Seed Conflicts in Colombia: Ethnorace, Territory, and Violence

Nathalia Hernandez Vidal

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss

Part of the Sociology Commons

Recommended Citation
Hernandez Vidal, Nathalia, "Seed Conflicts in Colombia: Ethnorace, Territory, and Violence" (2020). Dissertations. 3795.
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/3795

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 2020 Nathalia Hernandez Vidal
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

SEED CONFLICTS IN COLOMBIA:
ETHNORACE, TERRITORY, AND VIOLENCE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY

BY
NATHALIA HERNÁNDEZ VIDAL
CHICAGO, IL
AUGUST 2020
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I grew up with the very patriarchal image of the intellectual represented as a white man, seated by himself on a desk, surrounded by books, probably in Germany, France, or England. This image accompanied me until college. I still remember the first time I found an acknowledgments section in a book. It was quite surprising and exciting to read it. I had never thought that people actually wrote things together! Since then, the acknowledgments section of a book or piece of work is one of my favorite ones. Thus, to be honest, I have been waiting to write this section of my own dissertation for seven years (since day one of my Ph.D.), patiently and imaginatively thinking who may be included in it. Now, my challenge is to mention all of those who have been writing this project with me. This challenge is significant because it is a political one. If among the many things this dissertation speaks, silences, erasures, suppressions, absences, and invisibilities are crucial, I cannot but fear to leave someone unmentioned. In case I do, I take the fault as a political problem I have to deal with.

Attuned to my own political vision, I must begin emphasizing that this dissertation is not only about the Red de Semillas Libres de Colombia (RSLC); it has also been written by the members I had the opportunity to meet and work with. The RSLC is a political project that has radically changed my own life and the lives of many, in a context in which hope is most likely be smashed by the power of domination. I am particularly grateful to Gloria Erazo, Dana Jaimes, Alba Portillo, Viviana Sánchez, Danilo Gómez, Juliana Flores, Jair Naranjo, Germán Vélez, Fernando Castrillón, and Mauricio Garcia for their solidarity and their contributions to my thinking throughout this project. They were patient with my questions and, literarily and metaphorically, walked me through many intellectual and physical spaces where I learned most of what I know now about seeds and seed struggles and where I could reflect on it.

Another intellectual and vital force moving this dissertation forward has been my advisor and mentor, Dr. Kelly Moore. She has offered to me academic, material, and affective support
every day since I started my doctorate at Loyola. Dr. Moore invested invaluable time and energy reading my work, providing detailed feedback, and suggesting how to improve my scholarship. She opened up spaces for us to write and publish together, and has used her large experience and wisdom as a scholar to patiently guide me through the professional academic world. Finally, her generosity sharing her inquisitive and provocative thoughts on capitalism, domination, heterosexism, racism, and liberation, among many others, has deeply contribute to my writing and my way of understanding sociology and practicing it. I am profoundly grateful to have Dr. Moore in my life, and I hope to continue building my ideas in conversation with her.

The other two members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Abby Kinchy, and Dr. Rhys Williams, have also been crucial during all stages of this dissertation. Both have taken the time to read previous versions of my chapters and have guided me towards the development of a better scholarship with rigor and kindness. I have learned a lot from you and from your work, and I feel honored to count on you as part of my committee.

To my page liberators’ friends (especially Kyle Wooly and Jennifer Cossyleon), all the gratitude as well. Your comments and discussions on my earlier work encouraged me to continue this project and to take it to more exciting directions.

Perhaps the friends and colleagues who have inspired me the most in the last years of my life have been Laura Gutiérrez, Adela Parra, Lina Pinto, Soulit Chacko. I had the pleasure to meet all of them in different academic spaces, and our intellectual and political affinities have allowed our relationships to evolve and be nurtured in many different ways. Many of the thoughts in this dissertation about care, temporality, and social movements were formed in conversations with them.

During my second year at Loyola, my husband, Miguel, and I hold a series of meetings at our small apartment in Glenwood Avenue with a few friends who, like us, wanted to learn about decolonial thought and practice. Fruitful conversations in this group grounded a critical part of my theoretical and political approach to the questions I address in this dissertation. To Bilgesu, Ashely, Cam, Enrique, Yesenia, Rodrigo, María del Rosario, and Cindy, thank you for making an otherwise lonely and cold Spring in Chicago, an exciting and warm one.
My Latin American friends in Chicago, María, Catalina, Diego, David, María Victoria, Andrea, Marina, Enrique, Yesenia, Juan Pablo, and Lucía, were, for the years we shared our lives in the city, my family. Thank you for the delicious food (¡Los sancochos!), the long nights of dancing, the study sessions, and hugs. I would not have gone through my first years at Loyola without your company. The same goes for my neighbors in Atlanta, Kim, Jessica, Daniel, Margaret, and Hideky, who have taught me the meaning of community. They are some of the people I admire the most, for they embody the political practice of unconditional solidarity that I crave for so much.

I am incredibly grateful to Rebekah Spera, who worked at the same pace that I did at the end of this journey to proofread this dissertation. Her gentle but precise hand made of this piece of work a much readable one. Of course, all the remaining errors are only mine.

At Loyola, Stephanie Decaluwe and Alexander Friedlen have been a crucial source of support. Stephanie has always been prompted in her responses and has always found ways to help me, even in the most absurd of all circumstances. Dr. Marilyn Krough and Dr. Ann Figert also supported me through my path as a graduate student, as did Dr. Judson Evrrett and Dr. Judith Wittner in the early stages. My good friends Serhan, Adrienne, Gwendolyn, and Kelsey were funny, critical, and generous, and helped me re-shape some of my previous understandings of privilege, diversity, and justice.

The first months of my experience as a mother were difficult: I was not getting much sleep and felt really tired. But our friends at Depaul’s philosophy department made this challenging time better. They brought us food, kept us company, and also found ways to contribute to our household economy so it would not sink. Dr. María del Rosario Acosta and Dr. Elizabeth Millán were two of the faculty who took care of me and my family, and our friends Ashley F., Dan, Ville, and Gil some of the students who did the same with great affection.

It would be inconsequential from me not to mention the incredible importance that materiality had for the culmination of this project. Although I faced moments of severe economic hardship through some of its stages, I received funding from The Schmitt Foundation, the Latin American Association of Social Studies of Science (ESOCITE), and the Iberoamerican Institute in
Berlin, that allowed me to survive, improve my research and writing, and meet wonderful people. I am grateful to those who believed in me and my work and economically supported it. Of special importance for the intellectual advancement of my project were the comments of Paulo Kreimer, who in the ESOCITE fellowship program for junior scholars read a rough first version of one of my chapters and provided sharp comments for its improvement. Likewise, the encouragement of Rosalba Casas to write and finish one of my first published articles was invaluable.

My family has been a cornerstone throughout this journey. My mom, Elizabeth, has been my example of tenacity and love. Her intelligence, care, and persistence in helping me become the person I am now have known no limits. My dad, Fabio, has supported my professional life with bad jokes and kind gestures that have lightened my path when it seemed too dark to be walked. Both of my parents are also examples of political leadership. Thanks to them, I learned from an early age the meaning of class struggle, and even if they are both quasi-retired, they continue to fight for a better world. Humberto, my stepdad, and Miguel’s family, Chucho, Elsa, and Andrés, have also been loving and generous with me for many years, soothing my soul in times of need and contributing enormously to shape my political self. I feel lucky to be part of two families of activists who, despite the brutality of violence and the consequences it has had in their own lives, have never ceased to fight.

The sincere gratitude that I feel for being able to share my life with my compañero Miguel and my daughter Antonia cannot be put in words. Miguel is my friend, my lover, my co-parent, and my colleague. His love, dedication, generosity, and solidarity have accompanied me for nine years and have radically transformed my life. This dissertation has also been shaped by our conversations, his comments on my work, our common readings, and our experiences in the world. And Antonia, mi dulce Antonia, has been the seed of my life. As a seed planted in my body, she traveled with me patiently throughout the oceans as I completed the initial parts of my dissertation fieldwork and other academic commitments that I had at the time. And as soon as she was born, she planted joy, sweetness and kindness, curiosity, creativity, and gratefulness in our lives. Her existence has shown me what radical love means.
Para mi mamá,
quien con su ejemplo y su amor incondicional me ha enseñado por qué y cómo luchar
La semilla es el comienzo y el centro de la vida. A medida que la semilla crece, crece una historia, crece la vida. Crece una historia de la semilla en su mundo y en el nuestro, que aunque a veces parecen distintos están siempre conectados. La semilla los conecta. Y crece la vida, que no es sólo la planta que cultivamos, sino todo lo demás que usted ve y no ve aquí. Así que cuando se mata a una semilla extrayéndola de su mundo y del nuestro, se mata también una historia y se acaba con la vida de todo un mundo.

Alba Portillo, 2017

The seed is the beginning and the center of life. As the seed grows, a story grows and life grows as well. A story of the seed in its world and our world grows; and, although those worlds sometimes stay apart from each other, they are always connected. The seed connects them. Life grows too, a life that is not only the plant that we harvest; it is also all of what you see and don’t see around here. So, when you kill a seed by extracting it from its world and ours, you are also killing a story and putting an end to the life of a whole world.

Alba Portillo, 2017
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS........................................................................................................ iii

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................. xii

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................. xiii

TABLE OF CONTENTS ......................................................................................................... ix

ABSTRACT .............................................................................................................................. xii

INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................... 17
  The Formation of the Corporate Seed Regime .................................................................... 2
  The formation of the CSR in Latin America ....................................................................... 6
  Theoretical Framework ..................................................................................................... 11
    Specific Angles of application of FSS and NPSS to my case ............................................. 13
      1. Seed meanings and classifications ........................................................................... 14
      2. Seed knowledges and knowers ............................................................................... 15
      3. Seed territories ......................................................................................................... 16
      4. Seed labor and patriarchy ....................................................................................... 19
  The RSLC ............................................................................................................................. 20
  Evidence and Analytic Strategy ....................................................................................... 26
    Participant observation ................................................................................................. 27
    Consent ............................................................................................................................ 29
    Interviews ........................................................................................................................ 31
    My positionality ............................................................................................................. 32
    Document analysis ....................................................................................................... 33
    Analytic Strategy .......................................................................................................... 36
  Dissertation structure ...................................................................................................... 37

CHAPTER 1. GOVERNING THE BIOS THROUGH ETHNORACIAL TERRITORIALIZATION ....39
  Ethnorace ............................................................................................................................ 39
  Colombia: the war has never ended ................................................................................. 43
  Ethnoracialization in Colombia ...................................................................................... 47
    Neoliberal Multiculturalism ........................................................................................... 48
  Ethnoracialization and Social Mobilization in Colombia ................................................... 53
    Campesinx Movements ................................................................................................. 54
    Indigenous Movements .................................................................................................. 57
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Analyzed documents 33
Table 2. RSLC documents 35
Table 3. RSLC videos 36
Table 4. Legal actions undertaken by the RSLC from 2005- to 2017 80
Table 5. Regulatory framework of Territories Free of Transgenics 141
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Women exchanging seeds. National Seed Gathering, 2017 23
Figure 2. Seed Exchange in the department of Antioquia, 2019 24
Figure 3. Documents produced by the RSLC I 25
Figure 4. Documents produced by the RSLC II 25
Figure 5. An inhabitant of Córdoba observes the coffin in which rest the remains of his disappeared son 45
Figure 6. Barack Obama and Juan Manuel Santos shaking hands 74
Figure 7. Seed laws in Colombia 75
Figure 8. Peace at last? 91
Figure 9. Rosa holding her notebook 93
Figure 10. Women's march for peace, 2016 98
Figure 11. Meeting between ONIC and Agrosavia, 2018 100
Figure 12. Seed School, 2017 122
Figure 13. Mariela, a member of the RSLC in 2018 134
Figure 14. Cultivated hectares of GM crops in Colombia by 2016 137
Figure 15. Territories Free of Transgenics declared before 2014 140
Figure 16. Seed exchange, 2017 143
Figure 17. Map of San Andrés de Sotavento Indigenous Reservation 144
Figure 18. Embera-Chami Territory xiii 149
Figure 19. Cañamomo y Lomaprieta seed house  

Figure 20. Cañamomo y Lomaprieta seed house's storage  

Figure 21. Location of the department of Nariño in Colombia  

Figure 22. Borrowing seeds  

Figure 23. T-Shirts of the campaign to recover corn seeds  

Figure 24. Regional seed network Antioquia
ABSTRACT

This dissertation follows the theoretical approach of the food regime scholarship (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989) to understand the process of privatization of seeds and the social and material processes associated with it, known as the Corporate Seed Regime (CSR). The CSR is a transnational regime of governance over the bios (life) born in the post-World-War II period, imagined and enforced by and through the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank (McMichael, 2013). I show how a corporate seed regime (CSR) has taken form in Colombia.

Extant sociological studies on the formation of CSRs explain it as an outcome of transnational and national relationships between states and capital. Using a feminist critical science studies approach, I show how a social movement group, the RSLC, shapes the CSR through specific temporal and spatial orders, processes of gender/race formation, geography, and political history.

To do so, I study the actions, practices, and discourses deployed by RSLC members through document analysis, participant observation, and interviews. I reveal how they interpret these policies as mechanisms that further subjugate people's seeds, knowledges, and territories, reproducing colonial and contemporary orders of racial/gendered stratification, and how the RSLC reorders the CSR and the racialized, gendered, and territorial lives of people, through their interactions with seeds and seed epistemes.

I develop four core arguments throughout the dissertation. First, I show that social movement actions shape CSRs, and are forms of generative resistance that simultaneously create territorial, ethnoracial, and gendered relationships with and through seeds. CSR formation is thus ethnoracialized as a technology and a counter-technology of governance. As a technology of governance, ethnorace structures identity, territorial rights and territory itself via agricultural laws. As a counter-technology of governance, ethnoracialized territories, marked out by a history of extraction, are turned by the RSLC into territories that articulate seed and human
relationships in a unique way that cannot always be co-opted by the state, technoscientific or financial powers. I found substantial differences in territorial and seed epistemic generative practices and interactions among communities ethnoracialized as indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and mestizos.

Second, I demonstrate that agricultural and environmental transformations in Colombia are always entwined with the history of war and the history of the struggle for survival of communities living in the midst of it. Against a backdrop of research that focuses on social movement demobilization in Colombia, I explain that in the case of seed struggles, war and violence have not decreased mobilization, but transformed it.

Third, I demonstrate that the Colombian CSR reinforces colonial/capitalist/patriarchy as a system of domination by fueling the dismantling of family and community units, positioning rural women in further situations of subordination, and reproducing sexist masculinities that damage community tissue.

Finally, I show that the generative character of the RSLC praxis and their connection with other struggles across the world articulate a different positionality of Latin American thought, research, and activism that does not comply with the idea of it being part of a so-called periphery, but stresses its own importance as one of many epicenters of transversal struggles that include oppressed peoples, territories, and knowledges in both the North and the South.
INTRODUCTION

Land, agriculture, and seeds have undergone substantial transformations in the last forty years with the development of biotechnology applied to agriculture, or agro-biotechnology, and the systems of power and regulation that have been developed to protect the industry. Most studies exploring questions related to these changes have focused on six main axes. First, the relation that agro-biotechnology has with the expansion and deepening of rural poverty and capital accumulation (Andhra Pradesh 2001a,b; Gujarat 2008, 2005; Brown 2004; Altiere and Rosset 1999b; Barreda 2003; Kloppenburg 1998; Prudham 2007; Newell 2006). Second, the environmental - health problems related to the use of agrochemicals and consumption of GE foods (Azevedo and Araujo 2003; Singh et al. 2006). Third, the system of governance of agro-biotechnology, which includes the entanglement of national and transnational law, and the implementation risk management and assessment techniques (Gonzales 2004; Abergel 2007; Bravo, Toro, Vélez 2014; Heller 2006; Felt 2015; Otero 2012). Fourth, the role that national political cultures play at the time of making public policy decisions about GE crop production, regulation, and consumption (Chauvet, Chavero, and Zavala 2014; Parthasarathy 2017; Fitting 2011). Five, on seed saving practices and strategies that emerge as responses to conflicts over the meaning, use and property of seeds, and deeper conflicts about ontological and epistemological conceptions of the relationship between humans and non-humans (Phillips 2016; Demeulenaere 2014). And six, the contentious politics of GE crops and agro-biotechnology governance (Motta 2016; Lapegna 2016; Kinchy 2012; Fitting and Gutiérrez 2016).

In this dissertation, I am interested in understanding the contentious politics of seeds and the remaking of biosocial arrangements and structures carried out by RSLC members. Thus, although I draw from key contributions of the aforementioned scholarship, I focus primary on the last strand as my main interlocutor. Importantly, to understand the process of privatization of seeds and the social and material processes associated with it, I foreground my analysis on the theoretical approach of the food regime scholarship (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989),
which has framed this process as the formation of a Corporate Seed Regime (CSR).

I study the CSR formation in Colombia at the political, material, social, cultural, territorial, and epistemological levels, through the examination of the RSLC organizing processes and relations with the state. I argue that the RSLC deconstructs and reconstructs an organized techno-legal, ethnoracial, and spatial order, as much as it creates and redistributes resources through the disruption and rebuilding of seed, territorial, and ethno-racial law.

I explain next how has the CSR formed at a global level. Then, I discuss how it has been shaped in Latin America.

**The Formation of the Corporate Seed Regime**

The CSR is a transnational regime of governance over the bios (life) born in the post-World-War II period, imagined and enforced by and through the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank (McMichael, 2013). This regime is intrinsically tied to the laboratory, the bank, and the courtroom as the central sites for its maintenance and reproduction. The laboratory is conceived as the primary location of the production of technoscientific truth (a disembodied kind of truth); the bank is designed as a space that allows that truth to be produced by setting the rules determining which knowledges (and, consequently, which bodies) are funded or not; and the courtroom turns the search for truth into a matter of “justice.”

The CSR is the result of a historical process of food regime formation. McMichael (2013) historicized the emergence, implementation, and decomposition of other global food regimes, some of which co-inhabit with the CSR. These regimes articulate particular forms of colonial capitalism through the creation of food chains that foster the generation and maintenance of already existent (but also new) social inequalities. In McMichael’s own words, the food regime analysis “is an intrinsically comparative approach to recent world history, as so far as food regimes come and go with political re-ordering, in a mutually conditioning dynamic” (Ibid: 2). In this sense, understanding how food regimes form and how they evolve in relation to the global movement of goods, labor, and capital, allows scholars to understand as well the larger political ordering that is at stake.

In the food regime genealogy, McMichael underscores three different formations. The first, derived from the colonial slave trade, was based in the plantation economy and enslaved
labor. The second was focused on the expansion of the agro-industrial model at the territorial and market levels. The third was dedicated to securitized neoliberalism as a political, economic, and cultural project, where states and communities are subordinates of the market. The CSR combines elements of all three, but it is fundamentally an extension of the third.

The food regime focus emphasizes critical shifts in western world power, affected by the very structure of western colonialism: from British hegemony in eighteenth the nineteenth centuries, to the US imperialism of the late nineteenth century to the present. The latter, during the Cold War, pushed its “allies” in the “Third World” to internalize “the US model of national agro-industrialization, adopting green revolution technologies, and instituting land reform to dampen peasant unrest and extent market relations to the countryside” (McMichael, 2013:4).

The food regime formation is also rooted in asymmetrical power relations where the colonial powers become the recipients and transformers of the food produced “elsewhere”, and the so-called peripheries, the providers of labor force and raw commodities. In other words, as I explain more in depth in Chapter 1, peripheral countries become exporters and centers of extraction, dependent upon the political and economic will of imperial powers (Amin, 1974).

This, however, does not mean that food regime formation is an even process that can be restricted to the particular power dynamic that I just described. Even though at a macro-scale that is what the picture looks like, at a micro-scale there are many factors that play a role in the process. Of special importance has been the involvement of local elites in both imperial and colonized territories, who, at times, have work towards the formation of the food regimes with similar enthusiasm. Other factors also underscored in recent scholarship include geography and social movement resistance on the ground (Kinchy, 2012; Fitting, 2011; Friedmann, 2005; Lapegna, 2016; Motta, 2016). Thus, the idea of food regime formation rejects abstraction in that it “concretizes historical relations between state-building, land/frontier colonization, food circuits, agro-industrialization, consumption patterning, transnational corporate strategy, and food and agrarian counter-movements” (McMichael, 2013: 12).

Food regimes have been central to the creation and sustenance of the colonial/capitalist power configurations throughout history that have established the current world order. Such a dynamic has functioned in the same dialectical way as capitalism has, tied to politically organized
cycles of accumulation, grounded in the material, cultural, epistemic and social conditions that help bring legitimacy to the regimes themselves.

Scholars point out, too, the fact that food regimes are regimes of governance that initiate a process of enclosure of the commons (seeds, water, land, knowledge). In the case of the CSR, it has done so through mechanisms that made corporations subjects of rights and gave the liberal state power to govern in favor of capital (Trauger 2014). For example, in their influential analysis, Borras et al. (2013) define land grabbing as the control of land and the resources (such as water) associated with it. It involves the direct production and export of both food and agricultural raw materials for the production of concentrates for animals, agrofuels such as ethanol, and inputs for the food industry. And, it is connected as well with real estate speculation, the development of mining and forestry projects, and environmental conservation for large-scale (eco) tourism projects or for "green markets" such as carbon credits (green grabbing) (Hernández and Gutiérrez, 2018).

The CSR follows the enclosure pattern through specific mechanisms that organize and structure the privatization of seeds, such as the production of national and international legislation (fundamentally, certification and intellectual property laws), the creation of a financial assemblage that encourages seed property accumulation, and the intensification of plant-genetic focused technoscientific research.

Crucially, the CSR produces two other problematic processes: the parallel territorialization and de-territorialization of seeds and the dis-embodiment of seed-knowledges. Enclosure is, fundamentally, a territorial practice. For seed enclosure to take place, not only must seeds and seed-knowledges be privatized, but the land must also be appropriated (through direct ownership or leasing programs) to cultivate these privatized seeds (through direct ownership or leasing programs). In this sense, seed enclosure implies the re-territorialization or reconfiguration of the politics of land and the meaning of space. Seed enclosures also de-territorialize seeds because commercial seeds are increasingly created and developed off-site/ex-situ, which means that they are disconnected from the world of biosociality provided by in-situ/in-placed/territorial cultivation. Through these processes, seed-knowledges become expropriated from particular bodies as well. They no longer belong to
peasant’s bodies, which could be women’s bodies, black bodies, and/or disabled bodies, nor do they belong to the community body which carries their stories; they belong to the technoscien
tific disembodied industry (Weber 2010; Lam 2016).

Thus, essential to the food regime scholarship has been the understanding of the role that technology plays in capitalism development. Marx already had drawn attention to it throughout his work (see for example Capital Volume I, 1867/1906), as did too, later on, the Frankfurt School, particularly Horkheimer and Adorno (1972). They emphasized three important aspects of the relationship between technology and capitalism: (i) it guarantees human control over nature; (ii) it augments the generation of surplus value and; (iii) it fosters human alienation.

In consonance with this understanding, but going beyond it, the food regime approach understands that each food regime has been propelled and maintained through different technologies. And the case of the CSR is not the exception. As Kinchy (2012) poses it, the development of biotechnology applied to agriculture has marked a historical changed in the ways in which humans relate to seeds, food, and agriculture. In the 70s, seeds began to be “designed” in the lab using genetic engineering, a process that set the ground for the CSR to flourish. In the market, genetically engineered seeds (GE) have a different value and meaning than non-GE seeds (which in Colombia are called criollo or native seeds), carrying a completely novel set of property relations.

One of the critical mechanisms implemented in the formation of the CSR has been crafting international agreements that aim to regulate and control what they call "vegetable materials" (including seeds), such as the International Conventions for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV 78 and UPOV 91). Another mechanism has been the generation of Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). These conventions and TRIPS were planned to harmonize and standardize international trade, research, and profit of vegetable materials. UPOV 78 AND 91 introduced food safety standards based on the science of hygiene (biosecurity), which tends to manage the production of food in favor of transnational capital (Kurtz, Trauger, et Passidomo 2013). TRIPS enforce the Intellectual Property Regime (IPR) established by the WTO in 1994, which made patents the main legal channel for research and trade of plant varieties.
In the 1980s, biotechnology patents were extended to include genetically engineered plants and organisms as inventions, which became one of the most problematic aspects of seeds enclosure (Kinchy 2012; Kloppenburg 1988; Parthasarathy 2017). The patent has historically worked as a material and symbolic means for colonial powers to control and profit from international trade. However, while European countries have protected state power and the public good from the interests of the marketplace, the US has done almost the opposite. In the US, the patent is a symbol of progress and human invention, and a basis for competitiveness (Parthasarathy 2017).

Yet, as homogenous as the formation of the CSR may seem by its theoretical characterization, it actually varies substantially depending on the particular location where scholars have studied it. Of central importance for this project is what the research on the CSR formation in Latin America has shown and what is lacking. I answer these two questions in the next section.

The formation of the CSR in Latin America
Bravo, Toro, and Vélez (2014), Fitting (2011), Gras and Hernández (2016), Kinchy (2012), Motta (2016), Lapegna (2016), and Villulla (2014) have been some of the scholars studying the formation of the CSR in Latin America. They point out to the increased immersion of Latin America in the global economy as one of the causes of the expansion of its commercial ties to new world powers, such as China. This scholarship analyzes how GE crops have been growing in the region, with a special focus on corn and soy production in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. Lapegna (2016) and Villula (2014) explore soy expansion in Argentina; and Motta (2016) makes a comparative study of Argentina and Brazil, two of the largest producers of GE soy in the world. The three authors draw on the food regime scholarship, as well on neo-Gramscian perspectives on what Newell (2009) called biohegemony, to shed light on how the CSR found a comfortable home in Argentina thanks to the way in which the neoliberal project developed there. They underscored how the CSR has operated through three main mechanisms: (i) the forced displacement of peasants and indigenous communities; (ii) the intensification of the uncontrolled use of agrochemicals and the extension of the agrarian frontier and; (iii) the state and corporations discourse about technology as being neutral and as intrinsically beneficial for the national economy, dismissing entirely that in Argentina, agrobiotechnology has developed in
a niche of deeply unequal power relations.

Lapegna and Motta’s work contributes substantially to the social movement scholarship and the literature on critical agrarian studies by showing the limitations of the concept of co-optation, and by showing that social movement members were ambivalent about their political position regarding the technology and the process of enclosure itself. Their work also shows the great regional variance that it is encountered when analyzing the CSR formation in Latin America. Specifically, Motta reveals why Brazilians have actively opposed the regime, whereas Argentines, despite some resistance, have largely accommodated to it.

Motta also shows that one of the key differences between Argentina and Brazil that determined, to a large scale, social movements’ organizational capacities, was the previous history of agrarian-based grassroots organizing of each. While Brazil already had established and well-organized agrarian groups such as the Movimento Sem Terra (MST), Argentina’s grassroots organizations had been hurt during the economic crisis of 1991, which left the country impoverished and in social chaos.

Nevertheless, Motta and Lapegna emphasize that, regardless of the strength of social movements, demobilization was a central factor determining the consolidation of the CSR. Demobilization, for them, was motivated by four elements. The first was Argentinian President Kirchner’s and Brazilian President Lula’s attempts to use the money generated by the agro-industry to fuel their programs of social reform. These two presidents were relying on a social base support that, for many years, did not publicly oppose this approach to agricultural and political governance. However, as it also happened in Bolivia and Ecuador, throughout the years some social movements and grassroots organizations became increasingly critical of it. And while some groups remain cohesive and continued supporting their presidents, others separated from the big national movements or broke due to strong internal disagreements.

Second was the conception of peasants and GE challengers as “underdeveloped” or “backwards.” Even though both governments had an important base in the peasant sectors (especially Brazil), the colonial imaginary of the countryside as an underdeveloped site never went away. The developmentalist narrative (Escobar 2012) impacted the most rural groups, who were directly affected by the agri-business’ colonization of rural territories.
Third, clientelism and patronage politics (particularly in Argentina) not only characterized official politics, but affected how people came to be involved with the movements. This diminished trust in organizing and fostered movement demobilization.

And fourth, the growing skepticism in the popular base of the movements regarding the power of social mobilization to effectively transform their lives produced by the general impoverishment of the rural population and the lack of possibilities for the creation of long-term alternatives for those who opposed the soy boom.

Villulla’s work (2014) shows another face of the regime formation that is less focused on understanding the dynamics of contentious politics that intervene the consolidation of the CSR in Argentina, and more concentrated in emphasizing the labor and territorial changes that the model has brought with it. In Argentina and other soy centers of worldwide production such as Brazil, “a good portion of the national production has transitioned to rented lands and is managed by a new class of agricultural entrepreneurs, who coordinate agricultural activities throughout decentralized networks of service contractors” (Silva, 2020: 2). One of the implications of the re-structuring of the agricultural sector is that in the network-like production chain, paid and unpaid labor meet to create value at different points of the production and commercialization processes. In this context, Villulla underscores that agricultural workers have accommodated to the “flexibility” and disaggregation of soy corporate networks, in which they are constantly in the move, living in isolated “soy camps” where no one but other workers are allowed, and where the separation between day and night, work and leisure fades as they have to work within the temporal order of the industry.

Scholars have explained the CSR formation in Mexico in a quite different way. There, as in Colombia and other countries across the world, the CSR was initiated through a Free Trade Agreement: the North America Free Trade Agreement, effective since January 1994. However, unlike Colombia, where the resistance was organized way before the free trade agreements were signed, in Mexico the controversy exploded a few years after, when GE contamination in native varieties was found in the south of the country. This is the geographic center of the Kinchy (2012) and Fitting (2011) studies. Both authors agree that corn/maize has a long history in Mexico’s culture, which stands out as a strong difference compared to the case of soy in
Argentina and Brazil, where the crop did not belong to the national culture and imaginary of the nation.

Kinchy focuses on understanding the role of technoscience in the GM controversy in Mexico, paying particular attention to how the scientization of politics has grown in that context. She reveals that social movements’ credibility greatly varied depending on their involvement with institutional science or their focus on sociocultural consequences of GE expansion. When the former happens, movements seemed to have more credibility, when the latter was chosen, such credibility declined. That is why she identifies GE monitoring as a contested tool that, at times, was helpful to gain political space. Thus, while she finds that, indeed, there are many ways in which technoscientific expertise and methods can contribute to the making of social movements’ claims against a specific socio-environmental policy (in this case, GE corn), it is crucial to move beyond scientism to push for the introduction of public participation in the decision-making process regarding these issues.

Fitting’s (2011) findings share some of Kinchy’s emphasis while also offering new insights about the substantial changes through which the Mexican countryside is going. She argues that many of the scholarship on the CSR accentuates a dichotomous understanding of agriculture as either agro-industrial and aggressive to rural inhabitants and the environment, or traditional, family-based, and romanticized. But she found that the picture is more complex than that. Not only the CSR, but other political, social, and economic transformations have pushed small-scale farmers out of their territories to look for other means of livelihood. In many cases, this has implied the migration of middle-aged and young people to the US. For the most part, the elder are those who stay. This changes the ways in which peasant families understand, live and work in the countryside, making family agriculture almost impossible, while also opening the space for the agri-business to keep growing.

Finally, I want to call attention to the work of Bravo et al. (2014). They brought attention to the formation of the CSR in Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Colombia, the four members of the Andean Community of Nations (CAN). These countries began to implement seed laws in the 1970s, in accordance with the international regulatory frameworks of the time, such as the one written in 1978 by the Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants, (UPOV, 78). The entry
of seed regulatory frameworks into these countries was facilitated by the political climate that they were experiencing, including the military dictatorships in Ecuador (1976-1979) and Bolivia (1971-1978), and the militaristic regimes in Peru (1971-1981) and Colombia (1970-1982).

These governments, although profoundly conservative on an ideological level, brought with them national projects that were aligned with US geopolitical interests of economic, political and military intervention in Latin America during the Cold War. Additionally, in Peru, Moore and Woolley (2020) have found a major appeal to neoliberalism that also created the conditions for the CSR to expand. This appeal comes from a history in which the nationalization of industries resulted not in redistribution, but in a concentration of wealth in the hands of political elites, who became both economically and politically powerful. Building alliances with the elites in these countries, the US managed to implement their preferred forms of governance, which included the disarticulation of social resistance, and the deepening of the extractive economic models prevailing in the region since colonial times.

However, although US alliance with local elites has facilitated the implementation of the CSR in Latin America, it is also important to emphasize that in cases such as the soybean agribusinesses, regional colonialism has played a big role. Oliveira and Hecht (2018) explain that this is especially notorious in the case of Brazil, which has become the most important player in the industry, with companies based there buying land and expanding GE soy monocrops across the region. McKay and Colque (2016) also show that other countries, such as Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela have also preferred to invest in Bolivia than to push the GE soy production at the domestic level. In these cases, Latin American owned agribusinesses companies used the tools provided by the CSR to build and expand their business, but do not necessarily do so with US support. Local alliances and partnership with Chinese companies are central too to the growth and implementation of the regime, both nationally and transnationally (Yan, Chen, and Hok 2018).

Today, the four Andean countries are collectively regulated by CAN decisions 345, 486 and 391, The Nagoya Treaty (2010), and The Convention on Biological Diversity (1992). This shared international regulatory framework does not, however, create an even formation of the CSR in these countries. Hernández Vidal (2018) showed that Bolivia and Colombia, despite of
differing radically in their political ideologies, coincide in the extractivist nature of their economies. Colombia has been a pioneer the incorporation of intellectual property and certification laws for seed production and commercialization; Bolivia has become the third largest Latin American soybean producer. Along the same lines, she emphasized that Peru and Ecuador, also almost on opposite sides of the spectrum regarding political culture and ideology, aligned in the opposition to transgenics at the state level (76). Ironically (at least for the case of Bolivia), Ecuador and Bolivia stand out for their advancement in food and seed sovereignty in the legislative apparatus, while Colombia has been notorious in the region for having a history of pro-corporate state, but being less successful in the introduction of GE crops at the territorial level.

Thus, studies of Argentina, Brazil, México, and the Andean countries have, for the most part, understood the process of seed regime formation as happening in interaction with territorial formations, social movements, and community-based organizations, through opposition or accommodation, shaping the form that the CSR has taken in particular contexts. These scholars have also underscored the contentious nature of food regime formations.

However, they focus almost exclusively on the territorial characteristics of GE expansion and the anti-GE controversies, and in doing so they shed light on how GE crops have become widespread at the national, regional and transregional, and local levels. While extremely important, these studies leave out criollo and native seeds, which I foreground in this project. In Colombia, criollo and native seeds continue to have a central space in communities’ lives, even though they face other challenges posed by certification and intellectual property laws. Critically, the use and reproduction of criollo and native seeds shapes the contours and possibilities of GE seed expansion Colombia, where GE crops have not been produced with at the same rate as they have in Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, and Bolivia, which makes them more a failed attempt of the government to “modernize” agriculture than a reality affecting vast areas of the country.

Theoretical Framework
As I showed above, the analytical focus of the CSR in particular, and the Food Regime in general, ground my understanding of seed conflicts in Colombia. However, in this dissertation, I use
feminist science studies to approach aspects of the conflict that have not and cannot be illuminated by the CSR scholarship due to the prevalence that it gives to the analysis of global political economy. Those aspects are central for my work, where I inquire about how the RSLC organizes to challenge the colonial continuities and disruptions of the current market and regulatory national and transnational bio-agricultural arrangements, as they work through specific gender, racial, and class relations, and create or contest the production of subaltern identities.

Thus, to develop that line of inquiry, I follow feminist science scholarship (from now on FSS; Foster 2016; Harding 2008; Schiebinger 1993; Pollock and Subramaniam 2016; TallBear 2014), which has proposed a critical way of studying and understanding the relationships between technoscience and society that takes into account the contributions made by critical race scholars (Mills, 1997; Benjamin 2019; Chun 2009; Coleman 2009; Omi and Winant 1994; Wade 2010) and decolonial scholars (Boaventura de Sousa Santos 2007; Escobar 2012; Mignolo 2011; Lugones 2007; Quijano 2007; Mignolo and Walsh 2018) about the co-constitution of colonialism and capitalism and their system of social and racial/gendered stratification. They have deconstructed and refined the conceptualizations and analytical frameworks of these fields, introducing an intersectional socio-historical perspective to illuminate the continuities and disruptions of technoscientific regimes of domination.

To complement my analytical approach to the study of the RSLC, I also rely on the theoretical framework of the New Political Sociology of Science (NPSS, Moore and Frickel 2008). I follow their approach by bringing my attention to how power is constituted, contested, and built in the seed conflict in Colombia, looking out how power travels across actors, such as the Colombian state and the different government agencies, the women and men at the RSLC, lawmakers, and scientists. I make an in-depth analysis of how institutions articulate and deploy laws and regulations that fuel, ease, or transform the conflict. And I perform a critical examination of how networks of knowledge, people, and power shape the formation of the CSR.

I also draw from NPSS my analytic concentration on the creation, maintenance, and reproduction of structural inequality in the CSR. Moore and Frickel (2008: 10-13) underscore the importance of mapping the research process considering "the unequal distributions of power
and resources, rules and rulemaking, and the dynamics of organizations. Throughout this and the following chapters of this dissertation, I analyze the process of formation and reception of the CSR in Colombia and the regulatory system that it establishes, and I examine the RSLC's generative practices and repertoires of contention. My goal, then, is twofold: I want to understand how they modify, crack, or subvert structural inequality while identifying how they also generate and/or sediment practices of domination that reinforce it.

Analytically, I treat the RSLC as a series of processes of organizing that have similar goals and targets, and that have cumulatively worked towards their achievement. This continuous work has produced complex and sometimes contradictory outcomes as well. In my analysis, I identify the contradictions as arising from already existing and always-in-formation power relations that determine, to a large extent, who, how, and when new biosocial arrangements take place. With the understanding that the formation of the CSR in Colombia has occurred in relation with the RSLC’s actions, my empirical and analytical conclusions are distinctive because of the attention given to the history of ethnoracialization in Colombia, and the histories of war, violence, and the attempts to “make peace”, which, as I had mentioned earlier, no other country in the region has experienced.

Specific Angles of application of FSS and NPSS to my case
A critical anchor of this dissertation is the idea that, similar to the way in which the Spaniards and Portuguese required technoscientific innovations, originated and developed in the colonies and by the colonized, to maintain and expand their empires, contemporary capitalist forms of power that deploy colonial mechanisms of expansion still need technoscientific innovations to seize, retain, and augment power. And, in the same way that the Spanish and the Portuguese empires did not operate on their own but through the Jesuits, the imperial armies deployed and constructed in the new world, and the European trading companies that were instrumental in the making and proliferation of the plantations, contemporary forms of imperial power, such as the US (the quintessential modern empire) and transnational corporations, function through servile nation-states and regional and local elites that use the monocrop as the modern plantation for capital extraction. As I mentioned in the previous section, I include regional and
local elites as central subjects in the implementation of colonial expansion to show that it is both an external and internal phenomenon, irreducible to a binary conflict of North vs. South.

Old and contemporary expressions of imperial power have created a world-system (Wallerstein 2004) in which the social organization of labor is based on the racialized/gendered understandings of land, territory, bodies, communities, and epistemes. The racial/racist practices of the old colonies translated into administrative and economic colonialism, settler colonialism, and the colonial cultural system (Bacchetta, Mairam, and Winant 2019). In the colonial cultural system, for example, we find the production of colonial discourses and imaginaries that, as Bhabha puts it well, "construct the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (1970:71). The construction of the colonized as degenerate has had different faces but has always kept them in a position of material, symbolic, political, and social inferiority. Importantly, since territories have been subjected to the coloniality of power, nature has also been subalternized (Merchant 1990).

In my research, the racialized/gendered colonial/capitalist order is reflected in at least four aspects of the CSR. First, in how different kinds of seeds are classified and named. Second, in how the CSR frames and constructs the spheres and subjects of legitimate seed knowledges. Third, in how the spaces for seed production are conceptualized and employed. And fourth, in the organization of physical and affective labor.

1. Seed meanings and classifications

Seeds have meanings. Such meanings are rooted to particular histories and places; to the specific uses that they are given by people and institutions. Under the CSR, seeds have been categorized in Latin America as genetically modified or engineered (also called "improved seeds") or as native and creole. Each kind of seed belongs to different actors in the conflict, and both actors and seeds represent different temporal and affective orders. "Improved seeds" are produced by the seed industry, while native and creole seeds by rural peoples. Improved seeds are thought of as being more productive and stronger, while native and creole seeds are seen

---

1 Quijano (2007) developed the concept of coloniality of power to talk about the colonial structures, practices, and discourses that outlive colonialism itself, becoming a continuous form of power in contemporary life.
as weaker and unproductive. Such systems of seed classification are thus traversed by racialized hierarchies of nature/culture that overlapped in various ways. For example, in the study of rice, Gan found that "agronomists and scientists at rice institutes organize seed collections as "modern" or "elite" seeds; "traditional" or "native" landraces; "weedy relatives"; and "wild" ancestors (2019:2). "Modern," "elite," "improved," and GM seeds carry with them the "potential solutions" for catastrophic futures that increase the already deep anxieties of our times. "Creole," "traditional," and "native" seeds are relegated to the past or re-symbolized as commodifiable material with contradictory "potentials," among which the potential to repair structural colonial damages has become salient in benefit-sharing initiatives. In the dissertation, I explain the variety of meanings that different kinds of seeds have for communities, showing the ways in which the meanings are mobilize to foster or decrease resistance to the CSR, and the temporal dimensions in which they move.

2. Seed knowledges and knowers

As I pointed out above, the CSR continues with the logic of subalternization of people and knowledges through the implementation of several mechanisms. First, by removing rural people as subjects of knowledge. As Villulla (2014) showed, the GE soy industry de-skills, de-territorializes, and isolates rural people by transforming them into mobile workers, a process that eliminates their possibilities to create and share knowledge about seeds and agriculture. In this process, the knowers become the “experts” of the industry, certified scientists and agronomists whose knowledge, skills, and practices aligned with developmentalist understandings of agriculture and rurality, and the interests of the industry itself.

Second, by relying and maintaining a regime based on pro-corporate certified expertise through the very designed and framing of what legitimate knowledge is. Thus, the laws and regulations if the CSR respond to the colonial/capitalist legacy of modern science, and the trends of scientization that Moore et al. (2011) and Kinchy (2012) described when analyzing the kinds of epistemic practices and discourses that become central at the state level and in the making of public policy under neoliberalism. They point out that the kinds of knowledge that count for

---

2 Haraway (1993) coins the term nature/culture to point out that nature is not separate from culture, nor is it independent from how people organize it, depending on their needs, beliefs, social structures, and histories.
policy are those that match with Western understandings of scientific knowledge, which pass through the lab, and are developed by people with certified knowledge. Perhaps one of the most well-known accounts of this trend of analysis is the extensive work of Vandana Shiva (1988, 2000). In her work, Shiva undertakes an extensive analysis of how Intellectual Property Laws (IPL) over seeds dismiss women and indigenous’ knowledge, helping to reproduce old structures of domination and exploitation. She shows that seed corporations employ the technoscientific language of genes and molecules as a way to legitimize patents and IPLs. She calls this bio-colonialism, a form of contemporary colonialism based on the bioeconomy that frames extraction as a scientific and property matter based on “discovery”.

This feminist perspective has strongly influenced the scholarly debate on certification and privatization of seeds and the place of situated knowledges in structures of national and transnational governance of nature/culture. In particular, as Gutiérrez-Escobar shows (2015), this framework is the basis of the notion of epistemic coloniality that has been widely discuss in Latin American decolonial scholarship.

Epistemic coloniality refers to the pattern of power that instead of being limited to the formal relation of power between two peoples or nations, has to do with the forms in which work, knowledge, authority, and culture are articulated through the capitalist market and the idea of race. The idea of epistemic coloniality is important in my research. It serves as a framework to understand the formation of the CSR and its introduction in southern countries from a historical perspective in which epistemic contestation and relationships domination are central. It also allows me to show how is the RSLC re-placing the centers of knowledge and the knowers in the public debate about seeds. And finally, it provides critical analytical, empirical, and theoretical elements to contribute to the bulk of Latin American scholarship that is being produced to nurture the collective anti-colonial project called “Epistemologies of/from the South” (Sousa Santos, 2014) that is also a tune to feminist science perspectives such as Harding’s idea of multiple sciences (Harding 2008), and Moore, Hernández, and Kleinman (2019) understanding of the relationship between knowledge and justice, among many others.

3. Seed territories

NPSS and FSS pay special attention to place, and thus, they also play a central role in the way in
which I study the relationships between seeds and territories. As I stated above, I follow the idea that there is a co-constituency between nature and culture, mediated by ethnoracial and gendered appropriations of the territory and the ways in which dominant and popular sectors of society demarcated the limits of belonging. In this line, I conceptualize territory as a "historical formation that needs to be understood within the context in which it is conceived, produced, lived, re-produced, and unproduced" (Vergara-Figueroa 2018: 27).

Throughout the dissertation, I show that there is a tied relationship between the formation of the CSR and the ways in which racial and territorial formation have been historically co-created in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly in Colombia. The Spanish, French, and English Crowns shaped a territorial/racial regime based on the distribution of labor and the prominent racist ideologies of the time that questioned the humanity of indigenous people but did not doubt the bestiality of Africans (Friedemann 1976; Friede and Keen 1971). In some cases, in the territories dominated by Spaniards, the indigenous communities that were not massacred, were moved, most of the time, to the mountains. Trying to keep indigenous people and African enslaved people separated, the latter were taken to plantations or kept in the lowlands, close to the rivers and centers for mineral extraction, where they worked mainly in mining activities. The different territorial relations that indigenous people and Africans established throughout the colonial era continued during the struggles for independence and are salient elements affecting the development of today's socio-environmental conflicts in Colombia (Bebbington 2013; Sánchez Ángel 2016; Ulloa and Coronado Delgado 2016), including seed conflicts.

Importantly, Vergara-Figueroa (2018) argues that it is critical to see the configuration of black territories throughout history as the making and re-making of World-Historical-Emptied-Spaces. She conceptualizes these as "the territories where exploration, exploitation, violence, deracination, politics of development, and contestation for liberation coexist, covered by the mantle of marginality and barbarity" (23). These spaces, she shows, have been depicted as naturally ungovernable, and also, insurmountable, which has opened them to colonial/capitalist territorial expansion, mainly through land dispossession. In Colombia, the Historical-Emptied-Spaces are the so-called "black regions" of the country: the department of Chocó and the Pacific region.
The process of dispossession of land and territory has happened, precisely, through the economic, epistemic, political, and socio-cultural creation of these as "blank" or "empty" of people, progress, wealth, light, and reason, and in need of outside intervention. As a consequence, she states, Afro-Colombian territories have been converted into laboratories of death (of both direct and slow death, as proposed by Bacchetta, Mairam, and Winant 2019). This conceptualization is crucial for my work. It grounds the explanation about the absence of a solid and visible Afro-Colombian base at the RSLC, as well as their exclusion from recent initiatives of collaboration between the Colombian state and other groups that belong to the RSLC, such as indigenous communities. I explore this in depth in the next chapters.

Another face of the construction of lands and territories as empty is shown by Oliveira and Hecht (2018) and their discussion on how soy has become the central means for contemporary state ‘territorialization’ in places considered “empty” in South America, such as the Chaco region in Bolivia and Argentina. They notice that “Given the low productivity of extensive ranching, land degradation and abandonment, low employment, and deep association with speculation and violence generated over decades, such land use came under sustained critique as a development strategy, enabling the search for a substitute that could better accomplish state goals” (267). This has happened in Colombia too, where even though the GE soy and corn industries have not found a niche, the government’s approach to land and territory that are not “productive” enough to contribute to the GDP of the country is similar. It is conceived as empty land. Such emptiness, however, has a different nature in Colombia, where the land or the territory may be already occupied by armed groups who denied entry to the state. I develop this point further in chapter 5, where I talk precisely about the issues of territorialization and de-territorialization in the context of “perpetual” war.

Crucially, in my analysis I do not give more prevalence to the racial/territorial formation imposed by the CSR and other forms and regimes of power than the one I give to understanding how people re-making territory and territorial meanings through organized resistance. Thus, I devote a component of the dissertation to reveal the generative practices of the RSLC and the ways in which they re-define territories and relationships within and with it.
4. Seed labor and patriarchy

Many of the studies of on the CSR focus on the analysis of how the nature of rural labor has changed in the countryside. They emphasize how the CSR profits from migration and migrants, and how it small landowners stop working their own land to become lessors of agribusiness companies that run the production system with specialized labor and the advice of certified experts. Hecht and Oliveira (2018:) point out that such companies “merge agroindustrial and management expertise with rented farmland and hired labor to expand vertiginously across the continent. Now, literally hundreds of thousands of farm units are operated by a handful of companies that manage millions of hectares across South America” (265). These studies are mostly centered on men, disregarding women and other subjects affected by the transformation of labor in the CSR. Others focus on the analysis of “gender” (Ferro 2013; Miranda 2012; VanWey and Spera 2013; Richards and VanWey 2015), taken as a code for women, neglecting the structural and cultural process of gender construction and gender relationality.

A feminist approach allows me to demonstrate how patriarchy shapes the CSR and the resistance to it. To focus on patriarchy and not on gender is key since it reveals, precisely, how a regime of power creates and positions gender through different stages of the process. Importantly, my analysis of patriarchy in the formation of the CSR seeks to intersect with my analysis of ethnoracial formations. To do this, I follow the work of Lugones (2007) and Davis (1983), who show the co-constitution of race and gender in systems of colonial/capitalist domination. In these systems, only women of European or from European descent were considered as such, situating black and indigenous women in a gray area, or totally removing them from their status as women and human. Davis (1983) explains, they were human enough to be sexually depredated but dehumanized enough to be treated as disposable laborers. Thus, they did not have the status of fragility given to European bourgeois women, and their labor, bodies, and sexuality remained brutally exploited and controlled. This system was kept in place even through the revolutions of independence in Latin America and other places of the world, and has been categorized by intersectional feminists as one of the most stable regimes of domination throughout history. Today, it remains in place in many places in Latin America, and certainly, in Colombia. I use these insights to explain the differential positions and values the
labor of indigenous and black women in the CSR, and the general struggle for women’s inclusion and recognition in processes of negotiation with the Colombian government and within the RSLC itself.

In my study, I also draw from FSS to point out, in various instances, how colonial/capitalist heterosexism not only affects women. Harding (2017), for instance, sheds light on how "colonialism is about creating powerful masculinities precisely through European expansion in service to God and gold" (629). In this system, white male colonizers were constructed as "the heroic navigators, conquistadors, traders, priests" (627), black men were seen as physically dangerous and mentally underdeveloped, and indigenous men who survived the genocide and were already mentally and spiritually subjugated were treated, in some cases, as humbled servants. Although the positionality of white, mestizo, black, and indigenous men has changed over the centuries, the CSR also demands certain kinds of masculinity to be deployed in legal, scientific, and agricultural scenarios that has not been sufficiently observed. In my dissertation, I study, particularly, how these constructions of masculinity operate at the domestic level, which I understand as being the primary territory for the communities I worked with. The analysis also reveals new structures of paid and unpaid labor not discussed by previous literature.

The RSLC

Many seed country-based seed networks can be found across Latin America, and there is a Latin American seed network called La Red de Semillas de Libertad [The Seeds of Freedom Network], which includes members from communities in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, México and Perú. National seed networks can be found in Venezuela (Felicien et al., 2018), Ecuador (Torres 2008), and Colombia (Hernández and Gutiérrez 2019; Gutiérrez and Fitting 2017; Silva and Gutiérrez 2019; García López 2019). These networks were born in similar time frames (the 1990s and 2000s) mainly as a response to the implementation of new forms of seed governance in Latin American countries developed through the CSR. Yet as these and other studies show, informal seed networks have existed since the very beginning of agriculture around the world. Such networks have allowed local peasant economies and ecologies to thrive and have shaped human-nonhuman relations in
ways that do not fit within the logic of the colonial/capitalist system. As seed networks formally emerged in the last decades, they have developed specific forms of mobilization. They are sociomaterially making new epistemic, regulatory, economic, and social arrangements via seed saving, which includes recuperation, conservation, sharing, and circulation.

These activities create a dynamic assemblage of practices that suggest that other worlds are possible— and already exist. I use Michelle Murphy’s term “alterworld/s” to capture what it means to be and live otherwise, which I see as what RSLC members and members of other seed networks in Latin America are doing. Importantly, these forms of being and living otherwise are not only strategic ways of opening paths in science and industry, but also an array of histories of generative processes and reformations of the biosocial (Hernández and Moore 2020).

Another distinctive feature of these networks is that they are neither class-based, nor based on social identities: they do not organize strictly as a peasant movement, nor are they a women’s movement, nor an indigenous or Afro-descendant movement that privileges the struggle for the inclusion of their identity in the wider civil society (Della Porta and Diani 2008). In contrast, seed networks are made of peasants, indigenous, afro-descendants, social and natural scientists, lawyers, NGO advocates, environmental activists, and laypeople who are aligned with the struggle for local seeds and against the CSR. As such, their struggle does not rely on their identities, but on their existing social, material, and legal relationships with seeds, knowledge, and food.

The RSLC is a web comprised of all these actors, spread across various regions of Colombia and the world. It was consolidated as a distinct social organization in 2014 during two historically intertwined events. The first was the signing of the FTA between Colombia and the US in 2012, which, as I have briefly explained, introduced the legislative framework that has allowed ongoing processes of seed enclosure to take place. The second (as anticipated by many social organizations) is that the impact of the FTA on small farmers led to the agrarian strike of 2013 (Coscione et García Pinzón 2014). The strike set the stage for many agrarian organizations

---

3 Tsing (2015) develops the concept of "third nature" to describe "what manages to live despite capitalism" (Tsing, 2015: VIII). I like this concept as a way to think about forms of living and being otherwise as well, but I prefer “alterworld/s” as it emphasizes the alterity of these worlds.
to come together and share common struggles. It became a political opportunity to establish a common agenda among grassroots organizations in which seeds occupied a prominent place as well. Yet, as Rosalba, one of the RSLC leaders in Nariño told me one afternoon in downtown Pasto:

During the strike, we soon figured out that we needed our own organization to put forth seed-related issues and only seed-related issues in the national and regional agenda. And what I mean by that is not that we did not want to engage in other discussions too, like the ones about land and water issues. What it means is that we wanted to begin with the seed because the seed is the center around which everything else happens. This was the only moment in my time on earth when seeds were being talked about in the news, in the streets, in the government, so if they had not been made absolutely central in the demands of the agrarian movement, we wouldn't have been protected; they would have vanished due to the historical importance of other debates, such as agrarian reform. (Fieldnotes 2017)

After Rosalba told me this, I was still not sure who exactly belonged to the organizations that decided to come together to form the RSLC, so I asked for clarification. She replied:

We were talking here about local and regional, informal, and formal organizations of campesinos who had already been working for a long time in the creation of non-monetary based economies of exchange, particularly of agricultural and food exchange. They had always been in the periphery of big agriculture in their territories and had already figured out autonomous ways to do seeds, food, and knowledge exchange. Some of them had support from not-for-profit organizations. So, although not everyone was strong in, let's say, economic terms, they had been historically doing these exchanges, which were functional for everyone in their communities. They were now afraid that they were going to be hooked or forced into the cycle of indebtedness proposed by the government and the banks. To respond directly to your question, the ones who came together were the regional networks of seed savers, some of which were mainly indigenous, and some of which had a more campesino base. (Fieldnotes 2017)

Rosalba's words show that the RSLC is the result of a long process of consolidating community-based agricultural, food, and economic independence in Colombia. The struggle for such independence, however, is often not willingly chosen but rather imposed by need; the same means of accumulation by dispossession that have impacted colonized territories in different ways (depending on the historical moment of capitalist development and resistance) have pushed communities to look for self-sufficiency and alternative lives.
Rosalba also emphasized that contact with other already established seed networks on the continent was important for the RSLC. She said, for instance, that in the case of Nariño, a department that is located close to the border with Ecuador, the economic, political, cultural and social daily exchange with Ecuadorians and their own National Seed Network (called *Red de Guardianes de Semillas*/Network of Seed Savers) facilitated the formation of transnational seeds and knowledge exchange. However, she also underscored that the Ecuadorian network being formed mainly by middle-class people, some of European descent (mostly Germans), has made "our relationships difficult up until now because we are poor people, and our worldviews and politics are not always aligned." (Rosalba 2017) This shows how racial/class politics play an essential role in the establishment of seed solidarities.

Today, around 120 grassroots organizations are affiliated with the RSLC (RSLC, Internal Report 2018), and RSLC members have agreed to work in three sub-networks. The first is in charge of the conservation, recuperation, and free circulation of seeds. They promote educational practices that stimulate the investigation and sharing of local knowledge. Some of their activities include: seed schools; workshops; forums, conferences, and thematic working groups; national, regional, local, and thematic gatherings; and national, regional and local seed fairs and markets.

![Figure 1. Women exchanging seeds. National Seed Gathering, 2017. Picture: My own](image)
The second sub-network addresses formal politics and legal issues. It monitors and fights governmental policies regarding the privatization of seeds, the expansion of Agri-business, and the introduction of GM crops in the country. In the last few years, this sub-network has undertaken: lawsuits to repeal seed laws; lobbying potential political allies; and creating other networks and opening up different spaces in which strategic objectives of the RSLC can be achieved.

The third sub-network works to increase public attention to, information about, and social support for, social agrarian protests and campaigns for the abolition of GM seed laws. Examples of how they do this are: the creation of a single e-mail account where members and everyone interested in getting in touch with the organization can write and get a prompt response; a website, a Facebook page, and one national and a number of regional WhatsApp
groups; radio programs where RSLC members talk to advocates of GM-crops in Colombia about the uses and consequences of such crops and the importance of local seeds for rural people, economies and environments; and the creation and distribution of educational materials in the form of videos, pamphlets, and cartillas [primers].

Figure 3. Documents produced by the RSLC I. Picture: My own

Figure 4. Documents produced by the RSLC II. Picture: My own
I addition to the division of work in different sub-networks, the RSLC also operates at the local, regional, and national levels. At the local level, the RSLC relies heavily on families, who are often the ones who plant seeds and conserve them. At the regional level, networks of seed savers and informal seed and food markets are critical the circulation of seeds. At the national level, official politics are at the center.

The following are the regions in which the RSLC is present in Colombia.

- Caribe Region
- Coffee Region
- Center Region
- West-Center Region
- South-East Region
- Amazonia

Although the RSLC works at the national level, it does not completely include the national territory. Throughout my dissertation, I will identify in which regions the RSLC is strongest and potential reasons for its strength in these locales.

Evidence and Analytic Strategy

I have been involved with the RSLC for the past four years as a researcher, a colleague, and an activist. I began to collaborate with them virtually when I was living in Chicago, writing documents, and organizing evidence they collected to compose lawsuits or publish articles on their web site (https://www.redsemillaslibres.co/). In summer 2015, I traveled to Bogotá to work as an organizer for the second national gathering of the organization. In the Fall, when I came back to Chicago, I continued attending the organization's meetings virtually and supporting them with research and writing tasks. In Spring 2016, I traveled to Colombia to participate in a national forum about derechos campesinos (peasants' rights) at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, the most prestigious public university in Colombia. The forum was organized by several campesinx organizations in the country and their allies, such as La Via Campesina. Alba Portillo, one of the prominent figures of the RSLC and leader of the network in
Nariño, was scheduled to talk in the afternoon session. I was asked to take notes during the forum and write an article about it for the RSLC website.

One day after the forum, I spent two weeks traveling with RSLC leaders to the departments of Tolima and Nariño, where local members were doing vital work, such as political workshops and seed school sessions. At the time, I was three months pregnant. I told RSLC members with whom I was traveling that I was expecting a baby, fearing that they would not allow me to go with them to certain regions where the Zika virus was at its height and where the armed conflict between the state, paramilitary armies, guerrillas, and drug traffickers was boiling (even though the Colombian government and the FARC were close to signing a peace process). However, after long conversations, we figured out ways in which I could get to the places with them without “risking too much,” as Alba put it in one of our conversations.

But, even though I took all the precautions that I could to avoid mosquito bites, traveling to Zika infected regions while pregnant caused me a lot of anxiety. At the same time, it connected me to many women and men who had suffered from the virus and who were sympathetic to my situation. At night, while we sat around the communal fire and ate some chicken with rice and beans, they came close to me and simply talked. In these conversations, I learned a lot about how RSLC members lived their daily life in their regions and a lot more about how they care for seeds, even when, sometimes, no one seems to be caring for them.

These experiences touched my heart and helped me develop this dissertation. I received IRB approval for my dissertation research in 2017 to carry out participant observation and interviews with RSLC members.

**Participant observation**

I was a participant-observer for eight non-consecutive months in 2017-2018. I spend the Fall of 2017 in Bogotá, traveling in and out of the departments of Antioquia, Valle, Tolima, Nariño, and Cundinamarca with RSLC members. During these trips, I attended national, regional, and local gatherings, seed fairs and exchanges, seed markets, and regional seeds schools. Most gatherings I attended lasted two or three days. In addition to attending the schools, I also met people in their homes and gardens and shared meals with them. In some of these gatherings, RSLC members themselves taught others how to cook delicious meals with lost or forgotten foods,
and fostered knowledge exchange among RSLC members on topics such as composting and the non-toxic management of pests and fungus. In these events, I was often asked by local residents and participants to stop by their homes to share a meal together or to walk around their gardens and crops to see the work that they had been doing with specific seed varieties for myself. These moments were of special value to me; they allowed me to see the life-world in which RSLC members lived their everyday lives first hand and also indicated that we were building mutual trust.

When I met leaders of a specific region to talk to me, on a few occasions they would ask me to accompany them on errands around town while we talked. I particularly remember one time when a prominent leader of the Nariño network took me to the bank with her and continued talking to me as we waited for her to reach the front of the line. As we got there, I thought the most appropriate thing for me to do would be to step aside while she spoke to the bank's financial counselor, but she asked me to stay. Then she asked me to walk with her to run some other errands, such as paying gas and electricity bills.\(^4\) We finally went to a coffee shop, where we talked for a couple of hours more. These kinds of encounters, where talks which were planned to last one to two hours but ended up taking the entire day, gave me a clearer sense of how RSLC leaders navigated the politics of seeds conflicts in and outside of the RSLC itself.

Seminars and conferences that included scholar-activists and RSLC leaders were common sites for my study. I went with RSLC members to academic and public policy events in Bogotá and Medellín. I was invited to be a speaker at the "National Forum for Agrobiodiversity and the Human Right to Food," organized by the RSLC and other organizations to open spaces of dialogue with the Colombian government. I participated online in the three preparatory meetings for the forum, where discussions about who else should be invited and how the panels should be organized became heated. The event took place on February 15, 2018, in Bogotá, on the campus of La Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, a Jesuit private university. Because of my situation of economic hardship at the time and the lack of funds of the RSLC and the other allied organizations to pay for my ticket, I ended up

\(^4\) In Colombia, although these services can be paid online, many people are still going to the bank each month to pay for them.
not attending. However, the forum was live-streamed, and I got the chance to talk and ask questions when other participants or I considered it necessary or important.

The bulk of my fieldwork was carried out in Bogotá, where I attended to biweekly or monthly meetings of RSLC members and volunteered at Grupo Semillas, a non-profit organization co-founded by Colombian environmental and rural activists and scholars in 1994 that pushed for the formation of the RSLC and has supported it since it was officially constituted. There, I organized meetings contacting seed savers and activists, edited documents, took photographs of seeds exchanges and other seed-related gatherings, and did research about the development of seeds and agricultural law during and after the peace process with the FARC. In Bogotá, I also had several informal meetings with RSLC members to talk about the current problems of the organization or other political matters. Those meetings always took place at public places such as coffee shops and restaurants, and interlocutors verbally consented to have the conversation recorded.

Participant observation was crucial for capturing how members of the RSLC interact with each other and to observe power asymmetries and dynamics and the ways in which ethno-racialized communities mobilized their identities to make political claims regarding seeds, knowledge, land, territory.

Consent
In each of the regional and national gatherings, participants introduced themselves. I did the same while also explaining what I was doing in the space. I did a consistent presentation speech throughout my fieldwork, in which I also included a consent speech. I always said my real name and told them that I was a graduate student at Loyola University Chicago, a university based in the US. I continued by explaining that I was very interested in their work with seeds and in understanding how they do it. I emphasized that I had also been collaborating with the RSLC in Bogotá for quite a long time now, and many of the compañeros there were very familiar with my face (I made sure I greeted those who were present to accentuate my familiarity with them). I then proceeded to explain that I was going to be taking notes and pictures throughout the gathering, and I promised that I would always get their permission before including them in my visual or written materials.
I also underscored that I was open to answering any questions about what I do at any point in the event. I closed my introduction by saying that I was looking for ways to learn about each person’s stories with seeds, so if they wanted to talk to me about it, we could find time for it later on. I was explicit about my incapacity to compensate them for talking to me one-on-one. I intentionally avoided academic jargon such as "interviews," "doctorate," and "fieldwork" because I wanted to be transparent with the wide variety of RSLC members (many of whom do not have an academic background) about what my intentions and actions were. Instead, I said that I wanted to understand and write about the RSLC and how its members live their experiences as a seed growers, savers, and activists. I emphasized that my work travels across different venues (journal articles, books, newspapers, and blogs) and that at some point it could be reached by everyone with access to those writing spaces. I assure them that confidentiality will be maintain at all stages of the project.

I use pseudonyms for all people I talked to in order to protect their identities, except for Germán Vélez, Fernando Castrillón, Gloria Erazo, Alba Portillo, and Mauricio García. They explicitly asked to use their real names. They are all public figures in Colombia, and sometimes, internationally. Germán Vélez and Fernando Castrillón co-direct the NGO Grupo Semillas and are well known public figures in Colombia. Alba Portillo is a prominent leader in the RSLC. Mauricio García is a researcher at Swissaid, a Swedish NGO that has been working with grassroots organizations in Colombia for about 30 years. Gloria Erazo was the head lawyer of the RSLC at the time that my research took place.

Interviewees were free to choose their own pseudonyms, but I changed/used different pseudonyms in my written fieldnotes because I wanted to prevent their identification as I described locations and activities. My objective was to protect the interviewees as much as possible. Thus, at times, someone who is quoted with a name in my fieldnotes appears under a different name in a quotation from the interviews. When I finished interviews and field observations, I communicated with the regional nodes of the RSLC through e-mail and WhatsApp to let them know that I was doing a brief presentation of some of my preliminary findings. The meeting took place in the office of Grupo Semillas in Bogotá in December 2018. After I finished my presentation, we had a fruitful discussion that revolved around how to translate the
dissertation findings into useful materials for the communities involved in the RSLC. Most members emphasized how important it was for them to give visibility to my study, so "academics can really help in the struggle," as Germán Vélez put it. I asked them if they agreed with my interpretations and with moving forward to writing the dissertation as I had it structured at the time, and they agreed. My commitment is to go back to share with them the final version of the dissertation. Since it is written in English, I committed to writing a short, accessible version of it in Spanish, with drawings and infographics that can help clarify the content.

*Interviews*

To complement the participant observation, I carried out in-depth and field interviews with members of the RSLC. The interviews allowed me to understand the experiences of members in the network more clearly and to learn the particular stories behind their involvement in the RSLC activities. They also clarified the meaning of some of my observations about the relationships that RSLC members have with seeds themselves. Most interviewees came from the locations in which I did the participant observation.

I always began the interviews re-introducing myself and asking them to tell me "a bit about themselves." Then, I asked them if they had any questions about me or my work. They always had questions for me, mostly related to my personal life, my reasons for working with the RSLC, and my life as a student in the US. After this initial conversation, which could last from thirty minutes to one hour, I began the interview. I carried with me an outline of the central questions I wanted to ask (Appendix C), but I let the conversation to move in various directions as we talked, even if that meant not covering all the areas I wanted to. This was important to me because it allowed me to see angles and aspects of the questions I had that I did not considered before, while also revealing ideas, practices, relationships (with seeds, soil, water, pests, other people, etc.) and feelings in people’s lives that I was not expecting.

I carried out thirty interviews, including twenty in the field and ten that were scheduled. I recorded the scheduled interviews and transcribed them. After reading them in Spanish, I only translated the excerpts that I wanted to place in the body of the dissertation. For the ethnographic interviews, I chose to take notes. I had a special notebook where I did so.
I interviewed: (i) seed savers, (ii) scholar-activists, (iii) non-academic allies (e.g. NGO members), and (iv) RSLC organizers. Twenty interviewees self-identified as women between 16 and 70 years old and ten self-identified as men. Their age range was between twenty-seven and 68 years old. None of my respondents self-identified as other than women or men. To know respondents’ age and gender identification was important to me because it allowed me to understand how and whether experiences were gendered and crossed by aged.

The interviews were organized around the following areas: (i) How participants came to be members of RSLC; (ii) how they saw the RSLC activities in relation to their identities as campesinxs\(^5\), indigenous, and Afro-Colombians; (iii) how seeds and seed knowledge are produced and circulated; (iv) how members interpreted the impact that IPRs have had in their communities; and (v) how members related to the ethno-racial and land tenure system in their struggle for seed liberation. When the conversations were free-flowing, I asked clarifying questions after I felt that the person had finished with that specific part of the conversation. I did this with the purpose of listening to member's stories, which often would only emerge as they dived into the world of their own speeches.

**My positionality**

As it would be expected, my positionality as a middle-class Colombian woman doing a Ph.D. in the US was sometimes problematic and challenging. Sometimes seed savers who live in conditions of severe material precarity asked me for money donations or help for their relatives. Once I explained that, although I was indeed located in a center of power and knowledge, I did not have much power or money, our relationships proceeded more smoothly, and the expectations that we had of one another were more realistic and honest. My positionality was also problematic when I was first engaging with more radical sectors of the RSLC, who were reluctant to have a US-based scholar studying the movement. However, because of my long engagement with the organization and my active participation in the

---

\(^5\) In traditional Spanish, this word is written using the male substantive *campesino*. I choose, however, to write it with the "x" instead of the "o" because I believe that, as many Latin American feminists have noted, the prominent use of the masculine in Spanish grammar signals the deep sexism ingrained in the language and the cultures that it helps to create and sustain. In contrast, the use of the "x" is being implemented by counter-hegemonic groups that seek to change gendered power asymmetries in these societies in and through the transformation of language, understood as a place in which the social world is constantly built and structured.
different activities organized, with time I developed a close relationship with some of those members, who taught me a lot of what I now know now about agrarian politics in Colombia. Yet, I think power imbalances never resolved and will never be resolved, especially as the university, as an institution, increasingly becomes another site of exploitation, extraction, and dispossession governed by corporate logic.

My daughter, Antonia, and my husband, Miguel, accompanied me to half of the fieldwork carried out outside of Bogotá. Their presence also shaped how RSLC members perceived me/us. Many times, RSLC women would carry my daughter and comfort her, and both men and women would ask me about her or Miguel when we were not together. In my informal conversations with one of the men leaders of the organization, he told me that now he could see that "I was really committed to the RSLC work."

*Document analysis*

In addition to participant observation and interviews, I also analyzed documents, photographs, and videos produced by the RSLC and government agencies to understand their narratives. Most of the documents I worked with were publicly available online or in public archives. A handful, though, were given to me by RSLC members.

To understand seed law and the ways in which colonial categories of race are embedded in current laws regarding land, agricultural and specific political rights, I analyzed seed trade and agricultural laws in Colombia since 1978, and the historical production of ethno-racial categories under colonialism and their continuation into the present manifested in laws giving special rights to ethno-racial groups.

In the next chart I show the documents I analyze:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Document</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Convention for the Protection of New</td>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varieties of Plants, 1991 version (UPOV91)</td>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombian Free Trade Agreement with the USA, 2012 (FTA 2012)</td>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Constitution of Colombia, 1991. Particular focus on the sections on special land rights for Indigenous and Afro-Colombian Communities and state ownership of natural resources (articles 63, 68, 246, 332)</td>
<td>Printed and Digital</td>
<td>Online and National Library, Bogotá-Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombian Penal Code (PC), article 306 (on property rights of breeders of plant varieties)</td>
<td>Printed</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law 1032 of 2006 (modification of article 306 of the PC)</td>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation 970 of 2010 (establishes the requirements for the production, packaging, import, export, storage, marketing and/or use of seeds in the country)</td>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law 1518 of 2012 (on breeders rights)</td>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft bill for the reform of article 64 of the National Constitution of Colombia. Project for the Declaration of Campesino Rights, 2016.</td>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFTs declarations of Cañamomo y Lomaprieta, Resguardo Indígena de San Andrés de Sotavento, and the municipality of San Lorenzo.</td>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSLC lawsuits</td>
<td>Digital and paper</td>
<td>Online/ RSLC archive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1. Documents analyzed

I studied the following documents produced by the RSLC to understand the narratives used by the organization to talk about what is relevant for them, to define strategies, and to persuade members and non-members to join their cause/s and activities. In the analysis of these documents, I looked for ethno-racialized and gendered language:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Document</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flyers, banners, and other public written and visual materials use in the National Gatherings of 2014, 2015, and 2017</td>
<td>Printed and Digital</td>
<td>Online and at RSLC main offices in Bogotá, Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyers, banners, and other public written and visual materials use in the preparatory meetings for the National Gatherings of 2014, 2015, and 2017</td>
<td>Printed</td>
<td>At regional meeting centers across the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSLC meetings’ synopsis written by members from 2015 to 2017.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I also analyzed videos produced by RSLC members (including myself) to frame and convey different issues for the public, such as the role of seeds' savers and the meanings of seeds for communities and organizations that belong to the RSLC:

Table 2. RSLC documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Document</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Videos of the 2015 and 2017 gatherings</td>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>Own archive, digital achieve of the RSLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videos posted on youtube, facebook, and RSLC’s website</td>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. RSLC videos

Analytic Strategy

After transcribing my interviews and fieldnotes, I analyze them in light of understanding my research questions and new issues that arose as we spoke, and that I continued investigation in further interviews and observations. I was focused on themes central to my work, such as the relationships between seeds and agricultural and ethno-racial law. I wrote memos with substantial questions and findings from the analytic process. I was careful to connect the written content with the context it was produced and with my embodied experience in fieldwork and in the interviewing process. I historicized the narratives while also looking at them as produced by subjects with different class, gender, and ethnoracial configurations. When analyzing the RSLC visual and written materials, such as videos, I looked at formation, organization, activities, and how the RSLC participants understood the terms of the struggle. The analysis of government documents, had a different focus. I was interested in finding when and who introduced laws, the political influences that led to them, how were the laws and
regulations deployed, and which of them the RSLC helped to build or contest. As I did in the analysis of interviews and fieldnotes, in the analysis of visual and written documents I was particularly attentive to gendered, classed, and ethnoracial aspects and structures of the discourses, legal orders, embodiment and materiality.

**Dissertation structure**

Over five chapters, my dissertation shows how ethnorace, gender, class, and territory intersect to create different kinds of resistances to seed privatization and to demarcate the scope and limits of such resistance. Chapter 1 shows how resistances to seed privatization in Colombia are articulated in regimes of ethnoracial governance reflected in contemporary Colombian seed and territorial laws. In this analysis, I argue that ethnoracial law becomes the foundational axis for the deployment of other regimes of governance, such as territorial and agricultural governance. Likewise, I reveal how the politics of identity of ethnoracially constituted groups played a key role in the constitution of such regimes and in the way in which they are now contested by the RSLC.

I argue that seed laws can be thought of as having two distinct moments: From 2002 to 2017, the overtly aggressive period of the implementation of seed laws' generation, and 2017 to 2020, or the post-peace agreement phase. I analyze the first moment in Chapter 2, looking at the role of Colombia's geopolitical position as a strategic ally of the US in Latin America and the Caribbean to explain why this seed regulatory framework was explicitly pro-industry. I also analyze the content of seed laws concerning the challenges posed by the legal contestations presented by the RSLC.

In Chapter 3, I analyze the impact of the peace agreement of 2016 between the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC-EP) the oldest and strongest guerilla in the hemisphere, and the Colombian state on seed laws. I argue that although the post-peace agreement regulatory system has been presented as inclusive (in gender and ethnoracial terms) and as a vehicle for transforming the disadvantaged structural position of those who could potentially benefit from it, this inclusion is only partial and works as a parallel mechanism of further exclusion and subjugation for ethnoracialized women and men.

I analyze RSLC pedagogical practices in chapter 4. I critique of the use of concepts such as
"cultural imperialism" or "cultural coloniality" that others have used to argue in favor of so-called "indigenous" knowledges arrayed as the opposite of colonial knowledges. Through the analysis of pedagogical practices and the socio-epistemes created and moved through them, I demonstrate that social re-arrangements are not always plainly anti-colonial or anti-imperialist, but, in their specificity, are more hybrid forms of struggle and ways of envisioning the past, present, and future of rural peoples.

Finally, in chapter 5, I explain what ethno-racialized territorial logics look like in the creation of Territories Free of Transgenics and what the possibilities for socio-epistemic and territorial reconfiguration that they offer are. I show how they open spaces for new biosocial relationships and worlds to emerge, strengthening communities and giving the RSLC a formal territorial structure for operation.

I conclude the dissertation with a reflection on how the RSLC’s generative practices crack the systems of neoliberal state domination manifested in the Colombian CSR. I analyze why contemporary resistances to the CSR in Colombia are an array of class, ethno-racial, and gender-based resistances that transcend the debates about old and new social movements that have characterized the literature on this topic. I also expand my findings to argue that seed networks in Latin America are a reflection and example of other ways of doing politics that are generative and propositional.

I give myself some space for speculating about the connections between a broader tradition of critical social scientific thought in Latin America and Non-Latin American sociological frameworks, opening new roads to understand the complex web that links the experiences of colonized and exploited communities across the region under contemporary biocapitalism extractivism, as well as the liberatory possibilities opened up by these encounters.
CHAPTER 1
GOVERNING THE BIOS THROUGH ETHNORACIAL TERRITORIALIZATION

This dissertation is not strictly about war and violence. But nevertheless, it is. Many RSCL members have been historical subjects of the war in Colombia, and their relationships to seeds are traversed by their relationships to violence and hopes for a peaceful life. In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the ethnoracial politics of seed conflicts in Colombia. I use a socio-historical perspective to explain the relationship between war and violence, ethnoracialization, and seed politics. Then, I analyze the political economy of ethnorace. I show how, in the context of seeds and agricultural contestations, it has worked as a technology and a counter technology of governance to enable and disable particular kinds of resistances to capitalism in general, and the CSR in particular.

Ethnorace

They call their seeds “improved seeds” and they protect them using all these laws and regulations. They call our seeds weak and they blame us for spreading diseases through our practices of seed exchange. They have called us backwards and ignorant to our own faces. The problem that they have with our seeds is the problem that they have with what we are. Perhaps it would be better for them if we were not longer here. But we are! Despite it all, we are! So, there is that [deep breath]. Can you give me a moment? (Pedro, Interview 2017)

This is an excerpt of my second interview to Pedro. In 2015, I interviewed him for the first time when I was volunteering at Grupo Semillas and we were recording interviews with RSCL members with the objective of doing a documentary about how they envisioned the future of the food system in Colombia (the documentary never came to be due to financial reasons). In the interviews that I conducted at the time, Pedro’s one was the one that touched me the most. He cried as he was telling me how much he was looking for a future without so many difficulties, a future in which his family and neighbors could grow and eat their own food while at the same
time having the opportunity to do other things that fulfilled their spirits. I also cried as I listened to him and saw his suffering.

In 2017, at a National Gathering of the RSLC in Buga, Valle, I met Pedro again. We immediately recognized each other. I ran towards him with enthusiasm to greet him. When I asked him if he wanted to be interviewed again, this time for my dissertation work, he accepted by saying “but only if you don’t make me cry again.” We both laughed and met next day to do the interview. Unfortunately, I could not keep my promise. After asking me to give him a moment, he wiped away the tears with his hands. He took another deep breath and looked away. His gaze came back after a while. He smiled. Before I could say anything, he told me, “You did not keep your promise! But it is not your fault, I am just an old crybaby!” He laughed. Then he asked me about my daughter, and the conversation about seeds stopped there.

The reason I bring up an excerpt of my conversation with him in this section of the chapter is that I think it shows how, for some RSLC members, their social position as rural, ethnoracialized people is directly related to the social position of their seeds in the current regulatory framework imposed by the CSR. This understanding of ethnorace resonates with Benjamin’s (2019) claims that race is not only a social relation but also a technology. For her, sociology has limited the study of race and technoscience to looking at how the latter “hides, speed up, or reinforces racism” (36) without paying much attention to how race, understood as a historical tool, “codified by law and refined through costume,” organizes and structures technoscientific production and circulation. In a similar vein, I argue that ethnorace in Colombia is a technology that organizes and structures the introduction of GM seeds and agricultural biotechnology in Colombian law and territories while also acting as a counter-technology of resistance that has allowed ethnoracialized groups to put forward historical reclamations and reparations.

Although I follow Benjamin’s argument, I make a distinction between the way in which race and ethnicity have been understood in public policy and the way in which scholars conceptualized them. When I talk about race and ethnicity as separate terms, I refer to them as they are defined by public policy discourse. When I talk about them in my work, from a scholarly point of view, I use the term ethnorace. In the following pages I will explain why.
The term ethnicity has two interrelated axes: culture and territory. It became a prevalent category in public policy in the early 90’s, when international and multilateral organizations institutionalized its use, in part because they saw it as less politically charged and more convenient for responding to political reorganization in a global economy. Moreno (1991) talks about ethnicity as the result of a historical process in which groups have come to form a common culture that defines their identity and makes them different from other groups in a given society. Importantly, this culture is passed down generation by generation, and, thus, Moreno stresses that family and kin are important elements in the constitution of a particular ethnicity. In this understanding, only shared, blood-binding and differential culture is seen as relevant to defining ethnicity. However, other authors such as Ng’weno (2007) have also underscored that in contemporary public policy, ethnicity also has a territorial aspect mediated by the struggle for collective rights. She studies these aspects in Latin America, particularly Colombia. Ng’weno points out that Latin America, as a region, gave prevalence to ethnicity over race in their National Constitutions in the 90’s.

These changes, Ng’weno notices, were not only influenced by but also pushed for by the International Labor Organization Conventions (170 and 169), the United Nations, and the World Bank. In Colombia, the World Bank was seeking to implement the Natural Resources Management Program in areas were Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities were settled. The program functioned on the basis of the private titling of property, which was a problem for communities that were already sharing territories and had no legal titles for them. Communities demanded the inclusion of collective titling in the program, and, after a long and painful process, it was granted through the World Bank’s Indigenous Peoples’ Policy. Thus, a key aspect of the discussion about ethnicity has revolved around the issues of collective rights, particularly of those tied to territory. This can be seen in this policy, which links indigeneity with ethnicity, and ethnicity to land.

Other authors such as Escobar (2008) have stated that collective rights emerged in the relational processes among states, experts, communities, and environmental activists, creating what we know now as ethno-territorial rights. This move shaped the topography of multicultural recognition in Colombia in particular ways and created a framework in which
territorial cultural distinctions were the basis for understanding (and proving) ethnicity (Ng’weno 2007: 427). Additionally, it also made race an invisible factor in the determination of ethnicity.

The move towards ethnicity is what scholars have called ethnicization (Hall 1996; Wade 2000; Lasso 2007; Almario 2003; Restrepo 2004), which has affected the way in which public policy is written and applied as well as the way in which social movements organize. For instance, Restrepo (2004) studied the changes in social mobilization in the Pacific Region of Colombia in recent years. He found out that there has been a slow process of ethnicization of blackness, which implied apparent parallel processes of “racial closure.” Restrepo calls for Latin American scholars to take these processes of ethnicization in their own right, as separate from but in consonance with particular ways racial categories were formed in the region. Along a similar line, Lasso (2007) argues that ethnicization cannot be understood without taking race into account. And Ng’weno (2007) argues that race and ethnicity are co-constituents because colonial rule created a system of racial segregation that allowed the creation of a system of ethnic differentiation that outlived republican periods in postcolonial societies. Ng’weno emphasized that this co-dependency of race and ethnicity permeate colonized societies, even though one can find many differences in the ways in which this codependency is deployed. To illustrate this point, she refers to the case of Africa:

[Ideas of ethnicity in Africa] were based on two ideas of rule—a civil society that was racialized and a native authority that was tribalized. Thus, colonial rule in Africa set up a simultaneous hierarchy of races with an equivalency of ethnicities (each ethnic group was legally equal to the next ethnic group) that was inherited by post-colonial states [...] only some races (Africans) could be divided into tribes (as Natives). The result was not two systems of rule (one of race and one of ethnicity), but one system where race and ethnicity were co-dependent. (Ng’weno 2007: 422)

I follow Ng’weno’s interpretation of the co-dependency and co-constituency of race and ethnicity in colonized societies, including Colombia. Hence, I adopt the term ethno-race to refer to this relationship.

I provide next a brief socio-historical contextualization of the histories of war and peace in Colombia, which I claim are interlaced with processes of ethnoracialization and seed politics.
Colombia: the war has never ended

When I began this project, I did so trying, in my own way, to flee the histories and stories of violence in Colombia. I thought, naively, that if I focused on seed politics and the possibilities for hope that I wanted to capture, I could heal from the historical trauma that I carry with me as a person who grew up in the midst of the war. However, as I thought, wrote, and did research about seed politics away from my desk in Chicago, standing on people’s houses, and traveling through territories devastated by the many juxtaposing violences, I realized that I could not escape these histories/stories.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, RSLC members have also been affected by the war in many ways, and their relationships to seeds politics are connected to it. But to speak of the war in Colombia is not an easy task. Despite several efforts to end it, it is still ongoing. And, as I write these pages, many communities are being dislocated and many people are being killed or disappeared by several different groups that control an important portion of the national territory.

The war in Colombia is fought by the Colombian and US militaries, the police, left-wing guerrillas, paramilitary groups (which have been associated with the extreme right-wing parties in the country), and other criminal gangs formed by ex-members of the military, paramilitary, guerrilla groups, and/or the private militias of drug traffickers. To some extent, it is a continuation of colonial conflicts and a remanent of the Cold War. At the same time, it is the manifestation, the product, and the mechanism through which contemporary colonial/capitalist governance operates.

Theories of state formation coincide with the Hobbesian idea that strong nation-states need territorial sovereignty and that a central way to achieve and maintain it is through the monopolization of violence (Blom Hansen and Stepputat, 2001; Holsti, 1991; Tilly 2003). Following this logic, the problem of structural and war-related violence (which in the Colombian case go together) could be ascribed to the “weakness” of the Colombian state. This, it could be claimed, can be seen in the lack of territorial control, reflected in the existence of a plurality of armed actors across most Colombian regions. Although that may be partially true, it is important to underscore that, first, the Colombian state has been present in many areas
disputed by armed groups, sometimes participating in the armed confrontations, and at other times, through its absence, exercising violence in a silent way. And second, the formation and the ongoing maintenance of the Nation-State is a violent process with particularly long-lasting consequences for the ex-colonies.

Gutiérrez Sanín (2003) points out that the Colombian guerrillas “are the survivors of a proliferation of small insurgent efforts that developed in the early 1960s under the conviction that a revolution was possible” (5). Importantly, although the many guerrilla groups that have existed throughout Colombian history have had different ideologies and forms of operation (some relying on China and the Maoist party and others on Cuba and the Soviet Union), the most powerful group, Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), was a peasant-based guerrilla. This contributed to making rural areas the main centers of war.

In the late 70’s and 80’s paramilitary groups began to form in the country. The strongest and deathliest paramilitary group was the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, AUC (Molano 2015). To operate, these groups needed armies and military infrastructure. However, as Cristancho (2014) underscores, paramilitaries ought to be understood as more than armies; they are a coalition of actors, such as landowners, rural workers, the police and the military, and drug traffickers, that “coordinated to defend their common interests through the privatization of arms” (27). These interests were private property, a conservative moral order, and/or the sovereignty and economic policies of a right-wing, catholic Colombian state.

---

6 As Foucault (1976) showed, to “let die” is a primary manifestation of sovereign power.
The Center for Historical Memory (CNMH), created in 2011 during the peace process with the AUC, has determined that 1,892 massacres were perpetrated by these groups 1982 and 2012 (CNMH, 2013). Including the massacres, the estimate of total killings by all sides involved in the conflict had risen to 220,000 people by 2016 (Ulloa and Coronado, 2016). The number of people disappeared increases almost every day, since more and more cases are being reported and more mass graves are being found. In 2018, the CNMH revealed that there were 80,000 desaparecidos. However, on December 2019 the number of people expected to be found in mass graves increased to 200,000 (Comisión de la Verdad, 2019). Almost of all them are expected to be poor rural inhabitants who were trapped on one side or another of the war.

Colombian scholars studying armed conflict and violence and the long, complicated histories of agrarian social mobilization in the country point to land enclosure and economic and ethnoracial inequality as critical elements for the continuation of social and armed conflict (Fajardo 2014).

The poverty of rural inhabitants in Colombia is related to its extremely high levels of land accumulation, which is the result of several factors, such as the land tenure structure created in colonial times and maintained afterward in what was called latifundo (huge parcels of privately own land). Colombia’s agrarian structure is based on day-labor wherein rural inhabitants,
generally lacking land of their own, work for large landowners for very little money (Molano 2015).

Colombia is home to a diverse population that, despite a long history of racial mixture, is still highly geographically and economically segregated. In the country, black Colombians and indigenous people are segregated from mestizxs and whites, both in rural and urban spaces. The total population of the country is 47.7 million people, of which 11,656,291 are counted as living in rural areas (World Bank, 2014). The National Department of Statistics (DANE) reported in 2005 (the last official census published in Colombia) that 5,709,238 people identified themselves as part of an ethnic group. Among them, 1,392,623 identified as indigenous and 4,311,757 as Afro-Colombian. The percentage of indigenous people living in rural areas is 78%, and the percentage of Afro-Colombians is 27%. Another census focused exclusively on the rural population in Colombia estimated that around 50% of people living in rural areas live under conditions of poverty, and 25.5% under conditions of extreme poverty (Dane 2010). Recent research shows that, unsurprisingly, in places were land accumulation is high, poverty and inequality are higher too (IGAC, 2012). The same research shows that Colombia is the country in Latin America with the fourth highest GINI index after Paraguay, Brazil, and Peru. The analysis of the GINI index in North America, Central American and the Caribbean, and South America also ranks Colombia in fourth place, this time after Argentina, Brazil, and Canada, countries that are also known for the growth of agribusiness dedicated to the production of GM soy and maize.

After a highly contested process, in 2016, the Colombian government signed the Plebiscito por los Acuerdos de Paz en Colombia (Colombian Peace Agreement Referendum, a peace agreement with the FARC. Colombians themselves voted against it two months before it was signed), but the government went ahead with it.

I argue that the periodicity of seed laws can be thought of as having two distinct moments. The first moment goes from 2002 to 2017. This is what I call the overtly aggressive period of seed laws’ generation. The second moment goes from 2017 to 2020, which I conceive as the post-peace agreement phase. In the analysis of the first moment, I look at the role of Colombia’s geopolitical position as a strategic ally of the US in Latin American and the Caribbean to explain why this seed regulatory framework was explicitly pro-industry. I also analyze the
content of seed laws in relation to the challenges posed by the legal contestations the RSLC presented.

One of pillars of the Peace Agreement Referendum, and, also, one of the sources of the controversy, was the Integral Rural Reform (IRR) that the FARC demanded, which replaced the project of Agrarian Reform initially presented by the armed group. The IRR has four central points: (i) to democratize the access and use of land; (ii) to create special programs of rural development with a territorial focus; (iii) to create infrastructure and agricultural productivity plans, as well as to formalize agricultural work; and (iv) to provide the conditions for the consolidation and maintenance of food security. In chapters two and three, I will show the limitations that the IRR has by virtue of its very design, which was conditioned by the patriarchal nature of the agreement and the shared developmentalist ideology of all the sides participating on it.

Yet, even if this was not an ideal agreement, it was one that could have allowed the country to move in a different direction. Nevertheless, as soon as it was signed, it began to be fractured and dismantled by the right-wing parties led by the ex-president Alvaro Uribe, who also managed to get one of his protegees, Ivan Duque, into power in the presidential elections of 2018. In this context, although the FARC demobilized in 2017, there are various groups of ex-members who rejected the peace accords and did not participate in them. Others joined the first part of the demobilization process, but due to the lack of guarantees, decided to return to the remaining armed factions (Stanford -CISAC, 2019).

Today, the political economy and ecology of the armed conflict is almost indistinguishable from the political economy and ecology of drug trafficking (Fajardo, 2014; Ojeda 2016; Bocarejo 2009), and, as some of my analysis in the coming chapters reveal, their effects on ethnoracialized groups vary across regions. To understand this in more depth, I explain next how ethnoracialization has happened in Colombia and what are its relationships to structural inequality and the ongoing war.

**Ethnoracialization in Colombia**

In the 80s and 90s, several countries in Central and South America and the Caribbean went through processes of reforming their national constitutions. These included Chile (1980),
Guatemala (1985), Haiti (1987), Nicaragua (1987), Brazil and Ecuador (1988), Colombia (1991), Argentina and Bolivia (1993), Peru (1993), México (1993 and 1999), Dominican Republic (1994), and Venezuela (1999) (PDA, Georgetown University, 2018). Some of these constitutional changes came about as ways of finding democracy post-dictatorship, such as in Argentina and Chile, and others were the outcome of structural global economic changes that required these countries to comply and lay out a political and legal platform for neoliberalism to consolidate (Asher, 2009). But, interestingly, while many of these new constitutions or constitutional reforms opened these countries to the free market and set up structures of governance managed by multilateral agencies and financial corporations (e.g. the International Monetary Fund [IMF]), they also created states that recognized the population’s diversity in ethnoracial terms and issued laws that sought to grant territorial rights to them. Some scholars argue that these constitutions were heavily influenced by a specific branch of multiculturalism, one that Hale (2002) called *neoliberal multiculturalism*.

*Neoliberal Multiculturalism*

Neoliberal multiculturalism is born in parallel to and through neoliberal globalization (Moore, Kleinman, and Hess, 2011.) Neoliberal globalization is described as a historical and situated process that, despite happening at a global scale, is not homogenous and static and has not developed without being challenged and contested. Neoliberal globalization is characterized as an ideology, a form of governance, and an economic process driven by market logics favoring economic liberalization over economic protectionism. It is also a system that conceives the elevation of living standards in consumerist terms without really considering the creation and implementation of redistributive measures geared towards the generation of social, economic, political, and epistemic justice (Moore et al., 2011: 508). Part of this means that, in contrast to the classical idea of conceiving the nation-state as holding the monopoly of power (to, for example, regulate the politics of life and death), now that power is shared with multilateral agencies, transnational corporations, NGOs, regional alliances, property and contract systems (Coombe, 2016). In this context, neoliberal multiculturalism erupts as a branch of multiculturalism that collaborates with the elites’ projects of capital and power accumulation.

---

7 [http://pdba.georgetown.edu/](http://pdba.georgetown.edu/)
aligned with the forms of governance of neoliberal globalization. Specifically, neoliberal multiculturalism uses the politics of cultural difference to delimit and create rights and territories in ethnoracial terms that not only reinforce colonial imaginaries of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities as being closer to nature and less-than-human, but also also opens the door to new forms of exploitation and commodification that work through the tactics and mechanisms of power deployed by neoliberal globalization, such as the implementation of intellectual property rights via trade agreements, the creation of public-private partnerships to manage and profit from bioresources, and the corporatization of public universities.

In Colombia, neoliberal multiculturalism became visible with the 1991 National Constitution (NC91). That year, various sectors of Colombian civil society, the government, political parties, and ex-guerilla members of the M-19, EPL (Ejército Popular de Liberación [National Liberation Army]), and the Quintín Lame (an indigenous-based guerilla group) came together to participate in the constitutional assembly that would produce a new national constitution to replace the conservative National Constitution of 1886 (NC86).

The process of creation of the assembly was indeed strenuous. It occurred after the failure of several attempts to pass the project in congress, when the student movement pressured for the introduction of what was called “la séptima papeleta” [the 7th ballot] in the presidential elections of 1990. The ballot gave voters the option to choose whether or not they wanted the constitutional assembly to take place. With more than five million votes, the answer was “yes.” A few months later, with the endorsement of the Constitutional Court, through another election 25% of the Colombian people chose the participants in the assembly who were going to be responsible for the making of the new “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983). Among the non-partisan groups, the M-19 got the majority of seats (19), followed by the EPL [Army for National Liberation] and the Quintin Lame. Members of the unions and the student movement also attained representation (Palacios, 1995).

The NC91 is a contradictory constitution that, on the one hand, sought to make the Colombian economy more flexible so it could be “competitive” on the world market, and, on the other hand, to develop a progressive framework for marginalized groups to claim rights denied in the past.
Making the Colombian economy more flexible implied specific structural adjustments that had a tremendous negative effect in the poor and the middle classes and further helped dominant groups to keep and extend their power (Bushnell 2007: 402-404) mentions that among the most notorious examples of such adjustments were, for example, the privatization of public enterprises, the elimination of importation licenses, the near elimination of control on foreign capital assets and inversions, the dismantling of labor protections such as penalties for unjustified dismissal, the corporatization of the health system, and the over-specialization of agriculture so it could be further geared towards the export economy.

Scholars such as Ocampo (2004,2005) and Fernández (2000) have shown that such drastic changes in the political economy favored the expansion of monocultures for biofuel production (such as palm oil), further concentrating land tenure and taking small-farmers through new waves of dispossession and poverty. Other analysts also point out that the extension of the agricultural frontier and the concentration of land tenure in the 90’s and the 2000’s were carried out by private militias, often in alliance with the police and the military (Garcia 2011, Arjona 2011).

At the same time, the NC91 offered a reformulation of Colombian nationhood with concrete consequences for the daily life of historically marginalized groups, which is seen as perhaps the most positive side to it. The constitution declared Colombia to be a multiethnic (*pluriétnica*) and multicultural nation (article 7), which happened after black, indigenous, and guerrilla members found a place at the table and put forward ethnoracial issues as important matters to be resolved. Ng’weno (2007) and Rahier (2012) underscore two fundamental shifts in the state’s ideology: (i) after 100 years of having a Catholic Colombian state, it was declared secular., and (ii) the Colombian nation ceased to be conceived as a *mestizo*[^8] nation and began to be understood as a ethno-racially differentiated nation. This last point is the what concerns me here.

Critics of the twentieth century construction of the ideology of *mestizaje* (Quijano 2007, Lugones, 2007; Wade 1993, 2010; Martinez-Alier 1989) point out that although it served the purpose of unifying Latin American countries in the Republican periods by creating the image

[^8]: Mestizo means mixed, with a similar meaning to the French word *métissage*. 
that “everyone was mestizo,” it also created the erasure of ethno-racial differences produced in colonial times that actually had specific consequences for those who were not white and Catholic Spaniards and therefore did not belong to the supreme race. As Whitten (1881, 1885) puts it, the ideology of mestizaje was used to exclude those who not only were not meeting the expectations of phenotypical mixture, but also were not willing to (or, for various reasons, could not) be part of the process of cultural whitening. This process implied to become less rural, less native (black or indigenous) and more urban, more modern.

A similar interpretation of the problems created by the ideology of mestizaje has been analyzed by introducing the concept of “transformist hegemony.” This concept, based on the Gramscian understanding of hegemony, was first developed by Bracket Williams in her work on Guyana and then taken up by Peter Wade in his contributions to the analysis of ethnoracial problems in Latin America. The idea of “transformist hegemony” is helpful because it refers to the process by which “nationalists attempts to create cultural unity dealt with diversity by assimilating elements of that heterogeneity through appropriations that devalue them or that deny the source of their contribution” (Wade, 2010:93). In the case of Colombia, when it reached its independence from the Spanish Crown (1819) and began its process of construction as an autonomous republic, the idea of the mestizo nation was used by the elites to both appropriate and re-signify the meanings of blackness and indigeneity (and the practices of black and indigenous groups) to fit “the central value complex of the dominant groups” (ibid). Hence, the changes in state ideology and the imagined community produced by the assembly process and the NC91 constitute a tremendously important moment in the continuous process of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of ethnoracial identities and livelihoods, which are always inscribed within state margins (by inclusion or exclusion).

However, the change in state’s ideology and the formation of a new racial project (Omi and Winant 1994) was not only limited to the substantive declaration of the ethnoracial and cultural diversity of Colombian people. More importantly, it set the ground to put in place judicial mechanisms to grant special rights to these communities:
a. Article 68 guarantees the right to communities to preserve and keep their cultural identity.
b. Article 246 guarantees special sovereignty rights to what were called “territories,” or collective
ownership of lands that have historically belonged to a particular ethno-racial group.

Later on, in laws 55 and 70 of 1993, the Colombian Constitutional Court granted the rights for prior consultation to indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. This means that the Colombian State has the obligation to ask communities that have acquired territorial rights for their permission to act upon them or their collective land. These rights, then, set a partial limit to the sovereign power of the Nation-State, while at the same time kept it as precisely that—the sovereign body in charge of the making and application of ethnoracial identities and communal relations of belonging, as well as the one with the last word when a process of prior consultation goes against state goals.

Yet the study of the interaction between the creation of especial ethnoracial rights and the organization and reorganization of identities can also be seen from the perspective of communities who, not being passive actors but also agents of their own destinies, reconfigure social relations, culture, materialities, and meanings in their own ways.

Indeed, as Asher (2009) shows in her study of black social movements in Colombia, these groups have been pivotal for the introduction of socio-environmental and ethnoracial issues in various development plans. Thus, following Asher, I think that it is necessary to look at how groups have been benefited or not benefited by these changes, and what has happened when they have not. I also claim that, in cases of groups such as the RSLC, although the constitutional changes have played on different logics that sometimes have harmed people and communities, they have also allowed them to become stronger political forces and to achieve key demands for their survival, the preservation of their territories and of the cultural objects and practices they value.

A key point to consider, then, is the impact that such changes in state ideology, which painted the picture of Colombian nationhood as a multicultural and multiethnic imagined community and subsequently incorporated and enforced ethnic-based rights, has had in the scenario of social mobilization in Colombia. Following the analysis of Sánchez and Arango (2015) a few factors are salient:

1. The generation of new territorial conflicts between communities
2. The rupture of solidarity relations among and within communities

3. The emergence of new alliances among communities

4. The transformation of ethnoracial identities and the rise of new processes of mobilizing and community organizing that try to re-construct such identities as black or indigenous, and to mold the mobilizing processes based on those identities and the rights acquired by communities who fit in the ethno-racial categories defined by the state and granted those special territorial rights.

I take these points as part of the core aspects one should be looking at in order to understand how ethnoracialization has been worked out through neoliberal multiculturalism in Colombia. I turn now to the analysis of how social mobilization in Colombia has changed throughout the years as the ideology of cultural difference becomes more prominent in institutional and non-institutional spaces.

**Ethnoracialization and Social Mobilization in Colombia**

Recent studies of social movements in Latin America (Almedia and Ulate 2015; Stahler-Sholk; Vanden, and Becker, 2019; Veltmeyer and Petras 2011) have focused on addressing the political and cultural context, strategies, and outcomes of social mobilization in what some have called a post-neoliberal world (Stahler-Sholk; Vanden, and Becker, 2019), marked with the delegitimation of the Washignton consensus. These studies approached social mobilization on the continent by paying attention to national and transnational movements in countries that belonged to “The Pink Tide” (Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela) as well as in Chile, México, and Brazil.

Not many of the compiled studies on social movements in the region pay close attention to social movements in Colombia, where the central concern of academics and activists has been the war. The idea behind this gesture is that the war devours social mobilization. However, Colombian scholars (Fals Borda 2001; Ulloa 2001; Duque Cañas 2012; Archila 2019) have pointed

---

9 Sánchez and Arango (2015) studied the process of a community in Los Montes de María, one of the most violent zones of Colombia and also one of the centers of palm oil expansion and land grabbing. They show how that community had historically associated their primarily identity as campesinx. Nevertheless, in the last few years they have initiated an organizing process in which they are trying to be legally recognized as a constituted Afro-Colombian community so they can actually protect their territories and lives from the different threats they face.
out that social movements in the country were constantly active since the beginning of the 20th century and that, even though they are affected by the armed conflict, their actions and practices have taken their own trajectories.

Colombia has been a center of urban and rural social mobilization for many decades, and such mobilization has shaped cultural and institutional formations in important ways. Yet such movements have also been traversed by broader cultural, political, and economic processes. In the next sections, I explain the genealogy of peasant movements in Colombia (which I call from now on Campesinx) and their relation with the formation of ethno-racially-based movements, such as the indigenous and the afro-Colombian movements. This analysis reveals how the formation of agrarian and more general political regimes are have been tied, by inclusion or exclusion, to social contention and social mobilization at the grassroot level.

Campesinx Movements

In the 20s and the 30s, for instance, there was a strong development of different agrarian organizations. These organizations mobilized politically and generated a broad and important resistance to the processes of dispossession and proletarianization of the rural population, processes that began as early as the 18th and 19th centuries with the gradual incorporation of the capitalist system into the seigniorial and colonial systems prevailing in the 16th and 17th centuries (Fals Borda, 2015 [1962]). Thus, during these decades, campesinx groups such as the National Agrarian Party, the Peasant Leagues and the Rural Action Units began to play an important role on the national political scene. These groups created webs of solidarity between smallholders and new campesinx proletariat, which began to be part of the labor force created by national and foreign agrarian corporations that found in Colombia the perfect space for their growth and expansion (Fals Borda 2015; Pécaut 2001).

These organizations were also born in a context in which the Communist Party gained presence in the country and consolidated itself as an active political force to counterbalance the liberal and conservative parties. The influence that the work of the Communist Party and its factions (The National Left Revolutionary Union and The Socialist Revolutionary Party) had on these popular formations is essential for understanding the type of speeches and narratives they and their “heirs” adopted in the subsequent decades. Thus, Colombia became a center of
reception and adaptation to Marxist-Leninism. The agrarian question was assumed as one more wing of the class struggle and became a fundamental axis of both its political agenda and grassroots organizations (of course, with their respective modifications) (Fajardo, 2014).

Scholars of the history and sociology of social movements in Colombia such as Archila (2006) agree that, in this scenario, those who worked the land identified with the mass of the campesinado/peasantry, even if they were also subjected to or participated in the formation of ethnoracialization.

However, in the decades of the 1940s and 1950s this changed in important ways. In 1934 a group of landowners created the National Patriotic and Economic Association (APEN), which systematically operated by exercising physical and symbolic violence against campesinxs who organized to push for the approval of Law 77 of 1921 and Law 200 of 1933, which were promoted by the liberal party with the aim of giving a “social function to property.” In part, to counter this onslaught against grassroots organizations and their members, the Campesino and Indigenous Federation was born, which in 1942 became the Campesino and Indigenous Confederation (Kalmanovitz, 2006). Despite the fact that this was the first national organization to put a separation between indigenous and campesinxs as two different social and political subjects on the table, their claims and discourse were focused on the problem of access to land and distribution and redistribution of the means of production and wealth in Colombian agriculture. Their reclamations excluded vocabulary that would indicate the presence of an ethnoracialized discourse. In this sense, it is possible to affirm that this political narrative remained within the sphere of the class struggle (Fajardo 2014; Jaramillo and Cubides 1986).

With the arrival of the time known as La Violencia, the late 1940s and the entire 1950s were devastating for social movements in Colombia, particularly for movements located in the countryside (Fajardo 2014: 36-39, Hendreson 2006). On the one hand, physical and de facto violence nullified the possibility of continuing to do political work for many organizations; leaders and members were assassinated, disappeared, or forced to move to other areas of the country. On the other hand, the symbolic violence carried out by the bipartisan ideology appropriated the spaces of thought and action built by other ways of understanding the world and reality,

---

10 La Violencia was a period of highly violent bipartisan violence that brook Colombian history in two.
displacing many of the cultural achievements of grassroots movements.

It took fifteen or twenty years for social movements to be re-built. In 1967, the creation of the National Association of Campesino Users (ANUC) restarted a cycle of campesinxs mobilization fundamental to the history of the country. Despite the fact that the ANUC had an independent character in the years following its official constitution, it is important to mention that it was promoted by the presidency of Carlos Lleras (1966-1970).

As Bejarano (1990, 1995) and Zamosc (1992) show, among others, Lleras was committed to carrying out an agrarian reform that had as one of its main objectives the redistribution of land, especially in those areas of the country dominated by the latifundista tenure structure such as the Atlantic coast. At the same time, the liberal president saw "the strengthening of the campesinado as an essential element to expand markets for national industry and slow down the pace of the rural-urban migratory avalanche" (Zamosc, 1992: 28. My translation). In 1970, the first national congress of ANUC took place at the National Capitol of Bogotá, in which its organizational structure was formed.

With the arrival of the conservative president Misael Pastrana, the official political scenario for the campesinado became arid again. Pastrana not only undertook to dismantle the land reform process begun by Lleras, but also joined with the large landowners to promote the exile and eviction of campesinos throughout the country. This situation led ANUC, in 1971, to assume the agrarian reform process as its own, carrying out the processes of land redistribution through organized invasions. In the same year, ANUC promulgated the agrarian mandate, which proposed an ideological platform made up of 18 points. The platform begins by emphasizing that ANUC:

Is an autonomous organization of salaried poor campesinxs that fights for a comprehensive and democratic Agrarian Reform; for the vindication of the agricultural worker, for the elevation of their level of economic, social, cultural life, and the full development of their capacities. We understand that to overcome the economic backwardness of the country and achieve the general well-being of the Colombian people, it is necessary to break the current internal and external structures of domination that have benefited a small exploiting class, through the organized and permanent struggle of the Colombian campesinado with the working class and other popular sectors committed to structural change and the total liberation of our country from all forms of
We are all grouped as Colombian campesinos without racial and religious distinctions. (ANUC Constitution Act, Villa del Rosario de Cúcuta: June 1971. My emphasis. My translation)

This excerpt from the ANUC constitution act signed by representatives of twenty-two departments of the country is of great help in understanding and showing more clearly several of the constituent elements of the language, conceptions, and mobilization strategies of the peasant movement at that particular historical moment. As is clearly seen in the excerpt, the conception of the campesinx struggle as a class struggle that aligns with the struggle of all the oppressed and materially exploited (physically and economically) is articulated with a conception of the campesinx as an agricultural worker. Here, the campesino movement is thought of as a community historically subjected to specific material conditions that have marked its relationship of power (or, rather, its lack of) vis-à-vis the dominant sectors of society and the other exploited or oppressed sectors. This historical construction of the socio-political location of the campesinado determined the type of demands and mobilization strategies employed by this group for much of the 20th century, focused on the following basic aspects:

1. Redistribution of land.
2. Improvement of the working conditions of the salaried peasant.
3. Respect and support for popular organization.
4. Political inclusion of the peasantry in the national, regional and local decision-making scene.

These demands were also shared by other organizations in the country, such as the indigenous ones. However, indigenous movements were constituted as such only in the second half of the century. I explain next how they emerged and what their platform is.

**Indigenous Movements**

In the 70s, more or less at the same time that ANUC launched its ideological platform, the Indigenous Council of the department of Cauca (CRIC) was born in Toribio. A short time later, the CRIC became linked to the ANUC general secretary, which strengthened both the campesinax movement and the nascent indigenous movement.
In the case of the indigenous movement, I find that it is precisely because of the agrarian reform that the Colombian government tried to implement in 1968, which included the total elimination of the figure of the indigenous reservation/resguardo, that the indigenous communities of Cauca were forced to strengthen their organizational processes. Galeano (2006) points out that the elimination of the resguardos would entail the loss of territorial autonomy and the transformation of the indigenous people into agricultural workers. The creation of CRIC was a response to this.

Although the CRIC was mainly composed of indigenous people, it inherited or directly related to the repertoires of contention of the campesinx movement. Furthermore, Rappaport (2007) states that, for many years, the CRIC used a vocabulary that suggested a self-conception as a union. However, it also incorporated demands for the political and cultural sovereignty of indigenous peoples, so “at first indigenous struggles against landowners were fought with campesinx organized in communist party leagues ... Over time, differences between indigenous and campesinos were revealed” (Galeano, 2006:58). While for the peasants the fight ended once the land was recovered, for the indigenous people this was only the beginning of “a long road of struggle to be recognized as peoples with territorial and cultural autonomy, as their ancestors were before the arrival of the Spanish” (Galeano, 2006: 58).

Consequently, unlike trade unions and other grassroots organizations, the CRIC also sought to strengthen indigenous councils, make known the laws on indigenous peoples and demand their fair application, defend indigenous history, language, and customs, and train indigenous teachers themselves.

In the 80s the CRIC mobilized with other regional indigenous groups to create the National Indigenous Organization (ONIC). The consolidation of ONIC and the previous work carried out by CRIC and other indigenous organizations in large areas of the country thus allowed the Colombian indigenous movement to become part of the constitutional process in the 1990s. At the same time, as Escobar (1998) points out, it is not only the constitutional process that modifies the role played by indigenous groups and social movements in the country.

*Black Movements*

As I argued at the beginning of the chapter, the colonial histories of ethnoracial and territorial
formation in Colombia put Afro-Colombian groups in a different social, political, and economic location in relation to indigenous communities. Africans and the African diaspora in Colombia has a long history of resistance. Castillo (2007: 67-68) talks, for example, of how "the movements of slaves at the end of the 18th century increased especially in the south of the country, in the province of Cauca, and on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts." At the time, the slogan of the slaves in Cauca was “death to the whites of the Cauca,” which, he says, was indicative of their preference for death over slavery, which is a pattern that scholars have found in many other colonial sites. In contrast to the campesinax and indigenous case, this shows as well that black resistance was racially framed since the colonial era.

In the 19th century, Afro-Colombian groups were also an essential part of the independence campaigns. These campaigns offered them opportunities for liberation that were later cut short by the very actions of the "heroes" of the patria (Bolívar and Nariño). However, it is the liberal leader José Hilario López who, in the second half of the 19th century, led the declaration of total freedom for slaves, thus gaining a great adherence of this population to his party. Subsequently, in the first half of the 20th century, there emerged what Wabgou, Rodriguez, Cassiani, Ospina (2012) called a black intelligentsia. This was comprised of Afro-Colombian people who studied at colleges in Bogotá, joined the liberal party, managed to counteract white and mestizo power militating in the ranks of the liberal party, and acquire political leadership in departments such as Chocó and Norte del Cauca (Agudelo 2005). The generation of black leadership in the department of Cauca in the 1920s and 30s is crucial because a prosperous black campesinado existed in those regions and engaged with the struggles of the campesinax movement before creating a distinct and separate black movement.

Additionally, and despite the fact that the presence of this intelligentsia during those years has been linked to one of the ruling parties that has been accused of corruption and clientelism many times, its formation and the subsequent boost to the organizational processes of the 1950s and 1960s led by this intelligensia, during which time events such as Black Day (June 20, 1943) were held, made racial discrimination a visible problem to the public for the first time.

There is no doubt that from the activist perspective related to the beginnings of black organizational processes in Colombia, we consider that “El día del Negro” was a
manifestation or expression of a black subordinate alterity, whose existence had become invisible in the Republic: it was an essential event for the emergence of a racial consciousness in the protagonists. In the same way, it built on ethnorracial transnational solidarity from Colombia to the United States, passing through Latin American countries with a black presence. (Wabgou et al. 2012: 73. My translation)

The same group that led the “Black Day” created the Black Club, which started in Bogotá but later spread to the regions of the country that had the largest black population. The Club sought to carry out cultural strengthening processes in Afro-Colombian communities through educational processes. These processes were based on the idea of the existence of "black values" that were of utmost importance for the construction of Colombia. Such an idea represents the conception of a “Colombian black identity” clearly and directly, perhaps for the first time.

Despite the fact that The Black Club did not prosper as expected and that the black social movement was substantially weakened by La Violencia and the onslaught of the agro-export economic model, in the 1970s the international political environment of anti-colonial struggles in countries such as Algeria, the writings of West Indian thinkers such as Aimé Césaire, the anti-Apartheid movement in Africa, and the black liberation movement in the United States (specifically the movement for civil rights and the creation of the Black Panthers) shocked black intellectual elites, who were again motivated to promote a re-organization of the Afro-Colombian movement. In 1975, the First National Meeting of the Colombian Black Population was inaugurated in the city of Cali, in the department of Valle. During this meeting, the National Council of the Colombian Black Population was consolidated. Some of the conclusions reached during the event mentioned by Wabgou et al (2012: 103-104) emphasized racism as a source of economic inequality, the need to generate a black racial consciousness that shaped a clear representation of “ancestral black identity” (ancestral black cultural values), and the recognition of the historicity of the Afro-Colombian struggle and its need to project itself into the future.

A year later the Second National Meeting of the Colombian Black Population was held in the city of Quibdó in the department of Chocó. The main topic of the meeting was the black identity in Colombia. In this meeting, the demands for recognition and socio-racial equity were extended to more specific issues, such as strengthening education centers in predominantly
black areas, the improvement of access to health for black communities, the improvement of infrastructure road that connects black peoples, and "the improvement of agriculture, mining and livestock for the black population, among others." (Moreno Salazar 1995: 87-91)

The demands for the recognition of ancestral black values and the historicity of the Afro-Colombian struggle are crucial for understanding the way in which the black social movement began to differentiate itself from the campesinox and indigenous movements. Some authors have described these demands as the need of the Afro-Colombian people to develop a “black consciousness,” which is defined as:

(...) the concept that reflects the historical struggle of the African communities that emerged in the continent and that allows to differentiate the historical personality and cultural peculiarities of the ethnic groups descended from the Africans kidnapped from Africa to exploit them as slaves. (Mosquera 2007: 10)

This conception would be definitive for the struggles that the Afro-Colombian organizations carried out at the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century, which, as I will show later, pick it up and frame it in terms of identity politics and ethnoracial and territorial recognition.

Thus, Wabgou, Rodriguez, Cassiani, Ospina (2012: 141) show that, although the majority of Afro-Colombian people live in urban areas in Colombia, there is a large number of rural social organizations that, were carrying out projects to defend their communities and territories independently from urban organizations. For instance, important organizational initiatives that emerged in the 1980s were registered at the rural level in the Pacific with an ethnoracial territorial character. They launched struggles for recognition of their groups as ethnic and demanded rights to collective titling, which impacted the process of writing the NC91. Paradoxically, as Rahier (2012), Ng’weno (2007), Restrepo (2002) and Wade (1995) point out, this type of legislation has mainly favored the black communities of the Pacific Coast of Colombia, which “are seen as closer to indigenous than other black communities in the country who have been denied territorial rights” (Rahier, 2012: 5. My translation).

Currently, scholars who study the political mobilization processes of black communities in other parts of the country have shown show how a community whose members understood
themselves to be campesinos in a pre-constitutional era has constructed their identities as Afro-Colombian. As these scholars have demonstrated, this is due, in large part, to the space for ethnoracial political struggle the constitution itself opened for this type of community. This strategy has become one of the most important ways for communities to resist processes of uprooting generated, in large part, by the agricultural industry and their clandestine alliances with paramilitary forces and criminal gangs (Sanchez and Arango 2011; Baquero-Melo 2015).

Both rural and urban black organizations, although different in terms of structure and form of operation, coincide in key elements that are part of the narrative of social mobilization that have been built through the years. These elements have to do with the idea of recovering a series of ancestral and spatial practices that come from another space-time: the life before the middle passage, which is unreachable but nevertheless imagined, and the territory. In this sense, for the black movement in Colombia, the history of slavery does not completely destroy the African legacy, but rather, opens it, cracks it, and then reverts it to the Raizal, Palenquera and Maroon culture that developed in the Americas and took root, once again, in a territory that has always been contested, never entirely theirs. In this way, it can be said that, regardless of whether Afro-Colombian organizations operate in rural or urban areas, they maintain an ancestral discourse that has a fundamental effect on the type of political demands and mobilization strategies they choose.

Movement’s oscillations and processes of formation

When comparing the indigenous movement’s platforms of struggle with that of the ANUC, it can be seen how the former, despite aligning itself with the demands for land redistribution of the campesin movement, incorporates other elements that structure indigenous communities as participants in the class struggle while locating them historically as distinct subjects. This makes the social mobilization strategies of this organization differently articulated and focused on broader axes than those implemented by the campesin movement. However, the fact that the indigenous movement constructed its struggle based on their historical differences as a distinct group does not mean that they were adopting the language of ethnorace. Jimeno (1996) and Rappaport (2007) emphasize that the movement was organized on a territorial basis, not on ethnic grounds.
Additionally, it is worth underscoring that indigenous peoples and campesinxs distinguished themselves in the way in which their goals and identities were positioned in relation to the state: while in the indigenous case they were trying to be separated from the nation state, the campesinado was looking to be included in the project of nation-building. My analysis of the relationships between indigenous groups and campesinxs in the RSLC shows that, in seed struggles, this situation has substantially changed.

On the one hand, today, the campesinx movement is going through a process of organizing to gain territorial rights based on the creation of a campesinx identity. This last process has been triggered by the strengthening of the campesinx movement in the great agrarian strike of 2013. This strike paralyzed the country for 23 days and involved not only campesinx sectors but also the urban population, which stood in solidarity with the cause. The campesinx movement made an extremely important turn to understand its current repertoire of struggle: it began to ask for the recognition of the campesinado as a differentiated subject of rights. This initiative is animated by the national and international context of social struggle. The creation of transnational campesinx organizations such as La Via Campesina, together with the issuance of the United Nations Declaration of Campesino Rights (July 2013), influenced rural grassroots organizations and provided them with a political platform that expanded the scale of their struggle. The campesinado demanded their recognition not only as agrarian workers but also as possessors of a culture and “traditional” ways of life. On this basis, the campesinado, working together with senators on the left, presented a bill to congress that made the following argument: if campesinxs are special subjects of rights in the same way that indigenous and afro-colombian communities were in the NC91, the right to land and campesinx territoriality has to be recognized (Official primer of the project, April 5, 2016).

Although similar to the claim that indigenous and Afro-Colombians made about the need for a special set of rights in the NC91, there is a crucial difference in the way the campasinado understood its particular subjectivity. They framed their difference as socially-based, not as ethnoracially-based, breaking, in some way, the very dynamic of the colonial narrative of raciality.

The distinct black positionality generated by the history of slave trade and the
continuation of contemporary forms of the colonial/capitalist system has meant that black communities, unlike indigenous communities, are not always recognized as peoples; on the contrary, they are seen as invasive in some cases (Green 2007). Thus, it can be said that, despite the fact that both groups “gained special rights” in the NC91, there is still great inequality in terms of access to land that affects mostly Afro-communities.

Baquero-Melo (2017) and Escobar, Álvarez and Dagnino (1998) claim that, although social mobilization in Colombia has been increasingly organizing around identity lines, class-based reclamations have remained at the center. It is important to understand this because, as I have already emphasized, in the case of the RSLC, ethnoracialization and identity formation plays a critical role in the process of organizing, but these elements are not dislocated from material, class-based demands. As I will show in the coming chapters, the RSLC has deployed language that strongly emphasizes the socioeconomic inequalities and exclusions of the indigenous, black, and campesinx communities. However, recent changes in the relations of power between different groups in the organization have generated new repertoires of contention that replace demands for profound transformations of the agricultural and political system for questions about rights and inclusion in the nation state.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I argued that the legal, political, and economic implementation of neoliberalism in Colombia has made a technology and a counter-technology of biosocial governance of ethnorace. I described contemporary efforts to dominate nature/culture in Colombia that emerge as expression of colonial pasts. I carried out a critical analysis of how violence traverse Colombian histories and stories in various ways and how it intersects with seed politics. Then I connected this to the implementation of neoliberal multiculturalism. In that section of the chapter, I showed how this form of governance, born in the 90s under very specific circumstances, creates a technocultural, legal, and political framework that shapes communities’ rights to land and territory and affects the ways in which they mobilize. I also showed how, in the very process of mobilization, these communities experience mutations in their identities and their relations to one another. To understand how ethnoracialization has worked via the institutionalization of ethnoracial rights is important because it is the first axis intersecting with
the techno-governance apparatus established directly and indirectly by the CSR. And it is also relevant because it shows how even though the apparatus seeks to be totalizing, it is not and cannot be so, as communities themselves have proved able to make and unmake such technopolitical arrangements in ways that help them carry out liberatory projects.
CHAPTER 2

THE LOGIC OF INCLUSION/EXCLUSION OF ETHNORACIAL GOVERNANCE IN SEED STRUGGLES

In this chapter, I argue that in seed struggles in Colombia, neoliberal multiculturalism advances contemporary forms of colonial/capitalism. I show how, interlocked with seed laws, it operates as a mechanism for inclusion/exclusion of ethnoracialized communities as subjects of rights, by creating the illusion of delimited territorial, economic and ethnoracial recognition and participation. Drawing from this argument, I also claim that shifting back and forth between unstable forms of inclusion and exclusion is itself a form of governance in contemporary biopolitical life.

Neoliberal Multiculturalism, bioprospecting, and ethnoracialization

I have previously discussed how in contemporary capitalist societies three spaces are central for the production of regimes of truth in seed conflicts: the lab, the bank, and the courtroom. Each of these sites operates under a different logic, but they all connect to form webs that shape the flow of capital and power in ways that have tended to benefit the agrobiotech industry, imperialist endeavors of the United States, and internal colonialist moves of the economic and political elites. Yet, as I have also shown in chapter one, these regimes of truth are not completely hegemonic, solid, and unbreakable. On the contrary, seed movements across the world, and in this case the RSLC, have been able to crack them by mobilizing communities’ epistemic and political power. However, whereas in chapter I was concerned with the analysis of how this is done at a more general legislative level, in this chapter I look at the discursive space in which contestations and transformations have taken place within seed law. To do this, I go back to the critical analysis of neoliberal multiculturalism (Hale, 2002) that I presented in the previous chapter and the way in which it interlaces with seed laws and bioprospecting projects. I examine the legal and political debates that have taken place in and through the courtroom,
which I understand as a symbolic and material space that embodies gendered, ethno-racialized, and class-based relationships between law, knowledge, capital, and society.

The multiple relationships between technoscience, social movements, and the law have been discussed in a wide array of sociological scholarship. Some scholars have understood the courtroom as a central space where contentious politics take place and where science policy gets re-shaped by the actors participating in socioepistemic debates (Jasanoff 1995; Kinchy 2012; Moore, 2008; Foster 2916; Parthasarathy 2017). Others have studied how litigation about technoscientific controversies can foster both mobilization and demobilization (Lapegna, 2016; Hess 2016). These studies have shown that neither the public workers in the judiciary system nor scientists and social movement’s members participating in techno-legal debates are apolitical. On the contrary, they are embedded in systems of power as well as specific institutional contexts and structural conditions and are influenced by political histories and ideologies that, at times, present conflicting meanings of the concrete and potential relationships between technoscience and society. Based on the insights of this literature, I understand seed law in Colombia as a historical continuum of relations.

One of the central approaches that has shaped the form that seed law takes in Colombia is bioprospecting. Feminist STS scholars have defined bioprospecting as the search for new bioresources to generate biocapital for some while exploiting and excluding others in critical ways (Foster, 2016; Schiebinger 2004; Clark, Mamo, Fosket, Fishman, Shim, 2009; Subramaniam 2014). In the case of Colombia, bioprospecting has been articulated with neoliberal multiculturalism and has operated at the ideological and material levels as a mechanism by which indigenous communities have been trying to expand their (still minimal) political, economic, and epistemic recognition in the country. However, neoliberal multiculturalism has interlaced with bioprospecting in a different fashion for other marginalized peoples, such as Afro-Colombians and Campesinxes. Although they have sought, and, sometimes, even achieved recognition through the law, they have remained in a position of political, material, and symbolic exclusion, which is reflected in their absence or invisibility in seed law contestations.

I argue that the potential for communities to benefit from bioprospecting in a way that significantly transforms structural inequality in Colombia is embedded in the politics of
inclusion/exclusion that is constitutive of modern politics, as initially conceptualized by Agamben (2002). Thus, in my analysis, I draw from two central aspects of Agamben’s theory of power. The first aspect is his argument that the definitory categories of western politics are not friend-enemy, as Schmitt proposed, but inclusion/exclusion. To develop this point, he states that the structure of the exception is what grounds such a relationship, in which what he calls bare life or \textit{Bios}, is included in political life, or \textit{Zoé}, by virtue of its exclusion. I claim that seed legislation and bioprospecting agreements in Colombia follow such a logic.

The second aspect of Agamben’s theory of power that I draw from is his critique of the Foucauldian genealogy of power. In order to answer the question of how and why life becomes part of the public concern and is governed by the State, Foucault separates sovereignty from biopower. In this move, he sees sovereign power as controlling the territory through the physical presence of the police and the military and biopower as controlling both individual bodies and the population as a whole. The body is controlled through disciplinary devices, such as the health monitors used in hospitals, the desks used in schools, and the bars used in prison cells. The population is controlled through “apparatus of security” (Foucault 1978: 102). This apparatus is constituted by technologies that produce social control and direct and/or modify the biological destiny of the human species. The primary objective of these technologies is not to manage a multiplicity of individuals in a direct way, exercising power from above or in crude forms such as executions or formal rights, nor to control a territory.

The goal of governance is to control both things and behaviors that are essential in human economic activity and that strongly affect other essential spheres of human life. The things Foucault is referring to are not material objects; they are human relations with each other and with their environment, be it their rituals, the quality of the soil they harvest, or their reproductive capacities and possibilities. Thus, for Foucault biopolitics is a form of power that prevails in the modern world along with the paradigm of sovereignty, which appears, in temporal terms, as the first form of power. In contrast, for Agamben, biopolitics is the horizon from which Western politics has been historically articulated, and as such, inhabits sovereign power. Likewise, sovereign power is a key form of power for biopolitics (Quintana 2006). I ground and transform this argument in the analysis of legal conflicts between the RSLC and the Colombian
State in which sovereign power, embodied in the legal power of the nation state and reflected in ethnoracial law, meets biopower, in this case embodied in commercialization of native and creole seed production and reproduction, and the domestication and control of life itself through agrobiotechnology.

In the next section, I discuss the legal and political antecedents of the RSLC’s lawsuits to show how biopower has expanded the molecular gaze from plants to seeds. I point out to how, whereas in earlier controversies about patents the cultural character of plants and seeds was excluded from legislative decisions as irrelevant, it has been recently taken into consideration as a marker of ethnoracial identity and authenticity, which adds value to the bioproducts that can be generated from them (but have yet to be produced). In Colombia, seed law frames seeds as biocommodities. Initially this meant excluding native and creole seeds from political legislation and governing them through exclusion, while recently they have been included as an ethnoracialized product that articulates new meanings of indigeneity while expanding the reach of biocapital.

Indigenous contestation to the transnational governance of biotechnology

The history of the national and transnational governance of biotechnology precedes the emergence of seed regulation in the Colombian legal body. It involves contestations over the meaning and uses of nature that gave the first glimpse of what biopiracy looked like for indigenous communities and rural grassroots organizations in contemporary contexts. In this section, I focus on only one key antecedent of seed conflicts in Colombia: the legal and political contestation over the ayahuasca (yagé for Colombian communities, *Banisteriopsis caapi*) patent. I do this because Andrés, an RSLC activist who has dedicated most of his career to working with indigenous organizations in Colombia, and many other activists told me that the technical rationality used by the US Patent System in the Ayahuasca case shaped the RSLC’s repertoires of contention (Tilly 1986) in particular ways:

Since what happened with the case of Yagé, people working on these kinds of issues began to learn to speak the language of these offices. Do you see what I am talking about? We started to learn what their technical reasoning was, what things could they understand and how those things be should said so they could hear them, hear us. And I
think we now do such a better job at RSCL in the crafting of the legal arguments against the seed laws because we know that the Colombian legal system very much follows the gringo system in these matters, and we have developed the tools to show the fallacies in their own arguments. Look at the derogation of UPOV 91. We made it happen because we were able to demonstrate the flows of the novelty principle. (Andrés, 2017. My translation)

Andrés’s words show how important the Ayahuasca case was for the RSCL to build new areas of knowledge not yet explored, areas of knowledge that were articulated as a form of resistance in and of itself. Ayahuasca or Yagé is a sacred plant for indigenous people in the Amazon that has been used for centuries in collective rituals of healing and consciousness exploration (due to its psychedelic effect). The patent over this ancestral plant was granted to Loren Miller, director of the International Plant Medicine Corporation in California in 1886. In 1994, the Indigenous Peoples Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA by its Spanish acronym), which was based in Ecuador but also represented Indigenous organizations in Colombia and Brazil, presented a lawsuit against the patent to the US Patent and Trademark Office. The lawsuit offered two different kinds of arguments.

The first argument followed IPR rhetoric by arguing that the patented plant could not be considered an invention since it was identical to the one indigenous people have known about and cared for centuries. The second argument was grounded on the spiritual value of the plant and its intrinsic association with indigenous identities and ways of life. After scientific scrutiny of the plant, the office declared in 1999 that the patent had to be revoked. The ruling considered the lack of novelty to be the main impediment for giving the green light to the patent but did not consider the cultural value of it to be of relevance for the decision. This kind of technical rationality (Horkheimer et Adorno, 1972/2002) allowed Miller to submit a second patent request. The Office approved it in 2001, this time arguing that the plant variety was indeed novel (Dorsey 2003).

Although the patent expired and can no longer be renewed, this case marked a precedent for indigenous and environmental organizations in the countries involved in the contestation, including those in Colombia, in at least four important ways. First, it made biotechnology, bioprospecting, and the Intellectual Property Regime (IPR) visible to the public
and to grassroots organizations in Latin America, which had no previous knowledge of or experience with them, at least not in their contemporary form.\(^{11}\) Second, this new visibility, made these three processes real and concrete and constructed them as neocolonial threats to indigenous culture, identity, and sovereignty. Third, the case set an important precedent for social movements on the continent for possible innovative ways of organizing to resist different forms of techno-extraction. These ways of organizing would mirror white colonizers’ exercise/excess of power against indigenous communities in the colonial era and would include new actors, such as pharmaceutic corporations. And fourth, it delimited a US-based exclusionary legal space in which spiritual significance or cultural value of plants does not operate as grounds for granting or not granting a patent, which made it clear to indigenous groups that the patent system they were facing understood patentability as a merely techno-legal process (Parthasarathy 2017).

Some RSLC members, having had long-term involvement in indigenous and environmental politics, were strongly influenced by the Ayahuasca case, which they used as a referent in order to “[push] for the GM contamination testing in the Network,” as Andrés put it. However, they have also pointed out that having the Colombian State as the main interlocutor has changed their approach to contesting seed laws. Gloria Erazo, one of the head lawyers of the RSLC, has underscored many times that the advancements of the NC91 in “ethnic matters” cannot be ignored. Consequently, she and other lawyer-activists have developed an argumentative system that utilizes NC91 as a political space for the protection of both seeds and the so-called ethnic communities. Thus, the RSLC has combined technoscientific-based arguments with culturally-based ones in order to dismantle (or at least crack) seed legislation. In the next section, I show how this has been implemented.

Biosecuritization of seeds

While the Ayahuasca’s patent dispute was taking place, another issue occupied the Colombian government of the time: the regulation of agricultural biotechnology. This regulatory framework,

\(^{11}\) I emphasize this because as STS feminist scholars have shown, the histories of bioprospecting go back to the XV century and shaped in significant ways the relationships between imperial centers of capital and power accumulation and the colonies. See for example Parthasaraty (2017) and Chacko (2019), among many others.
which was no longer concerned with plants themselves, had its eyes set on GM seeds explicitly and on criollo and native seeds implicitly. This meant not only a change in the scale of what is regulated and managed but also in the scope of the regulation. Whereas plants could have a life of their own, not necessarily tied to human activities, seeds, in this context, were associated with food, and, therefore, with the capacity of human beings to reproduce themselves. Thus, the regulation of agricultural biotechnology involved strategies for the control of both seed and human reproduction (Kloppenburg 2004).

In 1992, one year after the NC91 came into being, a delegation from the Colombian government packed their bags to go to La Cumbre de la Tierra de Rio de Janeiro [The Rio Summit], where the Treaty on Global Warming and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) were signed. The Colombian government was already prepared to adhere to the CBD, becoming another of the hundred forty-nine countries committed to enforcing three central goals: biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, and bioprospecting. Later, the CBD also included another complementary agreement called Protocolo de Cartagena para la Bioseguridad [The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, CPB]. The CPB was ratified in 2000 in Montreal after seven years of discussions concerning whether or not GM organisms should be internationally regulated, how that regulation should take place in terms of specific procedures, and the extent to which such regulation could actually be legally and politically binding.

Barros-Platiau (2003) talks about the CPB as the document that inaugurated the International Biosecurity Regime, understood as a form of coordinated international governance among states and international organizations such as FAO, WHO, and OECD. Today, with the raise of biocapitalisms and the way in which genes (derived from humans, animals, plants, and seeds) become just one more commodity for transactions, biosecurity has emerged as a pivotal way of securitizing of the bios through environmental and agricultural policies, property rights (related to intellectual property and land property), and ethnoracial rights. Following Moore (2020, unpublished manuscript), in a broader sense, securitizing can be understood as the process by which states, corporations, and regulatory agencies pursue the stability and safety of their populations, investments, and technoscientific adventures. Berda (2013) shows that securitization practices began to be implemented in the colonial era by the largest empires in the
world (particularly England and France), and these practices increased significantly during the liberatory struggles of the colonies for independence in the 19th and 20th centuries, becoming finally institutionalized in Europe in and the US during the “War on Terror.” In agriculture, the emergence of biosecurity coincides with this historical period of securitization. Specifically, this regime was founded on a set of principles, norms, rules, and decision-making processes that provided the framework and platform to manage agrobiotechnological related risk.

The CPB emerged, partly, as a response to the concerns that the scientific community raised about the risks of the use and propagation of GM organisms and their unexpected impacts on highly complex ecosystems that had been previously categorized as centers biological diversity, such as those in Meso and South America (Bravo 2014). The CPB was legally conceived by the European Commission as an environmental treaty focused on food and phytosanitary security. Politically, however, it became part of the contemporary history of the power struggle among nations, international organizations, and corporations.

Although the Colombian government was on board with the CPB since its inception, the apparatus of legal dispositions needed to successfully implement it took a few years to be prepared and approved. But since the first law based on it was passed, several laws have followed. I divide the periodicity of these laws into two: from 2002 to 2017, which I consider to be the overtly aggressive period of seed laws’ generation, and from 2017 to 2020, which I conceive of as the post-peace agreement phase.

In accordance with Colombia’s geopolitical position as a strategic ally of the US in Latin American and the Caribbean, the regulatory framework of the first period mostly followed the US patent and seed systems, although it also incorporated some elements of the European framework included in the CPB. I conceptualize it as an overtly aggressive period because it openly created to favor the agrobiotech industry, whereas the post-peace agreement regulatory system has been presented as inclusive (in gender and ethnoracial terms) and as a vehicle for transforming the disadvantaged structural position of those who could potentially benefit from it. Yet, as I show in chapter 3, this inclusion is only partial and works as a parallel mechanism of exclusion and subjugation.
Establishing a pro-industry seed regulatory framework

Figure 6. The US president at the time, Barack Obama, shakes hand with the ex-president of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, as they finish the negotiations of the Free Trade Agreement between the two nations. Source: The Venture, 2011

The alliance between the Colombian and the US government has worked in such a way that it has benefited US imperialism, Colombian projects of nation-building, and the Colombian elites. The Colombian government has stood behind the US government during crucial moments of the expansion of US domination across the world: in 1950 when it presented the petition against North Korea before the UN Security Council; in 1962, when it pushed the expulsion of Cuba from the OEA; in the 2000’s in the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan (even offering a contingent of Colombian soldiers that could join the US deployment of military forces in these two nations); and in 2009, when the Colombian government accepted the construction of seven military bases in Colombia as part of Plan Colombia (Toro Pérez 2011: 159). These bases were also part of the implementation of the US security agenda in the region. Thus, not only Colombia, but also Costa Rica, Honduras, Curacao, and Aruba allowed and supported their construction. In total, the US built thirteen bases, that, together with the 11,000 soldiers deployed to Haiti after the earthquake, intensified the surveillance of Venezuela and helped neutralize of the now-extinct Pink Tide (Toro Pérez 2011; Zibechi; 2010).
The relationship between the Colombian and the US governments became even closer after 9/11. During that period, the US Republican president George W. Bush and the far-right Colombian president Alvaro Uribe Vélez sat down together more than once to set the “cooperation agenda” for the two countries. Besides the implementation of military and economic agreements, such as the Free Trade Agreement that I already discussed, a critical aspect of this agenda included the securitization\footnote{I conceptualized securitization in Chapter 1.} not only of Colombian territory but also of Colombian biodiversity. A key step towards this was the establishment of a pro-industry seed regulatory framework. The regulatory framework focused on three main axes: Intellectual Property laws (Law 1518 of 2012, Law 1032 of 2006); Certification and Commercialization laws (Resolution 187 of 2006, Resolution 970 of 2010, Resolution 3168 of 2015), and Biosecurity laws (Law 740 of 2002, Decree 4525 of 2005). The graph below explains the periodicity of the laws:

![Figure 7. Seed laws in Colombia. Source: Silva, 2018.](image-url)
Among these sets of regulations, the first issued was Law 740 of 2002, which aims to:

Contribute to ensuring an adequate level of protection in the area of safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology that may have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, also considering risks to human health and focusing specifically on transboundary movements.” (Law 740 of 2002:1. My translation)

In this law, the Colombian government adopts the principle of substantial equivalence followed by the US agrobiotechnological regulatory system, in which it is assumed that GE organisms are, potentially, as “safe” as their non-GE counterparts unless there is scientific data available that proves otherwise. The law is also centered on the evaluation and management of risk, which is typical of biosecurity approaches that do not consider the prevention of harm as guiding GM regulation. In other words, the law does not take the uncertainty of potential harm as a relevant factor to restrict the incorporation of GM organisms in Colombian territory. Point 9 of Article 11 of the same law states this clearly:

Due to the lack of insufficient relevant scientific information or knowledge about the magnitude of the possible adverse effects of GM organisms in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, the Party will not be prevented from making decisions, as appropriate, in relation to the importation of the living modified organism to avoid or minimize such possible adverse effects.” (Law 740 of 2002:7. My translation)

The ICA, The Ministry of Agriculture, and other government agencies participated in the debates that gave birth to these laws. As can be read from the law itself, the absence of knowledge about harm is seen as a limitation for a creating a regulatory framework for preventing harm. Thus, the regulation of the production, harvesting, commercialization, and consumption of GE organisms is founded on knowns, which appear as a force that delimits the space of what we actually know.

With this in mind, some activists in the RSLC have proposed that what is needed is to fill the gap with new knowledge. For example, on several occasions during the RSLC internal meetings I attended in Bogotá, some activists confronted others repeatedly on this issue. They wanted to increase the efforts to do more testing on GM crop contamination across the country so they
could “prove” to the judiciary that some criollo and native seeds had been exposed to GM seeds, and that they needed to be protected. But others considered this to be a “waste of time” since neither the courts nor the public policymakers actually cared about harm:

If we keep putting our efforts into changing things at the policy level through the production of more data for the government agencies to make the right decisions, we will be wasting our time. We cannot legalize this debate. We cannot assume that they do not know what the problems of transgenics are. They know, they just don’t care. (Camilo, RSLC meeting, 2018)

Camilo’s position was supported by other RSLC members, who added that the government and the courts already had proof of human and environmental damages in other cases, such as glyphosate. Gabriela said that “they [the government] know what glyphosate has done to people and nature after more than twenty years of aerial aspersion but they want to keep doing it because all they care about is pleasing the US” (Gabriela, RSLC meeting, 2018). This position has been prevalent in the RSLC, which has publicly advocated for less monitoring and more prevention. However, government officials and members of the seed industry consider monitoring to be the main mechanism for regulating GM organisms.

These discussions echo larger debates among STS scholars who have studied the politics of environmental monitoring and how it addresses the unknowns as knowledge gaps. On the one hand, they underscore that the CBD and the CPB transformed the understanding of risk in such a way that monitoring has become an essential part of today’s environmental politics, adding to the scientization of politics in which broader social questions regarding the consequences of the introduction of various technologies in the environment are reduced to questions of risk and the production of scientific data (Moore et al. 2011; Hess 2016; Kinchy 2012; Kinchy et Kimura 2019). On the other, it reveals how public policy and systems of knowledge production, circulation, and dissemination are articulated by complex political, historical, and temporal-affective scenarios. Kinchy (2015), for instance, has shown how spatial knowledge gaps are forms of what she calls epistemic inequality, defined as “the uneven distribution of public and private knowledge investments (resources expended in generating knowledge about local conditions) across different places where people live, work, and play” (Kinchy, 2015: 882). Epistemic
inequality, she argues, could be a crucial factor in the generation of social and environmental inequalities.

Other STS scholars have been concerned with the erasure or invisibilization of knowledge, understood as a form of ignorance not consisting in lacking knowledge (Proctor and Schiebinger 2008; Sullivan and Tuana 2006; Gross and McGoey 2015; Harding 1991; Fernández Pinto 2015). They depart from a modernistic understanding of ignorance as an empty space that needs to be filled with scientific, value-free knowledge, and propose to see it as a space inhabited by complex structurally and culturally generated epistemic relations and assumptions.

For instance, Hess’s (2016) study of epistemic suppression in the struggles of industrial transition movements let us see how, in some cases, the state (whether embodied by the police, the military, the judiciary, etc.) can control the flow and production of knowledge about sensitive matters and manipulate the public perception of the movement, negatively affecting its credibility. Hess explains that the state’s epistemic control can be exercised in different ways. It can be exercised by preventing existing knowledge from circulating (Frickel 2014), by making “collective policy decisions not to undertake certain kinds of research” (Hess 2016: 31), by regulatory extrapolation (when the object or process to be regulated is assumed to be safe because of its similarity with another object or process already proven as safe), and by giving priority to national over local scales (Kinchy 2014).

For the RSLC, the pro-industry framework of seed regulation works on the basis of suppression (deployed with a combination of the forms above), making science that has yet to be done on GM seeds harm normative. In this context, one of the central forms of knowledge suppression they contest is the erasure of the work and knowledge of seed savers, an erasure associated with the historical construction of rural populations as ignorant and backward. In one of the working groups in which I participated at the RSLC National Meeting of 2015, members of the Zenú peoples (an indigenous group) and campesíns who live close by the indigenous reservation of San Andrés de Sotavento manifested their anger about how some government officials showed up in their territories with “technical and technological assistance” with plans already in place about what and how to plant, without even considering that those living in the territory knew what they were doing. Milena, for instance, said that “they think we are beasts,
they think we have survived for five centuries for the grace of the Lord, and not because we know what we need and want to know about how to live, what to eat, what to plant, and what to exchange” (Milena, public intervention 2015). The RSLC has also spoken publicly and privately on many occasions about how the unknowns of the effects of GM seeds not only on the environment but also in rural cultures and livelihoods does indeed deepen the already existing epistemic, social, political and economic inequalities of campesinos, indigenous, and Afro-Colombian communities. This resonates with the work of critical race scholars, who have shown that unknowns could be strongly racialized, further reproducing structural inequalities and producing new ones (Mills 1997; Benjamin 2019). The interplay of ignorance and race, so understood, is then conceived as productive, as an active force that is made of and makes social reality and power relations.

However, Law 740 included two other articles that address the unknowns in a more complex way as well. In these articles, the precautionary principle was added and extended beyond itself to also comply with the criteria of ethnoracial governance of the NC91. The precautionary principle, which comes from the European approach to GM regulation, understands that the state’s main objective is to safeguard the life and dignity of people, animals, and the environment. It establishes that it is producers and not consumers who have to keep technologies “safe.” To reach this goal, the patent system incorporates not only quantitative information coming from biosecurity operations but also citizens’ concerns (Hernández Vidal, 2018). Following this, in Article 23rd the participation of the public was introduced as a means to validate or reject decisions regarding GM organisms.

Adding to this last point, it is important to underscore that one of the basic principles of ethnoracial governance of the NC91 is that the Colombian State should prevent further damage to indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, adopting measures that anticipate the potential socio-economic impacts of development strategies in the so-called ancestral territories. Article 26th of Law 740 incorporates this governance principle, but the language is slightly different. Instead of mentioning indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, it mentions indigenous and local communities, excluding Afro-Colombian communities as ethnoracially different while tacitly including campesinos in the communities to be protected.
To some of these laws, decrees, and resolutions the RSLC has responded with a series of lawsuits that emphasize the relationship between epistemic inequality and structural inequality deployed in the regulations, the concrete problems that seed commodification bring to the rural poor, and the systematic exclusion of campesinos and Afro-Colombians as both sovereign peoples and peoples that ought to be protected by the state. In the table below, I show the legal actions undertaken by the RSLC from 2005- to 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulation</th>
<th>Lawsuit argument</th>
<th>Lawsuit legal and political tools of support</th>
<th>Development of the case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law 1518 of 2012, through which UPOV 91 is approved</td>
<td>The law is unconstitutional due to the lack of previous consultation with indigenous peoples who could be culturally and materially affected by it</td>
<td>NC91</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution 970, which “establishes the requirements for the production, packaging, import, export, storage, marketing and/or use of certified seeds in the country” (Resolution 970. My translation)</td>
<td>The resolution is unconstitutional due to the lack of previous consultation with indigenous peoples who could be culturally and materially affected by it</td>
<td>NC91</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The constitutional court declared the resolution unconstitutional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resolution 187 of 2006, through which article 306 of the Criminal code was changed to criminalized with fines and incarceration the transgression of Industrial Property Rights and Plant Breeders Rights

Technoscientific argument challenging the basic principles applied to decide whether or not a seed is similar to another

Partially won

The constitutional court order the modification of the article

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Legal actions undertaken by the RSLC 2005-2017.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source: My own elaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2005, Decree 4525 was issued in order to organize and specify how and by whom Law 740 was going to be enforced. It created an administrative separation that divided both conceptually and instrumentally agricultural and environmental issues. This was done through the classification of GM organisms into two types: those made for agriculture and that “could have adverse effects for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity” (Decree 4525 of 2005, Article 4), and those designed for environmental use. Consequently, the regulation of the first type was put in the hands of the Ministry of Agriculture and the second in the hands of the Ministry of the Environment.

Additionally, the Decree created three National Technical Biosafety Committees (agricultural, environmental, and health) that are in charge of the direct surveillance of GM organisms’ biosafety concerns. With these measures, the Decree managed to displace the Ministry of Environment as the main regulator of GM organisms, fragmenting its scientific and political authority and hindering the process of environmental risk assessment of GM organisms. This was precisely allowed by the lack of development and specificity in what the precautionary principle means and how should actually be applied in the Colombian case.

Further, the classification of GM organisms as created exclusively for and affecting only agriculture or the environment, and the administrative division that was set up as a consequence, has generated epistemic, regulatory, and political fractures that the RSLC has
addressed and, at times, used to intervene in the law. In the next section, I show in detail how such intervention has taken place.

*Re-rooting seeds through the cracking of seed legislation*

The administrative decision that created the three technical biosafety committees I talked about above had another consequence: it uprooted seeds. What I mean is that, by classifying some GM organisms as impacting the environment and other as impacting agriculture and having them evaluated by different committees, the Colombian government uprooted GM seeds from the environment and created a bridge between environmental and agricultural issues that was already broken. Yet this regulatory framework has been challenged, intervened in, and destabilized by RSLC legal actions. Thus, I argue that a critical thing that the RSLC has been able to do is to re-root/return seeds to the environment, or, in other words, to re-read agricultural issues as always and already environmental and political. One example of this is that, in the same year that the Decree was issued, Grupo Semillas presented a petition to nullify it. The petition underscored that:

> Through this Biosafety Decree (Decree 4525 of 2005) it has been possible to establish commercial planting of GM cotton and maize in Colombia and the introduction of GM corn and soybean raw materials in the food chain without proper controls via mass import of these products, while not preventing the negative effects of these technologies, especially on biodiversity, the agricultural systems of indigenous, Afro-Colombian and campesino communities, and food sovereignty in the country. (Grupo Semillas Petition 2005. My translation)

Besides this argument, they also mentioned two other key points. First, the CPB is primarily an environmental treaty, which implies that it should be implemented by the Ministry of Environment and not by technical committees, as the Decree established. Second, that the CPB adopts the precautionary principle and not the principle of substantial equivalence for the regulation of GM organisms, but the Decree does not actually develop it in the articles.

Although the petition has not gone too far (after fifteen years, the State Council has not ruled on it) and the legal and institutional support given to GM seeds and certification and commercialization laws has somehow increased, the petition operates as an epistemic, legal, and
political referent for both the RSLC and the government. Eliana, one of the junior lawyers and activists of the network told me that:

When we discuss legal matters at the RSLC, we often look at the petition as a referent to set a petition or to make our legal arguments. Of course, we are always learning and adding new things to the lawsuits, but that petition was the beginning of everything and we have to find a way to make it pass, even if hidden in other lawsuits. (Eliana, Interview 2017)

In the examination of the subsequent lawsuits presented by the RSLC, I have found that the RSLC has indeed included some of the key elements of the petition in them. However, other issues have sprouted too. In 2007, Grupo Semillas and SwissAid filed two lawsuits to revoke the ICA’s approval of the cultivation of two varieties of transgenic corn for commercial cultivation: Yielgard Bt [GM] maize, owned by Monsanto (Bayern) and Herculex (Bt and tolerant to glyphosate-ammonium) [GM] maize, owned by Dupont.

The lawsuits argued that the approval of the use of these two transgenics was invalid because the ICA did not follow the constitutional principle of previous public consultation on a measure that affects ethnic communities; that Colombia is a corn megadiverse country, which puts it at risk of patrimonial genetic contamination with the release of GM corn varieties; and that GM contamination is most likely to affect already vulnerable communities. This vulnerability, they said, is based on the precarious state of the territorial ordering of indigenous reservations in Colombia and the lack of constitutional protection for campesinxs.

On the one hand, indigenous territories legally recognized as such do not coincide with the extensive ancestral territories where corn production has taken place. The RSLC also emphasized that biosafety controls are almost impossible to enforce in officially recognized indigenous territories because the reservations are discontinuous areas. This means that occupancy includes land managed by terratenientes (big landowners) who use the soil for agro-industrial purposes or cattle raising, and campesinxs who may or may not use the same seeds and sowing techniques of the indigenous community.

On the other hand, the areas constitutionally protected excludes campesinxs territories, even though indigenous and campesinxs communities in many parts of the country have
historically shared and exchanged their local seeds and seed systems. This is especially serious in the case of corn because campesinx communities produced 61% of the country's corn, which is mainly used for internal consumption (Grupo Semillas, Retrieve November 2019).

It took eight years for these lawsuits to be processed. And although they had strong cases, in 2015, the State Council, the legal body in charge of the ruling, rejected them, arguing that because there was not scientific knowledge available about the harm that these two transgenics could present to human and environmental health, they did not require either environmental licensing or previous consultation with ethnic communities.

This episode of legal contestation between the RSLC and the ICA and the Ministry of Agriculture shows important elements that I want to underscore. It brings me back to my previous discussion about the relation between epistemic and structural inequality and the institutional construction of historical unknows. It reveals too the anachronic temporality of legal issues in relation to biosocial matters. In the ten years that the RSLC had to wait for its petition and lawsuits to go through the system in order to be analyzed, transgenic seeds were planted and commercialized across the country, already environing nature/culture transformations. The concept of environing is central here because, following Sörnin and Worms (2018) and Caroll and Freiburger (2016), it points to how technology intervenes nature to create the environment, understood both as the material world in which human activities take place and the symbolic world that both represents and produces those actions and the meanings that they take on. One of the bases that allow the construction of such anachronism is the presupposition behind the law that the environment is static, an object upon which human actions take place. This permits the legal system to delay decisions, to pile them up indefinitely as long as there is no immediate proof—visible evidence—of the human wrongdoing upon the monadic environment.

However, underscoring that there is always a process of environing shows that in the very moment when GM organisms began to be incorporated in Colombian soil, they entered into a dynamic relationship with human and non-human life. And whether or not these relationships are visible or invisible, trackable or un-trackable, they continue.

These legal discussions also show that even when the NC91 offers mechanisms to crack the preponderance of the sovereignty of the nation state over the sovereignty of ethno-
racialized communities, it keeps putting the nation state first. The reason for this is that the politics of cultural difference developed by neoliberal multiculturalism allows biosafety regulations to only partially govern GM seeds in subtracted land. These regulations do not govern GM seeds in the complex network of biosocialities being constantly created and re-created by historical patterns of land ownership and management and territorial ordering that has structured social, economic, political and epistemic inequality and established patterns of socioepistemic and territorial injustice. In the next section, I expand on these points, analyzing other legal and political instances of contention between the RSLC and the Colombian state.

The recognition of ethnic communities by the nation state through their positioning as stewards of biodiversity

In 2010, the ICA issued Resolution 970, which “establishes the requirements for the production, packaging, import, export, storage, marketing and/or use of certified seeds in the country” (Resolution 970. My translation). Yet neither the Resolution nor the registry guidelines mention native and criollo seeds directly, something that the government has used on various occasions to offer reassurance that the Resolution only governs GM and certified seeds.

In response, the RSLC has presented arguments that emphasize that the gesture of not mentioning criollo and native seeds as seeds that could take part in commercial activities under the law is, in fact an exclusionary act that constrains these seeds and their sowers to the non-commercial exchange of seeds. In addition to this, the network has pointed out that the resolution also excludes these already marginalized communities from legal participation in capitalism, which should be their decision and not their structural condition of existence.

When first issued, the resolution passed almost unnoticed by seed activists and other agrarian groups in the country, but later the documentary 970 made it public, showing the devastating effects that it was already having on some communities whose crops and foods produced for commercial purposes were burnt by the police because they were not certified. The documentary was released in 2012, but it began to circulate on Facebook in 2013, a few months before the National Agrarian Strike that paralyzed the country for 23 days in August of the same year (El Espectador, 2013).
Both the strike and the documentary the seed conflict that had been, indeed, seeded by the earlier issuing of Law 740 of 2002 and Decree 4525 of 2005 before the public eye. They created a window of opportunity for RSLC activists, who mobilized public opinion and the agrarian organizations who were part of the strike to demand the derogation of the resolution. After much pressure, the Colombian government declared it “on pause.” The public and agrarian organizations and even members of the RSLC assumed that this meant its derogation. But other RSLC members denounced the government’s declaration as a strategy to deviate public attention from the resolution, since resolutions, laws, and decrees cannot, by principle, be put on pause—they either exist and are therefore valid and enforceable, or they do not. This feigned “pausing” of the resolution is also temporally similar to the delaying of legal decisions regarding biosocial matters I explained in the previous section.

Within the time frame in which Resolution 970 came out, the documentary was released, and the National Agrarian Strike took place, the alliance of Grupo Semillas, Swissaid, and grassroots organizations focused on what they saw as the root of the problem: the UPOV Regime of Intellectual Property. In 2012, they presented a lawsuit to the Constitutional Court against the institutionalization of UPOV 91 in Colombia. The arguments presented before the Court were focused this time on the lack of public consultation on the regulation, which was mandatory by constitutional dictate. The lawsuit went through the Court surprisingly fast considering the time that the other legal contestations have taken, and in 2015 The Court ruled in favor of the RSLC, declaring UPOV 91 invalid. In the decision, the Court expanded upon the arguments presented by the RSLC, stating that because the regulation affected indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities directly, a public consultation was necessary before it was enacted. Since the consultation never happened, UPOV 91 could not be implemented. In their own words:

The Court found out that, as many of the parts of the process have said, it was necessary to pre-consult with the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities because this agreement regulates substantial aspects that concern these communities directly. The judgment of the Court is that the imposition of patent restrictions over vegetal varieties as stipulated by UPOV 91 could limit the natural development of biodiversity, which is the product of ethnic and cultural conditions and the ecosystems which these communities
This argument displays various elements that ought to be discussed. The Court’s ruling aligns with the idea that biodiversity is bioculturally produced, which should be an inclusive idea that conceives all human life as co-constitutive of nature, and it understands patents as threats to biodiversity. At the same time, it links culture with ethnicity in such a way that only ethnic groups are thought of as having a culture. Finally, it conceives biodiversity as having a kind of natural trajectory, or as they put it, as having a natural development.

The first two elements, taken together in isolation from the other two, seem to show a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between the human and the non-human world and a position that considers biodiversity as part of the commons (See chapter 3). However, the Court’s declaration does not exclude the patent of seeds under UPOV 91 because it allows for the privatization of biodiversity, but because it could affect ethnic communities protected under the NC91, and, consequently, impact biodiversity negatively. What is then the relationship between biodiversity conservation and the autonomy of so-called ethnic communities?

As Ulloa argues, indigeneity has been constructed in Colombia in the post-constitutional context as an ethnic identity intrinsically tied to “nature.” This identity becomes one that “has a culture” because it is culturally distinct from an ideal mainstream Colombian culture, which is conceived as the dominant culture. Under this understanding of the problem, culture and ethnicity become one, and ethnic groups become part of nature, not co-producers of it. They also are thought of as having to be protected in instrumentalist terms: the Colombian state needs to ensure that their modes of life are not negatively affected because they are the stewards of biodiversity. Additionally, the conception of biodiversity as an ethnic product also excludes campesinxs as co-producers of nature, since they are not considered ethnic subjects and also have been positioned in epistemic terms, historically, as ignorant. Thus, as Rivera Cusicanqui puts it:

The discourse of multiculturalism and the discourse of hybridity are essentialist and historicist interpretations of the indigenous question [...] Their function is to supplant the indigenous populations as historical subjects and to turn their struggles and demands
into elements of a cultural reengineering and a state apparatus in order to subjugate them and neutralize their will. (Cusicanqui 2012: 33)

In this petition as well as the lawsuits and other political documents I will talk about in the next chapter, the RSLC has been both critical of the limitations of the neoliberal multicultural framework and also used it pragmatically to crack the pro-industry seed regime. This includes crafting a representation of seeds as central for what means to be indigenous, black and campesinxs, and using that co-pertinence of the campesinxs, black, and indigenous self with the seed to articulate seeds as cultural patrimony. Thus, they put this notion, which has its own colonial histories, as a counter-notion to intellectual property.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I showed how seed conflicts in Colombia have taken a special form in and through the law, which I have framed as a space for truth production and the construction of important sociotechnical and ethnoracial arrangements. Using Agamben’s understanding of the relationship between sovereign power and biopolitics, I have shown that in the legal conflicts between the RSLC and the Colombian state, sovereign power and biopolitics are simultaneously exercised through ethnoracial and seed laws, both of which are interlocked with biosecuritization and bioprospecting initiatives in particular ways.

I argued that the politics of cultural difference developed by neoliberal multiculturalism and implemented through the NC91 and the laws derived from it has presented important opportunities for indigenous communities to regain autonomy and to overcome some of their marginalizations -in plural- while also operating as a mechanism of socioepistemic and territorial exclusion for campesinxs and Afro-Colombian communities in the country.

I analyzed the discursive production of the RSLC’s lawsuits and decisions of the courts participating in the epistemic and sociopolitical controversies. In this section I showed that these discourses co-produce conflicting territorialities through the ideology of cultural difference, an ideology that locates campesinxs and Afro-Colombian communities in a relation of inclusion/exclusion before the Colombian state, deepening their already structural disadvantage.

Throughout the chapter, I also addressed four pathways of epistemic absence in the formation of the pro-industry seed regulatory system. First, the generation of uneven
investments that produce less and/or wrong knowledges and kinds of knowledge. Second, legal and political erasures of the knowledges and practices of communities. Third, overt suppression of alter-epistemic and political relations with seeds. And fourth, the institutional incapacity to engage and deal with science and alter-epistemes, politics, and social and political concerns and realities. As I examined these pathways, I also showed how they seed a temporal and affective landscape in which an oscillation between visibility and invisibility is constantly at play.
CHAPTER 3

THE POST-PEACE AGREEMENT SEED LEGISLATION AND THE [RE] PRODUCTION OF ETHNORACIAL AND GENDERED OPPRESSIONS

In this chapter, I claim that the peace agreement between FARC-EP, the oldest and strongest guerilla group in the hemisphere, and the Colombian state transformed the history of seed politics in Colombia. On the one hand, thanks to the pressure of feminist organizations, the peace agreement includes women as distinct subjects. However, women are positioned in an abstract and disembodied manner, and their agency is mostly erased as they are given the unpaid job of managing bioresources. On the other hand, “The Indigenous Route of Seeds,” a new seed program created by the Colombian government and the National Indigenous Organization, ONIC, makes biocapital available to indigenous communities exclusively as marginal third parties. Thus, despite the attempts to politically re-position these two historically excluded actors, women and indigenous communities become subaltern partners in bioprospecting initiatives. Thus, although the post-peace agreement regulatory system has been presented as inclusive (in gender and ethnoracial terms) and as a vehicle to transform the disadvantaged structural position of those who could potentially benefit from it, this inclusion is only partial and works as a parallel mechanism of further exclusion and subjugation (both of included actors and of those already excluded, such as Afro-Colombian and Campesinx communities).
Peace-making and the extension of domination by “other” means

Figure 8. Peace at last? A FARC rebel waves a peace flag during the abandonment of arms in 2017. Source: Reuters / Jaime Saldarriaga, The Nation

As I mentioned in chapter one, the Peace agreement attempted, symbolically and materially, to end the fifty year-long armed conflict between the Colombian State and the FARC. It created a national space to collectively think and reflect upon the kind of country Colombians imagined in a post-war era. That moment of collective history-making presented itself, legally and politically, as an opportunity to reassemble and re-shape seed, agricultural, land, and territorial policy in a participatory fashion as well. But contrary to the romantic idea that many people have about participation always being straightforward and inclusive, in this case, and in many others, it is much more complex.

Recent scholarship on the agrarian politics of post-conflict societies in Latin America and Africa has shown that although peace agreements allow societies to enter into a new moment of nation-building, they do not necessarily end structural violence (Pugh, Cooper, and Turner 2008; Ybarra 2012; Grandia 2013; Mabikke 2011; Martiniello 2015). Peace agreements don’t take these societies from war to peace but put them in invisible inter-war spaces (Debos, 2016). Thus, as part of the idea of transition (from war to peace) there are trade-offs between representative democracy and neoliberal reform via development plans (Klein 2008). Furthermore, this scholarship underscores that a central site for the expansion and deepening of structural violence in inter-war societies are land and agrarian politics.
Following these studies, Grajales (2020) claims that the politics of war and peace in Colombia has created a post-war agrarian capitalism, understood as an inter-war phase of capitalism in which “land tends to be excluded from the realm of politics,” and “peace rhetoric and resources participate to define land problems as an economic matter, and to make land policies subordinate to market mechanisms” (Grajales, 2020: 2). For Grajales, then, “land control is a problem embedded in local histories of State and authority formation and in the transformations of agrarian capitalism and its links to global value chains” (6).

In Colombia, the territorial control that the FARC had of vast areas of the country kept the agribusiness sector away and promoted an agricultural model that was centered on small-scale farming, family style agriculture (with the exception of coca crops, which were the economic engines of the group). However, during the peace talks and after the peace agreement was signed, one of its most publicized “achievements” was that Colombia was finally going to be opened up to foreign investment and other forms of business opportunities, to which agribusiness has been central. Under this logic, market competition is substituted for war, while development, both as an economic and political project and as an ideology, is presented as the right tool to both generate capital and “fix” the problems that caused the war (Cramer 2006; Pugh, Cooper, and Turner 2008).

Additionally, in Colombia, processes of land dispossession have not always happened through the direct violence of armed groups or the military. Ojeda (2015) and Grajales (2016) show, for instance, that land dispossession has also been occurring through the privatization of nature and recent changes in the land markets, which have contributed to the construction of those dispossessed as “unprepared” for the market challenges.

In this chapter, I transform the concept of post-war agrarian capitalism to post-war bioagrarian capitalism to signal that the concept of agrarian capitalism falls short in addressing the transformations of seed and agrarian systems as separate but interconnected. As I stated in the introduction, I argue that the peace agreement with the FARC substantially changed seed politics in the country, shifting the openly pro-seed industry narrative of the previous seed regulatory framework to a friendlier version that tried to “fix” gender and ethnoracial inequality
by following a market-based logic in which women become managers and indigenous people become entrepreneurs.

Women as managers of technical assistance

I am the one who runs the house, even at my age! I make sure everyone has what they need, when they need it; their favorite food {comidita}, cloths, beds made, everything! Suppose they give us the money, which obviously is not very likely to happen... I would not mind managing it too and getting pay for it! At least I would earn something! (Rosa, Interview 2017)

I met Rosa in a regional seed gathering in Cogua, Cundinamarca in 2017. It was called La Mochila Semillera. She is a seed saver who approached me after we had a conversation in a roundtable about how the final peace agreement with the FARC had a chapter exclusively dedicated to women.

Figure 9. In the middle, Rosa. She went everywhere with that notebook. The other two women are also seed savers of the RSLC. Picture: My own, 2017
During the conversation, I asked a professor of sociology and agronomy at La Universidad Nacional de Colombia [The National University of Colombia] how the chapter conceived the role of women in the peacemaking process. At the time, I had not read the entire document, and I wanted to know how RSLC members perceived this particular chapter of the agreement. The professor said that as far as he knows, they would be managing an important part of the technical assistance, but that “like everything related to it, it was not a real possibility yet” (Felipe, fieldnotes 2017).

Rosa came to me to asked what I meant by my question. It was “snack time,” so I asked her to walk with me to the kitchen while we talked. I explained that I had the impression that women living in rural areas had a different experience in the armed conflict than men did, so I was wondering whether or not the peace agreement with the FARC included that. She laughed and said, “In the armed conflict? Miss, we have a different experience in life!” Rosa referred to herself all the time as a campesina. She was a 68-year-old woman with long, white hair, knitted in a braid all the way to the waist. As we continued talking, she told me that she was trying to find funding for a restaurant that she wanted to open. Her idea was to use the seeds that she has saved and the crops she had so carefully maintained to supply the restaurant, where she would be the cook and manager.

We walked towards a big tent the RSLC had set up for the gathering. There were some mats for those staying overnight, and some wooden logs to sit on. We came in and paused our conversation for a while. Almost everyone was eating the snack in the kitchen or close by, and only a group of women with their children were there. One was feeding her granddaughter (I could tell that she was a girl because she was color coded, dressed all in pink) who was about my daughter’s age at the time (1 years old). The other women were three of her daughters, including the mother of the baby, who was 17 years old. We greeted everyone. I went to see the baby girl and talked and sang to her for a few minutes until she began to cry. Then Rosa brought the peace process up again in front of the women. She said, “I was talking to la señorita and the group about the peace process. They said there should be money some for us!” The others laughed and Margarita, the grandmother, said, “Great! Tell us more about it!” I explained the
context of our conversation, and then Rosa intervened to say what I quoted at the start of this section.

I begin this section with this story, and specifically, with this excerpt, to show that through the peace agreement with the FARC, when it comes to seed politics, rural women are produced (and I say, even, re-produce) as managerial subjects, which reproduces their condition as caregivers, but translated into a neoliberal context in which to care is to manage.

This subjectivation of rural women is revealed in section 1.3.3.2 (entitled “Technical Assistance”) of the final peace agreement, which follows the inclusive/exclusive dynamic I have mentioned in previous chapters. The objective of the Technical Assistance section of the FPA is to:

Strengthen the production capacities in the rural, family-run and community-based economies to develop rural productive projects and to stimulate technological innovation processes through the design and implementation of a Comprehensive National Technical, Technological and Research-Incentive Assistance Plan / Plan Nacional de Asistencia Integral Técnica, Tecnológica y de Impulso a la Investigación. (Final Agreement 2016: 29)

In this statement, it is clear that the agreement reproduces the language of technical assistance which, as I pointed out, is considered dismissive by RSLC members. This excerpt of the agreement also focuses on the relationship between small family and/or community-based economies and the state, which is substantially different from the pro-industry seed regulation system. Under the pro-industry system, communities were only third marginal parties in the relationship between the state and the agrobiotech industry, such that they appeared, at times, as objects only to be considered because of the potential collateral damage they could suffer from the implementation of a GM driven model of agricultural production.

This section also strongly emphasizes that priority should be given to women in the process. This is new and disruptive of previous seed and agricultural policy, in which women were either not regarded as differential actors with distinct structural positions, or simply not considered at all. This logic of exclusion of women’s lives and bodies from discussions of public policy has been the norm in Colombian history. So, not surprisingly, women were also excluded from the initial negotiation team that opened the peace talks in Cuba, back in 2012. This was
especially problematic for the discussion of seed, land, and territorial points of the agenda, which began to be discussed in December of that year in a crucial event organized to begin the debate about rural reform called “Comprehensive agricultural development with a territorial approach.”

It was the feminist movement in Colombia that transformed this approach in the negotiation process. In the 1980s, the Association of Campesinx, Black and Indigenous Women of Colombia (ANMUCIC) was created, incorporating for the first time women’s positions and demands in campesinx mobilization. Years later, thanks in part to the work carried out by this organization, several more campesinx and popular organizations have emerged that address the problems of rural women in the country. Some of them are The Popular Women's Organization, the National Network of Women, the Pacific Route of Women and SISMA Woman. The role that these organizations play is important, since, by putting the issue of gender (in)equality at the forefront of their organizing strategies, they are slowly forcing larger sectors of the campesinx movement to commit to the incorporation of a political agenda that recognizes the situation of differential precariousness of rural women produced by the ways in which the colonial/gender system has exploited and dominated them.

This has been evidenced in the recent processes of campesinx mobilization, such as those carried out by campesinxs in Nariño and led by leaders such as Fanny Guancha, who not only fight for the recognition of el campesinado [the peasantry] as culturally different, but also the need to carry out particular struggles in order to transform the situation of rural women. In this regard, Guancha emphasized at the public Foro por los Derechos Campesinos [Forum for Peasant Rights], held on April 08, 2016 (a few months before the final peace agreement was signed) at the National University of Colombia in Bogotá:

Despite everything, our campesina identity has not been stolen, we have not been robbed of the desire to continue defending what is ours. And we are going to continue defending it from our position as campesina women, because that is an important position … We need land for women .... There will be women for a while and me to accompany them. (Guancha, 2016. Personal notes. My translation)
Guancha's speech is also articulated with the speech made by around 300 women who took part in the First National Meeting of Women, held in the city of Cali in the month of March of the same year (2016). The political declaration of this event shows the way in which campesinx feminism, by introducing gender issues within the larger campesinx movements, has not only begun to seriously question the economically and politically marginal status that patriarchal society has given to women’s labor, but also has also begun to break with the colonial construction of gender:

We the women of the People’s Congress, campesino, indigenous, Afro, urban, girls, LGBTI, Raizales, feminists, Latin Americans; We meet on March 4, 5, 6 in the city of Cali to continue walking towards the construction of the mandate of our National Women’s Congress. We are in sorority and effective love, in the fight against patriarchy, capitalism and colonialism. We are women who fight for the elimination of all kinds of violence caused by these three systems of oppression. We are revolutionaries who understand that freedom must belong to our bodies, feelings, thoughts and territories. (Final Declaration of the First National Meeting of Women, 2016)

The fact that in this meeting of women there is already a space to name and in some way exercise non-binary gender identities is an essential step in changing the discourse and repertoires of struggle for social movements in Colombia. However, it is worth mentioning that, just like in other environments such as academia, many of the spaces that are opened for non-heteronormative and hegemonic gender discourses are almost always inhabited only by women, and when discourses take place in environments where there is a larger male presence, these discourses are still perceived as minor.

Nevertheless, it was these and other feminist organizations in the country such as Mujeres por la Paz (Women for Peace) who pressured the government to include women in the negotiation team that could discuss “the differentiated impact armed conflict has had on rural women’s bodies and social and economic opportunities, (…) the current concentration of land in men’s and political and economic elites’ hands, and women’s access, control, (…) and recovery of land and promote their inclusion in political discussions” (Céspedes-Báez and Jaramillo, 2018: 14). Although the government accepted the inclusion of gender as a “topic” to be discussed at the event, women were still excluded as negotiators. It was then only through organized struggle
that women’s organizations achieved, first, the inclusion of two women in the negotiation team, and then, two years later, finally accomplished the creation of a sub commission for gender.

Figure 10. Women’s march for Peace, Bogotá, Colombia 2016. Source: Yenny Leguizamón Orjuela, Pressenza

Building on Céspedes-Báez and Jaramillo’s (2018) thesis about the gendered construction of the peace agreement between the FARC-EP and the Colombian government, I argue that the points of the agreement that include women as actors in agricultural and territorial spheres do so by superimposing a sexist gaze that constructs women as incapable of determining their own fates, and, thus, in need of masculine power (whether in the form of the state or the men that participate in their lives) to thrive.

Consequently, section 1.3.3.2 of the FPA states that women should receive the benefits of the subsequent programs firsthand based on three general principles. First, public funding and technical and technological assistance should be delivered to community-based agrarian economies in a decentralized manner. Second, state’s services should be accountable to participatory, community-based systems of monitoring and evaluation to determine their quality and socio-environmental impacts. And third, the programs should connect assistance with continuous agricultural research and new technologies. These so-called principles show the disembodied and abstracted nature of the category of “women” in the section. The women
mentioned there could just as well be men because what matters is not their political, epistemic, and socio-economic subjectivity, but the mechanisms set in place by the agreement to deliver technical assistance in terms that potentially benefit bioprospecting projects. At the same time, these mechanisms make state partners of communities and assign them new kinds of unpaid labor: monitoring and evaluating socio-environmental impacts and serving as mediums for both “continuous agricultural research” and the creation and testing of new technologies.

Thus, I claim that despite the importance of incorporating women in the government’s negotiation team during the peace talks and the pressure that the feminist groups in the country used to put gender issues at the center of the negotiation, the sections of the peace agreement that pay attention to women’s role in agriculture present at least two serious limitations. They create the figure of a disembodied rural woman that becomes a kind of *managerial subject* of biodiversity, understood in this context as potential biocapital, which does not transform women’s structural position of exclusion. At the same time, they reduce the state’s responsibility for preventing and accounting for the consequences of introducing transgenics and extractivist projects to Colombian soil. The historical exclusion of women in general, and rural women in particular, from public political life in Colombia is the product of the historical structuring of the power of the nation state as the continuation of the colonial/gender system as conceptualized by Lugones (2007).
This is a picture of various members of the RSLC, ONIC, Swissaid, and AgroSavia (the National Corporation of Agricultural Research, former Corpoica) as a one-day long meeting was coming to an end. The meeting was one of the steps given in the creation of the Indigenous Route of Seeds, which, I claim, is a plan that both disrupts and reroutes seed governance and the indigenous self in Colombia while reinforcing the exclusion of campesinxs and Afro-Colombians.

Before developing of my argument further, I would like to provide some context for these organizations. Since I have already explained in detail what the RSLC is, I will focus on the other three participating in the meeting: ONIC, AgroSavia, and SwissAid.

ONIC was born in the 80s. Its goal was to give visibility to the problems of indigenous people in Colombia while also opening spaces for sharing various organizational experiences from already well-established regional indigenous organizations in Colombia. Over time, ONIC has become the most powerful indigenous organization in the country. This was fueled not only by the coalition of different regional indigenous organizations, but also by international events that helped create the conditions for indigenous discourse to gain legitimacy in a deeply racist context. For example, the United Nations (UN) created the working group on indigenous populations in 1982, which began to promote organizational processes of different communities.
in Latin America (Hernández Vidal, 2016); the Berlin Wall fell and the Cold War was supposed to be ending; and multiple non-for-profit organizations entered the country after the NC91 was written (Escobar, 1998). These events promoted a loss of material and ideological influence that left-wing organizations such as the Communist Party had over social organizations and facilitated the entry of liberal discourses based on the politics of difference that, at times, have dislocated ethnoracial demands for recognition and legal inclusion from class-based demands for the transformation of the political economy.

AgroSavia is the product of the re-branding of Corpoica, a public-private technoscientific agricultural institution that was discredited after several corruption scandals involving the Ministry of Agriculture under the Uribe presidency (Portafolio, 2006). AgroSavia was presented as a more powerful and transparent version of Corpoica, with the capacity to reach a wider public. “AgroSavia is a perfect name, it says by itself what the Corporation is about, it talks about life, the countryside, science, trust, and technology,” said Juan Lucas Restrepo, its former director, on the day it launched (Ministry of Agriculture, 2018). AgroSavia focuses its research on the conservation of agricultural biodiversity, bioprospecting, and the establishment of plant breeding strategic plans. It also administers the Colombian Germplasm Bank System, which includes three subsystems: animal, plants, and microorganisms (AgroSavia, 2019).

Swissaid is a Swiss nonprofit organization born during World War II. At the time, it was a branch of the “Schweizer Spende,” the agency providing emergency aid in war. In 1975, the organization began its work in Latin America, establishing its first office in Ecuador before opening its Columbian office a few years later in 1983. It has two areas of strategic work: campesina, indigenous, and afro-colombian agriculture and gender equality (Swissaid, 2019). On their team are radical agronomists, environmental activists and scholars, and experts in gender and territorial issues. Swissaid has been a long-term ally of the RSLC and has worked closely with

---

13 Juan Lucas Restrepo has been a longtime ally for multilateral organizations and has worked in various institutions and projects such as the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR), hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and the negotiations on the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture where he served as head of the Colombian delegation (Biodiversity International. Retrieved in November 2019).
other social organizations and movements to achieve communal goals. They are a unique kind of NGO in Colombia that has made an incredible effort to support grassroots organizing.

The Indigenous Route of Seeds was born out of the chapter on Technical Assistance of peace agreement between the government and the FARC. Besides the three points that I previously explained, the chapter includes an additional fourth point that explicitly mentions seeds:

Promoting and protecting native seeds and seed banks, without restricting or imposing other types of seeds such as improved seeds, hybrids and others, so that communities — men and women — can access optimum seed material and, in a participatory way, contribute to the improvement thereof, by incorporating their own knowledge. Furthermore, strict socioenvironmental and health regulation of transgenic materials will promote the common good. The aforesaid will be within the context of the state's unshakeable obligation to take such measures and to use such tools as are necessary to safeguard the country's genetic heritage and biodiversity as sovereign resources of the nation. (Final Agreement 2016: Ibid. My emphasis)

This point recognizes the role of community-based, popular knowledge in the process of seed saving and emphasizes a new commitment on the part of the state to strictly regulate GM seeds. The rationale to for these two aspects is given within the rhetoric of the necessary maintenance of the nation state through the protection of nature, which, in this case, is translated as biocapital.

Supported by this section of the peace agreement, the Colombian Government created a system and a plan that opens a new chapter in seed management and regulation in Colombia: The National System of Agricultural Innovation (Sistema Nacional de Innovación Agropecuaria, SNIA from now on) and Seed Plan (Plan Semilla). SNIA is ascribed to the National System of Competitiveness, Science, Technology, and Innovation (Sistema Nacional de Competitividad, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación, SNCCTI from now on), which is also new. It is thought to be a system controlled by the state and private organizations in order to (i) improve agricultural productivity and competitiveness; ii) promote and implement research, technological development, and knowledge management actions; iii) manage, local, ancestral and traditional knowledge and knowledge of agricultural production in a participatory fashion. Seed Plan was developed within the framework of the Development Programs with Territorial Approach
Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial, PDET from now on) and the Comprehensive National Plans for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (Programa Nacional para la Sustitución de Cultivos Ilícitos, PNIS from now on), which, in Columbia, are mainly Coca and Amapola crops.

Within this framework, the National Government commissioned Agrosavia, the National Corporation of Agricultural Research, formerly Corpoica, to construct and manage Seed Plan. Initially, the Plan did not include the participation of social organizations, but in February 2018 things changed. In 2017, Gloria Erazo, the head lawyer-activist of the RSLC whom I mentioned before, was hired by Swissaid to help build a coalition that could pressure the government to work towards seed and agricultural legislation that embraced epistemic, social, cultural, food, environmental, and economic justice, which RLSC did not believe the peace agreement achieved. A central strategy for the formation of the coalition was to organize a popular forum were government officials, scientists working in Agrosavia, community members of the RSLC, and academics could participate in a day-long conversation. It was called “The Seed National Forum.”

The agenda for the event was discussed with RSLC members in local, regional, and national meetings. Some groups in the RSLC opposed the Forum, arguing that there was no point in talking to the government, which echoes Camilo’s thoughts as discussed at the beginning of the chapter. For instance, Pedro, an RSLC activist in Bogotá, told me in an interview that “we need to stop trying to negotiate with the government because they simply don’t care and will never care. What we need to do is to focus in our own processes, in making our own world as strong as possible, so they cannot destroy it” (Pedro, Intervention in RSLC meeting, 2017).

However, since the people opposing the Forum were not a united front, and since Swissaid and not the RSLC who was actually funding and organizing the Forum, they went ahead with the project. Gloria contacted me in September of 2017 to invite me to some of the preparatory meetings in Bogotá, Cañamomo y Lomprita, Nariño, and Sucre (in the Zenú indigenous reservation). She sent two documents to RSLC members that could be used to analyze how the state had been implementing the norms related to biodiversity and agricultural development. One was the proposal of the National Biodiversity Plan, which she had in a draft form because it had not been officially presented to the public; the other was the 2016 report on agricultural development written by the Ministry of Agriculture. Thus, these meetings and the
The Forum itself focused on discussing the relation of these two documents to the challenges with Integral Rural Reform proposed in the peace agreement, specifically section 1.3.3.2, which I discussed above, and section 1.3.4, which guarantees the human right to food.

The Forum took place on February 15th of 2018 at the Javeriana University of Bogotá. It was divided in three panels of two hours each:

- Panel 1: Balance of the Peace Agreement and its impacts on seeds, campesinos, ethnic communities, and models of development.
- Panel 2: Agrobiodiversity and Agroecology in the RSLC
- Panel 3: Community-based agricultural innovation

The discursive strategy set by Swissaid, with the participation of some RSLC members, was to open the Forum with a general, critical reflection of the limitations and problems of the Peace Agreement. To show political “neutrality” the panel was led by academic members and friends of the RSLC. “We need to open the Forum showing the government that this is not only a problem perceived by radical political factions, but also something academics are taking seriously. So, we need them up front setting the terms of the discussion in neutral terms,” said Gloria Erazo when proposing the Forum’s agenda at one of the preparatory meetings. The inclusion of academics with Ph.Ds. earned at prestigious national and international universities was not only a way to show the Forum as “politically neutral” but also a way to “certify,” in Mertonian terms, the knowledge presented there.

Panel two had a different organization and intentionality. It aimed to put community work with seeds at the center in such a way that their own epistemic and political ways of relating to the seeds could be finally seen (become visible—leaving the historical space of invisibility) and understood by the public. To do this, it offered different angles through which agrobiodiversity and agroecology are constructed in the RSLC. The first section was devoted to presenting community-based experiences of native and criollo seed conservation and exchange. Community leaders such as Velma Echavarría, from the indigenous reservation of Cañamomo and Lomaprieta, were key speakers who showed the power of the seed care work that these
communities have been doing to college students, professors, community members, scientists, and government officials participating in the Forum. Mauricio García, member of the RSLC and coordinator of the campaign Seeds of Identity in Swissaid, framed this as the most important panel during one of the meetings that took place before the forum, because:

(...) it could show to the government and the public, for the first time, that what communities do is hard work. It could show them how much it takes to build these systems of seed care where we find cultural and territorial relationships, the relationship between communities, agriculture, and seeds. But also, I think that this panel should emphasize that agroecology is not only a system of agricultural production, but a bet for the transformation of the agriculture model that has been implemented and that has resulted in the serious deterioration of natural and social environments. (Mauricio García, 2017)

In this quote, Mauricio is talking about seed saving as labor, which is important because it makes visible that the struggle for livelihoods is also entangled with the struggle for seeds. He also mentioned agroecology, not as mere technical path to produce “healthier” food through “sustainable” means, but as a political path for transforming the dominant developmental model in Colombian history: that of the plantation, that of extraction.

In the second panel, actors from the academy and the government were also included. For instance, professor of agronomy of the National University, Álvaro Acevedo, moderated the first section, and professor of rural studies at the Javeriana University, Neidy Clavijo, presented a discussion on agroecology as an agrarian, political, and environmental system. From the government, the Ministry of Environment was invited to present on institutional strategies for the conservation of agrobiodiversity and how they coordinated their actions with the Ministry of Agriculture.

The invitation was set in this way because after long discussions with RSLC members, there was a collective agreement that the Ministry of Agriculture was reluctant to sit at the table with the Network and an understanding that the Ministry of the Environment was actually willing to engage in the conversation. I see this gesture as another instance in which it can be seen how seed and agricultural issues are managed within a complex web of contradictory policies and approaches. In the first part of this chapter, I discussed how the pro-industry seed regulatory
framework decouples seeds from the environment, constraining them to the abstract realm of agricultural monitoring. What happens in this other instance is a different, but related process: instead of having a standard position about seeds and agriculture in the two ministries (agriculture and environment), they are split up, consequently decoupling seeds from environing.

However, the Forum helped to break this institutional fragmentation of seed management and seed materiality by framing seeds both as part of biodiversity and as central elements for agri/cultural life. Thus, this section of panel two discussed the importance of biodiversity for food and agriculture. Professor of International Relations Marta Gómez Lee, from the Externado University, and I were invited to talk. I initially accepted the invitation, and my name remain on the public agenda that was nationally distributed. However, I had moved to Chicago from Bogotá in January. I needed to buy a two-way ticket to attend to the Forum and go back to teaching in Chicago. But we could not find funding for my flight ticket, and I decided to cancel my visit and participation in the Forum. RSLC members were disappointed by my decision partly because they could not believe that I could not find the resources to travel as a Ph.D. student in the US. Although we agreed to my participation via Facebook chat in the platform set for livestreaming the Forum, this created distance with some people who trusted me, and it took a while to restore relationships after that.

Finally, the third panel included Ana María García, graduate student of the EUR- Organic studies program at the Universität Hohenheim, and the Stuttgart University of Natural Resources and Applied Sciences in Vienna, Austria. Ana María had been working together with the reservation of Cañamomo y Lomaprieta on the creation of the Seed Participatory System and was going to talk about the results of her dissertation. The guest speaker from the government came from Agrosavia. A few weeks before the Forum took place, Gloria Erazo sent them five guiding questions. These questions were requested by Agrosavia and previously discussed at the RSLC:

a. What criteria does the institution have to define what a clean seed is?

b. What are the criteria for seed certification? Are these criteria capable of responding to the genetic richness of biological diversity?
c. How has Agrosavia understood the marketing environment of Creole seeds?

d. How do government institutions value community-based certification?

e. What is the institutional responsibility regarding transgenic contamination?

The Forum was indeed a contentious space that revealed the different conceptual understandings of seeds, knowledge, technoscience, culture, land, territory, and development. But perhaps precisely because of that, it also opened the door for the creation of new connections between the institutions and some sectors of the RSLC. After the Forum, one of the scientists working in Agrosavia approached Gloria Erazo to set up a meeting with the ONIC to discuss Seed Plan, one of the main projects that occupied the stage in the Forum. She talked to Diego Chiguanchi, a member of the RSLC working with the National Indigenous Organization (Organización Nacional Indígena, from now on ONIC). They agreed to meet with Agrosavia.

Epistemic contention and the state’s anachronic temporality: negotiating the Indigenous Route of Seeds

The process of formation of the Indigenous Route of Seeds reveals the dissonant temporality between legal demands and social concerns mediated by the hyper-bureaucratization of the Colombian state, which not only creates but also contributes to the production and reproduction of an institutional imaginary of rural people as ignorant.

Human life happens through temporal orders that shape people, communities, and institutional experiences and practices. Weber (1905), for instance, showed that the Protestant ethic was based on the temporal imperative of using time as effectively and productively as possible (Moore and Hernández, 2014). This temporality, which continued with the contemporary colonial/capitalist system, has, however, not followed a linear trajectory. Although speed and time tracking seem to be critical in embodied experiences of contemporary society, the temporal order of the state and its institutions seems to be quite different. Specifically, bureaucracy and the law have their own temporal orders, which are dislocated from socio-environmental, political, and economic life. In contrast to the demands for increased acceleration in contemporary neoliberal economies, which create a temporal/affective regime
projected towards the future always felt as catastrophic, risky, unpredictable (Biehl and Locke, 2017; Dumit, 2010; Moore 2012; Pinto Garcia 2018; Vincanne, Murphy, and Clark, 2009), the dissonant temporality of bureaucracy and the law goes by a kind of inertia that does not allow itself to be “touched” by human matters. This temporal order is thus not based on speed but on delaying, and the embodied experience is one of suspension, located in the affective sphere of awaiting.

Colombian bureaucracy is no different from many other bureaucracies in the world and does not escape this temporal order. As a consequence, most government plans and initiatives are thrown back from their attempts at futurizing into a state of suspension. The process of creating the Indigenous Route of Seeds is one example of this.

The Seed Plan’s objective is to implement what AgroSavia and ONIC originally conceived as the Ethnic Route of Seeds but is now the Indigenous Route of Seeds. It is important to notice here that the change of name is very telling of what was going on in terms of inclusion and exclusion of different actors in the Route. Since it was not designed by the state to work with any other ethnic community in the country, such as Afro-Colombian communities, Rum, or Raizales, they decided to change the name to avoid political confrontation with those excluded.

AgroSavia and ONIC met a couple of months later but the process of reaching an agreement about how the Indigenous Route of Seeds was going to work took more than a year to be settled. The long negotiation was due to two main reasons: first, the epistemic differences between the parties involved, and second, the anachronic temporality of the state.

The inaugural meeting showed that the differences in conceptual understanding and approaches to seed and agriculture were deeper than they initially thought. So the first meetings were spaces in which both organizations entered into epistemic contestations at first to try to win some ground for their own political interests, but later, to construct together the meanings that central concepts would have for them in that particular space. I could not participate in these meetings, but Gloria Erazo and Diego Chiguanchi have narrated them to me and RSLC members in various occasions. Here is one example of how this epistemic and political contestation took place:
I was explaining to the AgroSavia team that there was not a set of public policies that communities could use as support for their in-situ seed saving work. And in that moment, the director of AgroSavia’s seed bank told me that what campesinxs do is ex-situ conservation because they are taking the seed and bringing it home. And I told him, excuse me? In that moment I felt upset, but Diego, who was more diplomatic, intervened to proposed an exchange of documents and resources in which they and us could expose our understanding of these two basic concepts (in-situ and ex-situ conservation), to meet again with some background for the discussion. (Gloria Erazo, Interview 2018)

The lack of common conceptual understanding kept popping up in every meeting. Gloria described how they would “freeze concepts” for “the next meeting.” For the ONIC delegation, it was shocking that the director of the Seed Bank at AgroSavia could not understand the difference between what they do, which Gloria described as “keeping seeds in a fridge, controlling their life and reproduction,” and what indigenous communities do, which she framed as “caring for the seed, allowing the them to live and reproduce in her own environment.” The ONIC’s understanding of the strong contrast between the work that AgroSavia does and the work that their communities carry out reveals that the level of epistemic contestation was high, and thus, working towards a middle ground when both started on almost opposite sides made the process of epistemic stabilization take months.

However, it is important to note that the discussions about seed work, reproduction, and meaning were entangled with political clashes about racialized understandings of indigenous people held by AgroSavia scientists. Gloria underscored that one of the most important things that they realized was that they had to “show them [Agrosavia] that indigenous people were not blank pages, but peoples with deep rooted cosmogonies, agro-ecologies, ways of life they needed to learn from and understand first” (Gloria Erazo, Interview “making visible” to AgroSavia the epistemic, political, and social “content”/ “position”/” substance” of the indigenous communities. But this was not easy for Gloria and others on ONIC’s negotiation team. They pointed out on various occasions that AgroSavia’s team was extremely Eurocentric, and that perhaps the real reason they were listening to them was because the pilot project of Seed Plan, which they launched with communities not affiliated to the ONIC or the RSLC, had failed, with only 7% of seeds surviving through the conservation process. To the ONIC, AgroSavia was, in a way, almost pushed by their own failings to collaborate with them.
The other reason the process of negotiation took so long was administrative. Although the ONIC took a couple of months to review and circulate the Route’s first draft among the academic sector of the RSLC, ONIC lawyers and leaders came back the table with a second draft to be signed as the final agreement relatively soon. But AgroSavia did not agree to two clauses on intellectual property and the registry of traditional knowledge. Clause five prohibited AGROSAVIA researchers from documenting, filming, or recording traditional knowledge associated with medicinal uses of the flora and fauna present in indigenous territories in any way. For traditional knowledge associated with agriculture, or agrobiodiversity, the clause established that collection of information would be carried out only by the indigenous communities themselves who would then send it to AGROSAVIA.

Clause 6 prohibited industrial property frameworks from being applied to life and prohibited promoting or encouraging indigenous communities or third parties to adopt intellectual property norms for plant genetic resources, particularly as stated in the laws and decrees that seek to implement the Cartagena Protocol, the Free Trade Agreement Colombia - United States, and UPOV 78. Some of the academics that read the draft had already cautioned ONIC that the agreement was “too paranoid,” but at ONIC, members were actually satisfied with that perception. Gloria told me that they “had to be paranoid” because history could not repeat itself, at least not with them on its side. Yet even these disagreements were overcome when AgroSavia ended up agreeing to the clauses.

Ironically, after such intense negotiations, the agreement on the form and implementation of the Indigenous Route of Seeds was not settled. The reason? Juan Lucas Restrepo’s term as director of AgroSavia ended. Since he was the one who had the political will to do it, things slowed down at AgroSavia. Gloria said that almost a year went by while the new director took charge and informed himself about the whole project. Now, at the beginning of 2020, the problem the Route is facing is that Juan Lucas Restrepo had already managed to process the government resources for the implementation of the plan, but because of the delays, the resources were re-assigned to other projects. As of today, ONIC and AgroSavia have an agreement, but no funds to implement it.
As part of this process of negotiation, in August 2018 the RSLC and Swissaid met with the director of AgroSavia and the research and policy team of this organization. The meeting took place in AgroSavia’s Tibaitatá Research Center, located in the department of Cundinamarca, one hour away from Bogotá.

It was a day-long meeting that included presentations on AgroSavia’s systems for quality seed conservation and production and bioprospecting projects. After AgroSavia’s presentations, the space for discussion was opened for the RSLC, ONIC, and Swissaid to ask questions and talk about their own positions. A special moment of the meeting was devoted to hearing Felipe Rangel Uncancia, the senior advisor on environmental matters (Consejero Mayor de Medio Ambiente) of the National Indigenous Organization (ONIC), but the RSCL did not bring a speaker nor did it officially participate in the negotiations. In fact, even though some RSLC members work at the ONIC and the ONIC officially supports the RSLC, apart from this visit, as an independent organization the RSLC is not part of Seed Plan and has not been participating in the meetings.

The exclusive relationship between Agrosavia and the ONIC was also visible in the way that discourses were delivered. Juan Lucas Restrepo, Agrosavia’s director at the time and now Director-General of the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), said in the opening remarks that Agrosavia organized the meeting to “work with ONIC” and to sit down to talk not only about seeds but also about “pest management, climate change, and soil erosion,” all of which affect “the national territory” (Agronet, 2018. Retrieve November 2019). A similar statement was delivered by Felipe Rangel Uncancia, who said that it was “important to join efforts between AGROSAVIA and ONIC to formalize continuous work with and for indigenous communities”(Agronet, 2018. Retrieved November 2019).

The Route is traced to cover four indigenous reservations that are recognized as already having a strong platform of seed saving and conservation. Each of the reservations constitutes a stop on the Route where indigenous communities and AGROSAVIA experts meet to exchange knowledge and technologies, respecting the institutional boundaries and norms of each organization.
The three pillars of the Route are:

1. Systematization of the processes of seed saving and conservation carried out by the communities in their territories during the duration of the plan.
2. Cultural and environmental monitoring of technological transfer effects.
3. Education on how to negotiate genetic resources under the current legal and political framework.

In the meetings (which are designed more like long term projects), systematization is the proposed mechanism for ensuring quality seed conservation, which they see as the basis for strengthening the technical capacity of local communities, which will in turn provide the input for the formulation of an action plan. This should work to promote Native and Creole seeds as part of the state’s efforts to protect and promote agrobiodiversity.

Cultural and Environmental monitoring of the impacts of technologies transferred and/or developed for the plan is a point of particular importance for the ONIC, which wants to ensure that these technologies do not hinder communities’ traditional uses of genetic resources.

In the initial document of the agreement between the ONIC and AGROSAVIA (point 5), written in 2018, it was also stated that the Indigenous Route should support the process of education of indigenous communities in matters of negotiation so they can understand the economic and political interests involved in the commercial use of agrobiodiversity and develop capacities to value their knowledge of biological diversity.

The plan relies on the Common Regime on Access to Genetic Resources of the Andean Community (of which Colombia is a member) in order to emphasize that the Indigenous Route should:

1. Help provision the conditions for fair and equitable participation in the benefits derived from access to genetic resources.
2. Generate the foundations for the recognition and valuation of genetic resources and their derived products, especially in the case of indigenous, African-American or local communities,
excluding seeds and other genetic resources produced for self-consumption and based on their customary practices.

In the process of the consolidation of Seed Plan, one of the main issues discussed was biopiracy, understood by the ONIC as state and/or corporations’ appropriation of biodiversity. In order to address this, parts of the agreement proposed that the Route should include the construction of communities’ capacities for their own protection and the protection their biodiverse environments as well as for the achievement of “fair and equitable distribution of benefits derived from the access and use of biological diversity” (Indigenous Route, 2018: 11).

Thus, the present agreement is presented as a mechanism that will provide indigenous organizations and communities with the capacities to prepare, organize and negotiate arrangements for sharing the benefits of genetic resources and for the recognition and protection of traditional knowledge and practices of agrobiodiversity.

In line with the objective of presenting the Indigenous Route as joint effort of AGROSAVIA and ONIC to strengthen the capacities of indigenous communities to understand technoscience and negotiate on its terms, during the visit AGROSAVIA’s team gave ONIC members a tour of the seed bank and walked them through the labs where seed research was being done. In order to enter the labs and the bank, RSIC, Swissaid, and ONIC members had to wear hospital-like blue aprons, shoes, and caps. The commission was also asked to leave their belongings at the entrance of the sites. In an interview, Gloria, one of the RSIC members who attend the meeting said, “As we were walking into one of the labs, one of the researchers said that ‘we were about to see some improved seeds,’ which immediately caused a strong reaction in us as a group. One member of ONIC replied to that in an annoyed tone, saying ‘Why are these seeds improved? See? It is evident to us that you are still holding these ideas about our seeds being inferior’” (Gloria, Interview 2018). Gloria told me that the moment of tension dispelled quickly, but that the bad taste of that researcher’s comment stayed with the group for a long time, reinforcing feelings of suspicion they already had about engaging with the government in any way.
**Conclusion**

Following a path of reflection tied to the previous chapters of this dissertation, in this chapter, I focused on the creation of what I called the post-war agrarian biocapitalism. I presented a critical analysis of how the peace agreement and the seed and agricultural projects derived from it reshaped women’s and indigenous peoples’ relation to the state in a complex and problematic way. I showed how women are constructed as a disembodied category, a category that does not recognize the different challenges that rural women face depending on their structural position not only as poor and landless for the most part, but also as belonging to groups and communities with distinct colonial histories. I also pointed out the way in which, in the language used in the peace agreement, women become managerial subjects that mediate the relationship between the State and the biosocial world where bioprospecting projects take place.

I also paid special attention to the Indigenous Route of Seeds, which I interpreted as a crucial project that transforms the history of seed politics in Colombia in ways that follow the dynamic of subaltern inclusion of indigenous people and exclusion of Afro-Colombians and Campesinos. I have also reflected upon the anachronic nature of the law’s temporal behavior, which, interlocked with an institutional context of hyper-bureaucratization, surpasses the good intentions of individual actors to improve the legal process and fuels the production and reproduction of socio-economic, gender, and ethnoracial inequalities and the further environing of socio-environmental and technoscientific conflicts.

More generally, my case shows that, in Colombia, the institutional production and management of nature/culture has been entering into a participatory moment in which the knowledges of historically marginalized peoples and communities are being included in epistemic and technopolitical enterprises already established by the government. And even though it has been pictured as “a moment for diversity” under the logic of neoliberal multiculturalism, the knowledges of women and ethnoracialized groups are not really being included. Instead, they are only being “added” to the processes of decision making and the construction of public policy because the state does not give them any real epistemic value. Thus, inclusion operates as a vehicle to legitimate such enterprises and reduce resistance.
CHAPTER 4

CREATING SOCIOEPISTEMIC TERRITORIALITIES THROUGH SEED SAVING IN COLOMBIA

It has been a long day. We worked very hard and now it seems that we are going to be able to know, as a group, what everyone knows personally. This is so important! We could not finish everything that we had planned, but we have enough for tomorrow’s session. Let’s meet at 8 am. We will begin with a presentation of each group’s drawing, and then we will talk about the visits to the different parcels that we did today in the afternoon. We can reserve the evening to trace our action plan for the coming months. Remember that we need your ideas about various things: how to make seed saving sustainable in the long run; how to think about seed exchange, and how to create our own cooperatives. We also have to discuss how to build the map of actors in the region so we have a clear idea of how and if to advance this with state support. And we have to plan the forthcoming sessions with the children. So be sure to sleep well tonight because there is a lot of work to complete! (Mixel, Fieldnotes 2017)

With these words, Mixel, a seed saver in central Colombia, closes the first day of a seed school that was taking place in her house. I remember this moment vividly; everyone looks tired, but at the same time, everyone is full of excitement. She is talking about a series of pedagogical practices that are at the heart of what it means to create epistemologies of seeds while re-making and re-thinking territories in seed struggles in Colombia. Over the next two days, twenty-five campesinxs gathered from morning to dusk to share seeds and experiences in Agri/culture as means of creating socio-material and spiritual ties to other groups that seek to maintain seeds as part of the commons. The network of communities that resulted is now part of the RSLC. Following the argumentative path of my previous chapters, in this chapter I underscore two pedagogical practices carried out during seed school sessions: first, the creation of drawings of communities’ territories, and second, the visits to family parcels where people learn from each other’s practices of seed saving. My analysis of these two practices shows how the generation of seed knowledge and territoriality go hand in hand. This crucial because it destabilizes three colonial and imperialist ideas that have been pervasive in the social sciences. First, that non-white, western European epistemes emerge and develop in
a shadow-like form that is always behind, or under, white-western European or North American epistemes (Escobar 2012; Lugones 2007). Second, that an important characteristic of modern knowledge, as opposed to traditional knowledge, is that it becomes an immutable mobile (Latour 1986), or that it is de-placed, easily movable between subjects and across time and space without alteration. Third, that territory is a clear delimited space where only top-down authority is exercised by Empires and Nation-States (Rocha 2014; Diez Tetamanti 2014).

Throughout the chapter, I study empirically how these three ideas are interlaced, generated, and contested through the pedagogical practices I discuss. I show that these ideas, on the one hand, create specific racial-gendered regimes of epistemic and material domination that deepen inequality and subjugation of already historically marginalized people, such as women, indigenous people, people of African descent, and disabled people. On the other hand, I describe how communities, in the very process of contestation, generate territorial epistemes that reveal the creative capacity of social movements and popular pedagogies to crack technocratic systems of domination.

**Seeds struggles and the creation of alternative pathways in agriculture**

As I showed in previous chapters (particularly in chapter one), many scholars have studied the transformative potential of social movement’s actions against processes of enclosure, reduction, and dispossession of knowledges, seeds, bodies, and relations among the human and non-human worlds. In his discussion of broader issues in the relationship between social movements and technoscience, David Hess proposed the term “alternative pathways” to describe how community-based groups find effective ways to modify public policy and research directions in science and industry. A few years later, Kinchy (2012) borrowed the term to talk specifically about “alternative pathways in agriculture,” which includes the revival of traditional agricultural practices and indigenous/peasant knowledges. These pathways, she asserts, seek to “limit the reach of the biotechnology industry, forming alliances with environmentalists and the transnational anti-biotech movement” (Kinchy, 2012: 10). This suggests that, although social movement’s contestation seems to be reactive to top-down policies, it is an active process, constructing alternatives that have serious effects on formal politics and the production, circulation, and legitimation of knowledges.
Aligned with this perspective and focused on studying seed struggles ethnographically, there are a number of works that illuminate the discussions that I am opening through my analysis of the RSLC case. Demeulenaere (2014), for instance, has shown the transformative potential of social movement in seed struggles. She analyses how French farmers have built alternatives to the seed industry by deploying a counternarrative that uses the term “peasant seeds” as a way to emphasize the peasants’ autonomy over their seeds, land, knowledges and labor instead of the term “farmer,” which, as Mendras (1970) showed, turned the peasant into an agricultural laborer whose aim was to work under the principles of efficiency and rationality.

Another ethnographic study about seed struggles in Canada also sheds light on how alternative pathways in agriculture are built. Phillips (2016) draws on Haraway’s (2008) concept of “response-able” and Latour’s concept of “learning to be affected” (2004b) to show the central place that training and learning had for the seed savers that she studied and for her own practice of seed saving. Importantly, she explicitly talks about learning as an embodied process in which both the bodies of people and the bodies of nature connect all available senses to build relationships “in-the-making.” She describes “learning seeds” as a process in which we learn how seeds should look, grow and develop as plants or foods. This process, she stresses, is place and culture-based.

Scholars focusing on seed struggles in Latin America have problematized the epistemic and social arrangements of seed movements and their potential to create long-term political change. For instance, Fitting (2011), in her analysis of the struggle for maize in Mexico, emphasizes that “community resources and agricultural knowledge are not distributed equally throughout the community” (236). Rather, she says, they are related to the historical relationship between patriarchy and other forms of situated political power, and wage labor.

Studies of Argentinian agriculture, such as Motta and Aranciba’s (2019), interpret the capacity of social movements in Argentina to mobilize against the unrestricted use of pesticides as rooted in the production of three different types of counter-expertise. And Lapegna (2016), with his extensive ethnographic work in Argentina, shows the space-making of GM soy crops and how, although campesinxs in Farmosa tried to fight against the corporate power of the
agrobiotechnology industry, the mobilization process was crossed by all kinds of difficulties that induced them to demobilize and accommodate to the techno-political project of the industry.

Some studies have been done in recent years about seed struggles in Colombia, focusing specifically on the RSLC. Fitting and Gutiérrez (2016) explore the discursive and organizational strategies of the RSLC to contest bio-hegemony. The main point of the paper is to show how the network builds seed sovereignty as a counter-notion to intellectual property, but there is not much emphasis on analyzing how seed savers epistememes are created and organized to achieve it. Other scholars (Rosset et al. 2019), examine how two communities that are part of the network work on seed recovery, transformation and defense, and how they contribute to agroecological scaling. Although they pay attention to territory as an important analytical category for understanding the process of agroecological scaling, there is not much attention paid to how seeds and territories come to be entangled in specific ways, especially through embodied epistemological practices.

In this chapter, I draw from many of the contributions of seed ethnographies I mentioned above. I center my analysis on the connections between epistememes, seeds, and territory. In the next section, I explain how have seed saving practices been taught and learned in Colombia at the grassroot level. Then, I develop the core point of this chapter: my analysis of the central pedagogical practices that RSLC members carry out in seed schools, which I argue, show the co-production of seed knowledge and territoriality, and its intersections with racial, gender, and class regimes.

**Popular learning of seed saving in Colombia**

Seed saving is not a “natural,” “already established” practice. On the contrary, seed saving is learned and taught through specific pedagogical practices that are the product of the interwoven of specific histories of rural and agrarian grassroots organizing. In Colombia, these struggles can be traced back to the first part of the twentieth century when campesinxs began to look for collective ways to stop processes of campesinx proletarianization and dispossession, accelerated by the industrialization of the agrarian sector and the advent of the green revolution (Fals Borda, 2015 [1968]). Since then, campesinxs have come together to gain a space in official and institutional politics, to defend their territories and ways of life, to
challenge development models and to propose other ways of understanding life—and death (Hernández Vidal et Moore, 2019).

Many RSLC members draw their current insights about what kinds of pedagogies are appropriate to promote the revival, construction, and circulation of popular knowledges from their previous participation in or knowledge about these rural and agrarian movements and organizations. This taught them the importance of combining politics and pedagogy as forms of social struggle. This is particularly salient in the case of members who were influenced by the work done in the Universidad Campesina (Campesinx University, from now on CU) in 1962. The CU was a pivotal project in the history of campesinx organization and enfranchisement in Colombia because it formed campesinxs so they could participate in public decision-making processes and become social leaders with the capacity to share with others communal and cooperative ways of life and work.

The CU based its pedagogies on the principles of liberation theology, which was born in Latin America in the second half of the 20th century. It began as a theological interpretation of the quest for human emancipation, bringing together principles of Catholicism and Marxist political economy. Gutiérrez (2005), for example, states that the central goal of liberation theology was to re-center Christ’s interest in the liberation of the poor (the vast majority of people in Latin America) in contemporary struggles against capitalist exploitation. This liberation could be achieved by overcoming social structures of injustice and the flourishing of human dignity as a reflection of God. Liberation theology became a social and political movement that expanded well beyond the Catholic Church to various social movements, including the student movement and many campesinx-based movements of the 60s, 70s, and 80s in Latin America (Martínez Andrade, 2015). But liberation theology was, at the same time, a movement and theology that also mingled with and was nurtured by the proposals [ideas?] and struggles of social movements. For example, the connection between environmental injustice and poverty (particularly relevant in the work of Leonardo Boff) was critical for both liberation theology and campesinx and indigenous -based movements. And it was key for the advancement of an agenda of social change that included an environmental critique of capitalism and a holistic
understanding of agrarian, environmental, and socio-economic issues as inevitably inter-connected at its core.

The CU was also influenced by pedagogies of liberation, such as the ones proposed by Paulo Freire (1968 *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) and Orlando Fals Borda (1972, 1979 *Participatory Action Research*). These pedagogies have also played a central role in the development of various pedagogical practices in Latin America. One of the pillars of this pedagogical approach is the need to de-school and de-standardize education so it becomes a medium of liberation for oppressed and marginalized communities, such as campesinxs. In other words, liberation pedagogies were created as relationship-centered learning and teaching practices to generate social justice in specific contexts that have been historically used to extract labor, nature, and knowledge.

Finally, the Campesino a Campesino Movement also influenced the CU, subsequent campesinx schools, and social movements across Central and South America and the Caribbean. The movement became a revolutionary pedagogical practice in the region (particularly in México, Guatemala, and Cuba) that radically changed the campesinx’s ways of dissenting politically and epistemically (Holt-Jimenez, 2006). The movement proposed that campesinxs have most of the knowledge that they need to create sustainable, culturally appropriate food territories that have kept their communities nourished and independent from the state’s shifts of public policy.

Inspired by the CU, Colombian campesinxs began to form campesinx schools, were spaces to come together to talk and learn from each other. The schools were itinerant because they had neither the money nor even the intention to build a place where everyone could gather. Instead, living rooms, kitchens, parcelas, gardens and patios became the spaces where members of a vereda [village] shared what was going on in, out, and around their agricultural practices. Intellectuals and academics who were involved in the environmental movement in Latin America, the US, and Europe participated in some of these schools too. NGOs with a socio-environmental focus that were just starting their work in Colombia became supporters and allies of a few schools as well (Acevedo 2011). Campesinxs began to experiment with
agroecology and began to remember how some of them used to live with the land and not apart from it (León-Sicard et al., 2015).

Mixel herself has told me on several occasions that the teachings of this model of political organizing have inspired “at least two generations of campesinxs” who learned how to subvert “the power of the elites without becoming subversives” themselves. Efraín, another seed saver from the RSLC who participated in the session, had the opportunity to learn to read and write in an itinerant campesinx school in the late 60’s, as well as to witness, from an early age, the many ways in which campesinxs became pedagogues and “owners of their destinies” (Efraín, Interview 2017).

Today, the RSLC takes up many of the legacies of the CU experience and the campesinx schools, as well as some of the core practices and principles of the Campesino a Campesino Movement, liberation theology and pedagogies of liberation.

In this sense, seed schools are similar to campesinx schools: they are meant to be itinerant spaces for collective learning in which seed savers reclaim and form epistemic and political power. They regularly last three or four days. The sessions are always participatory, led by seed savers. Some of them are owners of their little piece of land or parcel (5 to 10 hectares), and others are renters of more or less the same amount of space.

Before the sessions, each participant is required to follow and record what they have been doing with the seeds. Each seed saver chooses their way of recording; many prefer photographs. In some cases, when seed savers do not have access to a camera, and/or cannot read and write, they make drawings or find ways to remember the process they followed and reconstruct it orally. Thus, in some regions seed schools have also become spaces in which literacy work is done in conjunction to seed saving – as part of its politics.

14 “Los subversivos” / “The subversives” is what the Colombian government has historically called guerrilla members.
Experimentation and Demonstration in Seed Schools

Seed schools are places where people show how they save seeds, while also learning new forms of doing it using experimentation and demonstration. These are forms of teaching, learning, and research that have been used in both craft and scientific practice to create knowledge and validate it. In modern science, experiments have been central to the development of empirical answers to questions about the biophysical world. Through experimentation, modern science has historically validated its knowledge as bias-free or universally objective (Gooding, Pinch, & Schaffer, 1989; Schaffer and Shapin 1985). In craft, experimentation has been the engine for generating new knowledge and new or improved technologies that have allowed crafts and mechanics to evolve (Dierig 2006). In craft and science, demonstration is also a key means of teaching and learning, through which students and apprentices learn how to manage and handle tools, equipment, and processes involved in the production of knowledge. They observe others who already know how to do it. In demonstration and experimentation, there is always an aesthetic component (Flannery 1992). This captures specific sensual deployments, as well as the affection required of students and apprentices in order to “master” certain processes. In the way
teaching and learning work at seed schools, I find many similarities to these practices in craftsmanship and modern science despite the differences—though those, too, are critical.

In July 2017, I visited the headquarters of the CU in Buga, Valle, now called “The Campesino Mayor Institute” (*CMI- El Instituto Mayor Campesino*)° where the RSLC was holding a nationwide seed school for vegetable seed savers. The CMI has the main house, painted in white, that serves as a hotel and also hosts campesinx associations from across the country. It has two conference rooms, which are actually two tiny houses with plastic chairs and a few tables. The dining hall is located outside the residential house, and it is a rustic structure with big boilers and wood tables where people sit together to eat local foods. Perhaps the most important parts of the CMI are the plots available for agricultural work and the seed house. In the plots, regional campesinx associations perform experiments of all kinds and keep what they call “holistic territories of life,” as Manolo, one of the seed savers of the regional network of seed savers, called them. These territories are spaces where seeds, plants, water, and animals live together—sometimes in harmony, sometimes not. Manolo talks about “moments of non-harmonic interspecies cohabitancy” and explains that seed savers and campesinxs affiliated to the CMI spend a good amount of their time figuring out why territories of life are not working out well.

In one of the sessions of this seed school, participants visited some of the CMI’s plots where local seed savers had been working. Participants knew in advance that they could be selected by the seed savers leading this exercise to share their seed saving practices and techniques of soil and pest management. Everyone was prepared with seeds, notebooks, and some tools that were brought by the activity leaders from the residential house, where there is a room reserved for agricultural tools. Some of the tools were made by campesinxs themselves, while others were bought at the local market or donated by nonprofits or religious organizations. María, one of the activity leaders, started talking about the seeds while unpacking different sized glass bottles and paper envelopes one by one. María opened one

---

° Although the CMI is no longer the CU, it has continued to promote campesinx initiatives, such as agroecological local markets and the construction of a seed house run collectively by the regional network of seed savers of Valle (that belongs to the RSLC). The CMI is also a current member of the Latin American and Caribbean Agroecology Movement (MAELA), a movement that has promoted popular agroecology initiatives across the continent for more than a decade.
bottle. Then she said: “these are my favorite guavas. I select them very carefully each season.” María then went into the details of the selection processes. Dolores, José, and Misael, who also save guava seeds, raised their hands to ask questions. Soon, the order of the session broke down and the three of them were talking at the same time while María was trying to answer each of their questions. It was difficult for me to follow the conversation, but I managed to focus on what Dolores was asking: “María, how is that you only let the three grow 30 cm before you crop it? And then why do you crop it again a month later? Is that working for you?” María responded to these questions, giving specifics about the kind of soil acidity and access to water that she has. Dolores, who had never heard of one of the techniques to determine “soil’s health,” as she called it, said: “Mija, this is surprising! I have never heard about it before! Could we talk about it later on? We need you to visit our territory to help us care for our sick guavas.” Dolores and María met after the session ended, and, indeed, arranged María’s visit to Dolores’ community. After a few calls, Dolores found a place where María could stay and eat (her sister’s house). She told me later in the day and with a smile on her face, that “now we only need to find how to pay for the bus ticket!”

Back in the session, other people who also save guava seed shared their ways of doing it with the group. The conversation about seed selection turned into a conversation about planting, composting, and testing. Most seed savers were middle-aged women and men. There were some elders, who did not speak much, and some youth, who observed what everyone did and said. Dolores had been taking photos of the process of growth of one variety of guava called guayaba dulce [sweet guava] for a year. She asked María if she could borrow the sowing tools. María handed the tools to her without hesitation. Dolores then used the tools to demonstrate how to sow them: “three by three,” she said, as she dug the holes where the seeds were to be deposited. The others in the group stood up and took notes and photos, while energetically participating in the loud multiple conversations that were going on at the same time. In the evening, after all experiential sessions were done, people got together in one of the conference rooms to talk about what they wanted to learn in the next national school and how many regional schools were going to take place in the next months.
These moments at this CML seed school show that seed savers share what they know, what they learned and what they want to learn with one another through demonstration and experimentation. Although this looks in some ways like the demonstrations carried in science labs, one difference is that, in formal science labs, the epistemic hierarchy is quite rigid: students or apprentices remain subordinate until they officially finish their training process. However, at seed schools, such hierarchy is constantly broken, disrupted; there are often neither designated teachers nor given students and roles are interchangeable most of the time.

Another difference is that unlike agro-biotech science, experiments made by seed savers do not take place in the laboratory, but in the field. The laboratory has been understood in science studies as an “enhanced environment” that does not tend to work with nature so much as it occurs within nature. In other words, through the transition from whole plants grown in fields to cell cultures raised in the laboratory, the processes of interest become miniaturized and accelerated” (Knorr Cetina 1994: 145).

But perhaps one of the most important differences between the seed savers’ knowledge system and the scientific system is that, for the former, the knowledge shared and built in the sessions is mostly practical, tied to the relationship each person and family has with the territory and the community.

Making Socioepistemic Territories

It was almost noon. Mixel, her daughters, her husband, Laureano (a member of a not-for-profit organization who has worked with communities across Colombia in seed saving activities for over 25 years), and I handed cardboard and markers to the groups. They began making a seed drawing. They first drew their parcel and the communal spaces meaningful to them. They then made notes about their estimated size and their geophysical and atmospheric conditions. After that, they wrote down the number of people living in the household and the number of people from the household working the land and doing seed saving activities. They also made notes (both in writing and in the form of drawings) about the seed varieties grown, the ones consumed or re-used for the next season, and the ones wasted or lost. Finally, they drew the spaces where their seeds circulated.
Mixel said that activity was designed after she and other RSLC members shared their own experiences in organizing and figured out that they needed to gather this information with a drawing so they “could have a visual idea of how people’s lives are organized, and how seeds play a role there.” Drawing is thus a key technology for the RSLC. It makes the relationships between territories, seeds, and people concrete and visible.

People make these drawings through a double—almost simultaneous—exercise: they reflect upon their own lives and life-worlds, and they communicate and exteriorize such reflections, nurturing their perceptions and experiences with what others have to say. It is thus a double exercise. One of remembering and reconstructing the territory itself and their journey in it. And also a communal exercise of finding points of connection and agreement—and points of disconnection and disagreement with other members of the community for whom the territory may look quite different.

In the drawing process, people begin to notice and to bring to the surface practices, materialities, and experiences that passed unnoticed in the course of their daily lives. This process is, in other words, a process of recognizing the lived relationships between the collective human and non-human worlds. Esteban, for instance, said in the presentation of the drawing that it “the drawings gives us a sense of how many seed varieties are we losing because of the water problems that the community is facing today.” And some women who brought their children to the session mentioned that the drawing helped them to see and understand the importance of sharing the forest with other members of the community and other communities so “children could play and water could find space to flourish and run.”

Other drawings had located water conflicts with neighbor communities and environmental issues with a mining company that was directly affecting seed saving. They also delineated routes where people used to plant certain seed varieties and the houses of elders who were contributing to processes of seed recovery via storytelling. Thus, the process of creating the drawing can be understood through the analysis made by social cartographers who have argued that the collective construction of the visual in a community opens up the possibility for that community to see, embrace, and display its power to create political change (Montoya et al. 2014).
Or, in other words, the process of collectively drawing the socio-spatial relations that happen *within* and *across* the places and spaces where people live their daily lives gives birth to the concrete idea of territory and generates the basis for biosocial transformation to take place.

However, this process was not always harmonious in all seed schools I attended. On the contrary, it was constantly an agitating process revealing important social tensions. In the next section, I examine one salient issue: gender inequality.

*Women’s knowledges in and out of the schools*

While making her drawing with other participants at Mixel’s house, Lorena, a seed saber, told me that she did not know how much work she did with the seeds before she made the drawing because everything “felt so normal that it was impossible to see it as almost extraordinary.” Other women who realized their presence and care for the territory were stronger than that of their male partners became angry at them.

Their partners felt threatened to the extent that two of them left the session and never came back. Domestic violence and lack of women’s land property came up in the discussion and proved difficult to talk about. Many could not find the words and others used language that naturalized men’s majority ownership of the land and occasionally abusive behavior towards family members. In this discussion, the interwoven relation between seeds, care, and women’s work was explicit.

For example, many middle-aged men revealed their skepticism about seed saving as an activity that could produce “real value” for the family and the community, arguing that it required too much time and energy in exchange for little or no money. Rafael, one of the men seed savers in the session, said that “I would like to spend my time in my own house and on my limited piece of land, but I have to feed my children and even if seeds are pretty, I cannot devote my time to them.” Some people of all ages, both men and women, however, defended seed saving as a critical activity for them and the community. They saw it as something that produced what they considered “the healthiest food.” Others felt that it had unified the community and allowed members to achieve dignity, autonomy and Independence, recognition of their knowledge and work, different family ties and kin, and recognition of their full humanity.
When I coded my data, I found that, in general, women’s knowledge is described by seed savers (both women and men) as “important,” “special” and “unique” (as shown by the coding of these words in my data). Campesínx and indigenous women who participated in seed schools emphasized how their participation in these activities fostered their self-esteem and helped them to recognize many problems of gender inequality in their communities. In the RSLC, most seed savers are middle-aged women who have longstanding relationships with fruit and vegetable seeds that they cultivate or use for their families’ health and nutrition.

Feminist scholars have shown that women’s relationships with the seed as an aspect of care emerge from the historical feminization of spaces such as huertas [gardens] and kitchens that equip women with the daily experience and knowledge to provide food in domestic spaces (Hernández Vidal et Moore, 2019; Fortmann 1996; Pionetti 2017). Yet, even though much of the knowledge that women seed savers have when they begin the journey as members of the RSLC is rooted in their domesticity, it is precisely through their participation in seed schools and other political settings that they begin a process of de-domestication.

Alexandra, a 32-year-old seed saver who participated in the seed school that took place in Mixel’s house, told me that:

Before seed schools began to take place here, I never left the house for any purpose other than going to church or the local market. Now I leave the house constantly to go to the schools or to meetings we organize with other people from the RSLC. I never thought I had anything to say, and now I see that people pay attention to me and that most women face the same problems as I do, which makes us think about collective ways to solve them, instead of enduring them as if they were only ours. (Alexandra, Interview 2017)

Seeds schools and making drawings appear, then, as critical mediums to create group solidarity among women and to make their knowledge and labor visible. Equally important, they also humanize the lives of women who face not only gender oppression but also endured discrimination for their conditions of disability. Graciela, one of the participants in the session, lost her left leg in the town where she lived previously and had been unemployed since then. She said that:
I was called ‘the wooden-leg lady’ by everyone in my town when I lost my leg. Nobody cared about me or my suffering. Then I moved here and it was the same. People laugh at me in the town. People did not respect me, and I thought I was nothing. But one day my nephew told me to come to a seed school session. And it was like a different world. A remember that Laureano was the first person who talked to me like a person, and he listened to me and to what I knew. Knowing that I knew something, that I could learn and contribute again to society, has been the most important thing I have gone through since I lost my leg. Now I feel like a person again. (Graciela, 2017)

This testimony is crucial because it shows how the generation and recognition of socioepistemologies are intimately tied to the creation of affective worlds that undermine gender and ableist stereotypes.

Even though seed schools are generative and transgressive, these and other spaces/activities carried out in the RSLC also reproduce traditional gender roles. Women are the ones in charge of cooking and serving the food in seed schools, seed fairs, and local, regional, and national meetings. While their knowledge is recognized, in many instances it is talked about as care work, and, thus, assumed to be a natural part of their womanhood.

In my interviews with women in different leadership positions in the network, they directly questioned whether or not there is a place for their knowledge, particularly in formal politics. Some of them were thinking about creating a separate block in the RSLC were only women could participate. This feeling, however, was expressed to me mostly by middle-class women involved in the RSLC as collaborators and not by indigenous and campesinx women, who mostly only brought up how the RSLC has helped them to find ways out of daily life gender oppression.

Discussion: seed epistemologies, racegender, and territory

Through the description of specific pedagogical practices in the RSLC I have revealed that territories are not monadic entities but potentially unstable spatialities where social and epistemic processes play a central role. This is aligned with the development of new understandings of the idea of territory, or what Svampa (2015) called the “territorial opening,” in which territory is framed as an open, flexible and porous entity, shaped by communities’ understandings of their daily life in various, interconnected spaces. Andean-Amazonic movements were among the first to use the concept of territory to point to the tejido-mundo or
“world-fabric” which they inhabit. Since then, communities, grassroots organizations and Latin American scholars, particularly those engaged with political ecology as a field and as a practice, have been using the term to emphasize that rural popular struggles in Latin America are struggles about people’s relations to the material, epistemic, affective and spiritual worlds to which they belong. They are also trying to displace ways of framing such struggles as, for instance, singular struggles for food, land, or water (Bravo, 2014; Carvajal Martínez, 2013; Escobar, 2008; Sabogal Aguilar, 2013; Toro Pérez, 2012), which can also be seen in the way that the drawing, for example, showed the interconnected nature of various conflicts and opportunities for change. Agrarian movements and movements against mining have been leading this turn, with an increasing number of campesinxs “conceiving of and organizing their farms as not only economically productive spaces but also connective places with ethical obligations to a myriad of socioecological continuums...” (Lyons, 2018: 423).

Scholars have also pointed out that when communities talk about territories, they are talking about ongoing, continuous, open-ended, and mostly, contradictory and co-existent processes. Some of these processes are the construction of conflicting identities, the resignification and reification of socio-cultural and power relations, and the production and obliteration of knowledges. Seed schools show the intensity and openness that pedagogical practices allow the territory to have. The contradictions and disagreements in people's interpretations of territorial life can be read using what Marisol de la Cadena (2015) sees as co-existent contradictory processes that are not problematic per se, but central elements in the flow of relationality between, within, and among human and nonhuman worlds.

The proliferation of scholarly work on the territorial opening has also reinvigorated decolonial, postcolonial, and/or anti-colonial understandings of non-white European/North American epistemes that emerge in the community lead processes of making and remaking territories. Subramaniam (2014) and Foster (2016) underscore that the making of knowledge and its recognition as such is intertwined with gender, race, class, and nation in ways that have determined what or who is inside or outside the domain of modern science. This dynamic has its origins in the mode of power established by mechanisms of colonization in which race, gender, and labor orders were Intertwined and naturalized (Quijano, 2009). These orders were then
passed from generation to generation and reproduced by the offspring of the colonizers in what Rivera Cusicanqui (1991) calls a move towards the sedimentation of “internal colonialism.” The organization of labor in the system of racial stratification, however, was heavily affected by gendered-colonial understandings of the place of women and men in the chain of production and government as well. Importantly, as Lugones (2007) argues, people’s place in the system also determined and organized their ways of knowing in particular ways. Since women were kept in domestic spaces, their spatial knowledge of what was beyond the house was minimal. The domesticity of women tends to make them dependent on men, not only economically, but also spatially: women who do not go out of their house, who do not walk and live in the territory experience a much more limited spatial knowledge.

The case of seed schools in the RSLC shows that there is a great effort being made in social movements to create informal educational spaces where members can learn and teach each other to do agricultural labor outside of the individualistic framework of private property. Instead of, for example, working in individual plots of land that belong to one person, they do associative work on collective land using collective means of production. They also work towards reforming ways of cultivation that are harmful, mainly by incorporating agroecological practices, mainly, incorporating agroecological practices. Novas asserts (2014) that the emphasis on learning and teaching how to collectivize knowledge, property, and tools is vital for these movements because it is a step forward towards the de-alienation of labor and the construction of different forms of sociotechnical adaptation (Dagnino, 2010). Other scholars, such as de Sousa Santos (2014), emphasize that studying social movements is a way to address epistemic and colonial power asymmetries in contemporary capitalism, especially when the movements are outside of the colonial/racial/capitalist matrix of domination.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused on two of critical pedagogical practices that the RSLC members carry out in seed schools which show the co-production, to borrow Jasanoff’s expression, of seed knowledge and territoriality, and its intersection with racial, gender, and class regimes. Pedagogy has appeared in recent literature as a vital form of politics in the Movement of Landless Workers
(MST) in Brazil (Pinheiro and Rosset 2017; Barbosa 2016b), the Zapatistas in Mexico (Barbosa 2015b), the Mapuche in Chile (Figeroa 2015; Qulaqueo et al., 2016) and La Via Campesina (LVC) on the continent (LVC 2015, Martinez et Rosset 2015). The case of the RSLC advances this strand of scholarship by focusing on pedagogical practices geared towards making local knowledge and technologies for the people and by the people, knowledge and technologies that challenge colonial understandings of socioepistemes and territory. Drawings in seed-schools re-center the rural in terms of territory and territorialities outside of the realm of sovereignty and the nation-state. This is crucial because the imaginary Latin American nation has been continually contested by groups that have historically not belonged to the identities tied to it that are mediated by racial and cultural imaginaries of European whiteness.

The visual and dialogical pedagogical praxis that I have described also locate pedagogy in the realm of historical memory and territorial storytelling. And with this, this praxis opens spaces for the manifestation and recognition of forms of relating to seeds that transcend the technoscientific language of “innovation”, so much in use today.

In this historical and political context, the transformative political potential of these activities should not be ignored because the generation of popular epistemic power is often transformed in clear routes for political action. An example of it is what happened at the end of the seed school at Mixel’s house. There, participants defined first what paths should the community take to shift work, epistemic, property and geographical imbalances. Then, they made sketches of how they could, perhaps, approach the state and other meaningful actors, such as Non-for profit and Multilateral organizations (mostly United Nations).

At the same time the transformative political potential of such practices should not be overestimated because of the complexity of Colombian politics, particularly in the countryside. Even though the exercise of re-creating territories revealed the “world-fabric”, in which the very activity of seed saving is possible and takes meaning, as well as the knowledges generated and circulated in the community, the structure of possibility and meaning that seed saving takes across Colombia varies significantly depending on the community and their particular relationship with the territory that they inhabit. In the case of communities whose presence in the territory has been jeopardized by armed groups, I find that their approach to seed saving is
traversed by questions of how of seeds and communities survive in exile. Communities whose territory is shared with or cross through by other communities or actors, such as Non-for profit organizations, government officials, and/or extractivist machinery (mining, fracking, extensive industrial and mono-crop agriculture), sometimes have ambivalent relationships with the territory and blurry ideas of what it actually is. For example, seed savers from central Colombia, like Lorena, told me that because of the power of the potato agricultural industry and their “omnipresence in the fields,” they have had to re-make what they are beginning to see again as *campesinx* territory. As a result, campesinx organizers have had to knock on doors and collect (his)stories of local seed varieties, consumption, and harvesting in order to re-create what *could* have been (and, perhaps, will be) the community’s collective territory. This reveals that while for many already organized communities their territory and associated knowledges are easily re-created, for many others they are not. In these latter cases pedagogy is critical for the emergence of such knowledges as collective and territorial.

Seed saving in Colombia is deeply complex: it is a socio-historical and spatial process in which the engagements between the human and the non-human world are moved by multiple relationalities. In such [need a noun here], contradictions, change and instability are more common than agreement and harmony. In the next chapter, I show another face of seed saving in Colombia: the creation of Territories Free of Transgenics (TFTs).
The RSLC welcomed 2018 with excellent news: The municipality of San Lorenzo, in the department of Nariño, had been officially declared a Territory Free of Transgenics (TFT), becoming the eighth TFT in Colombia. With this declaration, San Lorenzo also became the second territory among the ones forming TFTs that is not officially indigenous (the first one was declared in the same department in the municipality of La Union in 2012). The other six TFTs have been granted in indigenous jurisdictions recognized through the National Constitution of 1991 (NC91) and the subsequent laws that helped support its implementation.
Why is it that six out of eight TFTs declarations have taken place in indigenous jurisdictions, and, in most cases have been ascribed to already constitutionally granted indigenous reservations? Why aren’t there TFTs in Afro-Colombian or campesinox territories?

That most TFT declarations in Colombia have taken place in indigenous reservations and not in campesinox or constitutionally granted Afro-Colombian collective territories is not a mere coincidence, but the product of two interconnected processes: the intersection of ethnoracial and territorial law with the politics of seeds and agro-biotechnology under neoliberal multiculturalism, and the logic of violence in rural areas in Colombia.

Following my argument in the last chapter about how the generation of seed knowledges and practices goes hand in hand with territorial processes, in this chapter, I explain what ethnoracialized territorial logics look like in the creation of TFTs and the possibilities for socio-epistemic and territorial reconfiguration that they offer. I show how TFTs open spaces for new biosocial relationships and worlds to take place, strengthen communities, and give the RSLC a formal territorial structure for operation.

Throughout the chapter, I also analyze three crucial limitations of the TFTs. First, although they have a crucial political, cultural, and social power, they do not really act as physical barriers to stop GM contamination since the minimal distance from GM crops to Non-GM crops established by law in the TFTs resolutions are minimal. Second, since indigenous communities are mostly the ones who are able to establish the TFTs, this territorial figure does not really alter the position of epistemic, environmental, territorial, cultural, economic and social vulnerability of Campesinxs and Afro-Colombian communities, who do not count with the same legal and political resources. Third, they neither have the material and political power to counter agribusiness and mining corporations, who are protected by the Government’s model of development and regional and national elites”, nor can they do much to face the military and paramilitary apparatus that is connected to the extractivist economy.

**TFTs in seed struggles across the world**

Seeds are seeded in the ground. Seeds need soil to come to life, to grow, to flourish. Seeds have a life underground and a life on the ground, as well as a life that is expanded and transported by
wind flows. They are interconnected and depend, basically, on having a place to be and to become what they can be. The scholarship that examines the processes of seed enclosure has shown that with the fast growth of transgenic crops, non-GM seeds have less space to grow, and their lives are affected by their interrelation with GM seeds. This relation has been called transgene flow (Kinchy, 2012; Delborn 2008). As a result, land and territory have become critical elements in seed conflicts. Thus, whereas seed enclosures happen through the territorialization of GM seeds, the resistance to it tries to de-territorialize them by way of re-territorializing native and criollo seeds. TFTs make this double process of resistance possible. In this sense, my analysis of how TFTs have come to be created in Colombia draws from the idea of the territorial opening that I explained in the previous chapter, in which territories are not conceived as delimited spaces where only top-down authority is exercised but as a porous entity where community life is constructed on a day to day basis.

Social movements across the world have pushed for a political agenda in which territories, whether taken as cooperative land associations (as in many cases in Europe) or as collective territories (as the case of indigenous reservations in Colombia), are inherently associated with seeds. This material and symbolic inseparability of territory and seed has driven many groups in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America to try to create GMO free-zones (as they are called in most places) or TFTs (as they are called in Latin America). These processes, however, are not identical in each case. They present important differences that show the interlocking nature of global political economic dynamics and national and local political histories and ideologies (Jasanoff 2005; Parthasarathy 2017), including the history of colonization, reflected in the processes of ethnoracialization in Latin America that separated communities, territories, and nations as indigenous, black, or mestizas (Bacchetta, Maira, Winant, 2019; Vergara-Figueroa, 2018; Wade, 2010).

Although there has been some empirical attention to how GMO free-zones and TFTs are created, it is not abundant. There are some studies on the determinants for GM-free zones formation in Germany (Nischwitz et al. 2005; Consmüller, Beckmann, and Petric 2011), France (Demeulenaere, 2014), Latvia and Costa Rica (Aistiara 2011; Sánchez et Buján 2014), and South Africa (Rock, 2018). These studies address questions about the nature of the groups involved in
the creation of these territories and the meanings that such mobilization processes carry with it. They conclude that GMO-free zones and TFTs come to life in most cases because of the action of local farmers who are already engaged with some kind of organic or agroecological farming and the creation of transnational networks of grassroots organizations that reject agricultural biotechnology, territorial and epistemic enclosures, and the unrestrictive incorporation GM crops. Yet these studies have little to say about how local histories affect the processes of TFTs or GMO free-zones formation, and they do not engage critically with ethnoracialization as a potential central factor in these processes. This is why it is so important to explore these issues in this chapter.

Territorial contentious politics of GM expansion in Colombia: Transgenic territorialization

Colombia has not been particularly known as a prominent site for GM cropping in Latin America. Moreover, it has remained almost marginal in analysis of GM growth in the region, whereas Argentina and Brazil drive the expansion of GM soy (Córdoba 2019; Lapegna 2016; Leguizamón 2019; Oliveira 2019). However, GM crops have been released in the country for about 20 years, and their incorporation in Colombian soil has not gone uncontested. On the contrary, it has, since the very beginning, been a matter of contentious politics (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly, and, 2001).
The commercial release of GM crops was approved through decree 4525 of 2005, which regulates the implementation of the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol. The first GM seeds entering Colombian agriculture were cotton seeds, and they were cultivated two years before the decree was issued.

The cotton agricultural sector in Colombia has been one of the most technologically produced, precisely because country’s economic reliance on it at the end of the 20th century and the techno-determinist ideology of the Green Revolution that flooded Latin American governments and academic institutions during the 70s and 80s. That cotton was a chosen crop where GM seeds could be tested makes sense when looking at the Colombian agricultural sector, which had historically been driven by coffee and cotton exports but faced a systematic production crisis in the 90s due to the environmental effects of monocropping, exposed by the increasing insect resistance to insecticides, genetic erosion, and soil degradation. As Kalmanovitz and López Enciso (2006, 273) show, Colombian cotton crops were at 400,000 hectares in 1977. By 2016, only 9,800 were sown (Grupo Semillas, 2018). The cultivation of GM cotton crops decreased so dramatically not only because of their inability to “fix” the harsh environmental conditions created during the Green Revolution but also because of its failure to fulfill the techno-promises of hyper-productivity and cost-reduction.

The sowing of transgenic corn was authorized two years later in 2007, but later modifications were made to its approval through resolutions issued by ICA, pursuant to Decree 4525 of 2015 on Biosafety. The decrees approving GM cotton and corn liberation in Colombian soil were issued without biosecurity evaluation, which would have included the evaluation of environmental, socioeconomic and health risks. The Decree 4525 of 2015 authorized transgenic corn varieties such as glyphosate-tolerant technology. Most transgenic seeds in the country today have one of two types of Cry toxins for the control of Lepidopteros pests and one or two sources of herbicide tolerance (glyphosate and ammonium glufosinate) (Grupo Semillas, 2018). The GM corn approved by the Colombian government is bought from six multinational corporations (Dupont Pioneer, Bayer, Dow Agrosciences, Dekalb, Syngenta, and Advanta) and one Colombian company (Semillas del Valle). The Colombian company has been in the seed market for over 40 years, and it has become one of the most important companies in the local
agribusiness sector, producing not only transgenic seeds but also agrochemicals. They make GM corn, sorghum, rice, and cotton, and glyphosate-based agro-fertilizers and pesticides (Semillas Valle, retrieved November 26th, 2019). Both national and multinational seed companies are associated in an organization called Acosemillas. The latter has a strong presence in the agribusiness sector in Colombia and has worked throughout the years lobbying Congress and the governmental agricultural agencies to favor the GM seed market (Gómez Lee, 2004).

Transgenic crops have been sowed mainly in areas where agribusiness already flourish. The main transgenic crops grown in the country are cotton and corn hybrids. In the case of corn, Colombia is a center of diversity (with approximately 23 corn breeds), which has made the incorporation of transgenic corn highly controversial. In 2016, a total of 109,935 hectares of GM crops were grown. Of that amount, 100,109 were corn hectares and 9,814 were cotton hectares. In 2017, the sowing of transgenic corn went down to 85,000 hectares (Grupo Semillas, 2018). No statistics are available for 2018 and 2019.

Besides cotton and corn, a small number of GM flower crops have been sowed. In total, the departments that grow the most GM Crops are Meta, Córdoba, Huila, and Tolima (ICA, 2016). Importantly, Córdoba and Tolima are two places where the RSLC has been highly active. This shows that the Colombian government has incorporated transgenic crops in the agricultural system of the country not only through the law but also through a process of territorialization of GM cotton and corn. However, the RSLC has resisted such territorialization using an array of strategies, including TFTs, which are crucial to their resistance?

Reverse territorialization: De-territorializing GM crops through the territorialization of TFTs

In Colombia, eight communities have declared TFTs, six of which are indigenous. These are the Zenu Indigenous Reservation (declared a TFT in 2005), the Cañamomo and Lomapierta Indigenous Reservation and the Wayuu Indigenous Reservation (both declared TFTs in 2009), the Indigenous Reservations of Llano Buco and Iquira (declared a TFT in 2010), and the Arahuaco Indigenous territory (declared a TFT in 2011) (Swissaid, 2012; RGSV 2018). Although most TFT declarations came to life before the official formation of the RSLC, the eight communities who participated in these processes were active in the formation of the RSLC and continue to work
together through the network to create other TFTs in the country. Therefore, I consider TFTs declared before 2014 as part of the RSLC processes of mobilization.

![Territorios Libres de Transgénicos en Colombia 2014](image)

**Figure 15. Territories Free of Transgenics declared before 2014.**
Source: Grupo Semillas

The process of formation of TFTs in Colombia has been led by grassroots organizations that are articulated by the RSLC. They were strongly influenced by the creation of GM free-zones in Europe and other regions of Latin America. Later on, some activists of the organization built collaborative relationships with The Union of Committed Scientists in Mexico (La Unión de Científicos Comprometidos con la Sociedad) and activists from the coalition *Sin Maíz no Hay País*, who made the case of GM contamination of native and creole maize public. In one of my conversations with Fernando Castrillón, an RSLC member and researcher of the NGO Grupo Semillas, he said that:
The FTA was being planned and organized with the US, and we knew, we knew exactly what they wanted because they had done the same thing with Mexico through NAFTA, so we decided that we needed to put in action as many strategies as possible to diminish the impact of the FTA—TFTs were one of them. (Fernando Castrillón, Interview 2017)

These relationships and the knowledge about what was going on in Mexico with the transgenic expansion alarmed RSLC activists, who expected a dramatic increase of GM crops in Colombia due to the conditions that the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States (signed in 2012) was establishing for the agrarian sector. Not all TFTs have come to life in the same way, but all have followed legal paths traced by the NC91 and other environmental and agrarian regulations issued after 1991. The RSLC used these legal resources to support the creation of TFTs:

2. The constitutional right to popular consultation, granted by law 134 of 1994 that establishes the right of the civil society to decide its fate on crucial social, political, economic, and environmental matters.

More specifically, the RSLC has mainly based its legal claims on three articles and one law. These are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article/Law</th>
<th>Legal Framework</th>
<th>Main elements draw to make the case for TFTs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article 313</td>
<td>National Constitution</td>
<td>Definition of the socioeconomic functions and the functions of protection and defense of the environmental and cultural patrimony of the municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 65 of Law 99 of 1993</td>
<td>General Law for environmental protection</td>
<td>Promotion and execution of national, regional and sectoral programs and policies in relation to the environment and renewable natural resources; Issuing of the necessary norms for the control, preservation, and defense of the environmental heritage, territorial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
142

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article 76 of Law 715 of 2001</th>
<th>Law regulating education, health, and agriculture</th>
<th>Setting out of the powers of municipalities in other sectors such as agriculture and the environment, particularly the promotion, participation, and implementation of programs and policies to maintain a healthy environment through appropriate monitoring measures.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law 388 of 1997</td>
<td>Territorial ordering</td>
<td>Promotion of municipal autonomy for the ordering of its territory, the equitable and rational use of territorial soil, and the necessary measures for the preservation and protection of the environmental and cultural heritage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Regulatory framework of Territories Free of Transgenics. Based on Grupo Semillas, 2018

Although the RSLC has been able to draw from different legal elements to initiate, present, and push for the creation of TFTs, the process is complex and requires a strong organizational capacity to face challenges at the local, regional, and national levels. Sometimes, local grassroots are not solid enough to keep the process going, or the material conditions of existence of many of the activists overcome their will to participate in the process, weakening the organizational structure and the process itself. In many cases, even though the process goes through at the municipal level, it is then rejected by regional or national authorities.

In the “National Report of GM Crops in Colombia” (2018), Grupo Semillas underscores that in the processes of creation of TFTs in Colombia the relevance of popular participation in the political process is visible, as is the centrality of making such participation as broad and representative as possible. They also emphasize that part of the success in mobilization and local wins was that the proposals presented to the municipalities and the national government were accompanied by
alternatives mapped, discussed, and agreed on by the communities themselves through their participatory processes.

These alternatives, in turn, were then “translated” by members of the communities with experience or training managing public issues, who wrote the petitions in institutional language and were explicit about the allocation of resources and action plans that each community had after the creation of the TFT. The concrete routes for action presented and the political clarity of the RSLC gave it a level of political leverage not seen before.

Indigenous TFTs

Figure 16. Seed exchange, 2017. A Zenú seed saver exchanges his seeds with others. In his t-shirt says: “Hijos del Maíz”. Picture: My own

At the beginning of the chapter, I asserted six of the eight TFTs in Colombia have been declared in constitutionally granted indigenous reservations. To understand the relevance of this fact, it is important to situate the figure of the reservation in a history that goes back to the Spanish colonization process and continues today. Historians consider reservations a social institution
that, instead of providing protection to indigenous people from the physical and cultural genocide they were facing, allowed colonizers to keep them alive to continue their exploitation and the exploitation of nature (Herrera Ángel, 1998; González 1970; Quiroga Zuluaga 2015). Importantly, since under the figure of the reservation land became inalienable, it prevented indigenous people from acquiring capital through the commercialization of their land. Although not without struggle, The Zenú people, the Embera-Chamí and other indigenous peoples in Colombia have managed to use this colonial instrument of racial, labor, and social control to their own advantage by contesting the domination of the Colombian nation state, defending their lands from attempts at land seizure, and creating and recreating the imagined community they envisioned. This history of domination and resistance is critical to understanding the emerge of TFTs on indigenous lands. I turn, next, to an examination of this process in Zenú territory.

The Zenú TFT:

Figure 17. Map of San Andrés de Sotavento Indigenous Reservation
Source: Observatorio del Programa Presidencial de DH y DIH Vicepresidencia de la República/Cartographic. Source: IGAC
On October 6 and 7, 2005, about 300 people participated a meeting organized by the Zenú indigenous councils in Zenú territory. The objective of the meeting was to discuss whether or not the Zenú Indigenous Reservation of San Andrés de Sotavento should be declared a TFT. After a day of heated discussions among the participants, an agreement was reached: the majority was on board with the declaration, so it was approved.

The Zenú Indigenous Reservation was created under Royal Deed No. 1060 of 1.773 with an area of 83,000 hectares. It is spread across six municipalities in the departments of Antioquia, Córdoba, and Sucre, and is made up of 177 indigenous councils. The Zenú have historically survived on agricultural work, which has been performed in their communal land by families that share responsibilities for the crops planted. The agricultural tradition of the community also involves the co-inhabitation of animals and crops, so they all share the same spaces. Liliana, a biologist who worked with this community for several years, told me in an interview that “for the Zenús, the separation of crops and animals does not make sense. They see both as complementary” (Liliana, interview 2017). They have also had a strong connection with ancestral mining practices and pottery. Gold was the main metal extracted and used for traditional jewelry and exchange (Arango and Sanchez, 2004), but not much is left today in the territory, producing the loss of traditional practices of goldsmith.

The Colombian Caribbean, where a large part of the reservation is located, is a center of biodiversity in the country (Andrade- C., M. Gonzalo, 2011). Because of its strategic location for drug and gun trafficking and territorial control, it has also been a space where armed conflict has been present for more than 50 years. For instance, in the department of Antioquia, in the municipalities of Caucasia and Zaragoza, Colombian authorities have found extensive cultivation and processing of coca, and in the department of Sucre, there is a strategic corridor for coca leaf that goes from the departments of Bolivar and Cauca towards the Caribbean Sea (Defensoria del Pueblo, 2008). In the mid-2000s, when a process of demobilization of paramilitary forces took place, many armed groups left the zones, while other groups were formed with ex-paramilitary members and mercenaries working for drug trafficking groups who tried to recover territorial control (PPPH 2009).
As a result, the Zenú have suffered from forced displacement (with about 35,800 members of the community displaced between 2003 and 2008) and disappearance (there no official statistics about this) and have been exposed to physical annihilation via massacres, as well as other forms of physical and psychological violence that has deeply fractured families and community life. From 2003 to 2008, 10 massacres were reported in Zenú territory, with a total of 47 deaths registered (PPPH 2009:10).

The territorial conflicts and difficult humanitarian situation in Zenú territory is not particularly different from the humanitarian situation of other indigenous communities in Colombia. These communities have had to face war as the product of historical political grievances between radical left and radical right-wing groups and the implementation of the state’s developmentalist project that has created socio-environmental conflicts in many parts of the national territory.

This project began its most aggressive phase during the government of president Gaviria in 1991 and has continued to foster exploration and exploitation of nature and human labor since then. This “quest for development” has overridden the state’s commitment to protecting communities from the horrors of war and its responsibility to eliminate, or at least reduce, historical structural inequalities among marginalized groups (Ojeda 2016, Escobar 2012, Gutiérrez-Sanín, 2019).

It is precisely during this period of extreme violence that the Zenú organized to demand the recognition of one of their territories as a reservation. In 2015, The United Nations Development Program (PNUD) sent a commission to the area to assess the process. In a short report published after the visit, they say that in spite of the challenges, the Zenú have achieved many of their goals. They interviewed Ismael Aguilar Solano, a Zenú governor. He said that in 2006 they had "managed to have 34 indigenous councils collectively recognized by the community, of which 11 were recognized by the Ministry of Interior, too” (PNUD, 2015. My translation). Besides the collective indigenous land granted to the Zenú between 2006 and 2011, most of the land in the region belongs to big landowners who rent the land to campesinos and landless Zenús whose territories have not yet been re-established by the law.
National and international scientists and environmentalists consider this region a center of origin of corn. Partly because of this, despite the fact that the Zenú indigenous group cultivates banana, cassava, beans, yams, cocoa, and malanga, among other crops, they focused on maize as the central crop for their campaign to declare their territory free of GM crops. This resonates with the Mexican case explored by Fitting (2013; 2006) and Kinchy (2012), where maize has become the symbol of Mexican culture, and, thereby acquiring the symbolic power to intervene in seed struggles in various ways, while at the same time reifying corn culture as part of an ideal tradition that is mobilized in debates about the problematic effects of neoliberalization on the agricultural sector.

The Zenú feared genetic contamination since transgenic crops began to be incorporated in the Colombian Caribbean in the early 2000s. In discussions about how to make their territory a TFT, they put together seeds and identity in a similar way as the Mexican anti-GM activists: they claimed that maize was inherently tied to their indigenous ancestry and identity and that exposing their crops to genetic contamination from GM corn and other GM crops harvested in the area was to expose their community to cultural erasure. Thus, they sought support in the constitutional mandate that supports the rights of indigenous communities to special territorial jurisdictions and grants their social, cultural, and political autonomy within the national territory. This can be seen in the second point of the declaration:

The Zenú indigenous people declares the reservation of San Andrés de Sotavento a Territory Free of Transgenics in accordance with [...] Law 89 of 1.890, the political constitution of Colombia and Law 21 of 1991 ratifying ILO Convention 169, the territories of indigenous peoples are inalienable, and imprescriptible, and these peoples have autonomy to exercise their own government, the right to a special territorial jurisdiction, the right to social, legal, economic, spiritual and cultural control of the territory, resources and knowledge, and the right to prior consultation and to take measures and actions against projects and activities that affect their cultural integrity. (Official Zenú TFT Declaration. My translation)

As Gutiérrez and Fitting (2017) point out, the Zenu’s processes of declaring their collective territories as a TFT was important because it open the governmental process of acknowledging that not only the Zenú but also other indigenous groups in the country wanted GM crops as far from their territories as possible. This lead the Colombian Agricultural Institute (Instituto
Colombian Agropecuario, ICA) to restrict the cultivation of GM maize within indigenous reservations and set a 300-meter minimum distance from any of these territories.

Despite the political importance of the TFT declaration in Zenú territory, this and other TFT declarations present limitations. At a dinner with members of the Zenú community in the 2017 National Gathering of the RSLC, they said that although the legal transformation of their territory in a TFT was a symbolic achievement that reinvigorated the community in their struggle for land, cultural heritage, and political autonomy, it did not entirely protect their crops from GM contamination, and, furthermore, it did not prevent agribusiness and mining corporations to continue in their process of expansion towards unprotected territories (Fieldnotes, July 2017). Maria Helena, a member of the Zenú community who participated in the gathering, said in a public meeting that:

Throughout the process of TFT creation, we not only learned about transgenics and human-environmental health. What we learned, most of all, was that despite our difficulties, disagreements, and challenges as a community, we could exercise autonomy, we could create a process of self-government and end up with a determination to protect our culture, our children. We also learn to renew our connection with maize. Today, we recognize that and we feel blessed to continue the struggle. But it is not easy. Sometimes we wake up and feel discouraged to see what landowners and agribusiness companies do to the region. We know we have power, but our power as a community sometimes feels too limited in comparison to the power of money. And by money, you know that I also mean other things. (Maria Helena, 2015)

Colombian scholars of violence have pointed out that, due to the history of violence, people who live in the midst of armed conflict sometimes do not name what becomes *unmentionable* and only suggest its existence through linguistic gestures (see for instance, (Castillejo 2007). Thus, drawing from the context of the conversation, I think that Maria Helena was referring to the power of legal and illegal armed groups in the area. The combination of so many actors in the region has made the struggle of the Zenú community for their seeds and ways of life more challenging than for other communities that do not have to face direct encounters with illegal economies and their emissaries, armed forces financed by big landowners or paramilitary forces, the guerrillas, and the military.
Besides legal actions, the Zenú people have also taken another form of action. As Maria Helena told me later in the day, they have been able to conserve 25 local varieties of maize and to share their seeds with other communities in the country that had lost some of the ones they recovered.

The Embera-Chamí TFT

![Figure 18. Embera-Chamí Territory. Source: Gutiérrez, 2016](image)

Four years after the Zenú declared the reservation of San Andrés de Sotavento a TFT, the indigenous reservation of Cañamomo y Lomaprieta, located in the department of Caldas, also organized to declare their territory a TFT. The process was accompanied by Swissaid and APROINCA (Asociación de Productores Indígenas y Campesinos), a local grassroots agroecological organization lead by indigenous people and campesinos. Swissaid provided most of the funding to pay (e.g., for lawyers’ fees), and APROINCA worked together with the indigenous authorities to organize the community. They held meetings where they discussed the need for the TFT and systematized their work with criollo and native seeds. They also visited parcels of land across the territory to deepen their knowledge about how different kinds of seeds were interacting with one another.
After a lot of work, the TFT was declared through the resolution 018 of 2009. The process to get there, however, was complicated. One of the main problems that they faced came from the colonial history of the area and the territorial ordering that the Constitution of 1991 created. These two factors geographically separated campesinxs and indigenous people from one another. The Emberá-Chamí indigenous people have been granted four reservations in the municipality of Riosucio, while campesinxs inhabit the region of Supía and have neither the right to form collective territories nor to have territorial sovereignty. They usually rent land or work as agrarian wage workers.

A second problem in working together was that while, in pre-colonial times, the area where the reservations are now located had an approximate population of 45,000 members, once the colonization process began, indigenous people were exterminated or forced to move to the high parts of the mountain ranges in another move to avoid processes of mestizaje, while African and African-descendants were brought to the zones close to the water and the mines (Appelbaum 2013). Today, that ethno-racially-based territorial division is still present. Thus, while indigenous people have had land for most part of their history and therefore have been able to organize, Afro-Colombian communities still very much isolated from collective struggles in the area. Cañamomo y Lomaprieta is an indigenous reservation that has a population of 21,422 people, an extension of 12,009.32 acres, and warm weather all year round (varying from 13-25 Celsius [59-77 Fahrenheit]). The reservation has two rivers (Riosucio and Supía), 81 streams, and one lake. It embraces 32 communities that share three basic principles: Unity, Territory, and Ethics. Unity and Ethics are spiritual and political principles that guide the communities towards ideals of collective work and peaceful inhabitance of the earth (as their mother). The principle of territory is tied to the material, spiritual, and emotional dwelling of the people in the spatial locations where their lives take place every day.

Coffee, unrefined cane sugar, and livestock are also significant economic activities for the Embera-Chamí community. Many households also harvest plantains, bananas, oranges, tangerines, lemons, and medicinal plants, among others, for everyday consumption. The inhabitants of the reservation whose source of living does not come directly from agriculture
work for the local offices of the State in Riosucio or are employees in small shops and artisanal industries of the region.

Single-crop agriculture generated many environmental, cultural, and economic problems in different communities across this region, which is known in Colombia and the world as part of the “coffee region.” There were environmental-health issues generated by the use of agrochemicals, and economic difficulties that many families had to face after the coffee leaf rust, a devastating plague, attacked the crops and left them with no other source of income or sustenance (Gutiérrez et Hernández, 2019). Lucrecia, a 32-year-old woman who lives in the reservation, told me that:

> Here, since I remember, coffee has been always present, but because of pests and all the work we are doing now to recover other crops, people are also growing little things to grab from the tree and eat. And, well, not only little things... people are growing their plantains, their medicinal plants, you know. I, for example, work in Riosucio, but I have my piece of land, mi finquita. We have a lot of things growing beside coffee, and we do it naturally because we want our family to be safe. And because we work with the indigenous council and the RSLC, we work as well towards the recovering of other crops that the coffee industry took away. (Lucrecia, Interview 2017)

Lucrecia’s words show how the economic, social, and environmental crisis produced by the unreliable coffee monocropping industry and the global coffee market in the indigenous community of Cañamomo y Lomaprieta generated a process of re-organizing in which food and seed sovereignty became central elements in the process of political emancipation. Thus, they organized towards the creation of alternative economies based on inter-community trade and the adaptation and strengthening of agricultural practices that could provide more autonomous and reliable sources of income, food, medicine, and cultural meaning while keeping the community independent. To do this, they adopted an internal strategy based on community building and two external strategies that reflect distinct relationships of the community with coloniality and capitalism.

The internal strategy followed the processes of social organizing of other indigenous communities in the country, such as the Nasa in the Cauca region. They wrote a Plan de Vida [Plan of life], which tried to establish collective objectives for the indigenous people of the
reservation, such as autonomy and dignity, expressed the need to unite to defend their collective rights to their territories and forms of life, and called for civil disobedience. The writing process of the *Plan de Vida*, was an important political moment for the community that laid the groundwork for later discussions about the need to create a TFT.

In a similar fashion to the Zenú process of TFT declaration, the community in Cañamomo y Lomaprieta displayed a series of claims before the Colombian government of political and cultural sovereignty to support their TFT petition. The reclamation for food and seed sovereignty followed as a logical consequence of these first two claims. For instance, in the TFT declaration, they invoked the “Ley de Origen, Derecho Mayor y Nuestros Usos y Costumbres” [*Law of Origin, Major Right, and our Uses and Customs*]. This is considered an ancestral law by the community, which underscores that the accumulation of indigenous knowledge is based both on the community’s daily agricultural and social practices and system of beliefs. The fulfillment of this Law of Origin guarantees the balance and harmony of nature and the order of the universe (humans included) as a unity. (See Luis Evelis Andrade, 2007).

The second strategy that they used was to engage in direct dialogue with the municipal government, which was close to the indigenous authorities and open to creating a participatory process in writing the Municipal Development Plan 2012 - 2015. However, although seed custodians and other activists of the community pushed for the declaration of a TFT in the region, nothing concrete was achieved; the TFT was not approved through this medium and no economic or political action taken to support the initiative. But one thing was won: putting the TFT on the political map and opening the conversation about seeds, which was not at the center before the participatory process.

The third strategy to declare the TFT drew from the geopolitical legitimacy that the figure of the reservation had in the colonial creation of the reservation, the NC91, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is worth noting that the reservation of Cañamomo y Lomaprieta was born in 1540 when King Charles I of Spain approved its formation. This indigenous reservation, and many others across the country, were dissolved as the colonization process became more intense. Reservations also had few opportunities to be
reborn during the early days of the Republic, although some were re-established through law 89 of 1890, which “determines the way in which the savages should be governed so they can be conducted to civilized life” (Reproduced by Roldán (1990), 46-56. My translation). This law re-incorporated the special status that indigenous peoples had in colonial times (such as the right to self-management or tax exemption), and it is one of the legal resources that, in spite of itself (its racist language and assumptions), many indigenous peoples have used to claim collective rights before the law. Thus, the TFT declaration of 2009 is both the product of colonial and decolonial tactics that operate inside and outside the state’s law.

After the TFT was formed, the community felt stronger, and more material and epistemic exchanges, manipulations, and observations of seeds began to take place. In the words of Felix, a community member that has been an active participant in the RSLC since its foundation:

The declaration of our TFT in 2009 was such an important achievement for the community! [Pause] It really was [he nodded]. After that, we felt encouraged to build the communitarian seed house, had more members of the community joining our processes of creole and native seed recuperation, and felt strong enough to initiate processes of land recuperation from the hands of the terratenientes [landowners]. If only you could see, for example, how much have we learned about some of our varieties of beans and corn, and even how much have we expanded our knowledge about coffee varieties! You’ll be surprised! (Felix, Interview 2017)

Based on this and other testimonies I collected throughout my fieldwork, for many participants in the processes of formation of TFTs, what matters more than the actual protection of creole and native seeds from GM contamination is the process of organizing to issue the declarations. Through organizing, there is a recognition and re-positioning of community’s power, and a opening of new configurations and relationships of the biosocial that would not have been possible if the community had not built material, social, political, and epistemic power through the formation of the TFT.

**Seeds need a home: Opening the biosocial**

The creation of a communitarian seed house within the space of the TFT is a good example of the opening of new biosocial configurations that were not possible before the community
organized to declare the TFT. The seed house of Cañamomo y Lomaprieta is a small structure made of wood, wicker, and concrete. It is a space open to the community.

![Cañamomo y Lomaprieta seed house](image)

Figure 19. Cañamomo y Lomaprieta seed house. Picture: My own

Seed savers are people of all ages who volunteer to take care of a particular kind of seeds. They grow the seed or seeds in the communal land of the reservation and redistribute them among other seed savers. In this way, they keep the seeds in constant rotation. The seed house requires seeds adapted to local conditions and cultivated and reproduced without the use of agrochemicals, although it also uses conventional standards that measure, for example, germination or seed moisture percentages (Gutiérrez and Hernández 2019). In addition, different conservation techniques are used simultaneously. For example, Rosa, a key member of the RSLC in the reservation, told me that "the purchase of refrigerators for storage is under consideration, but peppers and other traditional plants are used to prevent infestation by weevils and other insects" (Rosa, informal conversation 2015). Rosa also explained that before the seed house was built, it was difficult to access to the different seed varieties that seed savers have been recuperating. And so, having a place where everyone could come together and actually see different seeds and talk about new sowing and conservation techniques was a unique experience.
For people in the reservation, it was important to create a seed house instead of a seed bank. The latter started to be created in the second half of the twentieth century around the world. Currently, there are at least four prominent seed banks operating in various countries with strong imperial histories: the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway, the Vavilov Institute of Plant Industry in Russia, The National Center for Genetic Resources Preservation in United States, and the Millennium Seed Bank in England. Most germplasm banks are built using militaristic infrastructure and design because they aim to survive “natural” and human-created catastrophes, such as earthquakes and nuclear wars. For instance, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway was built on the island of Spitsbergen in the arctic. The metallic structure looks like a futurist fortress, and it actually is. The facility has underground access through tunnels and caverns, as well ground-level access through the main doors. It was constructed with materials such as asphalt, concrete, steel, rock, and thick glass. Its purpose is to save seeds in anticipation of warfare and planetary environmental destruction, basing its affective logic in the production of fear and anxieties of massive death that require the intervention of capitalist techno-management for survival.

Building a seed house was a way of making a community statement about how they understood seeds. Whereas the seed bank is seen as part of the world that turns the seed into a commodity, storing it in a structure called “bank,” a site of capitalism par excellence, the seed house is a space of community reunion where seeds and members of the community take care of each other, a space where children, young adults, adults, and elders gather to exchange seeds and stories.
In some of the meetings that have taken place in the seed house, the community discussed the need to have a collective way to know whether or not a seed is in good health. The conversations lead to an initiative in which RSLC members working in the seed house created a Seed Participatory Guarantee System (PGS). These systems have been implemented in other places in Latin America, such as Bolivia and Brazil, and similar participatory-based seed systems have also been put in place in Africa and Asia (Paudel et al. 2013). The system proposed in the seed house was, at first, focused mainly on the knowledges and experimentation of community members, particularly in the development of heterogeneous seed varieties on their land plots. But as the idea spread across the RSLC, other local and regional seed networks in the RSLC became curious about it and organized meetings among seed custodians who could learn and contribute to the creation and stabilization of the system.

The RSLC also looked for sources of funding to print materials and upload them on the network’s website. Again, the NGOs Swissaid and Grupo Semillas provided the funds to write and publish a Methodological Guide for creating a PGS. The guide was written by two of the most visible RSLC male leaders and one Colombian female researcher who wrote her MA thesis on PGSs assessment in Colombia through a joint program of University of Hohenheim, Germany, and University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU), Austria. The document itself was
put together in a series of workshops where seed savers of many local seed networks in the
country and members of the seed house of Cañamomo y Lomaprieta participated.

The methodological guide breaks the creation of a PGS down into three steps:

1. Design
2. Experimentation
3. Consolidation

The guide emphasizes that every person involved in the system has to know how and what to do
in the role chosen, and that knowledge has to come from experience. The aspects of seed health
have to be participatorily selected as being of central importance for the community and need to
be translated into further experimentation and notation of what happens in each land plot with
the seeds selected. The person has to be able to identify possible strengths and weaknesses in
the process and to propose solutions based on agroecological and local knowledge. When I
talked to Patricia, a seed saver in the Valle department in a gathering of seed custodians in
Cogua, Cundinamarca, in 2017, she told me that:

It has been a long journey, and we still have lots of things to do. It is not easy to create
PGS. but it is worth it. The TFT declaration was, I believe, the first step towards this big
project. Then, obviously the meetings among seed savers have been the way to articulate
different ideas. In the meetings, we have realized how much we know and we can
exchange, while also recognizing our limits.\(^{16}\) I think that is important because it has
allowed us to look for more hands in the process, so we have invited agroecologists and
agricultural promoters\(^ {17}\) that can guide us in aspects we do not manage. (Patricia,
Interview 2017)

Patricia’s understanding of how the PGS has come to life underscores two critical elements: first,
the importance of the processes of TFT declarations as vital moments of community-building,
epistemic and political construction of trust, and power mobilization. Second, the collaborative

\(^{16}\) In the same conversation, Patricia explained that some of their limitations had to do, for instance, with
agroecological pest and fungus management. Some members of her community had learned a few things about it,
but they felt they needed a more concrete orientation [\[information?\]] about it from other RSLC members.

\(^{17}\) Rural promoters are people from the community who have participated in courses offered by programs of
extension in universities or other centers of public education. Once they have finished their process of formation,
they come back to the community and help lead small-scale processes of rural or agrarian transformation.
nature of the process of PGS making, which is derived not only from the fact that the process has
been thought and carried out in participatory terms, but also from the openness of the
community to learn from other epistemic cultures (Knorr-Cetina 1999).

Even though I have found collaboration to be an important factor in this process, power
imbalance and structural inequalities are present in these efforts, as Moore and Frickel (2006)
have pointed out. The presence of people from outside the community is at times made explicit
and visible by members themselves, who make a conscious effort to dismantle it, and at other
times is ignored or reproduced. At some of the events, seed savers who were not trained or used
to public speaking were not heard or left out of the conversation. Yet, in other meetings,
prominent RSLC leaders such as Alba Portillo fought back against this silencing and opened up
spaces for these members to be heard. The conflict sometimes arose from an anti-intellectualist
faction of the RSLC, who saw academics as opportunists ready to make profit from their work.
These perceptions are rooted in people’s own experiences with and local histories of
developmentalism, which has often been designed and enforced in and by universities. This
faction clashed with another that wanted more academics and official scientists to be involved
with the RSLC and the process of territoriality making, seed saving, and the construction of a
solid epistemic structures. This conflict has been never totally resolved, and has become an
important part of the RSLC dynamic, since it reminds members of the vulnerability of implicit and
explicit epistemic social arrangements.

The PGS is already working in the reservation of Cañamomo y Lomaprieta, the Network
of Seeds of Life in Nariño (where San Lorenzo is located), the Valle department, and the Zenú
TFT. Other local networks across the country are also working on the creation of the system. The
idea of the RSLC, as a national network, is to come up with a national SPG that can drive and be
driven by local SPG while serving as a consolidated epistemic structure with enough authority to
challenge agricultural government agencies and official seed certification systems.
So far, I have shown the core legal and political elements drawn upon and developed by the RSLC
in order to present the TFT declarations, focusing on two emblematic cases of indigenous TFT
declarations. I turn now to the analysis of the TFT declaration in the campesinx community of
San Lorenzo, located in the department of Nariño, to show how ethnoracialization shapes territorial formation via seeds.

Figure 21. Location of the department of Nariño in Colombia. Source: UNODOC 2013

*Campesinx TFT*

The campesinx communities of La Unión and San Lorenzo, both part of the department of Nariño, are the only two campesinx communities in Colombia that have declared their territory a TFT.

*Campesinx* is a term used in Colombia and other Latin American countries for a rural inhabitant who works the land and is not a landowner. It has been, for the most part, a class-based term with the additional ethno-racial implication of not being indigenous or black, which
in Latin America means to be white or mestizo. However, campesinxs have never been seen as white, regardless of the color of their skin. The reason is that to be white in Colombia means two things: first, having European or North American ancestry, and second, being middle to upper class, living in urban areas marked by the hallmarks of progress (Viveros, 2009). This leads campesinxs to be considered mestizos.

Yet, the classification of campesinxs as mestizo has more layers than the connotation that mestizaje had in post-colonial times in Colombia, when, as Wade (1993) and others have shown, it was a way of filtering the desire for whiteness into the ideal citizen of the new republic. The post-NC91 treatment of ethnoracial categories reinforced the colonial racial divide but tried to repair some of the historical inequalities that it generated by granting special rights to indigenous and black communities. But in this move, it forgot about poor, rural mestizos/campesinxs, who had also historical reclamations for the state. This, together with the 50 year-long armed conflict that disproportionally affected rural inhabitants, became a lethal combination for campesinxs. Throughout the twentieth century, they were a disenfranchised group with no land, no collective rights, and no legal paths to make political claims that allowed them to improve their situation (Fajardo 2014; Fals Borda 1975), while also being subjected to epistemic and cultural oppression, justified by the stigma of being “uneducated” and “backward.”

However, despite the many challenges they faced, campesinx processes of organizing and resistance have been continuous during the last century and into the twenty-first. The TFT in San Lorenzo is an example of the success of campesinx organizing, and, also, of its limits in a wider context of ongoing social, epistemic, and political turmoil.

**The San Lorenzo TFT**

As I mentioned at the very beginning of this chapter, the municipality of San Lorenzo began to work with the RSLC and other grassroots organizations in the creation of a TFT in 2012. To achieve their objective, they walked two paths: community-building through public engagement with the municipal authorities and knowledge-making and sharing. This is distinct from what indigenous communities, who rely heavily on claiming territorial sovereignty using colonial and contemporary legal regimes and making identity claims that relate corn to a traditional
indigenous self that is threatened explicitly by GM crops and implicitly by neoliberal capitalism and internal colonialism.

The first strategy drew on a political opportunity (McAdam and Tarrow 2001) presented to the community during the election of a mayor committed with environmental and food justice. This political opportunity was also expanded by the context of the peace agreement with the FARC-EP. During this time, the politics of the department of Nariño were constantly discussed because of the critical role that it has played in the armed conflict in Colombia. The department is geopolitically central for the coca economy and has been the niche for left and right-wing armed groups, as well as a space where glyphosate air fumigations have been implemented since 2001, when the Colombian government began to receive funds from Plan Colombia.

The second strategy was based on the creation of communal spaces where epistemic, historical, and material exchanges about creole, native and GM seeds were introduced, and the mobilization of larger structures of support that facilitated three moments of testing of GM contamination. Like all moments of GM testing in the RSLC, this process was participatory and included many spaces for co-learning and community engagement. In this section, I talk about these two strategies and show how they connect with and differ from the cases of the indigenous reservations.

**Seeds between war and peace**

In the year 1999, presidents Andrés Pastrana of Colombia and Bill Clinton of the US discussed Plan Colombia. It was later presented in the United States Senate for approval as part of another chapter of the war on drugs institutionalized during the presidency of Nixon, militarized by Reagan and Bush, and relaunched by President Clinton as a strategy for US hemispheric control. In the same year, the Plan was approved and funds began to be immediately transferred to the Colombian government. In 2000, Colombia received $1.300 million US dollars. In the following years, the US government invested another US $700 million per year in the anti-drug and anti-subversive struggle, reaching in its first decade a total investment of about 7 billion dollars (Shifter, 2010). Plan Colombia continued to be implemented until the peace agreement with the
FARC-EP was signed in 2016, when it changed its name to *Peace Colombia* and restricted some of its scope ([elheraldo.co](http://elheraldo.co). Retrieved 8 April 2018).

The final version of *Plan Colombia* was very different from the first one: the latter, proposed by Colombian president Pastrana, was thought of as a humanitarian aid plan from the US government to Colombia to end the half-century-long armed conflict. After many revisions, the first *Plan Columbia* was a military and financial intervention plan for US military involvement on Colombian soil. The plan had the objective of attacking two flanks: the drug trafficking industry and the guerrilla war.

The money deposited in the Colombian Government’s coffers by the *Plan* strengthened the military forces and the police. This forced the FARC-EP and the ELN to flee the cities and municipal capitals and to withdraw into more isolated territories, transforming the war dynamic by changing its epicenter and forcing the actors to modify their techniques and tactics of control of the territory and the civilian population (Arjona, 2012).

Some of the military aid provided in the Plan, such as phantom planes, was controversial because there were indications that these were used for illegal activities, and, even worse, for military operations entailing massive violations of human rights and International Humanitarian Law. Such is the case of the “false positives” and massacres, such as that which took place in El Salado. In 2016, The legal findings of state participation in these events (by commission and omission) generated such an outcry within the civilian population, the media, and human rights organizations, that the Colombian president at the time, Juan Manuel Santos, was forced to make a public apology on behalf of the State for what occurred in Montes de María in February 2000 ([Revista Semana](http://www.revistaseman.com/), 2016). Most of the pressure placed on the government came from

---

18 Towards the end of 2008 a national and international scandal broke out after the assassination of civilians (19 youths illegally detained in the municipality of Soacha, in Bogotá) by the National Army. Members of the Army, after the executions, falsely identified said civilians as members of guerrilla groups in order to receive individual benefits and show the results obtained in the struggle against terrorism. Studies show that it was because of the Democratic Security Policy of the Álvaro Uribe Vélez administration (financed in part by Plan Colombia) that the then Defense Minister Camilo Ospina Bernal signed the Ministerial Directive 02 of 2005, whose objective was to offer 3,800,000 pesos (approximately US$1,900) for each body of a member of an illegal group killed in “combat”. This policy encouraged the killing of civilians by the public forces and the paramilitary, who in some cases worked together. Up to now, besides the case of Soacha, other such instances have been documented in Antioquia, Boyacá, Huila, Valle and Sucre. For more on this problem, see El Espectador newspaper and Semana magazine: [http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/articulo-389506-falsos-positivos-si-han-sido-politica-de-estado](http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/articulo-389506-falsos-positivos-si-han-sido-politica-de-estado) and [http://www.semana.com/opinion/falsos-positivos-practica-vieja-ejercito/119383-3.aspx](http://www.semana.com/opinion/falsos-positivos-practica-vieja-ejercito/119383-3.aspx)
testimonies of survivors of the massacre and some paramilitaries that took part in the events, who stated that the national army’s phantom plane (part of Plan Colombia’s endowment) flew over the village on February 17th, 2000, the day when some of the atrocious crimes were committed. This version was validated by paramilitaries captured after the massacre (Memoria Histórica, Informe el Salado, 33). The Center for Popular Research and Education in Colombia (Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular, CINEP) presents the situation in the following way:

Despite the continuity of the army’s military pressure against the FARC and the withdrawal of these guerrilla forces to peripheral rearguard zones where they have the capacity for action and ties with drug-trafficking, the FARC’s military actions in 2011 increased by 8% in relation to the previous year. The departments in which most of the actions were carried out were Cauca, Norte de Santander, Antioquia, Arauca, and Nariño. To believe that the military blows inflicted by the Public Forces have substantially affected the guerrillas’ structure to the point of leading to their military defeat is to ignore the fact that for years their structure has responded to a series of separate and complex nodes not entirely dependent on the Joint Central Command. (CINEP 2012. My translation)

In the case of the FARC-EP, the reconfiguration of their operational map concealed their actions in local territories, abandoned the sphere of public control, and returned to classical guerrilla warfare strategies (Arjona, 2010). This implies that direct encounters with the police and the military forces were avoided, and harassment and sabotage, the use of anti-personnel mines, and hit and run become commonplace in the commandos’ military tactics.

Besides the presence of US military personnel, the construction of US-military bases in Colombian territory, and the reconfiguration of the dynamics of guerilla warfare, Plan Colombia also brought with it another kind of war: What Lyons (2017) calls “chemical warfare,” or the use of glyphosate fumigations to eradicate coca crops. This type of warfare has been carried out through the Program for the Eradication of Illicit Crops by Aerial Aspersion with the Herbicide Glyphosate (PECIG). Statistics released by the Colombian Police in 2015 revealed that the mixture of glyphosate utilized the PECIG was 110 percent more concentrated than Monsanto’s Roundup Ultra was at the time. Additionally, the PECIG also included areal fumigations with a heavy mixture of glyphosate, polyethoxylated tallow amine (POEA) and Cosmo Flux 411F. Some
studies have shown that high concentrations of POEA and continuous exposure irritate the skin, are corrosive to eyes, and produced gastrointestinal problems (Martens et al., 2019). However, these studies have never been conducted long-term and with the levels of exposure that humans and non-humans have had in Colombia.

From 1994 to 2015, more than 1.8 million hectares of coca were aerially fumigated in Colombia (Lyons 2017). Importantly, because of the nature of fumigations (done from an airplane, with not much control on collateral damage and with fears of on-the-ground attacks of the guerilla groups), not only coca crops were affected by the chemical aspersion. Most other crops that were nearby or co-habited with coca crops appear in reports as impacted (GRAIN, 2003), as well as communities that have reported all kinds of human health problems connected to the fumigations.

As the CINEP report (2012) mentions, Nariño has been one of the epicenters of the armed conflict in Colombia and one of the departments where the PECIG has been more intensively applied. As I traveled through the department’s territory in Ricardo’s old red car on our way to a seed workshop with a community located few hours away from Pasto, the capital city of the department, I could see both the effects of glyphosate areal fumigations in humans and non-humans and the social consequences of the armed conflict. Looking out of the car window, on the side of the road I could see patches of land eroded, burned, quasi- deserted. I asked if campesinos made quemas (traditional land burnings to “clean” the soil) there, and Carola, another RSLC member riding with us said that “those are Monsanto.” She did not say anything else, and Ricardo was silent. A cold breeze blew through the car, and we continued the ride in silence. I saw abandoned small houses made of bahareque that had red graffiti on the main walls and the doors that read “FARC-EP.” The graffiti made me uneasy. When I was planning my fieldwork, I had made sure to go to areas not embroiled in armed-conflict, especially because I was three months pregnant and I did not want to endanger my baby. So, it was surprising and frightening to see this graffiti. But when I asked Ricardo about it, he told me that the graffiti was:

FARC made them a few years ago when many families from the community in this area left. There was a territorial conflict between them and the others, and people were
afraid. They were also getting the poisoned air from the fumigations, so why stay? They came [referring to the FARC] to do the graffiti to show that they won the territory. And indeed, they did, at least for a while. (Ricardo, fieldnotes, 2017)

The fumigations never ceased to be controversial, not only among the population of the departments most affected, but also at the national and international level. A partial end to the fumigations was established during the peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP. The fourth point sealed a commitment to eradicate coca crops through manual mechanisms instead of aerial fumigation (PA, 2016). Additionally, along with the peace agreement other political agreements were consolidated. They included the transfer of resources to the departments so they could implement special programs for coca-crops substitution, as well as strengthen local agrarian economies, many of which had remained forgotten by the state for decades.

With all of these changes in the local, regional, and national political scenario, a political opportunity was opened both for politicians who had a more defined environmental and agrarian agenda and were close to their communities, and for the RSLC as a social movement that seeks environmental and food justice, among other things. However, this situation was not homogenous in the national territory because the local dynamics of internal conflict and the regional cultures that had been created. But in Nariño, it worked just like that.

The governor of the department, Camilo Romero, had been a member of the Polo Democrático Alternativo, the biggest leftist party in Colombia, and had been part of the student movement in Cali, Valle. From his candidacy to the governor of Nariño he came in with a strong agenda for protecting marginalized communities and the environment. The RSLC, through the Network of Seeds of Life (RSV), led by Alba Portillo, understood that during his term they could achieve some strategic objectives they had been working towards since 2012. The TFT in San Lorenzo was one of them.

**Seeding the TFT**

After six years of continuous work in the recuperation of local varieties of corn seeds, in 2017, RSLC members had managed to partner with the RSV, Pastoral de la Tierra (Pastoral of the Earth), La Red de Familias Lorenceñas (the network of families of San Lorenzo) and the San
Lorenzo City Hall to organize twenty-two pedagogical assemblies in which the TFT project was to be discussed as a central strategy to avoid GM contamination. The coalition summoned fifty-five villages to the meetings. During the meetings, RSLC members explained how many corn seed varieties had been recovered in the last years, how the community could access them through the RSLC or the RSV, and why GM contamination was an issue that could be tackled through the TFTs.

The community meetings were key sites for the project because they were public spaces of participation that allowed people to talk about their fears and anxieties about the present and the future of agriculture, as well as their own personal and family life, which is tied to agricultural activity in many different ways. These meetings also served to identify common problems in the different villages, and, unintentionally, to start creating new networks of informal seed exchange in which alternative economies found inroads. Additionally, “walking groups” were created in the meetings, as Soraya said they were called. “Walking groups” were groups that were going to walk through the territory to find as many corn seed varieties as possible as well as samples for the GM testing. Children, elderly men and women, and middle-aged members of the RSLC all took part. During the walks, the different kinds of knowledges of community members came to life as conversations flourished spontaneously, one step after the other. Food and water were shared among the walkers, which also created a sense of community that lasted throughout the process.

Besides creating a public debate about GMOs and local seeds, the meetings were also used to collect signatures to present the petition for a TFT in San Lorenzo to the municipal government. At first, the intention was to collect eight hundred signatures, but RSLC activists and members of the coalition actually gathered five hundred more than that, for a total of one thousand and three hundred signatures. Finally, the project ran through the municipal council, which approved it in agreement No.5 of February 28th, 2018.

The process of TFT declaration, is, however, more complex than this, so I am going to return to 2014, when the RSLC undertook the task of recovering and producing seeds of creole corn varieties, augmenting their quality and quantity. Seed savers in the region were responsible for carrying it out. Two years later, in 2016 a campaign to bring creole and native corn seeds to
the community was developed. The funds came from The Center for Popular Research and Education in Colombia (CINEP), Swissaid, Grupo Semillas, seed sponsors in Europe and Longomai. CINEP and Grupo Semillas offered legal and academic support, particularly in relation to the analysis of the municipal plan and the constitutional instances that allowed for a TFT declaration in the area.

The process was thought of in such a way that a campesinx could borrow seeds from the RSLC and then, six months later, return them, whether as seeds or as harvest. This campaign was created in order to recover the culture of sowing corn for self-consumption, and in the understanding that, if communities have the necessary corn for human and animal consumption, they will not need to introduce seeds and/or food from somewhere else.

![Figure 22. Borrowing seeds. Source: Videoclip entitled “Los Colores del Maiz”, 2019](image)

On days that the seeds were lent to the community, a stand with T-shirts was set on the side of the other stands where the borrowing was taking place. The T-shirts were distributed for free to those who borrowed seeds. They were white, with a red logo placed at the center. The logo included elements of indigenous cosmologies and aesthetics, as well as corn plants. It was
printed with the words “My home is a territory free of transgenics” (Mi hogar es un territorio libre de transgénicos).

Figure 23. T- Shirts of the campaign to recover corn seeds.
Source: Videoclip entitled “Los Colores del Maíz”, 2019

Although I could not be present when the borrowing process was taking place, I interviewed a few of the participants afterwards during subsequent visits to Colombia and on the phone. Alba Portillo, for instance, said that the T-shirts were a key moment of the borrowing process because “it made the ones participating feel united, offered a concrete message, and created commitment to the process[...] And, to be honest, some people were so attracted by the t-shirts that they came to the stand and ended up learning about what we do, so I guess it was also recruiting strategy” (Alba Portillo, phone interview 2019).

At the same time that the borrowing campaign was taken place, the RSV, as a node of the RSLC, made three processes of GM testing for creole corn varieties. The community suspected that many hybrids were already contaminated by GM crops because the centers for adaptation of hybrids are too close to transgenic corn crops without any kind of barrier. The objective of the testing was to rule out possible transgenic contamination, particularly because in the
department of Nariño, GM corn is planted but not officially reported (Grupo Semillas, 2018). For the test, STX 74500 reference immuno-strip detection kits were used. The kits were chosen by RSLC members who work in Bogotá with the National Indigenous Organization (Organización Nacional Indígena) and who have been trained by public universities in agronomy and agro-biotechnology at the master’s level. They knew the testing kits used by ICA and other governmental organizations, so they proposed that the RSLC used the same to assure epistemic equivalence and reliability. The kits determine BT events: Cry1Ab / 1Ac and glyphosate tolerance, and CP4-EPSPS, which are the most widespread transgenics in other regions of the country such as Tolima, Huila, and the Caribbean.

The GM testing created important moments for the community of San Lorenzo, because the results shaped the kind of arguments made before the municipal council and the open moments of collective learning generated more cohesion among the participants. The three moments of testing were constructed through participatory calls. The RSLC made a public call to its members in the area via WhatsApp and word of mouth. Those interested showed up in the place chosen to perform the testing. Before the process began, several things were explained.

First, a brief context of the problem of corn dependency from exports and GM contamination was given by activists, who explained how, for instance, “twenty years ago Colombia was self-sufficient in corn production, having circa 1 million hectares of land harvested with native and creole maize seeds, whereas today, the country only has 200 thousand hectares planted with corn” (Diego Chiguanchi, Fieldnotes 2019).

Then, the participants were given white robes and blue gloves and asked to tie their hair back. The procedure and the different stages of testing were explained on the board, and participants took careful notes. The test was made with a sample of thousand seeds coming from different cobs so that the genetic basis for the test was broad. Those thousand seeds were ground until each particle was smaller than 1 millimeter. The next step was to use the Strip 83500 Vip 3a. to test insecticide protein. The group waited 5 minutes for each test to be ready. In total, 27 tests were performed. The color showed the results: all negative. This relieved the community and laid the groundwork for the kinds of arguments that were going to be presented to the municipality.
As I have shown, for the process of TFT declaration of San Lorenzo, public debates about GMOs
and the centrality of seed saving for communities’ organic lives through pedagogical meetings
and GM testing were cornerstones in the process. For the TFT declaration to come to
life, several grassroots organizations, campesinxs, NGOs, academics, and public officials
participated and created a network of actors strong enough to set the terms of the debate in the
municipal council about the political, cultural, and epistemic relevance of the formation of a TFT.

These moments of long-term community action centered on seeds were possible not
only for the hard work of RSLC members and activists but also for the structure of political
opportunity created by the peace process with the FARC-EP, particularly the agreement to stop
chemical warfare through aerial fumigations of glyphosate. The case of San Lorenzo shows the
complexity of declaring a TFT territory in the political, cultural, and material context of Colombia,
and also speaks to the resourcefulness that campesinxs communities need to have in order to
find legal paths to create territorial, epistemic, food, and seed sovereignty. The question that
now remains is why are there not Afro-Colombian TFTs?

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I showed the distinct formation of TFTs in Colombia in relation to the creation of
GM Free-Zones in other parts of the world. I explained that such distinctiveness relies on the
way in which TFTs in both campesinx and indigenous territories reflect the interconnection of
ethnoracial and territorial law with the politics of seeds under neoliberal multiculturalism, which
I have shown in previous chapters as a pertinent cultural and political form of neoliberal
globalization. I have shed light on how communities use rights anchored in the NC91 to make
legal claims that emerge from participatory socio-epistemic processes.

I also pointed out to how these legal claims are also connected with processes of both
territorialization and deterritorialization. Thus, in the first part of the chapter, I showed that
the project of GM expansion in Colombia has been carried out through the territorialization of
GM seeds, which has implied the concentration of agricultural production in two products
(cotton, corn) and the deepening of the monocropping farming style (inherited from the
colonial plantation). However, in my analysis I illuminated that a crucial form of resistance
articulated by the RSLC has been to reverse that process of territorialization of GM seeds with
the counter-territorialization of criollo and native seeds. I conceptualized this as the de-territorialization of GM crops through the formation of TFTs.

My close examination of TFTs formations revealed that although indigenous and campesinxs communities share some common ground in their experiences and opportunities to create them, they also deployed different strategies and faced different challenges. For instance, TFTs formation for both communities is fueled by an understanding of the conflict between creole and native seeds and GM seeds as the territorial manifestation of the coloniality of power (Quijano 2007) that establishes an epistemic and political dichotomous order opposing “the modern” to “the primitive.” Likewise, the analysis disclosed that this ordering is intertwined with the continuous generation and reproduction of ethnoracialized forms of colonial-capitalist oppression outlived by these communities who continue to struggle for their very right to exist, and for their cultural, social, political, and economic sovereignty.

While participating in the creation of TFTs and protecting creole and native seeds has become a process of embodiment of the indigenous collective self for indigenous communities, particularly in cases such as the Zenú and the Embera Chami, for campesinxs the situation is radically different, given the historical structures of social and epistemic inequality they continue to face.

The two cases of indigenous TFT declarations I explored in this chapter show too that while communities rely, to some extent, on the political sovereignty of the nation state, when it does not want or cannot guarantee (as in many cases) what they consider their legitimate rights, they deploy the power of their communities to make those rights effective. The processes of land and seeds recuperation and the re-making of the indigenous territories through the figure of the TFTs are not only an act of reclamation of political and cultural sovereignty but also a declaration against domination from external agents, such as the coffee industry and other agribusiness.

I also discussed the figure of the reservation, which I interpret as a restrictive form of territorialization that goes hand in hand with parallel processes of land dispossession carried out by Spanish colonizers and, later on, by landowners and local, regional, and national elites, agribusiness, military forces, and drug traffickers. I also emphasized that that reservations were
used in colonial times to limit the process of *mestizaje* and to keep segregated other racial
groups, such as Africans and afro-descendants (Friede 1969: 54). This particular fact has had
long-lasting consequences for Afro-Colombian communities, who before the NC91 had no legal
and political resources to claim communal territories. Afro-Colombians have also migrated to
urban centers and have had to adapt to a hyper-individualized city culture were institutionalized
racism makes their lives highly challenging (Delgado 2006). Critically, the most of those who have
remained in rural areas have been violently expelled from their territories (Vergara-Figueroa,
2018). For the case of the RSLC, one of the underlying problems of the non-existence of Afro-
Colombian TFTs is precisely this: their uprooting, which is continuation of enslavement, one of
the main historical mechanisms of capital accumulation through land dispossession (Arboleda
2004).

Throughout the chapter, but particularly in the second section, I emphasized that the
dynamic of structural violence in Colombia, which goes well beyond the armed conflict between
the state and the guerrillas and involves the Colombian and the US military, and the almost
omnipresent power of the criminal and drug-trafficking rings organized as paramilitary forces, is
always entangled with territorial processes of control that affect communities in multiple ways.
This pervasive entanglement increases their exposure to physical, phycological, and social
annihilation, and limits the power of TFTs and other forms of grassroots movements.

Thus, although I argued that TFTs have an immense epistemic generative character,
opening new spaces for the configuration of biosocial relationships and worlds, strengthening
communities, and giving the RSLC a formal territorial structure for operation, I also explained that
they have several limitations due to the territorial assemblage of Colombian geopolitics and the
colonial histories of continuous domination that underlie each process of territorialization, de-
territorialization, and re-territorialization that I have described. I would like to close this chapter
by pointing out that these limitations are serious and demand immediate attention. However, I
would like to underscore that they have not been able to erase the generative worlds that keep
seeds and communities alive, vibrant, and dignified. For every seed destroyed, for every
community member killed, a hundred seeds will be planted, and the memories and actions of
resistance will multiply by thousands.
CONCLUSION

THE AESTHETICS OF UNDERGROUND REVOLUTIONS AND SEED UTOPIAS

Figure 24. Regional seed network Antioquia. Picture by Juliana Cuéllar
Aesthetics

Usually, the word aesthetics refers, for many people, to someone looking at a work of art in a museum. This makes it a rather passive act of contemplation while placing that which is observed as a mere representation. The word aesthetics is also commonly associated with beauty. In Colombia, for example, places called "Estéticas," where women can go to "beautify" themselves [in traditional patriarchal and colonial ways], are critical for gender construction.

But I think of the aesthetics in a different way. When I talk about aesthetics in the context of this dissertation, I am not talking about the work of art; nor am I talking about beauty. Rather, I am talking about the seed, understood as a cultural subject, as it was initially conceptualized by Bourdieu (1979). For him, culture has a dual way of being: it is the product of structures of domination given in society, but it is also what helps to reproduce and transform those structures. Therefore, culture is always political, and it is expressed and constructed in the social world in different forms, through symbolic, affective, material, and/or epistemic power.

The aesthetics of the work of the RSLC is an embodied social process that cannot be reduced to a person's individual sensible experiences in the world; on the contrary, it is a pre-individual space for the construction of affectivities mediated by political economies and unique regimes of representation. Thus, Richard and Rudnyckyj (2009) point out that the generation of affect is essential to facilitate or complicate economic, political, cultural, and epistemic transformations. In the particular case of neoliberalism, Moore (2011; 2013) underscores the modes of affectivity based on the entrepreneurial spirit and trust in the market as central elements needed for the maintenance and deepening of the model. In my analysis of the formation of the CSR in Colombia, this was reflected in my explanation of how post-war agrarian biocapitalism constructed indigenous peoples as entrepreneurs and rural women as resource managers.

Yet, in the same way that affectivity has played a big role channeling neoliberalism, it has also been crucial in social movement formation. Such affectivity is based on the cultivation of solidarity, cooperativism, and mutual trust, which are pivotal in the RSLC. Through these affects,
the organization has been able to crack the implementation of the CSR in Colombia while strengthening the construction of alterlives.

A central axis of analysis in my dissertation was ethnorace, which also has an aesthetic component. Ethnoracial formation is, in a way, a process of inserting non-dominant groups in structures of settler time, where they are always urged to "catch up" with the temporal rhythm of the oppressor. This temporal movement is interlocked with regimes of affect where the subaltern (as a group and not as an individual) not only is under/behind the colonizer but is also affectively emplaced as such. Thus, the expansion of the CSR is only possible due to particular temporal and affective propositions about what seeds and rural people are that pre-determine the way in which seeds are governed, and property regimes are established and contested. At the same time, is because there is an affectivity and a temporality of resistance in the RSLC that they can re-position seeds, territories, knowledges, bodies, and communities as being already ahead of the CSR.

The inquiry about the aesthetic dimensions of the work of the RSLC is important. My objective in this section is to delineate a path for future research that connects the studies of regime formation and contestation with the aesthetic aspects of the work that social movements do. In the next section, I show what have been my contributions throughout the dissertation. Then, I reflect on how the aesthetics of what I call “underground revolutions” are central to the creation of seed utopias, which I see as one of the strongest political forces deploying the generative power necessary to re-move, re-make, and re-build the politics of the food system, and fundamentally of colonial/capitalism as we know it.

**My journey**
Throughout the chapters, I have shown that, as every revolution, understood precisely as the act and the praxis of re-doing while removing, the one carried out with the hands of the seed savers and seed activists at the RSLC, is partial and complex, and traversed by the socio-historical intersection of ethnorace, gender, class, and territory formations. And, I have emphasized how these are not only driven by the state but also by the system of global governance, the market, and critically, by social movements.
To understand the RSLC’s underground revolution, I needed first to examine the formation of the CSR in Colombia. Hence, my work provides evidence and theoretical analysis to do so, while also presenting elements to comprehend, too, its evolution in Latin America. In relation to this, I developed the idea that the CSR formation in Colombia is at the same time similar to the formation of the regime elsewhere, in terms of the utilization of similar tactics and techniques of control and expansion, and particularly distinctive, not only for the historical specificities of Colombia, but also for the type of underground, on the ground, and everyday work that the RSLC does, at different scales and by different actors.

The theoretical and analytical lenses of the dissertation were drawn from feminist science studies (FSS) and the new political sociology of science (NPSS). Thus, while most studies on the CSR use a macropolitical perspective that emphasizes the relationship between states and capital. I have expanded this perspective by paying attention to the dynamics of regime formation through time and space, looking at how gender, race, and class operate throughout history and different topographies of power. The use of FSS and NPSS has allowed me to contribute to the literature on regime formation by showing the concrete ways in which the RSLC and the CSR are connected and disconnected.

I find four of my contributions particularly salient. First, as I discussed in the introduction and other parts of the dissertation, most studies on the CSR and the subsequent seed struggles that it has generated do not study in-depth the ways in which ethnorace and territory interact with the process of regime formation; many of them characterize grassroots movements in Latin America as “peasant” or “campesinix,” without actually dissecting the different kinds of groups and identities that form the base of such movements. The extensive use of FSS and NPSS allowed me to explore, on the one hand, the historical formation of those identities, and on the other, the structural positions and the instances and ways in which both elements facilitated and limited the establishment of the CSR.

Second, I provide a critical analysis of the role that the geopolitical relationship between the US and Colombia has played in the formation of the CSR. The studies on the CSR in other Latin American countries such as Argentina and Brazil (Lapegna 2016; Motta 2016;
Oliveira and Hecht 2018; Villulla 2014) have shown a marginal effect of US pressure on the process of establishment of the regime. This is due to, for example, the left-wing governments that were on power during the regime formation, as well as the clandestine ways in which GE crops were introduced in some territories. In contrast, my case presents a different story: one in which US imperialist domination, combined with national and international elite’ class-driven ambitions, and Colombian governments’ servile attitude, have tried to imposed the regime through various tactics and techniques, and has never completely succeed. The story of the CSR formation in Colombia, and thus, in the region, would then be significantly different if the geopolitical history and position of Colombia as a US strategic ally had not been accompanying the drafting and implementation of agrarian and territorial law.

Third, my dissertation offered important insights about the ways in which colonial/capitalist/patriarchy is infused in the very way in which the CSR works, pointing out to particular instances in which it puts rural women in further situations of subordination. What is equally important, I argued in various parts of my work that seed, agrarian, territorial, and ethnoracial law were not built on intersectional principles and with intersectional methodologies, falling into what feminist of color in the US and abroad such as Crenshaw (1989), Collins (2019), Davis (1971), and García (1997), and decolonial feminists such as Lugones (2007) and Curiel (2017) have denounced for a long time: that liberal gender-oriented approaches disentangle gender from race and class, and reduce the category of gender to women.

In contrast, my analysis of patriarchy as a foundation of colonial/capitalism is centered on revealing the systems of gender relations that are rooted and deployed by the CSR, and contested and reproduce by the RSLC. Centering the analysis on relations demonstrated that patriarchy operates at different levels and with different strategies depending on the space where it acts.

At the level of public policy, it reinvents itself through neoliberal discourses of entrepreneurship and management; at the cultural level it is resisted by the inclusion and active participation of women in most of stages of organizing at the RSLC, but also reproduced at the domestic level and in the structures of paid and unpaid labor; and at the epistemic level, it is
contested by the RSLC creation of spaces for the development and systematization of women’s knowledges, and the location and understanding of such knowledge as especially robust and important in the process of epistemic contestations with the state.

Fourth, the conversation between these various set of scholarship that I presented and the kind of analyses of them that I carried out have shed light on a crucial issue that is seldom mentioned in studies on the CSR formation: the possibilities for transnational solidarity. Empirically, these possibilities are already given by the configuration of seed networks across Latin American and the Caribbean, which I showed, vary in scale. They are also set by the creation of transnational grassroots organizations, such as La Via Campesina.

But there is something that has been lost in these works: First, the analysis of the transnational formation of CSR reveals that even though it has been set, in many cases, as a struggle of North vs. South, and in terms of the working of official politics at the national and international level, the reality is that the CSR is at the same time a food regime that shows the class conflict between the elites (which are populated by members of the financial powers, extractivist corporations, and landowners, among others) and the rural poor, which in many cases are also agrarian workers. However, as I have emphasized, that conflict is also gendered and raced in ways that correspond both to the colonial history of the Americas (putting together North America and Latin America) and to specific race, gender, and territorial formations in each region. This commonalities in the forms of oppression that subordinate peoples experience in the North and the South constitute the bases for larger circuits of solidarity that are being built across the borders.

In the same vein, my work also sparks some ideas for future research about the necessity to evaluate critically the discourses on center-periphery, which have dominated a strong strand of STS in Latin America and places such as France (Kreimer and Vessuri 2017). Even when it is still truth that many scholars and activists in Latin America are still heavily drawn to, for example, follow a politics of citation that tends to give epistemic privilege to voices centered in the North, it is also the case that there is an increase tendency to build intellectual and political bridges that understand the formation of inequality, precisely, as a problem that transcends
borders, and that, since it is driven by the global formation of colonial capitalism, affects similarly those at the bottom of the social ladder, everywhere. I turn now to the specificities of some of my contributions.

**Going underground**

I divided my dissertation in two big sections. In section one, I included the first three chapters. There, I analyzed various instances of the interplay of ethnoracial and territorial formations with the dynamics of global capitalism, agrarian law and the formation of the CSR itself. In this sense, one of the arguments I developed throughout the dissertation is that the CSR relies on neoliberal multiculturalism to settle and produce a form of governance that works under a logic of inclusion/exclusion. This affects the impact that contentious politics can have in challenging the CSR’s hegemony, not only because it shapes both the forms of resistance and accommodation, but also because it determines, to a large extent, what challengers are “allowed” to enter in the contention. Thus, the particular ethnoracial and territorial formation in Colombia has made of indigenous people legitimate and visible challengers, while excluding campesinxs and Afro-Colombians as actual actors in the contention. However, I also show that their invisibility and silencing in public and state scenarios, has not however, demobilized them.

Paying special attention to the dynamics of war, violence and peace, I have argued that the later, as structured by peace negotiation processes and the peace agreement with the FARC, opened important windows of opportunity for agrarian social movements to change state policy, but ultimately has legitimized state action and promoted the extension of colonial/capitalist domination by other means. This is done through the radical transformation in seed law rhetoric and focus: whereas the initial phase of seed regulation was done with an overtly pro-industry position, the post-peace agreement adopts the language of neoliberal multiculturalism to present itself as inclusive and participatory. In this move, besides indigenous people, rural women seemed to be the big winners of the parts of the agreement that were devoted to agrarian policy. Yet, again, their inclusion was partial and anchored to the CSR needs. Consequentially, rural women are made managers of technical assistance, and indigenous people seed and agrobiodiversity entrepreneurs.
Another fundamental argument in this work is the idea that the formation and consolidation of the CSR requires not only of the creation of national and international seed laws but also of the generation of a regime of truth where legitimate and credible knowledge comes, exclusively, from technoscientific spaces such as the lab. I discuss what is a stake in this regime of truth. I argue that, contrary to what the mainstream discourse on technoscience has stressed, the regime of truth under which the CSR works is driven predominantly by unknowns rather than knowns. These unknowns have different structures and come from different places and actors (Proctor and Schiebinger 2008; Sullivan and Tuana 2006; Gross and McGoey 2015; Harding 1991; Fernández Pinto 2015; Hess 2016; Frickel 2014; Kinchy 2014).

On the one hand, there are the environmental and health-related unknowns about the use of agrobiotechnology, which can be attributed, for example, to the dynamics of suppression in the technoscientific industry, to which Colombia is a representative case. On the other hand, there are the unknowns that corresponds to the historical racialized nature of knowledge. In this case, I show how the knowledge of rural peoples, racialized as inferior and backwards, is institutionally coded as inexistente, and thus, made invisible. However, of critical relevance for my work is to show that one of the bases for the success of the resistance, in many instances, was the way in which the RSLC managed to direct the attention of the government and the industry towards their epistemic practices, which has given them epistemic and political power in the long run, opening the spaces for collaboration and negotiation.

The final two chapters of the dissertation shift the attention from the legal and public CSR formation and parallel contestation to the detailed examination of specific practices of the RSLC on the ground. These chapters aim to contribute to a recent trend of scholarship that has been focused on showing not only the mechanisms through which the CSR gets established worldwide, but also on the different alternatives to it that can be found in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America (Felicien et al. 2018; Lapegna and Perelmuter 2020; Muller 2020; Peschard and Randeria 2020; Philips 2016; Yenal, Z. and D. Nizam 2020).
In chapter 4, I looked at the RSLC’s work in what I called *seed schools*. I focused on understanding how the network’s pedagogical practices create and move particular socio-epistemes that emerge as hybrid forms and ways of envisioning temporal and affective landscapes. The chapter draws four conclusions. First, that during seed schools, participants work collectively towards reforming ways of cultivation that are harmful, mainly by incorporating agroecological practices. This makes work itself, knowledge-making, technocultures, and seed and land property collective, which is already a revolutionary step towards the de-alienation of labor and the construction of alternative agrarian worlds.

Second, that the hybridity and heterogeneity of the knowledges created through the pedagogical practices is central, since it reveals the fluidity of knowledge creation, as opposed to essentialist notions on ancestral knowledge or indigenous knowledge, which are conceptualized as a sort of pre-made knowledge, always in contradiction with scientific knowledge. In sharp contrast to essentialism, I show how community-based knowledge production is tied to particular forms of organizing and understanding such knowledge, as well as to the particular histories of the territory where that community is located at the moment of knowledge-building. Furthermore, I also show that for such knowledge to come to life, the very possibility for community has to be present, which, as I showed, is not always the case in Colombia.

Third, that in the same way knowledge is not monadic or pre-made, nor are territories. Drawing from the Latin American literature on the territorial opening, I showed that RSCL territories are unstable spatialities that acquire particular forms and meanings depending on the kinds of epistemic interventions and relations developed inside and outside the community, and in-between.

Fourth, that the colonial/gendered system (which I described in chapter 1) shapes women’s knowledges and their value in their communities in specific ways. Thus, although seed schools tend to be spaces for women to build gendered-based solidarities, they can also become spaces for the reproduction of women’s domesticity and subjugation. Thus, women’s position and women’s knowledge in the RSLC constantly oscillate, in a pendulum-like movement, from liberatory to oppressive.
In chapter 5, I explained the possibilities for socio-epistemic and territorial re-configuration that Territories Free of Transgenics offer, while also revealing three significant limitations. First, they do not really act as physical barriers to stop GE contamination. Second, that, while benefiting mostly indigenous communities, they do not really alter the position of epistemic, political, environmental, territorial, cultural, economic, and social vulnerability of Campesinxs and Afro-Colombian communities, who do not enjoy the same legal and political resources. Third, that they do not actually have the material and political power to counterbalance agribusiness and mining corporations, who are protected by the model of development of the government and regional and national elites, sometimes opening the agricultural frontier with the help of the military and paramilitary apparatus that is connected to the extractivist economy.

I believe these contributions are substantial to the study of the CSR at a global, regional, national, and local levels, as well as for the study of social movements capacity to re-shape systems of domination. In this last section, I want to displace my words towards a re-configuration of what I have done in this dissertation under the light of the aesthetics embedded and embodied in RSLC practices and in the importance and the meaning that they have, precisely, in times when a global pandemic has shaken humanity.

**Underground Revolutions**

The revolution won’t happen this year, even if the coronavirus outbreak is exposing and revealing at a global scale how much we need one. But I think that the work that the RSCL is doing in Colombia, and the work that other seed networks and agrarian social movements are doing in Latin America is revolutionary in itself. In the same way that communities have memories, the soil has its own, and those memories are being re-shaped with the agroecological work that seed savers are doing. To transform a territory dominated by the agribusiness industry into a territory dedicated to small-scale agroecological farming is to radically transform that biosocial space from the ground up.

The landscape of monocrops is arid. When I walked through coffee monocrops in Caldas, there was a sense that besides coffee, nothing else was alive there. It was an ironic situation. On the one hand, monocrops are created as techno-spaces, where productivity and efficiency
represent the temporal pace of capitalism, the need for speed. But being there, everything felt slow. Sometimes the tractors would pass, producing a long deep sound, and then, nothing else; nature was silent, quiet, numbed. On the other hand, when I walked through the territories were native, and criollo seeds were planted, nature/culture was flamboyant. There were chickens and kids running around; bees and all sort of bugs flying from tree to tree; tiny forests growing through the walls of the houses and blurring the boundaries between the built environment and the environment; loud music making people and plants dance. In these spaces, life seemed to happen fast, but this sense was there, only because life actually happened. So, the irony is that even though capitalism needs speed, the speed moves through a necropolitics that slows down life, until it can no longer feel or be. Another sense of the irony is thus that seed networks' underground revolution speeds up life by slowing down productivity, by articulating human and seed temporalities.

Seed Utopias
Seed utopias are not illusory. As I have shown in this dissertation, these utopias are indeed imagined (and they need to be in order to exist), and they are, nonetheless, real. Despite the horrors of violence, they already exist, and they refuse to go away. The "already" marks also a temporal dimension in which talking about seed utopias does not throw us only into the future; instead, the idea of seed utopias requires to remove, temporarily and materially, the layers of colonial capitalist temporality that cover the existence of historical territorial formations where afterlives have been developing in their own right. In this case, the anti-colonial gesture of the utopia consists in refusing the erasure of the historical formation of socioterritorialities where nature/culture has its own rhythm, its own sound. This does not imply a romanticization of these spaces, since part of understanding space as "socio-historically formed" means acknowledging the labor that the historical subjects who inhabit it have put into it.

The revolution is not happening this year, but it is already happening.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Castilla, Alberto. 2016. “Proyecto de Acto Legislativo”.


Duarte Torres, Carlos. 2015. Desencuentros territoriales: Tomo I. La emergencia de los conflictos interétnicos e interculturales en el departamento del Cauca. ICAHN.


Galeano Lozano, Myriam, and Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca. 2006. *Resistencia indígena en el Cauca labrando otro mundo*. Colombia: Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca : INTERTEAM.


Lugones, María. 2007. “Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System.” *Hypatia* 22(1).


McMichael, Philip. 2013. *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions.*


Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible. n.d. “Propuesta de Plan de Acción de Biodiversidad Para La Implementación de La Política Nacional Para La Gestión Integral de La Biodiversidad y Sus Servicios Ecosistémicos.”


VITA

Nathalia Hernández Vidal graduated from Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia, with a Bachelor of Philosophy. She has an MA in Philosophy from the same university. Her research has been supported by the Arthur J. Schmitt Foundation, Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, The Society for Social Studies of Science, and ESOCITE (Asociación Latinoamericana de Estudios Sociales de la Ciencia y la Tecnología). Dr. Hernández Vidal has published her work in US-based and Latin American peer-review journals and book compilations, such as the Colombian Journal of Anthropology, Science as Culture, and Engaging STS. She is currently a Visiting Scholar at Oxford College of Emory University and a book review editor at Tapuya, A Journal for Latin American Science, Technology and Society.