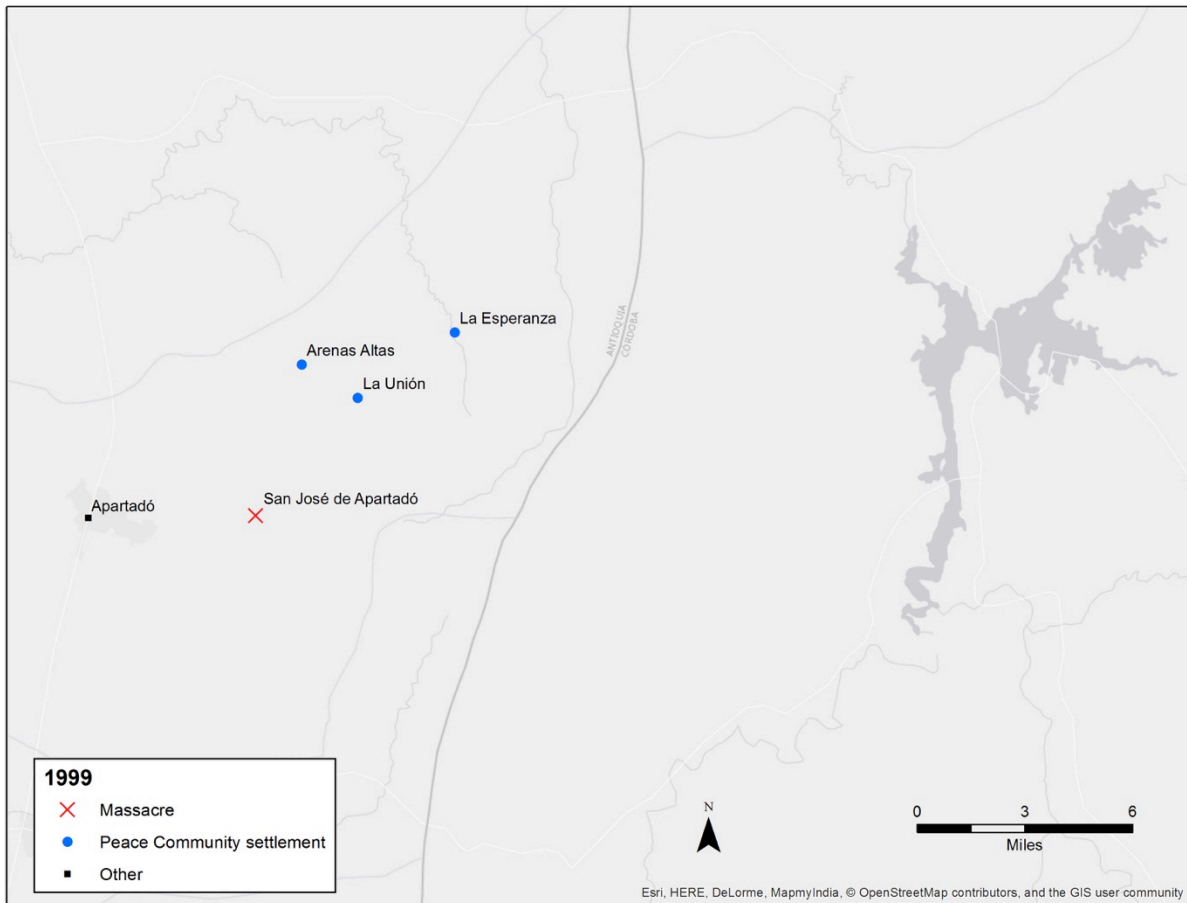


Figure 102. 1999.
 In April, the military commits another massacre in San José de Apartadó.
 Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

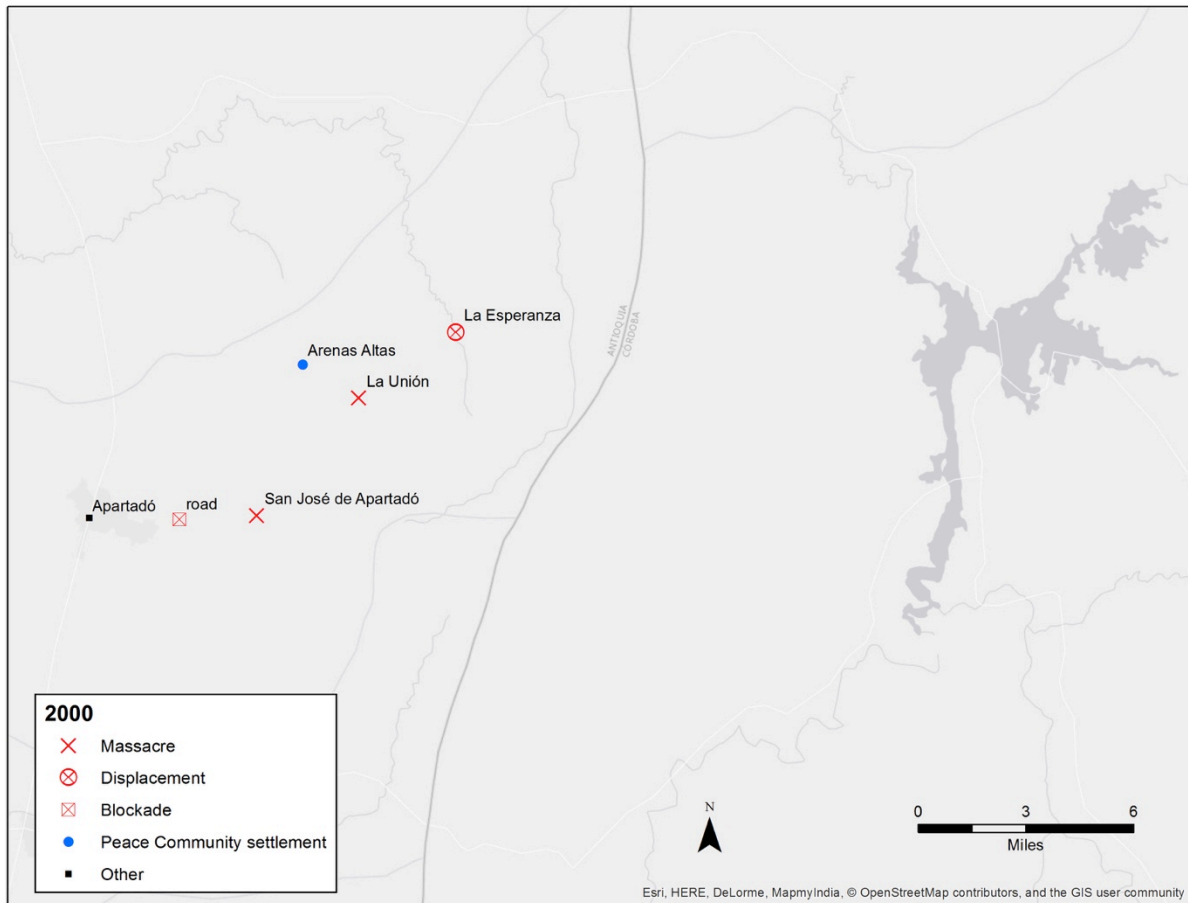


Figure 103. 2000.

Paramilitaries erect another road blockade and commit massacres in San José and La Unión. Farmers in La Esperanza also displace, fearing impending attack. A Special Investigation Commission is organized by the government to investigate human rights violations in San José de Apartadó, but it never leads to any judicial cases or convictions.

Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

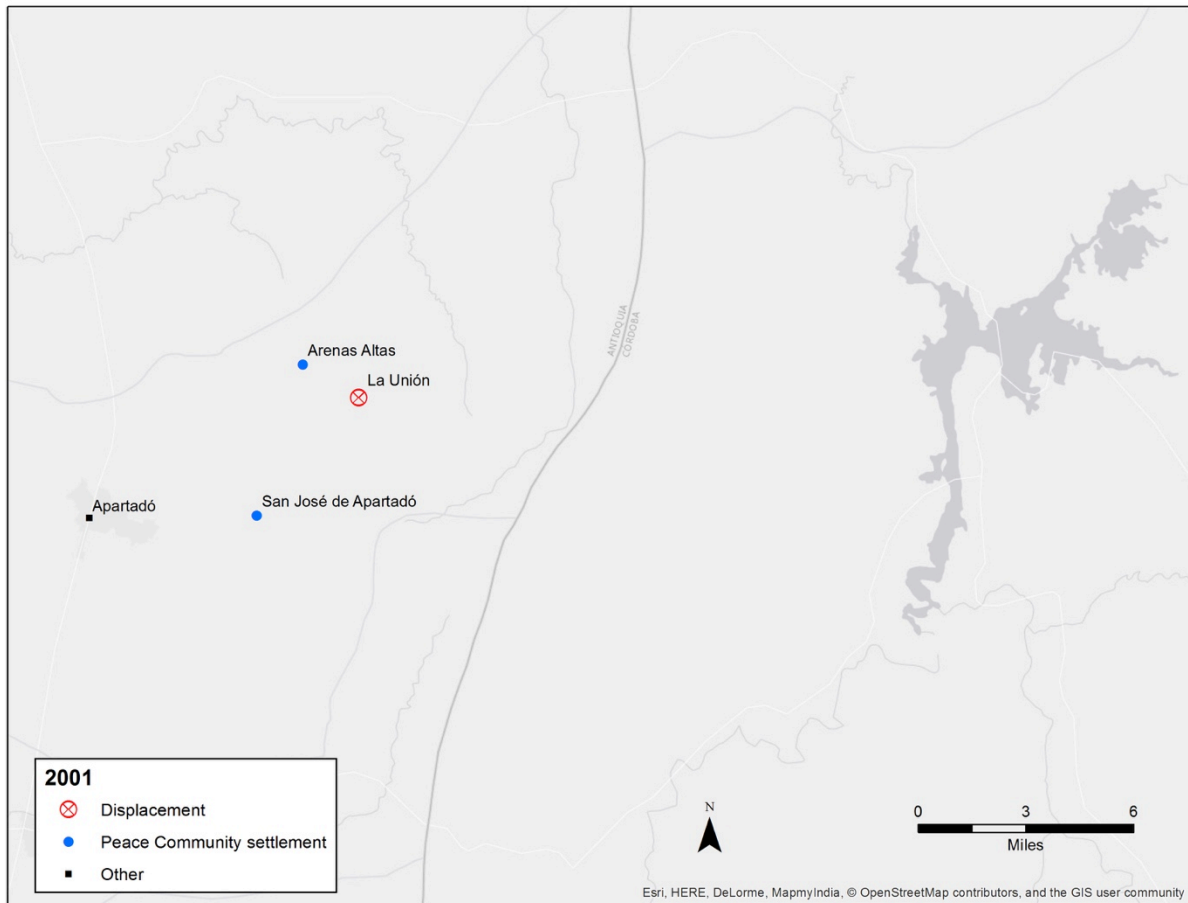


Figure 104. 2001.
 La Unión displaces again, following the military's killing of a Community youth.
 Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

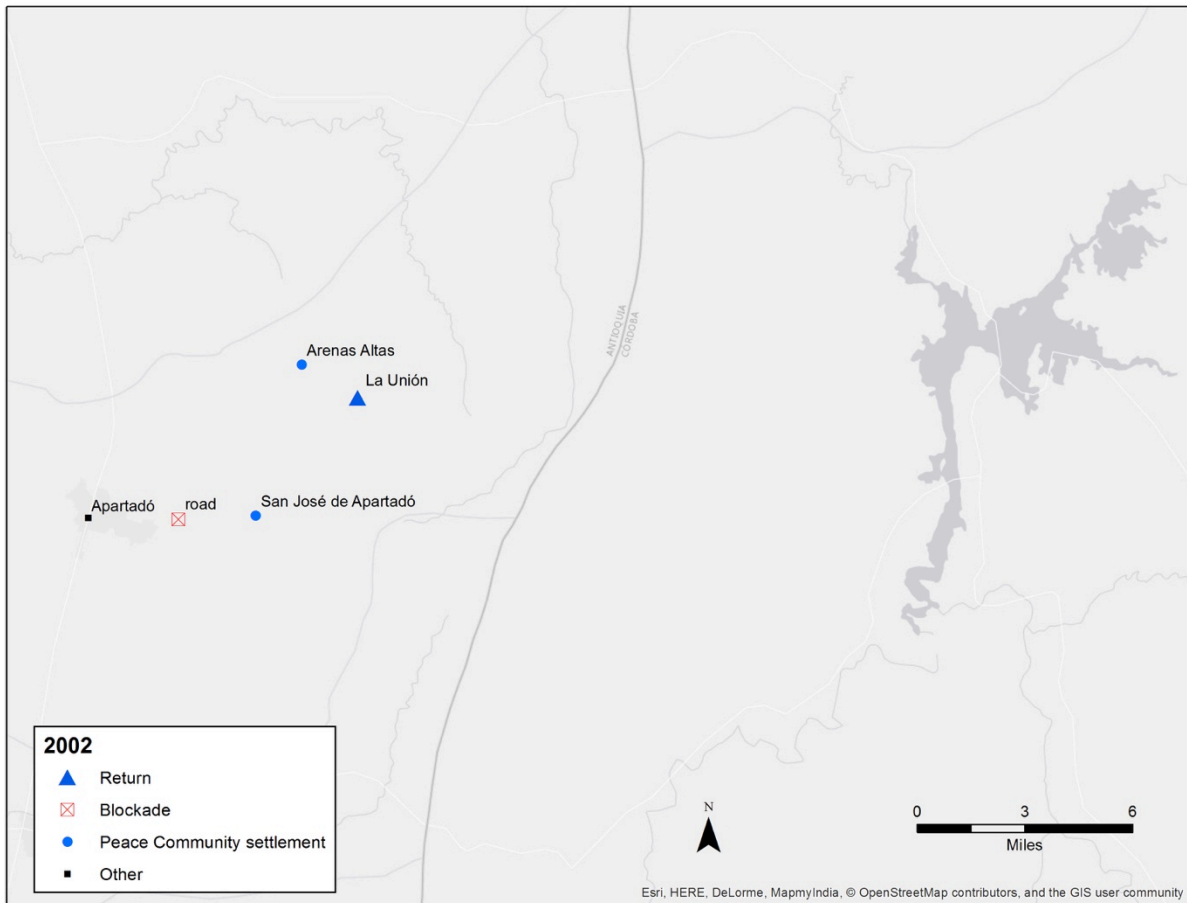


Figure 105. 2002.

The Peace Community breaks a three-month long paramilitary blockade of the Apartadó-San José road. After suffering its fourth displacement in six years in October, La Unión returns once again in December with the accompaniment of FOR.
 Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

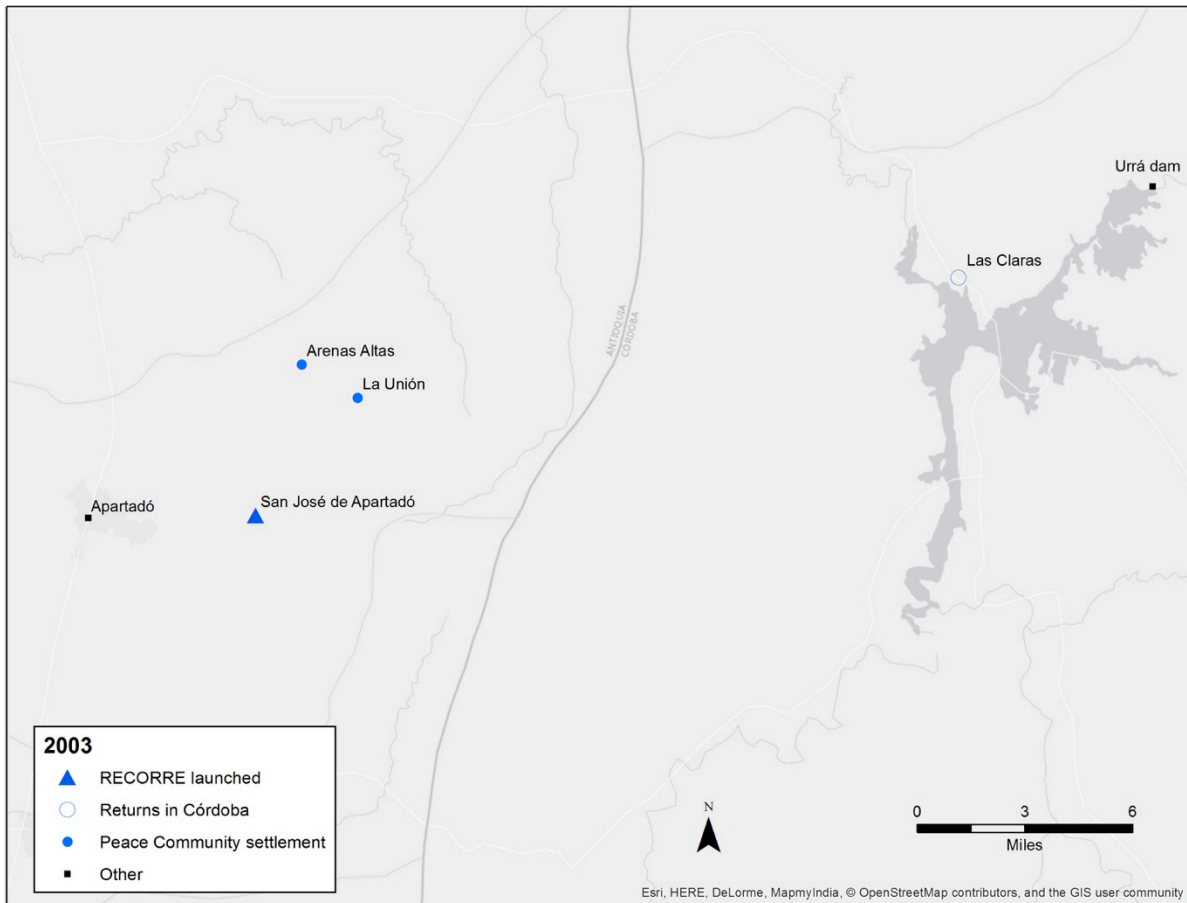


Figure 106. 2003.

In September, the Network of Communities in Rupture and Resistance (RECORRE) is launched in an inter-community gathering in San José. *Campesinos* in neighboring Córdoba who would later join the Peace Community in 2009-2010 begin to return to un-submerged lands.

Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

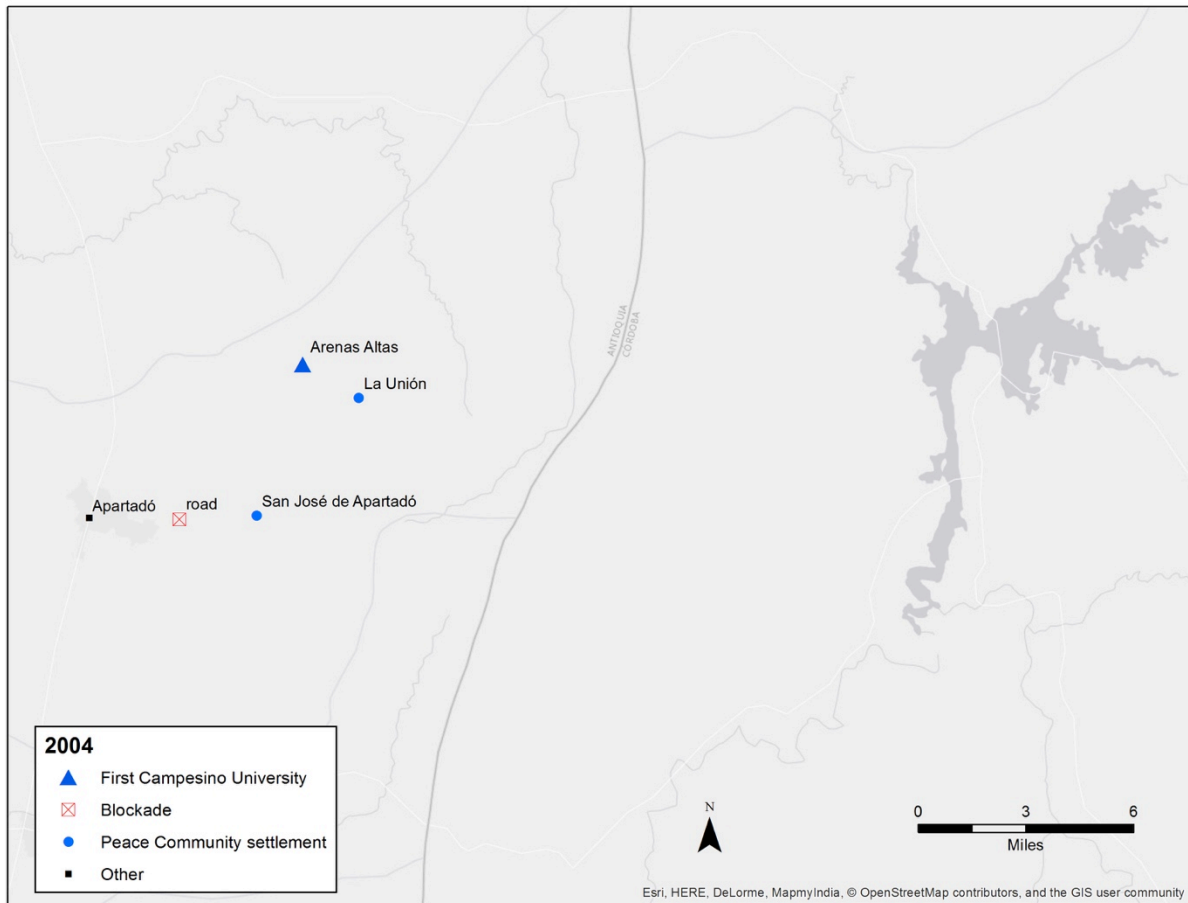


Figure 107. 2004.
 RECORRE holds its first session of the *Campesino* University of Resistance in Arenas Altas in August. In September, paramilitaries erect their fourth blockade in eight years of the Apartadó-San José road.
 Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

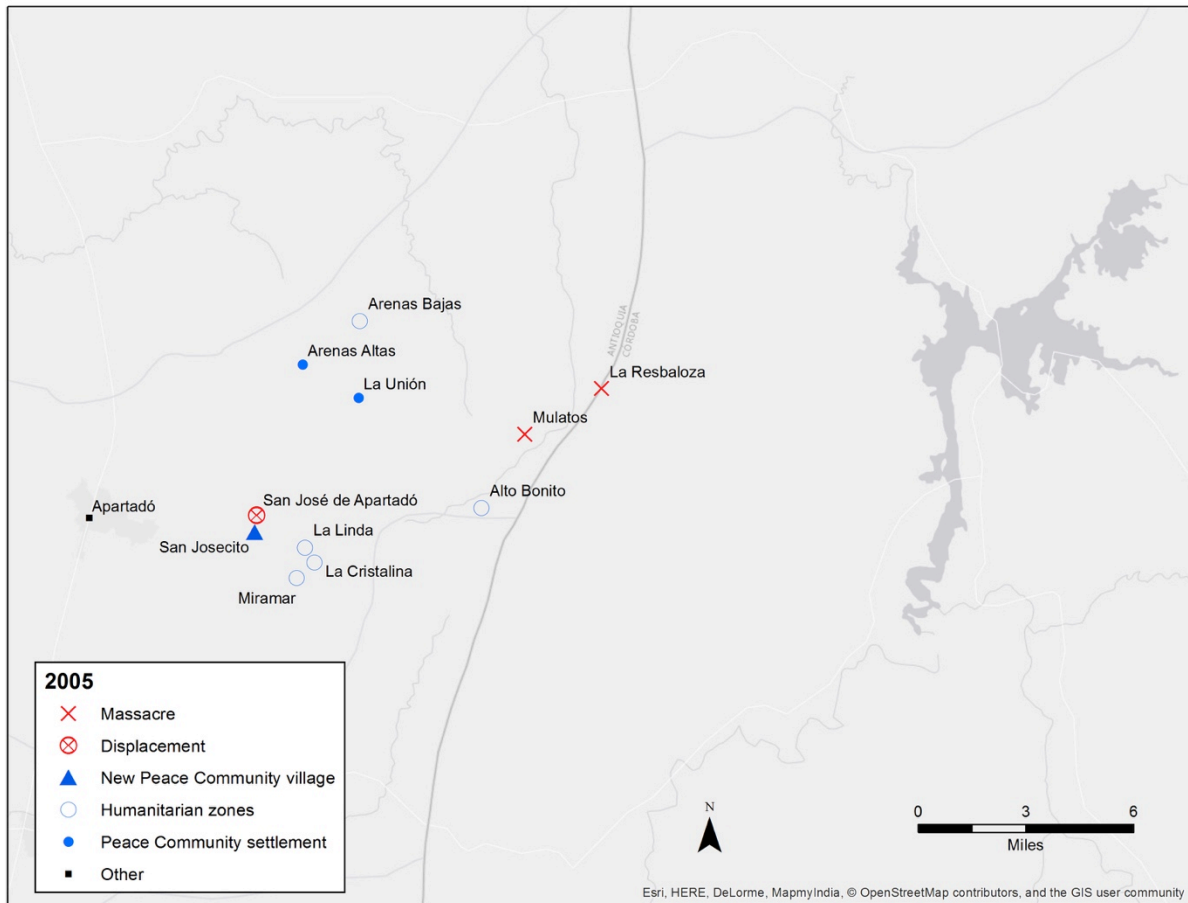


Figure 108. 2005.

The army and paramilitaries commit massacres in Mulatos and La Resbalozza on February 21st. Given the government's plans to install a police post in San José town in April, the Peace Community displaces from the town and builds a new village nearby, San Josecito. The Peace Community announces the creation of Humanitarian Zones where civilian *campesinos* can take refuge amidst combat, but these zones effectively cease to exist after many of their coordinators are assassinated in the coming years. Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

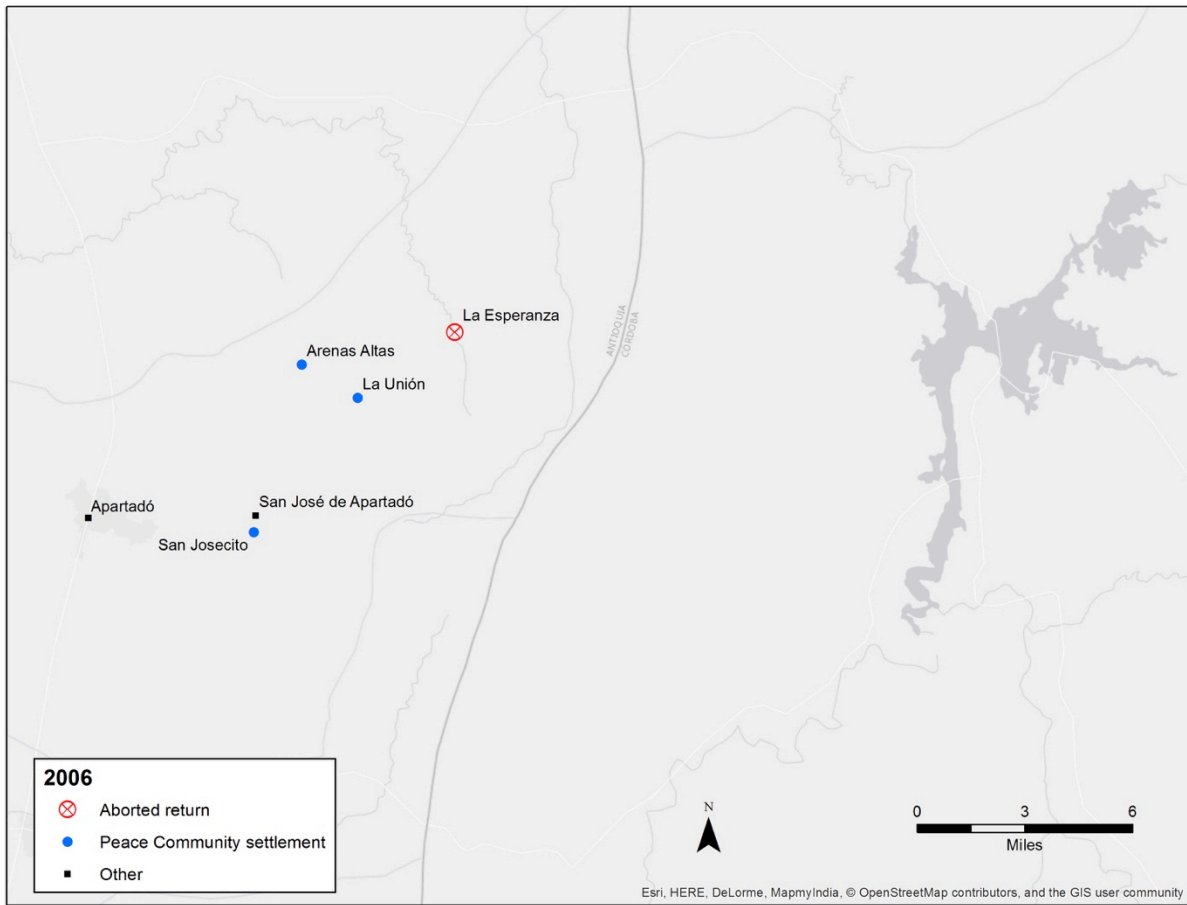


Figure 109. 2006.
 An attempted return to La Esperanza is aborted due to FARC threats.
 Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

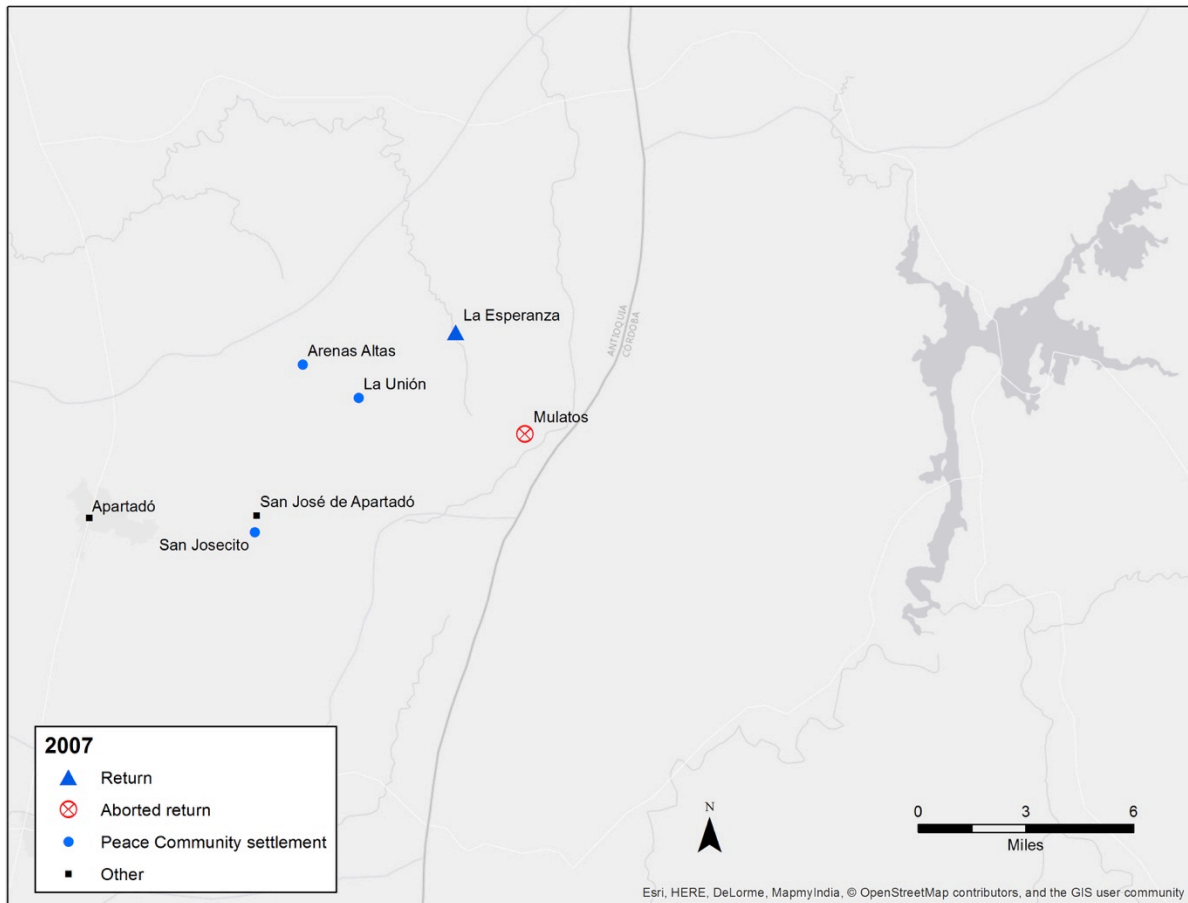


Figure 110. 2007.

The Peace Community returns to La Esperanza. A scheduled return to Mulatos is aborted upon the state's insistence that the return be accompanied by military forces.
Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

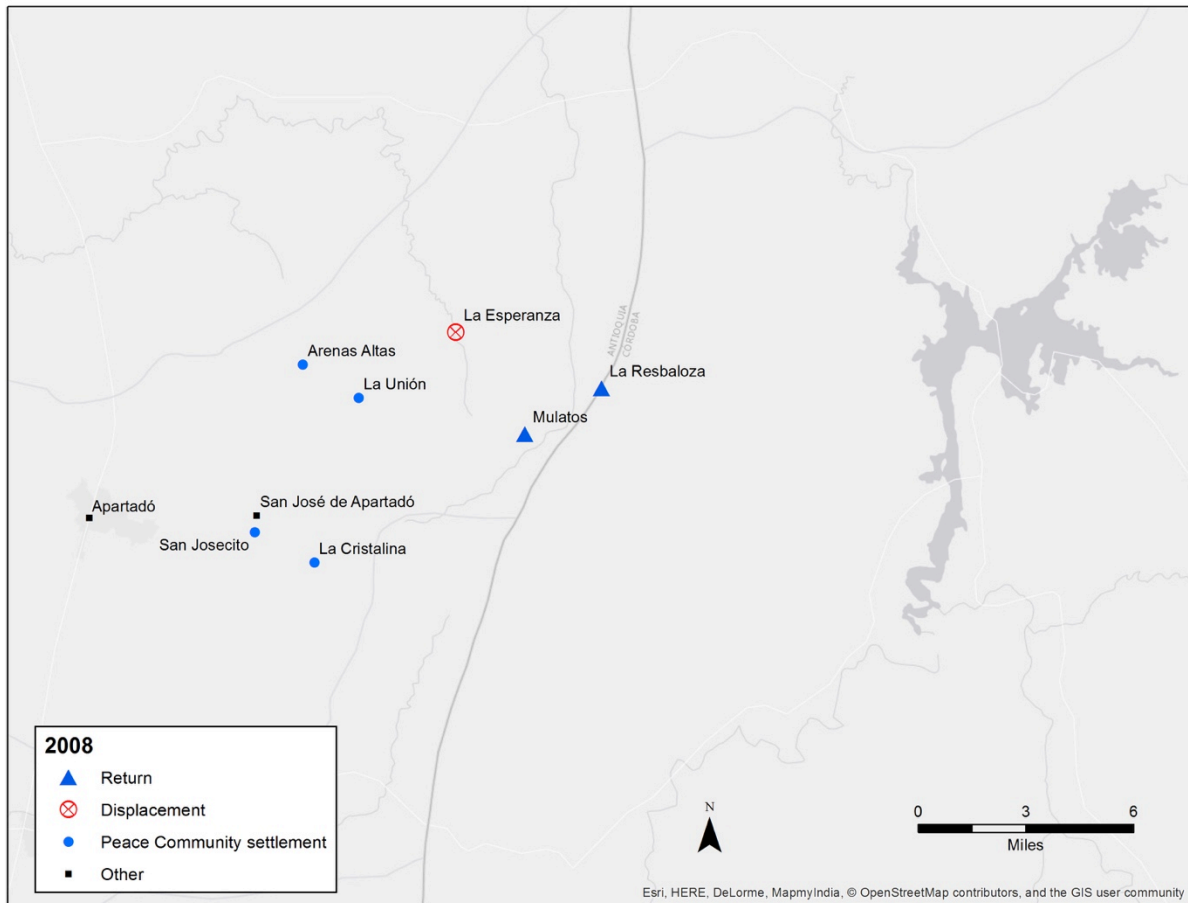


Figure 111. 2008.

The Peace Community returns to Mulatos and La Resbalosa on the five-year anniversary of the 2005 massacre in February. The majority of La Esperanza's residents abandon their homes in November due to paramilitary threats – Peace Community families refuse to displace and the others eventually return months later. La Cristalina is recognized as a Peace Community settlement.

Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

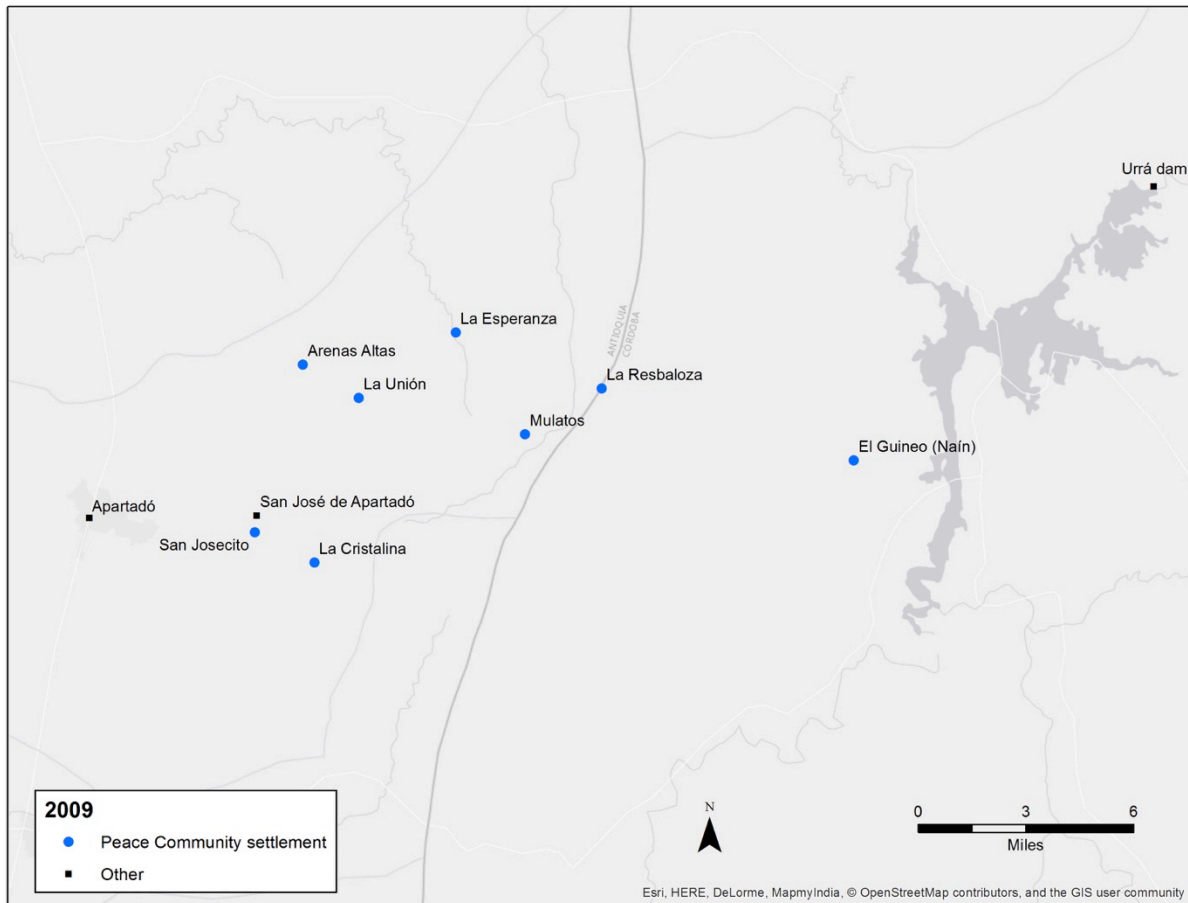


Figure 112. 2009. *Campesinos* in the neighboring village of El Guineo/Naín in Córdoba join the Peace Community. Fruit of the *Campesino* University of Resistance, an Agricultural Center is inaugurated in La Unión.
 Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

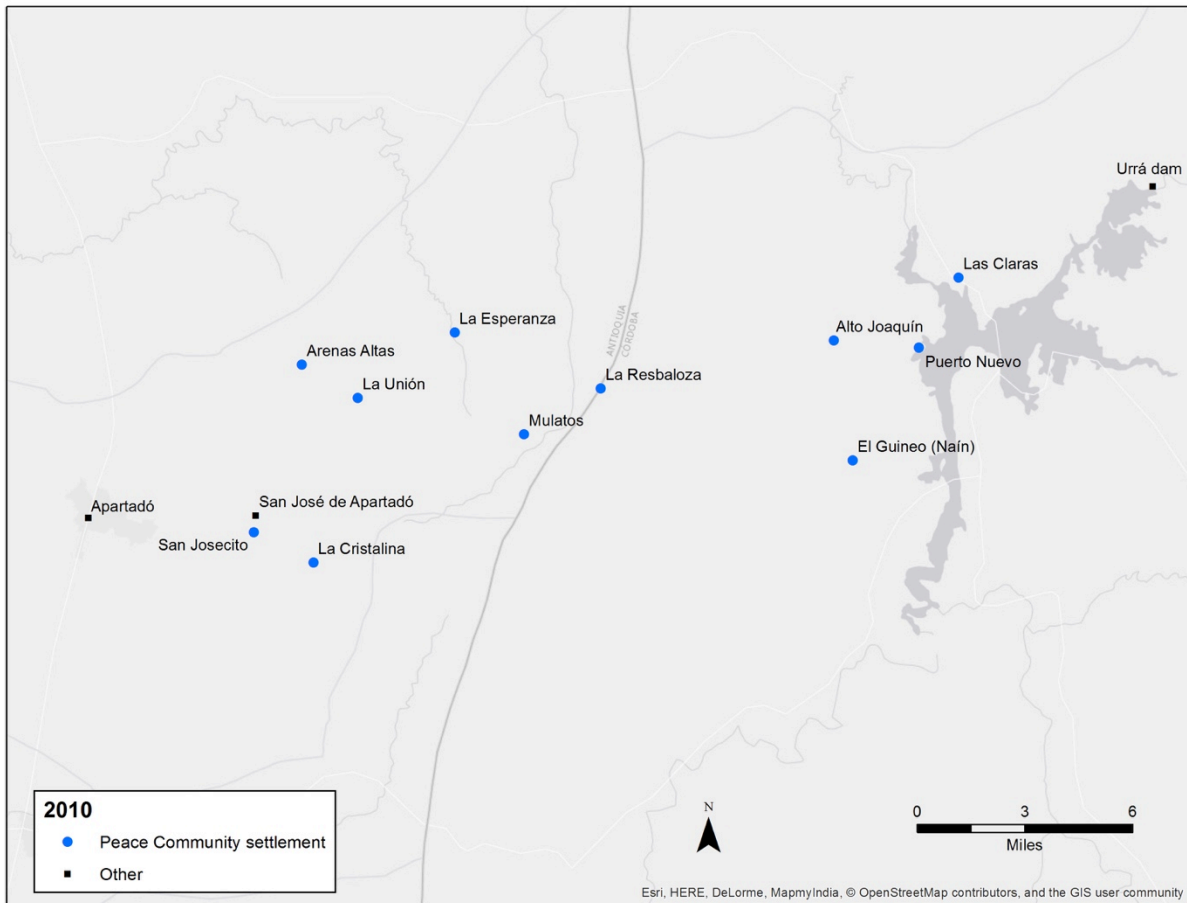


Figure 113. 2010.

Campeños from three additional villages in Córdoba, including Alto Joaquín, Puerto Nuevo, and Las Claras, join the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, extending the number of Peace Community villages to eleven.

Source: Map by author and Philip McDaniel.

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