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Thinking with the Global South and Decolonizing Indigeneity: Indigenous and Peasant Struggles to Reclaim Spaces, Identities, and Futures in Cauca, Colombia

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THINKING WITH THE GLOBAL SOUTH AND DECOLONIZING INDIGENEITY:
INDIGENOUS AND PEASANT STRUGGLES TO RECLAIM SPACES, IDENTITIES, AND
FUTURES IN CAUCA, COLOMBIA

by

Nicholas L. Padilla

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ABSTRACT

DECOLONIZING INDIGENEITY: INDIGENOUS STRUGGLES TO RECLAIM SPACES, IDENTITIES AND FUTURES IN CAUCA, COLOMBIA

by

Nicholas L. Padilla

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2017
Under the Supervision of Professor Kristin M. Sziarto

In this dissertation, I examine indigenous and rural identities and economic practices in Cauca, Colombia that are illustrative of Southern efforts to destabilize Western and European hegemonic histories, and reassert the plural worldviews and practices that persist to this day. The indigenous and peasant movements that I highlight problematize coloniality's totalizing and universalizing tendencies to erase local specificity across the post-colonial world. I argue these efforts are collectively decolonial in their orientations, as they seek to decenter the centrality of Western experiences in favor of the plurality of worldviews that are thriving in the Global South. Employing ethnographic methods, I find that decolonizing indigenous post-secondary education forges unity across ethnic difference, celebrating the plurality of ways of relating to the world that exist among Cauca's indigenous peoples today. Further, I argue that indigenous post-secondary education is better conceived of as a pluriversity that opens its classrooms and students to the world around them, yet is emplaced in the specific realities of each community. Decolonial struggles to reclaim and assert rural peasant economic identities in Cauca attempt to transcend colonial ethnic identities. These overlapping social movements are creating a space for peasant identities and economic practices that seek to 'make aware', 'make visible', and 'dignify' peasant economics by publicly asserting their 'value' as peasants. Finally, I find that interrelationships between Nature and economies have been undertheorized to primarily focus on Western capitalism as the driving force in creating nature. I develop the notion of a harmonious economy (*economía armónica*) to theorize how indigenous relationships to Mother Earth engender qualitatively different economies in Cauca. Taken together, these diverging and intersecting movements suggest that productive work can be done at the intersections of political ecology, diverse economies, and indigenous geographies in order to understand the wealth of decolonial efforts in Colombia's Andean Highlands.

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World View, 2011 ©Shuvina Ashoona

Shuvina Ashoona is an Inuit artist who is from Cape Dorset, Canada. Her work reflects her experiences as an indigenous woman in Canada. Her drawing, *World Views*, speaks to me and my work because it highlights the diverse and diverging ways of relating to and making sense of the world around us that stubbornly persist today. Her drawing illustrates how indigenous struggles to maintain and reawaken these knowledges are distributed across the world today. More importantly, these worldviews push back against the universalizing Western narratives to present how these worldviews are relationally constructed and do not all conform to the singular Northern narrative.

Introduction

Popayán, Colombia and indigenous movements

I chose to do research in Popayán, Cauca because it is the epicenter of Colombia's indigenous movement. La Gaitana, Juan Tama, and Manuel Quintín Lame were the early leaders of indigenous movements in Cauca. In the early 20th century, Manuel Quintín Lame led the fight against unequal land distribution across that prevailed across the region and the slave-like conditions under which they lived. People across the Colombian countryside, especially indigenous peoples and Afro-Colombians, were held under debt peonage to large landholders throughout the majority of the 20th century. In Cauca, one of the largest landholders happened the Catholic Church and its numerous parishes in the department.

By February of 1971, indigenous people and communities began to convene to take control over their own futures. Seven separate communities from northern Cauca came together in Toribío for the first meeting of indigenous communities with the intent of weaving together their hopes and dreams into concrete plans for the future. The Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (*Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca*), or CRIC, formed from those initial meetings. In those meetings, indigenous communities began to define their political 'platform of struggle' to increase the size of protected indigenous lands, no longer pay land taxes, and defend the indigenous family. The platform would help the communities to achieve, 'unity, land, and culture'.

The early days of the struggle were challenging, with violent repression against the agitating indigenous peoples. Landowners would hire mercenaries and thugs to intimidate and attack any indigenous people who were believed to foment unrest against the status quo. The first "Executive Committee" of the CRIC was powerless – in terms of what they could actually accomplish – but incredibly meaningful for indigenous communities as the first step in the fight against their continued exclusion. The second meeting of the CRIC occurred in September of 1971, and they laid out their "platform of struggle" that identified the political, economic, and cultural projects that would help indigenous communities realize their independence. These efforts made use of Law 89, which was promulgated in 1890, in order to lay claim to their historical *resguardos* (legally-recognized indigenous territories).

These communities have continued to grow over the intervening 45 years, with more than 120 indigenous communities today, bilingual education in numerous communities and an indigenous university, and an indigenous healthcare system that helps to meet the needs of the community, to name a few. The platform of struggle has grown to ten points that included training indigenous professors and defending the “spaces of life in harmony and equilibrium with *Madre Tierra*” (CRIC, 2017). The scale and scope of the CRIC have grown such that they have become one of the largest and most important political entities in Colombia. In fact, each of Colombia’s last four presidents has journeyed to La Maria de Piendamó – the Territory of Dialogue – in order to dialogue with the indigenous communities during their frequent *mingas*, or communal labor.

In August of 2012 in *Parque Caldas* more than 10,000 indigenous activists and allies descended upon the square in Popayán to protest the continued presence of Colombian military forces on indigenous lands. The *Guardia Indígena* – Indigenous Guard – arrived ahead of the marchers and formed a human barrier around the route so that the activists could pass through without incident. As the park swelled with observers, participants, passersby, and, of course, the police and military, a palpable sense of energy took over the space. Before I could finish talking to the police about their empty holsters – “lots of sticky hands here” one officer told me – the protesters filled the square carrying with them red, green, and white flags and banners. On that day, the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (*Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca*, CRIC) had organized this massive display of indigenous unity and solidarity as the CRIC’s leaders engaged the state in negotiations over incursions into their territories. This was not merely a local event: Representatives from the United Nations’ High Commission on Human Rights and the European Union were present to serve as facilitators of this discussion.

This is only one moment in the long history of struggles that Colombia’s indigenous people have engaged in to secure unity, land, and culture. Indigenous actors can trace their activist lineage back to the Andean foothills surrounding Popayán, and today the city serves as the locus of indigenous political organization and activism that attempts to support indigenous autonomy, territory, and culture. During my time in Cauca, local struggles to maintain, reassert, and reclaim indigenous, rural, and afro identities in the face of Colombia’s globalizing realities were ever present and became the central focus of my dissertation research. Cauca’s people matter in this struggle, and they carry on (re)making diverse realities despite the long odds.

Popayán is the governmental seat of the department of Cauca in southern Colombia. The department stretches from the Pacific coast on its western extreme, straddling the western and central cordilleras of the Andes, and eventually crosses the eastern Andean cordillera to Colombia's Amazonian lowlands. It is a geographically diverse region that is home to humid tropical rainforest and littoral lowlands, volcanoes, arid high plains, and highland páramo. Cauca's peoples reflect a mosaic of ethnic and racial diversity. Northern and coastal Cauca are home to a large percentage Afro-Colombian communities, while the national average is nearly 11%. The central range of the Andes, near Paéz and Belalcázar, and the eastern reaches of the department have municipalities where the indigenous population exceeds 80% within communities, while indigenous peoples constitute slightly more than 3% of the national population. Overall, Cauca is more than 21% indigenous and 22% *afrocolombiano* (Afro-Colombian) and it is statistically one of the most diverse departments in Colombia (DANE, 2012).

I place my research within this context of contestation over unity, land, and culture. In this project, I examine indigenous efforts to promote beyond-capitalist economic development and forge indigenous economies that align with indigenous worldviews (Wright, 2010). The CRIC has placed indigenous economic development at the center of its efforts and provides a transnational network of support to member communities' development projects. To explore these issues, I ask: How do indigenous groups construct politics that support and materialize their views of indigenous development? I pay particular attention to how indigeneity is mobilized or dissipates in these moments in Cauca.

I am interested in these openings, the moments when many futures are possible, and where indigenous actors are authors of these possibilities, rather than simply victims of historical injustices or a so-called global economy. Below I will offer a brief explication of the political context in Colombia, in particular the civil war and the war on drugs, and the politics of race, as background to current state efforts in economic development. Second, I present a concise historical geography of Colombia's indigenous movements, which stretch back to the early twentieth century and continue today. I will then offer a theoretical framework for this research, and my larger dissertation project. In the third section I will examine the CRIC's attempts to foster indigenous economies. Third, I

provide an overview of economic development as pursued by the Colombian state as a means to create peace across Colombia.

Colombian context – *La Violencia, guerrillas, paramilitaries, narcotics, and development*

Colombia's civil war has raged since the 1960s, when leftist guerrilla groups first attempted to overthrow the government in Bogotá. Since then, three main groups have clashed to gain control over the country (Meertens & Stoller, 2001). The most well-known Marxist group is the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia [FARC]) has employed guerrilla tactics since they first began their movement. Paramilitary groups have formed in an effort to resist the leftist groups in Colombia. Two prominent examples are the *Ejército de la Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Army, or ELN) and the *Autodefensas unidas de Colombia* (United Self-Defense of Colombia, or AUC). These groups have previously acted with impunity from government reprisal. Despite the 2016 peace accord between the government and the FARC, the Colombian armed forces continue to fight small bands of FARC rebels and, to a certain extent, paramilitary groups.

Successes in the US War on Drugs during the 1980s and 1990s have fundamentally altered the landscapes of power and conflict in Colombia today. First, the US government, in cooperation with the Colombian armed forces, was able to hasten the downfall of the Colombian cartels. During the 1980s, the Medellín, Cali, and Norte del Valle cartels were in complete control of the narcotics production and trade in the Americas. The death of Pablo Escobar, the leader of the Medellín cartel, during the 1990s created a power vacuum in Colombia that these extra-governmental groups were able to fill.

The American illicit narcotics trade is vast. Estimates of the value of this narcocapitalist chain (Corva, 2008) place its value between \$100 billion and \$450 billion annually (UNODC, 2009). Colombia is home to coca, marijuana, and poppy growth. Coca remains its main illicit export because marijuana and poppy can be grown in many places throughout the world, while the coca bush has a limited range. Coca is refined into a paste or cocaine in haphazard labs buried deep in the Colombian forests, and these refined products that are eventually smuggled to North America or, to a lesser degree, Europe.

Coca eradication began in earnest in late 1999, when President Bill Clinton signed an agreement with Colombia promising approximately \$2 billion to fight illicit narcotics and narcoraffickers in Colombia. More than 80% of this money has been in the form of military aid and training (Karch, 2006). The Colombian armed forces manually eradicate coca crops in areas that are accessible, and aerial eradication is utilized in the remote and mountainous regions. Aerial eradication consists of a small aircraft flying low over remote areas and spraying sodium glyphosate, with surfactants to increase its effectiveness, on coca-, opium-, and marijuana-growing plots. The state's aerial eradication efforts have been the most controversial because they have the greatest levels of 'collateral damage'.

The FARC, AUN, ELN, and other smaller groups altered their business plan to include narcotics trade in an effort to further their military aspirations (Peceny & Durnam, 2006). By 2009, the FARC were a shadow of their former selves, though they maintain a strong presence in the illicit trade. Paramilitary groups continue to benefit from lax enforcement of regulation and there is evidence to suggest they have also joined the drug trade (El Cambio, 2008). These extra-government groups not only appear to control the illicit trade, but they have also shifted their focus to include other tactics, such as kidnapping, to further their cause. Like the cartels, these groups also govern in areas where the state maintains a minimal presence, providing schools, collecting taxes, and policing the area (Thoumi, 2004; Thoumi, 1995).

It is important to mention the role of race, and subsequently class, in Colombia. Arturo Escobar (2008) examines Afro-Colombian groups along the Pacific coast and their identity formation in response to development projects. Members of the Afro-Colombian communities first became aware of their difference when they travel to other Andean cities and were subjected to discrimination (Escobar, 2008). Indigenous groups in Colombia experience similar discrimination, although they occupy a different place in the racial formation (regime) of Colombia. Human-environment relations for distinct groups represent an important space of contestation and constitution of a hierarchical racial identity. Despite the colonial history of racial mixing, Europeanness and whiteness, as determined by family lineage, culture, and purity of blood, remained the benchmark for which all people strove. White privilege has entrenched itself in the Colombian society, creating white practices and spaces that are privileged over black and indigenous practices and spaces (Pulido, 2000; Sundberg, 2008).

Situating indigeneity within Colombia

indigenous movements have their roots in the post-independence struggles to undo racialized colonial hierarchies that damned indigenous people to the lowest rungs of society. These movements originated in the Andean foothills outside of Popayán and permeated Colombia's rural indigenous communities. Manuel Quintín Lame led an indigenous uprising in Cauca against the oppression of the Colombia state during the early 1900s. Indeed, Colombia's indigenous movement for recognition has its roots in Manuel Quintín Lame's activism. Quintín Lame organized Cauca's indigenous communities. Building on this tradition of political struggle, by the 1970s Popayán's indigenous community united to form Colombia's first indigenous political organization, the *Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca* (Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca, or CRIC). The organization united actors because of and through their indigeneity with the goal of securing "unity, land, and culture". In order to accomplish these goals, the CRIC established three main foci as their platforms of struggle: the Political Project, Cultural Project, and Economic Project.

On Friday, August 10, 2012 more than 10,000 indigenous peoples from Colombia's numerous tribes joined a protest march that began in the indigenous communities outside of Popayán, Colombia and headed to the seat of the government in Popayán. This collection of men, women, children, and their allies peacefully marched in protest of the continued marginalization of indigenous voices in the violent struggle between the Colombian state and guerrilla groups that has played out across their lands since the 1960s. The *Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca* organized this peaceful march through the heart of Popayán and later continued their march toward Bogotá.

This event was significant for three reasons. First, the march came as Colombia's Interior Minister Fernando Carrillo opened a dialogue with indigenous groups in the department concerning the presence of military personnel on indigenous lands. Second, the march demonstrated the role that the CRIC plays in advancing indigenous causes throughout the Department of Cauca. One of their main foci is on indigenous economic development. That the marchers would address two issues that assert the right to self-determination of indigenous peoples in Colombia suggests that they are entering a new era in the country – one in which indigenous peoples' self-organization is achieving political significance for the first time. Third, the presence of U.N. representatives attests to not only the need for indigenous groups to jump scale by bypassing the Colombian government to seek recognition or support from international governance organizations, but also the efficacy of

Colombian indigenous movements in networking and acting with other indigenous groups historically to have their rights codified in international law. Nevertheless, much of the struggle around land, unity, and culture for the indigenous peoples of Cauca is waged locally in Cauca itself, and in interaction with the Colombian state.

It is in this context of political organization by indigenous actors, and of state acknowledgement of indigenous rights, that I have conducted my dissertation research on economic development in Colombia. Indigenous groups like the CRIC have identified economic self-determination as crucial to reducing poverty levels, economic exclusion, and environmental degradation while preserving indigenous identities. Today, indigenous actors across Colombia are defining the terms of economic development projects through indigenous political organizations. The CRIC, for example, now focuses its attention on promoting a form of economic development that is not based in maximizing profits for distant shareholders, but in creating secure and viable livelihoods for local indigenous communities. Indeed, the CRIC promotes development that first and foremost considers the social and physical health of the environment and the people who work the land.

Development(s) in Colombia – an economic topography

Colombia's colonial and imperial histories have inscribed long conflicting trajectories onto the landscape. Arturo Escobar (1995) argues that Colombia – and indeed many countries in the so-called 'Third World' – has revolved around European and Western desires since the 1500s. Escobar contends that Western discourses of economic development emerged in the post-World War II era and focused their gazes upon the non-Western world. Escobar presents these economic forces as unidirectional impositions on the rest of the world (Antrosio, 2002). Yet, these realities are complex and the vestiges of colonial value systems and hierarchies permeate these landscapes. Notions of 'progress' as inherently superior and 'backwardness' as primarily rural have pervaded Colombian national discourses since the early 19th century (Safford, 1991). These efforts culminated in the 1991 constitution that liberalized Colombia's national economy to join an increasingly-interconnected global market (Asher and Ojeda, 2009).

Today, the Colombian state continues to push a neoliberal economic vision that inextricably links durable peace and economic growth and development to visualize a stable and inclusive Colombia. The current 2014-2018 National Plan of Development (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo* in Spanish, or

PND) lays out a multipronged approach that focuses on nine principle pathways: peace across Colombia; an equitable Colombia without extreme poverty; equitable educational access and increased educational outcomes; competitive and strategic infrastructure; increased social mobility; transformation of the Colombian countryside; security, justice, and democracy for the construction of peace; good governance; and, green growth (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2015). In its entirety, the plan will work to achieve ‘peace, equity, and education’ for all Colombians. Behind the Plan’s business-friendly jargon, there is a clear focus on securing the rural areas of Colombia to open them for investment.

The PND’s focus on building rural security as an answer to economic underdevelopment and persistent urban-rural inequalities builds on a decades-long national strategy to consolidate the Colombian state (Velasco, 2011). The National Department of Planning (*Departamento Nacional de Planeación*, in Spanish) has implemented a regular ‘territorial ordering’, which is a rural census designed to identify productive land, quantify fallow parcels, and measure productive output of Colombia’s lands (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2013). Though the National Department of Planning presents this as a process to promote “greater access to land by landless agricultural producers or those with insufficient land...and increasing legal certainty under a green growth approach” (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2015, pg. 423), rural agricultural producers remain highly skeptical of the process that also seeks to “promote the efficient use of soil and natural resources” (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2015, pg. 425). Realizing increased efficiency has tended to favor large-scale industrial agricultural production in Colombia. The Peasant Movement of Cajibío, Congress of the Communities, numerous indigenous and peasant communities across Cauca, and representatives from La Via Campesina were vehemently opposed to the 2014 territorial ordering process (personal communication 10.June.2014). In fact, peasant and indigenous organizations combined to stage a ‘*paro agrario*’ (agrarian work stoppage) in September 2014 to demonstrate their collective strength and opposition to the territorial ordering.

Across Colombia’s rural departments, inequitable access to land is one of the main sources of legal and physical conflict (Rodríguez, 2008; Velasco, 2011). These conflicts range from confronting armed groups to the difficulty of the Colombian state to recognize collective land rights within a territorial system that privileges private property. More importantly, the state’s efforts to count and measure the current and potential productivity of rural lands are poorly disguised efforts to

‘constitute the state’ in Colombia’s rural hinterlands (Asher and Ojeda, 2009). Instituting logics of ‘efficient production’ and ‘sectorial competitiveness’ favors capital-rich corporations at the expense of small-scale peasant producers who employ logics of sociality and care in economic practice. The state’s piecemeal arrival to rural Colombia has not been smooth.

In light of Colombia’s long-standing civil war and position as the world’s leader in producing and trafficking narcotics, the vast majority of Colombia’s developmental aid has tended towards anti-narcotics crop substitution schemes or unprecedented levels of military aid to the Colombian armed forces and police. Most of the United States’ involvement in Colombian development has funneled through Plan Colombia, which channeled more than \$1 billion for the state to reduce narcotics production and trafficking. The West rendered development technical and began to instruct the third world on how to develop (Escobar, 1995, pg. 89). Escobar begins this endeavor by pointing out that an “ensemble of forms...constitutes development as a discursive formation, giving rise to an efficient apparatus that systematically relates forms of knowledge and techniques of power” (Escobar, 1995, pg. 10). He portrays development schemes as always originating in the West and the outcomes were measured against the ‘yardstick’ of Western progress (Escobar, 1995, pg. 83). The purpose of development is not only to introduce economic development to the third world, but also to serve as a device of social production (Escobar, 1995, pg. 89).

Escobar (2008) provides a rich ethnographic account of the intersections of development projects and Afro-Colombian groups in the Pacific region of Colombia that are simultaneously local, regional, national, and transnational. In this project, he seeks to make Western developmentalist knowledges strange, privilege the groups that live along the Pacific coast, and emphasize the role of ‘glocal’ networks (Escobar, 2001). Indigenous peoples and landscapes are fighting to maintain their identities and practices in the face of Northern capitalist development projects that will fundamentally alter indigenous social relations by separating people from land (Kirsch, 2006). Swanson (under review) calls these indigenous connections to lands, plants, and animals the ‘shared body’. A shared body is constituted when indigenous peoples eat, drink, and breathe the world around them in order to constitute biodiverse indigenous body, and a living landscape that is full with human life (Swanson, 2009). Entering into an intimate relationship with the surrounding land muddies the boundaries between indigenous peoples and their surroundings and enables enhanced relations between humans, plants, animal, and the land.

Indeed, indigenous social relations across the Americas frequently include deep and intimate connections between humans and non-humans. Development projects that seek to effect economic growth and structural changes fundamentally alter indigenous social relations to the more-than-human world by disconnecting indigenous peoples and societies from the plants, animals, landscapes, and spirits that constitute their indigenous worldviews. From rewriting land ownership laws to require a land title, to enclosing and privatizing commons (Heatherington, 2010), the developer's toolbox features diverse implements in order to dispossess indigenous peoples. However achieved, unmooring indigenous peoples from more-than-human life alters the basis of indigenous social relations. I couch my approach to 'development' in Colombia in these intimate indigenous relationships to *Madre Tierra* (Mother Earth) that know the earth – and her various life forms – as living and constitutive of life.

Theoretical framework

My dissertation engages with indigenous geographies, decolonial theory, political ecology, critical development studies, and diverse economies literatures. Indigenous geographies urge us to place indigenous peoples at the center of their own stories, to work alongside them in their movements for social and economic justice, and render strange Western and Northern narratives. Political ecology helps me to make sense of struggles over nature, her significance, and her role as an actor. Critical geographies of development argue that the models of development based on the experiences of the global north cannot explain the uneven development of the global south, and that we must pay attention to the historical geographies of colonialism and postcolonial oppression of indigenous peoples. In particular, critical development studies help me to place the varying land ownership rules that remain after colonialism, disruption of traditional livelihoods, racialized hierarchies, and contemporary neoliberalizing projects within my research agenda. Within economic geography I draw especially on the work of feminist political economists J.K. Gibson-Graham, who question how we understand capitalism. Rather than understanding capitalism as a coherent body of unified actors and actions, Gibson-Graham argue that capitalism is a collection of practices that are intertwined with and even rely on noncapitalist practices, allows us then to imagine diverse economies and the social practices that would support them. Together, these frameworks allow me to think about how the indigenous activists and allies are developing indigenous economies and an

indigenous university, despite being embedded within Colombia's particular neoliberalizing political economy.

The concept of Latin America a place for exploitation has its roots in colonialism. The Spaniards and Portuguese came in search of materials to benefit their existence in Europe (Galeano, 1973). The colonial project of erasing previously existing history, culture, realities, lifestyles, and worldviews has continued in Latin America since the end of the 15th century. This project had been accomplished through a variety of official state activities (i.e. imposing taxes, census taking, or declaring war) in an effort to bring indigenous peoples under the purview of the state (Li, 2007). Yet these colonial projects have not unfolded across blank slates, and postcolonial theory offers poignant and fundamental challenges to European modernity and the foundations of European colonial endeavors. First, post-colonialism creates a space for the marginalized and forgotten to have a voice in discourse (Escobar, 1995). It is a figurative re-placing of indigenous peoples and practices back on a social landscape. Second, this framework acknowledges the colonial project, though it officially ended in the early 19th century, continues today through persistent colonial desires, institutions, and dispositions. Colonial practices of indigenous marginalization have not ended and the colonial history continues to be reinterpreted daily through racialized identities, territorial dispossession, and cultural marginalization (Escobar, 2008; Galeano, 1973).

Postcolonial theory, however, has encountered resistance from the Global South for its limitations in addressing the violence of colonial encounters, coloniality's ability to persist more than 200 years after the South American independence movements, and decentering and pluralizing epistemologies that drive radical political movements and academic inquiry (Grosfoguel, 2011; Mignolo, 2000; Mignolo, 2003; Rabasa, 2011). These movements are developing alternative discourses and ways of thinking in order to frame their collective efforts to destabilize a Eurocentric vision of the contemporary world from a non-European perspective (Grosfoguel, 2007; Porto-Gonçalves, 2015). Decolonial thinkers fundamentally disagree that postcolonial scholarship is sufficient to challenge the epistemic hegemony of Eurocentrism due to its origin within the same corpus of thought (Grosfoguel, 2008; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Maldonado-Torres, 2011). Therefore, decolonial thought represents a productive avenue to interrogate activism in Latin America and their work to create their own futures (Grosfoguel, 2012).

Critical development studies have emerged in response to myriad failed and underperforming large- and small-scale development projects across the world (Wainwright, 2008). Scientific findings on development are presented absent of local indigenous input and often lead to conflicting ideas of effective development practices (Sillitoe, 2007). Development schemes have traditionally been authored by organizations that maintain a global headquarters outside of the country that ‘needs’ development (Gow, 2008). These projects approach development from the position that the subjects of development are deficient in some manner, they devalue indigenous ways of life, and attempt to impose ‘better’ modes of thought (Andolina, et al., 2009).

The limitations of development become readily apparent when technical solutions fail to demonstrably improve the livelihoods of the subjects of development (Hart, 2001; Hart, 2004; Mitchell, 2002). More recent efforts at development have explicitly endeavored to create a more comprehensive form of economic development that integrates local cultures and bodies into the development planning and implementation processes (Radcliffe and Laurie, 2006; Silvey, 2010). However, reframing the realm of possibility of the ‘economic’ by expanding the economic gaze of development presents one challenge to how and when economic development can happen. I see decolonial theory and feminist economic geography as a productive place from which to problematize development as an imposition of extractive Western global capitalism. A diverse economies perspective is a productive way to achieve an ‘economic development’ that is inclusive of local, embedded practices (Lawson, 2010). If economic desires no longer fit neatly within the easily quantifiable view of economic development, then academic analyses become attuned to the diverse already-existing life-making practices that permeate the Global South (Mignolo, 2009; Vargas Soler, 2009). Catherine Walsh (2013) identifies these moments as openings through which other ways transmitting knowledges, teaching, and learning with in order to ‘resist, re-exist, and revive’ (“*resistir, (re)existir y (re)vivir*” in Spanish).

Resisting, re-existing, and reviving subaltern practices and identities has been a long-term project across Latin America as communities struggle to retrieve lost practices and histories from the grip of the legacies of colonization. The diffuse strategies employed to incorporate bodies and lands into post-colonial governance ranged from requiring land titles and supporting debt peonage to mandatory monolingual Spanish education in the few rural schools. These efforts have resulted in a situation today where indigenous and rural peoples in Colombia feel besieged by the systemic and

institutional barriers to their continued existence. Southern thinkers have identified this constellation of forces ‘coloniality’ to create spaces to decenter Western epistemic and ontological hegemony:

“*Coloniality* normalizes these particularities, which become hegemonic and subsumes our ability to imagine other possible configurations of people and places. That is, race and racialized power anchor the modern world-system and the idea that European people are superior to non-European ones. Such Eurocentric systems of knowledge production are not just historical but continue to dominate present day political economy and social cultural relations” (Asher, 2013, pg. 834 emphasis in original).

In this dissertation, I use the term coloniality to reflect these long histories of racism and active marginalization. Indigenous and peasant social movements across Colombia struggle to create spaces in which indigenous and peasant activists can speak, act, and be in response to legacies of colonization and imperialism. The modalities of decolonial action are contentious and frequently appear incoherent because they toil against multiple forms of oppression.

Decolonial scholars have developed a lexicon to better theorize and examine the varied struggles that percolate up across the South in response to coloniality. José Rabasa (2011) calls these vistas “elsewheres” as he examines Mesoamerican colonial histories from the perspective of the colonized. Walter Mignolo (2000) names it “the locus of enunciation”, as he explores the particular and concrete histories of modernity and coloniality. Mignolo’s “border thinking” emerges from these colonial histories and responds to their colonial legacies (pg. 95). Importantly, none of these positions exist at any physical site. Rather, they originate from the colonized in response to their experiences. It is not outside of coloniality, but against it. Hamid Dabashi – somewhat flippantly – asked, ‘can non-Europeans think?’, and this question perfectly illustrates the politics of decolonial thinkers. Their histories, experiences, positionalities, and thoughts matter.

As decolonial scholars continue to reclaim the present from a universalizing Western perspective in favor of the myriad worldviews that exist around the Global South, their efforts have spread to asserting Southern ecologies to challenge privatizing natures and ecosystem services, enclosing commons, and industrial-scale agricultural production (Escobar, 2008). Political ecology provides a limited lens to interrogate indigenous relationships to Mother Nature because it maintains close relationship to Northern scientific inquiry. The movements are frequently explicit rejections of the epistemic foundations of Western socionatures – that treat nature as an external object. Rather,

Southern natures begin from a point of difference and seek to re-establish relations with nature that are reflective of local conditions and histories. Decolonizing political ecology provides a rupture through which unusual actors become central characters in relating to nature, or nature itself is reimagined as an agent who humans interact with to constitute a Mother nature.

This dissertation is firmly planted in these cracks. In this dissertation, I draw heavily from Southern thinking to contextualize indigenous and peasant activism in rural Cauca. I also rely on feminist scholarship to provide an ethical compass that permeates my research. I have purposely privileged the perspectives of my colleagues from Colombia in order to theorize my own research, rather than bringing more theory from the Anglo- and Francophone worlds to bear on the Global South. These works have their place, but that place is not here.

A note on methodology – walking, weaving, and thinking with

I am broadly motivated by a desire to decenter Western-centric academic inquiry in favor of Southern epistemologies. The reasons for this approach are twofold. First, I am struck by the disproportionate representation of theory, theorists, and practitioners from English-, French-, and German-speaking perspectives exists on the Global South. Yet, little work from the Global North even makes token efforts to speak to and with Southern thinkers. An incredible amount of creative thinking and sharp analysis exists outside the limited realm of English, French, and German academic realms.

Second, I have come to see firsthand the limitations of Western thinking in the Global South. For example, Marxian analysis that examines workers' relationships to the means of production seems insufficient to explain and inform afro, peasant, and indigenous efforts to destabilize hegemonic inequalities. First, the conclusions that we can draw from this approach are not particularly novel. The story of how indigenous peoples have been alienated from their own lands in the service of Capital has been told many times. Second, it misses the point that the very people who have been the objects of our academic inquiries might have their own thoughts on these histories. Instead, these groups engage each other – and public intellectuals – to define their own challenges and devise solutions that make sense from their own perspective. Employing a decolonial framework allows me to privilege their perspectives, draw upon my research partners' thinking to destabilize Western theories, and argue for an analysis that builds from Southern perspectives.

These efforts are actively political and somewhat hostile towards academics and academic currents that emanate from the North. Privileging Southern perspectives situates these movements as decolonial struggles that challenge the apparent universality of Northern perspectives. This also helps me to situate indigenous and peasant movements in a horizontal relationship with Eurocentric approaches, effectively positioning each as *A* perspective that builds from a specific ontology, not *THE* dominant or most logical perspective that speaks from a universal ontology.

These two realizations were fundamentally destabilizing to me as a researcher. I have always sought to work with, not study, indigenous and peasant communities in Colombia. I was forced to alter my research to align my dissertation project with my political stance. Yet, as I continued to allow my research to be shaped and driven by Southern currents in Cauca, my project became clearer and more pressing (Goerisch, 2017). Relinquishing absolute control energized me, allowed me to form stronger connections with my *compañeras* and *compañeros* because our interests were more closely aligned, and made the research process felt much less exploitative and more collaborative.

In this dissertation, I rely heavily on the words, thoughts, and actions of my research partners to make sense of their own realities. This approach draws heavily from decolonial thinkers who are struggling to create spaces in which Southern actors define themselves according to their own worldviews. It is also a response to J.K. Gibson-Graham's (2008) call for weak theory as an ontological project for creating spaces of possibility while thinking through lived realities and economic plurality.

What follows is based on approximately eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork in, and around Cauca, Colombia between 2012 and 2014. During my family's time in Popayán, I relied entirely on ethnographic methods to carry out my fieldwork. I first used the few connections from fellow academics and friends that I had in the area to gain access to some indigenous events. I attended early events to perform participant observation and focused primarily on meeting people and cultivating friendships. As my network expanded, I started receiving invitations to more events. My research partners allowed me to participate in their events as a normal participant, rather than a researcher who observed from the fringes. After a few months, my partners even became interested in me as an academic and invited me to lead workshops and give lectures. All the while, I worked to

form a formal relationship with the CRIC. I submitted a proposal to the High Council, but it was rejected after a few weeks. I continued to pursue a formal relationship with the CRIC through my connections in the indigenous movement. After trying unsuccessfully for months, I relented. In the end, this allowed me to travel more freely to travel Cauca and participate in the disparate – and frequent – events that constitute indigenous and *campesino* activism.

In the end, I performed several interviews, and most of them were not particularly instructive or insightful. They often pointed me in a direction to further refine my research, but they do not appear in my dissertation. The richest and most meaningful sources of ‘data’ for my research came from informal participation in countless events and conversations with people whom I met by pure happenstance. Most of the time, I treated these conversations as interesting opportunities to meet more people and develop my project. It is only through the discipline of taking time to think and reflect that these countless disconnected and seemingly meaningless moments became meaningful and central to my project. Fieldwork is a messy endeavor and, in my case, was complicated by my online teaching load, the geographic distance of my research sites, and my family’s presence (Whitson, 2017). At the moment one is in the field, it is exhilarating and full of more ‘failures’ than ‘successes’. It is only through the rearview mirror that failures became successes, and the research itself comes to be coherent.

In this dissertation, I have changed the name of every participant. Some *compañeras* and *compañeros* assured me it was acceptable to use their real names, but I refused in the end. I have selected the names from indigenous and peasant activists who have died, from other acquaintances and colleagues across Latin America, and selected common names from southern Colombia. I took this decision upon returning from the field, as I returned to my notes. The participants who gave me permission to use their names were frequently visible, well-known, leaders within powerful institutions. They occupied – and still do occupy – positions of influence. I also had the opportunity to work with people who had been expelled from their indigenous communities for creating a ‘bother’ (*molestando*, in Spanish), and students in the Indigenous University who openly questioned their education. Even though nearly all the participants in this project cannot speak or read English, I have elected to err on the side of caution in this project, to protect the voices of indigenous and peasant activists who contradict the prevailing movements and seek to *molestar*.

Following these diverse threads, I will next discuss the three substantive chapters of my dissertation. In the first chapter, I examine how an indigenous university in Popayán redefines an indigenous university as a pluriversity that relies on a placed and mobile pedagogies and is oriented toward awakening indigenous consciousness through decolonizing students. In the second chapter, I focus on the collective efforts of three different groups as they struggle to re-orient rural peasant economic practices inward and awaken peasant identities. In the final chapter of my dissertation, I bring together indigenous thinking about relationships to *Madre Tierra* – loosely translated as Mother Earth or Nature – to develop the concept of an economy that incorporates flows of ‘harmony’ in more-than-human spaces to create economies that flow from nature, instead of producing *a Nature*.

Dissertation outline

Chapter one examines indigenous efforts in Popayán, Colombia to decolonize post-secondary education, and it is based on my research with students and administrators in the Autonomous Indigenous Intercultural University (UAIIN). In Cauca, the political projects of the indigenous movement have proliferated to the classroom, and developing their ‘own’ educational (*educación propia*) model that builds on the cultural diversity of indigenous peoples in southern Colombia. The indigenous university is more effectively conceptualized as a decolonizing pluriversity. I argue that the indigenous pluriversity challenges the epistemic foundations of the Western University by opening the classroom to the world, fostering a spiritual connection between students, earth, and cosmos, and employing a pedagogical approach that forges indigenous solidarity by emphasizing the specificity of each indigenous community’s perspective and history.

The decolonial pluriversity in Popayán cultivates deep connections between students and the world around them, developing thinking-feeling (*sentipensante*) students who are unified through their cultural heterogeneity. Professors and administrators design learning opportunities that emphasize indigenous perspectives, seeking to ground indigenous students in the material realities of their surroundings. Students who attend the UAIIN engage in popular pedagogy and are required to switch between the role of educator and student, challenging notions of expertise as an inaccessible knowledge. Further, the UAIIN does not treat knowledge as a precious commodity that is traded in peer-reviewed journals. In the UAIIN, knowledge is co-created and no one owns it. Students, professor, and administrators readily exchange and share it. Lastly, instruction at the UAIIN is based in a mobile, yet emplaced, classroom. Students constantly engage the world around them through

classroom activities and a long-term community research project, effectively developing students whose work is practically engaged with their indigenous communities.

As the indigenous communities across Cauca struggle to build unity across difference, other rural actors are deploying similar strategies to preserve and reclaim marginalized identities and practices. Chapter two examines diverse movements to reintroduce and maintain social relationships in economic relations. Activating a *campesino* identity that transcends traditional ethnic identities. “Familiar products from familiar people”. I examine how rural peasant, indigenous, and afro communities are decolonizing economic practices and re-socializing their lived economies through activism. In this chapter, I attempt to people economic activities and destabilize capitalocentric representations of the Economy (Gibson-Graham, 1996). That is, I examine the economy from the perspective of household management, and I place economic actors and activities in this context. I ask, how are rural producers and consumers re-developing and spatializing traditional economic practices? What distinguishes a socialized economy from normalized capitalist values, and how do these practices speak to capitalism’s inherent contradictions?

Economic activists in Cauca seek to enact socially just economies that make explicit the consequences of cheap goods and exploitative labor practices that are a hallmark of capitalism in the global south. Non-governmental organizations, economic activists, and scholar activists are engaged in the process of *concientización* – or making aware – rural producers and consumers. These efforts are best captured by the phrase “familiar products from familiar people” that I heard from countless activists. This simple sentence lays out an ethics for a rural economy. It elucidates a host of images of who produces what, where they produce it, their practices of environmental stewardship, and the manner in which they exchange their goods and services with one another. This activism unites actors around an idealized *campesino* – peasant – identity that is not limited to colonized indigenous, *afro*, and peasant identities. These efforts emphasize the importance of traditional practices of lending labor; barter exchanges; and the social, economic, and political benefits of enacting a place-based and justice oriented economy.

Chapter three focuses on an-other way of practicing economic relationships. I examine how more-than-human geographies allow for other organizing logics to emerge and orient an economy. Specifically, I ask, how do an indigenous concept of harmony in a more-than-human geography,

combined with a community economies perspective, open an analytical space? Here, I employ political ecology, feminist political economy, and decolonial thinking to examine how indigenous communities are (re)constructing economies that are diverse and inclusive. In this chapter I ask, how do these economies account for more-than-human actors and non-monetized modes of ownership, production, exchange, and consumption? I develop the concept of an *economía armónica*, or harmonious economy, that actively rejects the idea that humans and Nature are somehow inherently separate. A harmonious economy incorporates Mother Nature, in all her forms – air, water, insects, plants, and animals – in its balance sheets and rejects the notion of externalities. Instead, a harmonious economy focuses on the nature of the relationships between humans and nonhumans in order to maintain harmony between people, Mother Earth, cosmos, and Mother Nature. It is crucial that economic relations do not exploit others, or originate from malicious intentions, as this leads to disharmony that is often made manifest through violence. I argue that re-introducing or maintaining harmonious social relations has become a crucial factor in re-imagining economies among rural, indigenous communities in Colombia.

Here, *Madre Tierra* is a living being who provides for all humans. Indigenous actors continually work toward harmony with her through their economic actions. Building on Gibson-Graham's (2006) ethical coordinates for a community economy, I argue that accounting for harmony between humans and a more-than-human world within indigenous economic practices unsettles the concepts of economic surplus, necessity, and the production of the commons. Finally, I conclude the dissertation by examining my analysis to properly situate the research within the literature. I revisit the findings from each chapter and interrogate the links between the chapters.

Taken together, these chapters represent my effort to design, carry out, and share a research project that is valuable, timely, and productive of an-other way of performing scholarship. Taking the institution of a university, and re-casting it as a place of indigenous knowledge reproduction by developing and practicing a form of popular pedagogy that builds solidarity across cultural difference. More importantly, the practices within a decolonial pluriversity are rife with tension, especially as this particular indigenous university seeks recognition from the Colombian Ministry of Education in order to provide its students with a 'valuable' diploma. One activist's characterization of the institution as a "university in name only" serves to remind us to question how the master's tools can liberate.

Shifting the focus to economic practices and livelihoods among Cauca's *campesinos* – or peasants – allows me to unpack the efforts to consolidate a peasant identity that transcends colonial ethnic and racial identities. The work of these diverse groups finds its commonality in the desire to make others aware – or *concientizar* in Spanish – of the costs of a consumptive economy in Cauca.

In the final chapter, I am arguing for a Southern theorization of economic logics that takes the concept of harmony between *Madre Tierra*, humans, and life in general as a central organizing feature of indigenous economies. In my concept of a harmonious economy, Nature itself serves as central actor *who* produces an economy, and not the other way around.

I would like to conclude by pointing out that Popayán and Cauca, Colombia matter. Cauca is the object of global desires. Energy companies are waiting for legal challenges to end so they can begin constructing large hydroelectric dams. Mining companies want greater access to Colombia's huge reserves of precious metals and stones. Agricultural industries continue to secure their markets for seeds and agricultural chemicals. The Colombian state continues to forge a 'stable and durable' peace for the region. The Colombian armed forces and police are working to establish and maintain a state presence in many rural areas. Indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and peasant communities work together to have a voice in deciding Colombia's future. They seek a platform for their voices to be heard and respected. They want legitimacy in the eyes of those who have ignored and silenced their voices for far too long.

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Chapter 1 – Decolonizing indigenous education: Revitalizing Mother Earth in an indigenous pluriversity in Cauca, Colombia

Introduction

Decolonial work across Latin America has taken on several forms – from landless peasant movements challenging the Brazilian oligarchy’s hegemonic grip over land to rapping Aymara groups in La Paz, Bolivia – and their goals have been necessarily diverse. Despite the diversity of these efforts to reassert marginalized identities and practices, these movements are united in their efforts to support the plurality of worldviews that persist in the global South. Among Cauca’s indigenous peoples, the process of decolonization has moved from the ‘fields to the classroom’, as Washington Wala, who is the program administrator and a professor for the Program for the Revitalisation of Mother Earth with the Autonomous Indigenous Intercultural University (UAIIN), once told me. The university as an institution that has sought to universalize knowledge (production) has been subjected to critiques from many fronts. Southern efforts to destabilize the epistemic foundations of the Western university have emphasized the classed, racialized, and gendered dehumanisations that were part and parcel of Western knowledge production (Boidin, Cohen, & Grosfoguel, 2012; Klor de Alva, 1995). Decolonial thinkers have posited that pluriversal approaches that emphasize difference, the partial and perspectival, and other ways of thinking, feeling, and doing are central to decolonizing thought and action (Carvalho & Florez, 2014). The pluriversity, then, creates a space for the ‘meeting of knowledges’, constantly (re)constructs knowledges, eschews ‘ownership’ of knowledge, and draws upon popular pedagogy to empower its participants (Freire, 2005; Quijano Valencia, 2008; Walsh, 2012). These educational spaces are intended to create a ‘dialogue of knowledges’ through which diverse – and frequently opposing – orientations can come together and be remade (Pedota, 2011). I analyse the UAIIN as a microcosm for the politics of decolonisation, complete with all the of contradictions that comprise a pluriversal educational movement.

In this paper, I draw on my ethnographic fieldwork with students, professors, and administrators from the UAIIN during 2014. I carried out interviews with six university administrators, participated in one 17-day session of classes with Program for the Revitalisation of Mother Earth (*Programa de la Revitalización de la Madre Tierra, RMT*), led two separate daylong sessions on the U.S. experiences with genetically modified organisms and legal structures that enable GMO crops, and participating in six

different events hosted by or at the UAIIN during a nine-month period of 2014. In this paper I ask, what exactly is an indigenous university in Colombia? If we look at the historical geographies of the institutions of ‘the university’, it would seem the UAIIN is not merely a university in Western sense of the term. I argue that learning in the indigenous classroom at the UAIIN challenges the epistemic foundations of the University by opening the classroom to the world, cultivating thinking-feeling students who engage Mother Earth through deep connections, fostering a spiritual connection between students and the earth and cosmos, and taking seriously the plurality of indigenous worldviews of participants. Building an educational model on the plurality of indigenous worldviews suggests the UAIIN is a pluriversity that develops indigenous solidarity across fractured ethnic lines (Echeverria, 2014). In practice, the UAIIN, as an institution, seeks to create a pluriversity within a university through its appeals to the Colombian Ministry of Education and a Western postsecondary educational model.

In the next section of this paper, I explore the spatialities of the university in Latin America and reformist movements to alter higher education’s trajectory in Latin America. Specifically, I address how Southern thinkers have challenged the epistemic foundations of the University, and draw upon the concept of the pluriversity as a productive lens through which to analyse indigenous education in Cauca, Colombia. Second, I provide a historical backdrop to Cauca’s indigenous movements to better situate the ongoing efforts to create indigenous futures in that particular area of Colombia. Third, I draw upon my experiences leading workshops and participating in the RMT’s classes to examine how classes in the Program for the Revitalisation of the Mother Earth engage in decolonial work through their mathematics lessons. The pedagogical foundations of the UAIIN emphasize unity across cultural difference, an open classroom, and seek create a space in which indigenous participants are simultaneously students and instructors. Finally, I end the article by arguing that a pluriversity in southern Colombia is a hybrid institution that marks the collisions between ‘jagged worldviews’ (Little Bear, 2000) and effects intercultural indigenous unity by working across and maintaining cultural difference.

University and pluriversity – decolonising knowledges, heterogeneity, and indigenous education

As Derek Gregory reminds us, “history is always more complicated...always plural, always contested, and shot through with multiple temporalities and spatialities” (2004). Decolonial thinkers – like Ramón Grosfoguel and Aníbal Quijano – posit that the institutions of European modernity

and colonisation were multifaceted. Within Europe the emergence from the Dark Ages was an emancipatory moment for peasants across the continent. Literacy increased. Mercantile capitalism began to emerge. Reason and objectivity offered a hopeful and productive alternative to sedimented religious worldviews, appealing specifically to the growing European bourgeois class.

Yet, this emancipation for Europeans from every walk of life was dependent upon the civilizing project outside of Europe. Europe's rise to colonial superpower was possible because of the wholesale exploitation and enslavement of non-Europeans. This is not to fall into the trap of unproblematic, homogeneous representations of the West, but reflective of active responses to colonial and imperial categories and attempts to highlight the unequal power relations that pervade the colonial present (Coronil, 1996). Coloniality's civilizing and domesticating projects underwrote the rise of the nation-state, participatory democracy, and personal freedoms for Europeans. Meanwhile Europe's colonies were subjected to the slow, epistemic violations and erasures of colonization, which were achieved through seemingly legitimate institutions of knowledge production (Mignolo, 2005). As Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos Jáuregui argue,

“The Latin American modern subject is the product of a traumatic origin. From the beginning of the conquest, the encounter of indigenous peoples with the European other was defined by violence. Territorial devastation, slavery, genocide, plundering, and exploitation name just some of the most immediate and notorious consequences of colonial expansion” (2008, pp. 2).

Both Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo argue that coloniality is the dark side of modernity, through which an ‘uncivilized’ exterior was subjected to violent conquests and extractions while Europe experienced a rebirth (Mignolo, 2010; Quijano, 2000; Quijano, 2007). Yet, these colonial processes have not reached an end. Indeed, they continue to unfold and redefine themselves today to incorporate more bodies in to coloniality's newest iteration.

In spite of the comprehensive suite of tools available to colonial and imperial powers, indigenous peoples have defied by continuing to exist. Indigenous activists and geographers today have shifted their attention towards the empowering and emancipatory efforts of indigenous groups across the globe (Johnson, Cant, Howitt, & Peters, 2007; Louis, 2007). Indigenous struggles in Colombia highlight their collective diversity by pushing back against the supposed universalism of the European Enlightenment (Johnson & Murton, 2007; Turnbull, 2000). Modern indigenous political actors continue to challenge the notion that indigenous geographies are limited to ‘local’ places

(Coombes, Johnson, & Howitt, 2012). Instead, anti- and decolonial indigenous persist as 'hopeful and aspirational' attempts to reclaim or create plural futures (Coombes, Johnson, & Howitt, 2013).

Decolonial thinking is an intellectual current with specific orientations toward re-thinking and undoing colonial dispositions, hierarchies, and modes of knowledge production (Mignolo, 2010). Decolonial scholars and practitioners attempt to contextualize peoples, places, and phenomena and lay bare abstract universal theories and histories that are foundational imperial desires. Instead, decolonial thinkers emphasize the multiplicity and simultaneity of histories that confront Eurocentric narratives of History and emphasize the interconnectedness of these histories through colonial and imperial conquests. Decolonial thinking requires 'an-other thinking' that is grounded in the quotidian experiences and actually existing realities of challenging, deconstructing, and reinventing colonial practices (Walsh, 2007). Decolonizing projects have been inspired by the necessity to construct pluriversal practices are built upon visions and practices of economic, political, sociocultural difference in the context of heterogeneity (Quijano Valencia, Corredor Jiménez & Tobar, 2014). These movements reflect Southern efforts to redefine community goods, territory, and values as sources of hope and possibility, and decolonial work creates space for Southern actors and institutions to speak for themselves towards the North.

Destabilizing centuries of European hegemony and (re)asserting Southern identities is an ongoing process. Walter Mignolo (2000) argues the 'locus of enunciation' must shift away from the global North towards other ways of knowing the world in order to challenge the coloniality of power. The locus of enunciation is not necessarily a physical place, rather it reflects the socio-spatial positionalities of postcolonial subjects (Nagar and Ali, 2003). It is best examined through an individual or group's relationship to coloniality, and decolonial work must emphasize contingency, heterogeneity, and unpredictability to bring to light the plurality and diversity of worldviews and experiences that stubbornly persist centuries after the end of colonialism.

Within Latin America, universities present interesting historical and spatial patterns. As Spanish and Portuguese colonists transplanted to the New World by the thousands and amassed wealth, they began to constitute a new bourgeois class. Despite their lower status in the Iberian Peninsula, the *nouveau riche* throughout the colonies sought to recreate European cultural institutions and inscribe racialized hierarchies within the colonies. Recreating universities in the New World served as one of the tools to reach that goal.

The European University contrived the colonial outside as an object of study, and created the idea of Latin America as a place of intervention (Dube, 2002). Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007) argues that within the American colonies the colonial university of the 18th and 19th centuries became an instrument that served to consolidate a national identity within the colonies, the education of elites, and, later, the emergence of independence movements. But these institutions still excluded native peoples across the continent. When students declared the Manifest of Córdoba in June of 1918 that called for the “Free Republic” by breaking ties with the domination that emanated from the Church and Crown, and continuing to fight for more rights, it curiously excluded indigenous peoples, as well as their voices and bodies. Colombian Universities continued to be constituted primarily of wealthy families and political elites (Hennessy, 1979; del Mazo, 1968). Further efforts to model Latin American Universities in the form of Western Universities opened many Latin American countries to U.S.-based imperialism (Califa, 2011; Wschebor, 1974). Latin America universities became sites of novel experimentations through imperialism’s unequal topographies (see Patricio Silva, 1992 on the case of Los Chicago Boys in Augusto Pinochet’s Chile). Though contemporary Latin American universities frequently cultivate a sense of self-aware nationhood and strengthen a common future for everyone in the region (Milena Jaramillo, 2011), Yet, public universities across Latin America do not fit well within historical European models in which universities promoted human development and scientific reasoning (Brunner, 2014). Universities and academics have struggled to develop an educational institution from a Southern positionality that actively pushes back against the epistemic violence of the coloniality of power and incorporates those historically-rooted identities into its pedagogy (Asher, 2013; Pedota, 2011; Quijano, 2000).

The ‘Latin American University’ is an unsatisfying category to identify the heterogeneous educational models employed across the region since there remain a collection of varying pedagogical models (Jiménez, 2007). However, the university’s origins in the colonial creation of Latin America and controlling of indigenous peoples make it an ideal target for indigenous peoples to deconstruct and rebuild. The university, then, presents a problematic case as a potentially emancipatory institution. The university has evolved from its roots as a singular institution of knowledge formation and colonial exploitations, to the contemporary university that no longer seeks universal knowledges. However, indigenous peoples, and indeed other marginalized peoples, recognize the university as an uncomfortable space due to its role in erasing other ways of knowing

(Figueira, 2012). The pluriversity, then, is an active rejection of the university's history of subjugating native knowledges in favour of the Western University's historical monism.

The pluriversity within a university

Decolonial movements across the Americas seek to proliferate lifeworlds through their emphases on the plurality of worldviews, the particularities of lived experiences, and the historical memories of colonisation as a defining moment of indigenous peoples. What, then, is a decolonizing university, and how does it differ from the western institution? Julia Suárez-Krabbe (2012) posits that decolonizing the university must be a simultaneously Northern and Southern effort, because the institutions are mutually constitutive and the generative connections between Northern(ers) and Southern(ers) do effect profound transformations within both. Students and professors in the Revitalisation of the Mother Earth aim to awaken indigenous dreams, unite the cosmos with earth, connect the spirits in humans, animals, water, air, and land through poetry, philosophy, politics of resistance, and popular pedagogy. In this setting, knowledge is not possessed and cannot be traded as currency, but knowledge is co-created, shared, and reflective of the specific realities of each community. Participants in the program are expected to be instructors as well as students, working with their peers to weave together their community's experience in the multicultural context of the university. Here, I argue that education in the context of the RMT is: (1) cultivating an intimate relationship with, and knowing *Madre Tierra*, as I will show with examples from math lessons; (2) it is mobile, both within the campus spaces, and in indigenous communities; and (3) it is better conceptualized as a pluriversity within a university.

A pluriversity, according to Walter Mignolo (2010), has two primary pedagogical strategies. First, students and professors learn to do. That is, their work is grounded in the everyday life experiences of the Global South. Second, students and professors must unlearn and relearn to orient and comport oneself in the face of coloniality. Students who enrol in Latin American universities, however, frequently are not exposed to decolonial thinking or Latin American philosophies (Walsh, 2012). Diversity, in this setting, is privileged over alternatives. That is, alternatives are already presented as minority practices that exist relationship to a hegemonic other. It is diminutive to present these knowledges, actions, and praxis as 'alternatives'. Dipesh Chakraborty (1992) argues that recognizing varying histories from around the world through the lens of European experiences serves to incorporate the specifics of the global South into a universal European narrative. Valuing

and preserving cultural plurality through the political struggles of the indigenous university, then, is a relational framing to better understand that practices and identities exist relative to another, and that none is inherently universal.

A pluriversal framing opens political possibilities for the UAIIN as well as the analytical spaces for academicians, and therein lies its creative and productive capacities. The pluriverse, then, is composed of a multiplicity of particularities, in which preserving, celebrating, and collaborating across cultural heterogeneity is favoured over the smooth space of neoliberal multiculturalism. There is an inherent orientation toward coexistence of other ways of knowing, instead of hegemonizing a particular perspective over the many that exist. Pluriversality is place-based, partial, and perspectival by nature. Relatedly, practitioners of pluriversality eschew the universality of experience, and avoid generalizing to larger truths or laws. Finally, the pluriverse is rife with ‘collisions’ (Little Bear, 2000) and ‘cacophonous’ claims to indigenous identities and practices (Byrd, 2011) at multiple sites and scales. These collisions occur among indigenous groups and individuals, between indigenous institutions and the state, and in the everyday spaces of indigenous lives.

The pluriversity serves as a site for indigenous peoples to assert their multiplicity, build inter-group solidarity, revivify indigenous cosmovisions and languages, and sustain traditional knowledge systems. Eschewing universality in favour of multiplicity produces profound effects within the university’s spaces, as administrators, professors, and students seek to create an educational model that ‘fits’ indigenous needs and reproduces indigenous knowledges and worldviews. These indigenous knowledge systems and lifeworlds are not verbatim, singular, or unified stories and cosmovisions, rather they are common themes within diverse experiences. Yet, indigenous protocols are crucial links that mediate relationships between humans and a socionatural world, and indigenous peoples seek to act within these protocols to maintain harmony and balance (Atleo, 2004). From this perspective, indigenous education serves a vital purpose for indigenous knowledges, histories, and bodies to simply persist in a world that has sought their demise for centuries.

Los indígenas del Cauca: Cauca’s indigenous movement

Colombia’s contemporary indigenous movement has its roots in Cauca. In the early twentieth century, Manuel Quintín Lame awakened indigenous consciousness throughout southern Colombia

and organized the disparate communities against paying a *terraje* – or labour tax for access to land. By the early 1970s, Cauca's indigenous peoples – who represent numerous ethnicities such as, Nasa or Paez [northern and northeast Cauca, especially the Tierradentro area], Misak [Silvia, Cauca], Yanacona [central Cauca and Popayán], Kokonuco Totoró [northeast of Popayán, from the eponymously named communities], Eperara [Pacific coast of Cauca and Nariño], Ambaló [Silvia, Cauca], and Inga [southern Cauca and northern Putumayo] – began to organize themselves in response to their continued exploitation more than 150 years after Colombian independence. The nascent movement espoused radical nonviolence in the face of extreme violence (Aviedes, 2002). These communities primarily sought to end their highly exploitative labour conditions, recognition of their reservations, and the end extremely inequitable distribution of land. The Catholic Church, through the Archdiocese of Popayán, was the largest landowner in Cauca at the time, and the Church also held the majority of indigenous lands and people under debt (personal communication 9.August.2012).

Popayán, Cauca is the epicentre of Colombia's indigenous movement. Manuel Quintín Lame fomented an indigenous movement in the early 20th century in response to the slave-like conditions that indigenous peoples were subjected to at the time (Findji & Rojas, 1985). By the early 1970s, a growing group of indigenous actors had gained enough momentum to declare the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca – or CRIC, as I will refer to it – in an assembly of indigenous territories. They declared unity, territory, autonomy, and culture as their central organizing principles. The CRIC emerged in 1971 as Colombia's first indigenous organization that united communities from various ethnicities in one political organization. There were only seven *resguardos* and seven *cabildos*, at first (Lara, 2012). As one can imagine, Cauca's landowners were less than excited about the prospect of losing their labour force and redistributing their land. Cauca's wealthy landowners responded with violence, often killing indigenous leaders, to quell the restlessness (Peñaranda, 2012). In fact, more than 400 indigenous people have been killed during the intervening years in the struggle for recognition and protection.

Today, indigenous movements across Colombia are emplaced efforts to negotiate 'threatening territorial regimes' and maintain indigenous worldviews (Oslander, 2002; Velasco, 2011). Cauca and Popayán maintain central roles in Colombia's indigenous movements to proliferate indigenities that

are reflective of Cauca's unique history as a place of highly inequitable land distribution and where indigenous communities were never fully 'civilized' through the colonial project.

Today, the CRIC has grown to include more than 100 communities. It administers funds from the Colombian state to provide educational and healthcare services to Cauca's indigenous peoples. Further, the CRIC provides training opportunities to improve indigenous governments and governance. Finally, the CRIC established *La María* in Piendamó as a territory for reflection, dialogue, and negotiation. As the CRIC has grown in scope and scale, so has its ambition. This brings us to the UAIIN, and the CRIC's more recent efforts to awaken the consciousness of Cauca's indigenous peoples that have moved from protests into the classroom.

The UAIIN

Reimagining higher education among historically marginalized peoples in Cauca has amounted to indigenous peoples asserting their 'own educational model' that treats cultural difference as strength, rather than a reflection of a system that fails to fully indoctrinate its pupils. The UAIIN builds upon the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca's efforts to consolidate indigenous education within the department, specifically the educational efforts focused on indigenous language preservation as a means of maintaining cultural specificity among indigenous actors (Rappaport, 2003). Among indigenous actors in Cauca, Colombian universities are a living and tangible connection to systematic erasures of colonization. Indigenous persons certainly attend state-run universities, as I met numerous indigenous students who attended the Universidad del Cauca and other universities around Colombia. Placing their aspirations for greater recognition and independence in a static place and adopting the word university was a contentious process that many within the indigenous movement opposed. The simple act of naming the university dragged on over months. In fact, Washington Wala, a program administrator at the UAIIN in 2014, favoured the name *El Tejido de la Vida* – the fabric of life – to better reflect the indigenous cosmologies. Fabric – and weaving – is a common representation among Cauca's indigenous peoples (especially the Nasa and Misak) that depicts all life as interconnected and interdependent. Each thread in a woven fabric is connected, however indirectly, to every other thread in same article. No single thread exists in isolation, and collectively they create stronger cloth. Humans only represent one thread in this fabric, and we share it with the earth, air, water, plants, animals, microbes, spirits, and the cosmos – all life. In the end, representatives from the CRIC, the Bilingual Education Program (PEBI), and indigenous activists

settled on the name Autonomous Indigenous Intercultural University, or UAIIN. Leaders feared that outsiders ‘would not recognize, or, even worse, ignore’ the “*tejido de la vida*”, and the work that takes place there. Nancy, a program administrator with the Community Pedagogy line of study at the UAIIN’s primary campus, preferred the title ‘university’ for pragmatic reasons. She told me over lunch one day that, “we want people to understand what we do [in the UAIIN]. What does it matter if it’s called a ‘university’ (personal communication 8.August.2014). Thus, the name of ‘university’ was a decision that attempted to reach a broader audience in terms that non-indigenous people would recognize.

An indigenous university – in the way that Cauca’s indigenous peoples have imagined and created it is a ‘university of life’. Washington Wala characterized study at the UAIIN as an education that “...supports life, defends the rights and harmony between humans, Nature, and the species. Education is the fabric of life...connecting the spiritual, physical, philosophical with the elders, humans, species, air, water, and the Earth” (personal communication 20.September.2014). The UAIIN seeks to develop scientific and analytical skills within its students, but their work continues to recognize, reawaken, and deepening (*profundizar*) the affective relationships with the earth and cosmos. Indigenous groups practice other ways of relating to the world around them, and the UAIIN has identified maintaining and expanding these diverse cultural practices as central their mission. The UAIIN seeks to maintain its indigenous identity, while also pursuing recognition from the Colombian Ministry of Education, and these competing interests manifest themselves in the UAIIN’s educational strategies. Crucially, for Cauca’s indigenous peoples, indigeneity as redefined and reframed through indigenous thought and praxis in the UAIIN creates an opening for resistance to hegemonic state formulations of education and identity (Byrd, 2011, pg. 229).

Maintaining the diversity of Cauca’s indigenous populations is not a straightforward task. As the UAIIN works to secure legal recognition from the Colombian Ministry of Education, and has aligned itself with the University of Nicaragua’s Autonomous Regions from the Caribbean Coast, URACCAN in Nicaragua to provide students with a meaningful diploma while the UAIIN seeks approval for their degree programmes. The Ministry of Education (MoE) requires that all students have at least 5,000 hours of study during the course of their undergraduate studies. Students in the Revitalisation of Mother Earth are required to do no less than 7,000 hours of class work, research, and teaching. Despite their programme exceeding the Ministry of Education’s requirements, the

UAIIN's administrators have struggled to convince the MoE that the three lines of formation meet the Ministry's standards. Specifically, the MoE's representatives remain unconvinced of the UAIIN's calculations of the number of hours that students will actually spend 'in the classroom'. More importantly, the RMT's programme coordinators – John Jairo and Washington Wala – were wary of seeking the MoE's approval for their coursework, because of the potential to flatten indigenous identities in the name of standardization. The movement to obtain formal recognition from the Ministry of Education continues despite these concerns.

The administration and programme coordinators designed the academic calendar to minimize the inconvenience of students being away from home. The programme calendar has also been constructed to reflect the realities of life and work in the countryside. There are five 15- to 18-day sessions per year, when students are expected to travel to the UAIIN and participate in each intensive session. Students pitch their tents, and live in the campus for the duration of each session and return to their communities when classes have finished. Each of the UAIIN's three lines of undergraduate study consists of five years of study, but the UAIIN's directors and administrators were very clear that a typical academic year would be untenable for most potential indigenous participants for two reasons. First, many of the potential students do not live near Popayán, or even in Cauca, and they cannot commute daily or weekly between campus and home. Second, due to the geographic distance, the prospect of a student being absent from his or her house for nine to ten months while he or she pursues a degree from the UAIIN would undermine indigenous cultures. As has been the case with indigenous communities throughout the Americas, incorporating indigenous actors into a traditional academic schedule tends to disrupt indigenous cultural reproduction by taking generations of indigenous students out of their communities and placing them in a classroom. In this sense, education can quickly become a tool to incorporate bodies and minds into modern society. Leaders members within both Cauca's indigenous movement and the UAIIN did not want to reproduce an educational model that actively disrupts indigenous cultures, so they settled on a schedule that maximizes time in the classroom while minimizing the time away from home for students. Nancy once told me "we spent more than a year developing a calendar that reflects an indigenous life in the countryside" (personal communication 9.August.2014).

However, this structure poses other challenges for the students. The students enrolled in the programme must travel from all over southern Colombia – with some students taking two full days

to travel to the UAIIN's campus. Their families acutely suffer from their absences and need to fill their presences in the home. Indigenous communities have been scattered across southern Colombia due to conquest, physical resettlement, and ongoing civil unrest. The first day of the session is typically poorly attended, as students trickle in from their communities throughout the day. Gerardo, who lives in a community along Colombia's Pacific coast, would spend approximately \$300 – the Colombian minimal monthly salary is \$310 – in order to travel to campus when class was in session. His annual travel costs to the UAIIN's campus far exceed the cost of enrolment in the UAIIN. The strong contingent of Nasa students travels from across northern Cauca and Popayán to participate. Fernando Grefa spent a day traveling in a *chiva* from the Colombian Amazon to attend. The geographic separation of its constituent communities complicates the UAIIN's mission, and it favours the indigenous individuals who live closer to campus. Students simply cannot afford to pay for long journeys. As a result, members of north Cauca's Nasa communities tend to be highly represented within the UAIIN's three lines of formation.

The programme requires that all participants bring something from their community to support to the group during its stay. For example, Don Alejandro brought cheese, coca leaves, and quinoa to share with the group. Patricio lugged *aguardiente* with him on a bus from nearby Tambo. No one arrives empty-handed. It is a community that depends on one another to thrive. Obligating students to bring food, indigenous medicinal plants, and other goods to support each session is a practical attempt to address the UAIIN's precarious funding situation. Like most aspects of Cauca's indigenous movement, leaders at the UAIIN have been reluctant to accept outside funds due to pervasive concerns over non-indigenous influence in indigenous groups. Waman Orozco, a member of the CRIC's High Council, once commented to me, "We have never been liked by the state because we reject their demands and money. We don't want them to make decisions for us, and we fight to stay independent from [the state's influence]" (personal communication 12.August.2012). Symbolically, gifting something to the UAIIN demonstrates an individual's solidarity with their fellow indigenous students. Gifting support materials the UAIIN does provide another financial hurdle that students must overcome. Gerardo, who travelled for two days to get to campus, could not afford to transport anything to campus.

In my conversations with these students they made it clear that they can be included in public universities – even receiving a monthly stipend as well as full tuition payments to attend – but

Colombia's 'quota' is a system that counts the simple presence of indigenous bodies as sufficient to demonstrate that indigenous peoples are no longer subjected to colonial structures of exclusion. Willy, a young Nasa student from northern Cauca who was enrolled in the RMT, explained to me that most students who are enrolled in the UAIIN would rather attend state universities because the Colombian government pays more to the students who enrol at those institutions. He also acknowledged that a diploma from the University of Cauca is 'worth more'. But, Willy explained that indigenous persons often feel 'alienated' and 'isolated' when they attend these universities because the professors and fellow students do not 'accept indigenous worldviews. They only see the world through a Western perspective'. Willy was not alone. Shinzhi Warmi told me that she valued the UAIIN because it allowed her to express herself without fear of 'prejudice from her classmates or professors'. Even though a degree from a state university conveyed greater cultural capital, indigenous participants in the UAIIN remain uneasy with the disciplining power of Colombian universities. Students in the UAIIN recognize that have been offered physical inclusion in a university space, but they feel that Colombian universities also require them to suspend or exclude their indigenous worldviews to fully participate.

Classroom spaces Indigenous appropriation of space at La Colina and La Aldea

The RMT holds its classes at a separate space named *La Colina*, which is a former recreational facility that housed fishing ponds, a restaurant, a playground for children, and exotic animals during the 1980s and 90s. Today, the site is a 39-hectare working farm that has some livestock, and has approximately 10 hectares dedicated to avocado, coffee, and banana production. These three crops are a point of significant tension between members of the UAIIN, but that is another discussion. Students who have enrolled in the RMT come from all over Cauca, and, indeed, southern Colombia. The students represented the Inga [southern Cauca and northern Putumayo], Yanacona [southern Cauca and Popayán], Sia or Eperara Síapidara [Pacific Coast of western Cauca and Nariño], Waunan [western Cauca and Valle del Cauca], Kokonuco [north of Popayán], and Nasa [northern Cauca] communities. Those from the coast had travelled by boat, bus, and foot for two and half days, spent 600.000 Colombian pesos in transit – which is approximately \$300, and is the Colombian monthly minimum wage – and, for the moment, received no financial assistance for these frequent migrations.

The CRIC recovered the property in the early 2000s, after it had supposedly fallen into the hands of *narcos* – or drug traffickers – during the early 1990s. Since the CRIC purchased *La Colina* in the early 2000s, it has served as a place to house indigenous educational and organizational events. It is more secluded than the UAIIN’s campus in Popayán – there is no cellular service, Internet, or distractions – and the space is often utilized for indigenous-only planning events. Indigenous leaders prefer to use La Colina, because they feel that technological isolation leads to more engaged actors and better decision-making. In fact, Washington Wala once commented to me that the isolation helps the students to foster deep engagement with each other and their work. It is easier to cultivate what Arturo Escobar calls ‘thinking-feeling’ students beyond the oppressive ubiquity of Facebook, text messages, and WhatsApp, which was a primary concern of Professor Jorge Fula. John Jairo and Washington Wala had the opportunity to offer their classes at the UAIIN’s principal campus in Popayán, but they refused to do so because they wanted to achieve a deep engagement with, and between the students.

The UAIIN’s principal campus is known as La Aldea, and it is housed in a recovered military school and barracks. The CRIC purchased the plot on the outskirts of Popayán from the Ministry of the Interior in the mid-2000s, with the intention of creating a space for indigenous education. But the space was not ready for use. The UAIIN required extensive harmonization ceremonies in order to restore its balance with *madre tierra*, and ensure that all who pass through its gates are in a place that is free of negative energies and spirits. The harmonization ceremonies took place over weeks, and involved traditional healers from various indigenous communities. Some of the spiritual healers drank *yagé* – to ‘plant their feet in the ground and their spirits in the cosmos’ – and identify the sources of negative energies. Others chewed coca leaves to connect their bodies to Mother Earth. Still more imbibed *aguardiente* – an anise-flavoured spirit. All made offerings to the elements – earth, air, water, and fire. Once the healers had appeased the spirits and chased away the negative energies, the space still required further protection. Indigenous members of the UAIIN began to reorganize the landscape’s features, and paint the spaces to reinforce the spiritual cleansing. Spiritually powerful rocks were brought in from various sacred sites around Cauca, and arranged in rhombuses around the campus. ‘Hot’ and ‘cold’ plants were planted in the courtyard in order to create balance in the land, its fruits, and the plants’ energies.

Knowing *Madre Tierra* and Practical mathematics

I arrived at the UAIIN through an acquaintance who happened to be collaborating with students in the Intercultural Communication line of formation. Rather fortuitously, I met Washington Wala, who was working to establish the Programme for the Revitalization of Mother Earth, and he invited me to participate in their next session. Studies in the RMT are continually engaged in a process of knowing *Madre Tierra*, and it is intimately connected to the place. Classes take place in the middle of *Madre Tierra*, not separate from her. The UAIIN's classroom is the world around the students: land, air, water, animals, species, and spirits. During my time with the UAIIN, I participated in several different lessons. Sessions covered diverse topics such as the life plan process, administration of the *economía propia* (their own traditional economic practices and identities), indigenous worldviews, and mathematics. In this section, I examine the mathematics lessons within the RMT as a concrete manifestation of indigenous attempts to decolonize indigenous minds, practices, and spaces. Math in the Americas predates the arrival of Europeans, and has deep roots among indigenous peoples. The majority of the mathematics lesson focused on highlighting indigenous practices of counting and finding order in nature.

Our professor Jorge Fula started our math lesson by delineating the boundaries between 'our' math and 'their' math, and the processes that erased indigenous knowledges. "They have told us that we do not have mathematics. This affirms itself and we begin to say it. *Yes*, we do have mathematics. For example, we have calendars, which are not necessarily written, but live on in our practices...we need to return to and revive [these practices]." Then, what exactly is indigenous mathematics, how does one 'decolonize' math, and what distinguishes these practices of mathematics from Western math? We all filed in to the former restaurant space early on a sunny morning in September to engage these larger questions. More importantly, we sought to untangle these questions through practicing indigenous mathematics. In spite of my sordid history with math, I cannot remember ever being so truly excited for math in my entire life.

We were combing a hillside at La Colina in order to find math in nature. We dodged the aggressive billy goat. I pulled back on the gate so the other group members could squeeze through the barbed-wire fence and continue climbing the hill. I glanced across the valley and saw that other students had climbed into the garden for the sunflower. I said to Paolo, "look...they are picking the sunflower". He dryly called them all '*flojos*' – or lazy. Our group agreed that the sunflower was the 'easy' choice,

what, with its obvious patterns, round shape, and one flower. “It’s easy to prove that flower is *the* example, when there is only one of them,” quipped Gustavo. Thankfully, Emma called us over to look at a flower that she found on a different shrub before we dwelled too long on the sunflower topic.

The five of us walked over to the shrub, and we all grabbed our own branch. “The leaves are always in pairs and they alternate between horizontal and vertical,” said Vicente, and Emma nodded in assent. David quickly noted, “I have 13 petals on this flower.” Our most recent plant discovery notwithstanding, we quickly agreed that there was nothing of interest for us on that hillside, so we wandered back down towards the main building at La Colina. Emma led us to the gardens immediately in front of the building, and the professor’s words echoed in my head, “Mother Earth is numerical, and well-structured and organized...we need to touch, smell, taste and use our senses to get to know a plant”. Finally, we found *it*. We picked *hierbabuena*, which is a member of the mint family, as our plant, and we went about describing its qualities. It is a rhizome that follows sunlight. Its roots and stems are square-shaped. The leaves were almost always arranged in pairs on opposite sides of the stem or root, and they alternated up the stem. The leaves’ edges were serrated. Flowers were white to lavender in colour, and all had four to six petals. Then our description moved beyond patterns, shapes, and relationships to the plant’s energy and spiritual qualities. Leaves always occurred in pairs because life has a dual nature. *Hierbabuena* was a ‘cold’ plant. This was a math lesson at the UAIIN.

Indigenous mathematics are diverse in their practices. For example, Washington Wala asked us all, “If our grandparents didn’t have mathematics, then how did they eat ever day of the year? How did they ensure that they garden always produced food? That, *compañeras y compañeros*, is math!” We discussed the role of shapes and patterns for Cauca’s indigenous peoples. The rhombus represents the body, elements, and life. Finally, Jorge told us that, yes, certain forms of math are not from the South. He specifically identified negative numbers as a product of capitalist exchanges and the development of credit to foster its continual movement.

Jorge moved on to share the many ways in which the *pueblos originarios* (indigenous peoples) have developed mathematics since time immemorial, “As native peoples we see mathematics in Nature – its geometric figures, numbers, structures, order, and symmetry – and it is not a product of Greek or

Egyptian thought. This history is a construction of Western rule. We had our own math, and [Europeans] imposed other mathematics schemes upon us.”

Mathematics from indigenous cosmovision(s) intends to make sense of world around them and serve to administer the *economía propia*, that is the house, socially reproductive labour, maintaining a supply of medicinal plants, and the planting and harvesting of the crops. Jorge reminded the class that “Traditional healers use math to prepare medicines. Midwives calculate a pregnancy’s progress, and under which moon a baby will be born. They count. Healers and leaders have the ability to analyse, compare, and calculate” These practices of mathematics are life, and all competent indigenous actors must be capable of performing the mathematical calculations of life itself.

Jorge paced back and forth in front of the class, stopping momentarily at a planter along the western wall of the room to look at a succulent, and waving his arms around as he convinced us that the *pueblos originarios* did, in fact, have math. “Every plant, animal, human and cosmos has its own symmetry and order. [In life] we find mathematics. Each flower has a certain number of petals. Each branch has so many leaves.” He later pointed out that, “We find mathematics in indigenous calendars, [weavings], mountains, streams, rocks, and other parts of the landscape have geometric shapes, structures and numbers. We have the math in our daily lives.”

Practicing math is engaging with the world around the student. After our first day of classes, the professor gave us all a homework assignment. We were told to measure body using the length of our hand as the ruler. First, we were to determine how long our face was, relative to our hand. Mine is approximately one hand-length long. Second, we were asked to measure our body length with our hand. I could fit about nine lengths of my hand in the length of my body. Curiously, 23 other students in the class came up with eight hands, and one student had seven. This ‘discovery’ created a vigorous discussion about the genetic differences between ‘*europesos*’ and indigenous peoples. Regardless, this homework was an exercise in identifying ratios in the human body itself. Students were all expected to present their height as a ratio; my hand length is one-ninth the length of my body. We mapped mathematics onto our bodies with our hands to connect indigenous knowledges, bodies, and identities. Professor Fula wanted his students to walk away from his early math lessons knowing that it is present within all facets of nature, and he wanted students to re-contextualize their relationships with math and the world around them from an indigenous perspective. As Jorge and I

sat enjoying our lunches one day, he commented to me “It appears to me that the greatest challenge we have is to make people believe that *our indigenous knowledges* are worth something and from here” (personal communication 16.September.2014).

The mobile classroom and emplaced knowledges

The UAIIN’s practices acknowledge how knowledges and experiences themselves are *emplaced*. That is, they are reflective of the experiences of people in places, not placeless peoples. Experiences from the North do not make sense in Cauca. Here I draw upon the solar and lunar calendars from the Nasa to help me illustrate my point. The paths of the Sun and Moon have emerged from the Andean highlands experience, where people have long sight lines and clear views of the sky. The ‘path of the sun’ (or the solar calendar) reflects this movement above specific peaks across the sky, or illuminating specific valleys at specific times of the year. Yet, one cannot simply apply the Nasa solar calendar to the jungles of the Pacific Coast. It simply does not make sense there. The Nasa solar calendar traces the movement of the sun as it relates to specific mountaintops on the horizon and the changing of the seasons in the Andean *cordillera*. In the Nasa cosmivision, the solar calendar relates the location of the sun to the specific climatic conditions of the highlands and the prevailing character traits of people born during that period. For example, the period of December 21 through March 20 of each year is the period of *sol picante* (strong sun) in northern Cauca. People born during that period are also “*picantes*” (spicy or biting) who like to ‘bother and keep other people awake’ through their actions. These people are related to the sun and can ‘call’ the sun to end the rainy season. This is emplaced knowledge and it does not help others to make sense of their world if they are not in the same setting.

Now, I look to a classroom experience on dreams to explore the politics of partiality, orientations towards the coexistence of multiple ways of knowing and being in the world, and intercultural education. I walked down the long driveway to the UAIIN’s La Colina campus on September 15, 2014 and I was anxious for the day ahead, my first with the RMT. I had just met Patricio, a student enrolled in the RMT, and we had finished discussing the plan for the coming 16 days. Patricio and I were the first to arrive, and we used the next hour to share stories and get to know one another as the students, professors, and friends trickled in. More students continued arriving after lunch as Washington Wala began the afternoon class with a phrase that I had never heard before, ‘We nasa have always been oneiric peoples.’ I felt a strange mix of excitement and panic because I had no idea

what he meant by that phrasing. Thankfully, Washington went on to explain, ‘Oneiric peoples believe in the power of dreams. We recognise their power to show us a path and tell us a story that we need to interpret.’ Washington spent the next 20 minutes of the lesson sharing his recent dreams with us, to demonstrate the power of dreaming and engaging them to ‘understand how to prepare and act after a dream’.

The day’s lesson was not intended to instruct other indigenous peoples how to approach dreams, rather, Washington sought to share the Nasa worldview with his indigenous partners and demonstrate the plurality of ‘protocols’ that mediate indigenous relationships to nature (Atleo, 2004). Washington had recently crashed his motorcycle after a night of ‘partying’ (*rumbeando*), and the week prior to crashing his motorcycle he dreamt that an old friend had ‘reached out to greet him with his left hand’. Greeting with the left hand is a transgression of a social norm and was a bad omen for Washington, however, he quipped that he did not do anything to convert the negative energy into positive energy because he ‘wanted to see what would happen’. 500,000 Colombian Pesos in repairs to his motorcycle and two broken ribs was the answer to his question. Yet, his lesson here was clear to us in the classroom. Dreams connect humans in an indigenous world to the more-than-human and cosmos. They herald a possible future and demand action of indigenous peoples to realize the good premonitions or prevent possible calamity. Washington then split the still growing class into two separate groups and we were instructed to identify 10 different dreams that had recently occurred to a participant and how an indigenous group would interpret each one.

Shinzhi Warmi took control of our group, and quickly shared four dreams that she or her family members had recently. They ranged from a venomous snake in the garden to a heavy rainstorm during the typical dry season. Don Alejandro, an elder student from Bolivar, Cauca who had been active in Cauca’s indigenous movement since the 1970s, remained dubious of their claims about their dream. Don Alejandro commanded deep respect from his fellow students because of his long history within Cauca’s indigenous movement. Don Alejandro disagreed with Shinzhi Warmi’s interpretation of her dream and its significance. A venomous snake, according to Shinzhi Warmi was a good omen of a productive harvest to come. The snake, in her view, was drawn into the garden to prey on rodents that were feasting on the garden’s especially abundant crop (personal communication 15.September.2014). Don Alejandro interjected, “I don’t know. To me, the snake is a sign of future problems. Snakes are tricky animals, and I would be careful after that dream. In fact,

I would make a coca offering to the mountain and ask my neighbour [the shaman] to help cleanse me and the garden” (personal communication 15.September.2015). The diverging desires of the UAIIN’s numerous stakeholders come into tension in these moments. Don Alejandro and Shinzhi Warmi were exchanging their situated perspectives to better understand each other. The UAIIN’s administrators, however, are struggling to find a place for these intercultural knowledge exchanges within the context of the Colombian Ministry of Education.

Vladimir, John Jairo, and Washington Wala and I ate lunch together the next day and I asked them why it was important for us to discuss dreams in these classes that sought to ‘revitalize Mother Earth’, especially when the interpretations were so apparently discordant. Vladimir was a Yanacona professor who had led several the mathematics lessons, and he was quick to tell me that for the Yanacona this work is not about “having *the Yanacona* worldview, but about valuing systems of knowledge that have disappeared” (personal communication 16.September.2014). It was less important that the community maintained a singular way to interpret their dreams, yet it was crucial that Yanacona community members, like Shinzhi Warmi, perform their indigenous identities and re-create them. John Jairo quickly added to that sentiment by claiming, “we [professors and administrators] do not want to teach the students how to be indigenous. We [professors and administrators] do not own being indigenous. We’re here to support [the students’] ability to be indigenous” (personal communication 16.September.2014). Vladimir, John Jairo, and Washington Wala are working to create a platform that supports Cauca’s indigenous peoples and promotes solidarity between these communities because they are unique manifestations of indigenous identity.

Returning to the group discussion on dreaming, it is crucial to understand the positionalities of the student participants. Don Alejandro is an indigenous man who grew up during the 1950s and 60s when an indigenous political identity was a potential death sentence. His connections to an indigeneity were tinged by his violent memories of monolingual Spanish education and beatings at the hands of landowners and Colombian police. Don Alejandro did not claim allegiance to any particular ethnic group or worldview – though every other student did – and he was confronting the generational differences within the indigenous movement that emerged in these discussions of dreaming. Shinzhi Warmi was born in the early 1990s and had only known an indigenous political identity that was recognized and protected by the state, observed by international nongovernmental organizations, and openly practiced. Shinzhi Warmi was struggling to be Yanacona, though she did

not speak Quichua, and to teach her son to be the same. Despite these differences, no one doubted that dreams were meaningful and reflections of their lives in this world.

The pedagogical strategies employed during the lesson on dreaming were intended to push students into the specific worlds and worldviews from their communities by examining their dreams and relationships to the world. Eduardo Kohn (2013) argues that it is insufficient to acknowledge the diverse worldviews that remain across Latin America today. Rather, it is crucial to engage the indigenous worlds that continue to thrive (pg. 12). Re-vivifying indigenous cosmopolitical plurality begins from the position that reality includes many worldviews, many worlds, many ways of being, and many ways of knowing the world, cosmos, and life (de la Cadena, 2015). However, dreams alone are insufficient to realize indigenous futures. Washington Wala created a situation in which students openly shared dreams with each other, and, interestingly, analysed each others' dreams from their differing perspectives.

The decolonial pluriversity within a university

According to Walter Mignolo, a pluriversity deploys two primary pedagogical strategies. First, students and professors learn to do. That is, their work is grounded in the everyday life experiences. Second, students and professors must unlearn and relearn. I would like to revisit how these two aspects of the pluriversity manifest themselves within the UAIIN's walls and pedagogical practice, but struggle to find traction at an institutional level as the UAIIN works with the Ministry of Education to gain accreditation.

First, students 'learn to do' through action. Not action without thought. Rather, students are constantly engaged in "an-other" mathematics in their communities and education. For example, another way that we practiced indigenous, lived math was through the construction of a greenhouse. The greenhouse was a means to connect the lunar and solar calendars to the practices of life. The lunar and solar calendars combined, provide indigenous actors with a guide on when one should perform certain activities. An engaged *indígena* does not simply cut her hair whenever she pleases, for example. Human energy reflects the energy that the moon gives to Mother Earth. A new moon is weak and fragile, and the hair is not strong enough to be trimmed at that moment. One must wait until the moon is bigger, and her energy is stronger.

Building a greenhouse through a *minga* – communal labour – united all of bodies together in one common goal. We all laboured together under the strong sun in the high Andes, while the cows chomped the river grass along the creek bed. Collecting wheelbarrows full of chicken droppings from one corner of the farm, rich black topsoil from the hillside, and bright red clay from a different hill. Sifting the topsoil and fertilizer. Swinging machetes to trim the *guadua* (a type of bamboo) to its proper length. Building a roof for the vermicomposting trough. Erecting the chain link fence. And, attempting to fill 5,000 one-litre plastic bags with the topsoil mixture across two days. It was an ambitious project, and, in the end, we did not manage to fill all 5,000 bags. However, the students who spent hours squatting next to a mound of topsoil took the opportunity to talk about their respective communities and share their experiences.

As we began to construct the greenhouse, the new moon had just begun. While we all filled bags with dirt, Shinzhi Warmi and I were discussing what they would plant in the bags that we were filling. She had brought corn to plant, but none of knew if everyone would be sowing their seeds during this 15-day session. Shinzhi Warmi was not one to let a question go unanswered and she shouted, “¡*Profel*! Are we planting our seeds now?” Washington Wala, who had been joking with a group of Nasa guys trimming bamboo, took off his bandana and told us ‘no’. Washington Wala said, “We can’t plant right now because the moon is a *bebecito*”. Planting now would give us weak plants, small yields, and hardly any seeds to plant again. Life ebbs and flows with the moon’s energy, and, as much as we all wanted to plant as soon as possible, it would have to wait according to indigenous knowledges of agriculture and the cosmos.

Here we can see students learning to do. Building a greenhouse was a very practical exercise – they needed the greenhouse, after all – but it also presented numerous opportunities to explore indigenous worldviews. Through the greenhouse, we all learned how the moon, seeds, and Cauca’s land are intimately and endlessly connected.

Second, students and professors must ‘unlearn and relearn’ in a pluriversity. Here, I would like to return to the comments that the two professors made during our math lessons. Washington Wala’s and Jorge Fula’s lectures were as much about practicing math as they were about affirming indigenous identities through unlearning Western educational experiences and narratives.

Washington Wala and Jorge endeavoured to galvanize an indigenous political identity by telling indigenous histories of indigenous mathematics.

The university is also a practice in decolonization through its fluid relationships between students, instructors, and university administration. Students are also instructors there also students the co-learning coproducing all participating in this process of study of the study of life. Even instructors frequently deferred to older students, the *mayores* who had been a part of the indigenous movement since the 1980s.

The UAIIN certainly faces many of the same problems as universities around the world. Funding is scarce, which has shifted the financial burdens of attendance to the students. The academic calendar which includes six fifteen-day sessions every year attempts to minimize the amount of time that students and instructors spend away from their communities while in session, but it is incredibly challenging for students to disappear from their homes and communities for fifteen consecutive days. Shinzhi Warmi brought her son with her most days, and she commented to me that there was ‘no way’ that she could attend the university without bringing her son. Patricio attended for the first four days of the session, but then he had to return to his nearby village to help prepare the community for an annual gastronomic festival. Gerardo travelled from the Pacific coast over a period of two and half days – a journey that includes a daylong boat ride, an overnight in a coastal town, a daylong bus ride to the next big city, followed by another overnight stay in Cali, and then a bus ride to Popayán. Gerardo’s family of six children and his wife all must make up the extra work in his absence. Catherine Walsh (2007) argues that decolonial thinking requires ‘an-other thinking’ that is grounded in the everyday experiences and actually existing realities of coloniality, and we see how the UAIIN confronts the complicated realities of indigenous livelihoods in Cauca, Colombia.

Discussion – contradictions and negotiations in the UAIIN

Decolonization is messy. The UAIIN embodies the contradictory currents in Colombia’s indigenous movement. The prevailing indigenous discourses condemn the state for its failure to comply with accords, yet there is a concomitant movement to comply with the state for greater recognition. Administrators and programme directors alike clearly stated their desire to create a model of education that is reflective of the histories and realities of indigenous peoples in Colombia. The UAIIN is also going through a formalisation process with the Colombian Ministry of Education to

gain recognition for the diplomas that they UAIIN can provide its students. Public discourse and actual practices of the UAIIN's leaders are apparently discordant. I argue, however, these practices are pragmatic responses to Colombia's situation. An indigenous pluriversity in southern Colombia is a hybrid institution that is a site of colliding 'jagged worldviews' (Little Bear, 2000) and effects intercultural indigenous unity by working across and maintaining cultural difference.

The UAIIN's administrators recognize its precarious position 'outside' Colombia's university system, and I felt these contradictions acutely during my time with the RMT. My role as outside expert also highlights the challenging and contradictory work that happens in the Indigenous University. Professors and administrators seek to keep the Western world at arm's length by employing indigenous professors, who are steeped in Cauca's indigenous movement, to orient newer generations of indigenous political actors. At the same time, the UAIIN is seeking recognition from the Colombian state in order become a degree-granting institution, and their work has been heavily reliant upon alliances with outside academics (both Northern and Southern) and transnational solidarity networks. My presence in the UAIIN was a calculated risk for all parties involved.

One can see these strategies in the ways that the UAIIN's students portray university studies. A degree from the UAIIN is more ambiguous without the state's recognition. Indigenous leaders are ambivalent about obtaining official recognition, for fear that they UAIIN itself would be potentially compromised by national educational standards, or the indigenous movement itself might be compromised. The students would prefer to attend a state university because its diploma is 'worth more'. Students who attend state universities receive greater benefits from the Colombian state. Their tuition is frequently paid in full and they are given a monthly stipend to support themselves. More importantly, when one graduates from an accredited university one receives a diploma clearly conveys status.

Decolonizing education is simultaneously a theoretical and political project in the UAIIN that aims to destabilize the knowledge production higher educational model that arrived with Europeans. The knowledges the UAIIN seeks to effect are locally rooted in ancestral knowledges (de Carvalho & Flórez-Flórez, 2014). These knowledges are emplaced, for example, through the mathematics lessons that I have shared in this article.

The students and administrators do enjoy the freedom they have from the state's more rigid requirements, for the moment. Washington and John Jairo were given nearly complete autonomy to run the Programme for the Revitalisation of Mother Earth within the UAIIN, provided the students were meeting predetermined benchmarks. John Jairo and Washington informed me that each student had to begin their community 'research' project before the end of their first year, share their results with their classmates, and begin to enrol participants from their home communities (personal communication 28.September.2014). Abel Andy and Alexander both felt that the UAIIN's creative pedagogy and was 'better' for the indigenous communities that have 'not maintained their identities and practices since the arrival of Europeans' (personal communication 24.September.2014). Their comments reflect the uneven topographies of power within Cauca's indigenous movement, the relatively tenuous situation that many indigenous groups occupy within Colombia, and the indigenous organizations themselves. In Abel and Alexander's eyes, these more precarious communities gained more from engaging with representatives from indigenous institutions because they 'no longer speak their own language, manage their own gardens, or use native medicines' (personal communication 24.September.2014). Working across indigenous identities helped Washington and John Jairo to cultivate a sense of indigenous identity despite the differences between the UAIIN's constituent communities.

Here I build on Guyatri Spivak's (1988) notion of 'strategic essentialism' to make my case that indigenous peoples in are engaged in a dual movement within the UAIIN's walls. First, the administrators, professors, and students struggle every day to vivify the diverse and varied worlds and worldviews they inhabit and practice. Re-making indigenous worlds and identities within the UAIIN's classrooms focuses on the diversity of experiences and perspectives of the UAIIN's students. However, the UAIIN, as an institution works to strategically universalise the rich difference of its participants to harmonize the cacophonous indigenous voices speaking to the non-indigenous world. The UAIIN's administrators struggle with nurturing the particular and plural worldviews of its students in its classrooms, while simultaneously creating an educational institution that complies with national higher education standards. I call this dual movement a strategic universalisation. The UAIIN's leaders intentionally deemphasises indigenous difference to fabricate an indigenous unity to claim authority when speaking to the Colombian Ministry of Education in their negotiations to recognise the UAIIN as an accredited institution of higher education. Yet, the

professors and program administrators struggle to bring intercultural difference to the fore in their lessons.

Though these negotiations with the MoE do not coincide with the classroom's activities, but their ramifications are felt across the curriculum as students are made to comply with the MoE's requirements. For example, students must strictly track the number of hours they are on campus and doing community research in their home communities to demonstrate they have completed the requisite hours of study and research. Students are also being made to produce a 'report' following the completion of their research so the UAIIN can demonstrate to the MoE that all students have met the state's requirements. Regardless, Nancy, John Jairo, and Washington all made it perfectly clear to me in our discussions, the UAIIN was meeting the Ministry of Education's standards, and not the other way around. Therein lies the fundamental contradiction of building an educational model that seeks to undo the coloniality of power while seeking the state's approval, and it reflects the pragmatic nature of Cauca's indigenous peoples.

Though its goals fundamentally shift the academic preparation that occurs through its pedagogy and within its classrooms, the UAIIN as an institution attempts to cultivate an indigenous identity that begins by recognizing the value and legitimacy of its participants' multiple identities. That is, there is not *one* indigenous identity that is acceptable, but *many*. Recognizing that the meanings these identities are dynamic, open, and relational, allows for us to recognize these indigenities as a constitutive part of Colombian identity, and not a divisive feature (Penrose, 2013).

Indigenous peoples' individual experiences have been linked to the epistemic erasures of coloniality as 'spiritual homelessness' that devalues indigenous orientations, worldviews, and ways of being in the world (Christensen, 2013). A physical place alone is inadequate to engender a sense of belonging. The UAIIN is a place that indigenous actors (re)create and define. It exists on their terms for them to educate themselves according to their worldviews. In mathematics lessons, this means that math lessons begin from a location of indigenous empowerment. Professor Jorge Fula spent half a day emphasizing where indigenous peoples across the Americas did practice math, how indigenous groups maintained math prior to European invasions, and the unique logics that underpinned indigenous mathematics. These knowledges are placed – and practiced – in indigenous communities and territories.

Despite these simultaneous movements toward and away from the Colombian state, the UAIIN does present a distinct mode of educational praxis that challenges the foundations of the western university. The UAIIN certainly does have two campuses in Cauca where students, professors, and participants come together and co-produce shared knowledges. These campuses, however, really do not demarcate the boundaries of learning and engagement.

Conclusion

If the Western University has traditionally attempted to universalize, generalize, and form abstract theories, then how is an indigenous University different? I posit that that UAIIN is a pluriversity within a university where western and indigenous worldviews collide (Little Bear 2000), and the UAIIN effects intercultural indigenous unity by working across and maintaining cultural difference. I have argued that, within the walls of the UAIIN, indigenous communities engage in intercultural education that cultivates cultural diversity and practice a hybrid form of indigenous higher education in southern Colombia. On one hand, the UAIIN's administrators attempt to satisfy the Colombian Ministry of Education's educational standards to gain recognition for the education it provides students. Meeting the MoE's criteria demands the UAIIN demonstrate that all students who study within its walls receive a standardised education. However, the professors and programme coordinators struggle to provide educational experiences that emphasise the particular worldviews of its diverse participants.

The UAIIN is decolonized through *action* and *practice*. There are numerous cosmovisions, histories, and identities that the UAIIN incorporates to represent Cauca's indigenous peoples. The UAIIN engenders distinct forms of knowledge production and exchange from Northern Universities. Students who attend the UAIIN find unity in difference, and, indeed, across difference. That is, the UAIIN's education is rooted in cultural difference, and it recognizes the diversity of experiences and histories of each community. Maintaining this diversity is crucial to recuperate, strengthen, and vitalize the *Madre Tierra*.

The UAIIN reasserts indigenous identities by appropriating a western educational model but returning education to the processes of cultural reproduction among peers, by requiring all students to engage in community investigation and popular education within their own communities. In

practice, the UAIIN is a pluriversity that builds on the diversity of its participants to foster thinking-feeling students who engage Mother Earth through deep and spiritual connections.

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Chapter 2 – Decolonizing economic practices: economic activism, ‘*lo propio*’, and re-socializing economies

In a smallish cooperative dairy below the steep verdant slopes of the Colombian *páramo* in rural Cauca, Juan Constanza stared into the audience as he waited for a response from the people who were sitting in front of an enormous map of northern Cauca, Colombia. Juan had previously lived in an indigenous community until recently, but he had been kicked out of the community for ‘bothering’ others. When I met him in 2014, Juan was teaching online courses for Gaia University and organizing and leading economic activist workshops for the Our Colombia Foundation. He had an intense gaze that reflected his passion for his work. Juan Constanza – a biologist by training – had just talked the group through the significant environmental threats that confront Cauca on a daily basis. Cauca’s riparian zones are experiencing intensive development and stressing the region’s surface water supplies. Large extractive industries in the high *páramos* were consuming massive amounts of potable water, and discharging polluted effluent – to say nothing of the impacts of paramilitary groups that accompany the arrival of these industries in Colombia. Large agricultural operations are depleting soils and swallowing up the remaining land. His partial list of mostly environmental threats was meant to sharpen the audience’s focus as he led us through an exercise to identify the region’s strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats. Juan Constanza reminded us all that the crucial part of this work was to ‘construct an identity and create unity’ and this work requires everyone to support ‘new territorialities that emerge from an environment of multiculturalism’. But how does one exactly ‘do’ that?

The meeting at which Juan Constanza spoke is one example of the intersecting efforts that are underway across Colombia to re-introduce the social aspect of economies, and highlight the importance of social relations in economic activities. These budding activists coalesced to further develop the *economía propia* (their ‘own’ economy) and reclaim *an* economy as theirs. Socializing the economy is a means of reclaiming ownership over diverse economic practices and identities that constitute actually existing economies. The assemblages of practices, bodies, and identities that are awkwardly sutured together though lived economies are erased through the construction of an economy of distant and impersonal transnational finance capital, which is conflated as an analogue for *the* economy. Activism across rural Cauca and Valle del Cauca is cemented around deconstructing the assertion that economies are distant and impersonal.

This chapter, then, seeks to examine how peasant movements in rural Cauca, Colombia are practicing and maintaining diverse economic livelihoods with ‘new territorialities’ as global capitalism seeks investment opportunities across Colombia. I highlight actually existing, lived household economies that replace the abstract capitalist market with markets as spaces of practicing economic subjectivities, and calling the social nature of economic relations to the fore. Building on feminist political economy that pushes back against masculinist finance capitalism, wage labor, and monetized exchanges, I highlight efforts to re-introduce identities and social relations to economic practices. Capitalism – as a shining example of Northern logics – is a collection of dispositions that seek to enclose and integrate the multiplicity of imaginaries and worldviews that continue to flourish across the world today (Quijano, 2012). Economic identities are not limited to capitalism’s hegemonic field of influence, rather, they are plural and always becoming. The plurality of economic practices and identities that persist at capitalism’s periphery have been cast as anachronistic vestiges of a pre-modern economy, but the people who continue to practice these economic livelihoods do not identify as such. In Cauca, Colombia, peasant activists use their difference to demonstrate their strength as they persist in the face of a supposedly inevitable neoliberal future.

In this chapter, I examine a series of meetings, workshops, moments, and actions that all work towards forging a regional economy and spatializing peasant economic practices and identities. Economic activism in Cauca seeks to forge an economic peasant identity that recognizes the racialized legacies Colombia’s colonial era and their material impacts today, but transcends these racial and ethnic boundaries. This coalition building also seeks to re-orient the *campesino* economy away from dependence on a globalized constellation of capital. I argue, instead, this regional economy is based in the concept of interdependence and directed inward towards other peasants. Activists deploy a peasant identity to claim ownership over this economy and build alliances to further their cause. In the first section of this chapter, I present my methodology, which builds on the literatures on participatory research with social movements, especially movements for alternative economies and decolonial activism. Second, I review the academic literature that examines economies as constellations of lived social relations, with attention to social reproduction, rather than as disembodied structures. Third, I explore three different examples of economic activism of making others aware, becoming visible, and building multiethnic networks. I conclude the article

with a discussion of the importance of this work of bringing social relations to the fore of economic relationships.

Empathetic methodologies for participatory research with social movements

This research project relies on my active participation in the processes of economic decolonization and identity formation across Cauca, Colombia during 2014. I traveled around Cauca, Colombia, meeting activists, scholars, and concerned peasants. During that time, I interviewed 18 people who were involved in economic activism, and I engaged in more than 30 casual conversations. I participated in eleven economically-oriented workshops across Cauca – variously serving as a facilitator, participant, and observer. Taken together, my interviews, informal conversations, and participation in economic activist workshops and public events form the basis for this project.

Most importantly, I employed an empathetic approach that opened my questions to the hopeful moments of creation in which rural activism operates. As J. K. Gibson-Graham argue, a diverse economies approach provides a concrete way in which to *unlearn* and *relearn* by pushing scholars and activists to deconstruct capitalism into its constituent pieces and examine economic practice as potentially non-capitalist (Gibson-Graham, 1996). Here, I lean heavily on Gibson-Graham's call for 'thick description and weak theory' in order to understand economic alterity on its own terms. Weak theorization requires that we approach questions of the economic with an open analytical framework that allows for the subtleties of economic subjectivity and praxis to emerge, rather than beginning with a rigid economic framing (Gibson-Graham, 2014). Empathy, for me, allowed me to appreciate my research participants' expertise about their own lives and experiences. It allowed me to treat their knowledges as valid and worthwhile. Empathy, for me and my work, is hearing the truth of another, taking in their experience, and validating it. I trust my *compañeras* and *compañeros* are experts on their own lives and experiences. I only sought to understand their histories, experiences, and dreams for their own futures from their perspectives and on their own terms.

I do not intend to flatten the unequal power relations that emerge in ethnographic fieldwork between Northern academics and people from the global south (Stacey, 1988; Hall, 2015). This project was still rife with unequal access, assumed expertise, privileged mobilities, and problematic assumptions on my part (Coddington, 2017). The people with whom I worked were my partners,

not subjects. I was interested in their opinions and desires. Empathy meant that I was quick to listen, and slow to speak. I was reluctant to offer my ‘expertise’ in most situations, because I was rather doubtful that I could truly offer expert advice (Lather, 2009). More importantly, I did not seek to ‘give these people a voice’. I hold no illusions that my *compañeras* and *compañeros* ‘needed’ my work or presence. I did, however, seek to view their work through a feminist political economic lens.

Economic developments in Colombia

Latin America has served as a site of neoliberal economic experimentation since the 1970s, and such experimentation has resulted in significant and durable shifts in political, social, and economic changes. Land tenure laws and liberalizing foreign trade policies have created an environment that favors large-scale agricultural production (Burkham, 2012). The failure of development projects across the global south has highlighted the limitations of a global capitalism that can benefit all (Escobar, 1995). Development can be viewed as part and parcel of efforts to spatialize a relatively coherent economic vision across the landscape, attempting to institute specific economic identities, conceptions of nature, and values (Hart, 2004).

In the face of development’s failure to improve everyone’s livelihoods, political economists have displayed a lack of imagination to identify alternative pathways, creative practices, and the continued production of other worlds (Escobar, 2013; Jaramillo Salgado, 2013; Quijano Valencia, 2012). For rural actors, their daily economic livelihoods are obliquely impacted by international political economy and the impacts are frequently delayed. Furthermore, alter globalization has emphasized how places respond to the arrival of global forces, treating these sites as places that are newly experiencing economic marginalization. Latin American peasants have known the North’s exploitative and extractive economic demands for centuries (Galeano, 1973; Nash and Safa, 1980).

Yet everyday experimentation of Latin American peasants seems to escape the frame of analysis (Nash, 1981). Analyses have relied upon macroeconomic measurements that reflect a nation-state’s economic health, but these efforts entirely miss economic practices, identities, and subjectivities that do not fall into an economic framework are cast aside (Gibson-Graham, 2008; McCarthy, 2006). These creative experiments exist, and research must be attuned to the diverse practices that exist and propose an alternative to the neoliberalizing present (de Sousa Santos & Rodríguez-Garavito, 2006). Diverse economic practices are not vestiges of a traditional past, but are reflective of an economic

topography that is far more heterogeneous and inchoate than traditional economic thinking cares to admit (Narotzky & Besnier, 2014). Making sense of how these diverse practices are legitimized, however, requires analyses that are open to contingency in order to examine how actors are forging alternative pathways (Woods, 2007).

Defining these movements as ‘alternative’ is a point of contention (Gibson-Graham, 2006), but the activists whom I worked with frequently proclaimed that their world was an alternative. They reflected emancipatory movements to create economies that work for people by repurposing and reinterpreting traditional practices. Following Boaventura de Sousa Santos and César Rodríguez-Garavito (2006), I focus on the emancipatory practices that are based in notions of democracy, equity, solidarity, and environmental sustainability. These varying intentions are what mark these economies as distinct from the totalizing capitalocentric representations that pervade a ‘There is No Alternative’ to globalizing capitalism. While the movements do not represent an all-encompassing alternative to capitalism, unpacking the moments where capitalism’s logics fall apart demonstrates the weaknesses in its discursive framings.

I look to the praxis, thinking and theorizations, and performed identities of my research partners to provide me a productive avenue to analyze the economic logics of their activism. Specifically, I focus my analysis using two concepts that pervade economic activism in Cauca. First, I encountered the phrase ‘familiar products from familiar people’ in meetings, markets, and planning documents across Cauca. It is a simple phrase that calls to the fore idealized, but social, economic relationships between producers and consumers. Familiar products from familiar people disrupts the notion that economies are somehow asocial planes of activity that emphasizes the sociality of economic relationships. Second, I look to how these diverse activist efforts draw out and highlight the social relationships embodied within economic practice and products. These combined efforts struggle to develop an economic identity that is tied to the Colombian countryside, rooted in solidaristic practices and ethics of care, and attaching peasant labor practices to products.

***Concientizar y visibilizar al pueblo* – social reproduction, economic activism, and peasant economies**

Economic activism across Cauca has a rich history that has been often limited to colonial identities (i.e. *campesino*, *afrodescendiente*, *indígena*, and *mestizo*) while groups of people struggle to maintain their

identities and practices. Meanwhile, the Colombian state continues to seek greater integration into global markets, and deploys its version of a racialized economy, reinforcing economic stratification along the lines of lingering colonial identities (Bonds, 2013). These diverse groups of peoples, however, do not present themselves as victims of ‘western capitalism’ (*capitalismo occidental*, in Spanish) or development in their efforts to reclaim an economy (Ballard, 2015; McCarthy, 2006)). Today, rural and urban activists are seeking more durable partnerships between Cauca’s diverse groups to link peasants, indigenous, and *afro*¹ groups under the umbrella of a broad peasant identity.

Economic exclusion has manifested itself in various forms – from analytical gaps of researchers devaluing gendered labor and care to a myopic focus on monetized exchanges – within governmental and academic gazes (Katz, 2004). Geographers and feminist scholars have emphasized the hidden and excluded moments of social reproduction, examining how economic practices and identities are continually reproduced and reinvented (Waring, 1999; Waring, 1988). A key point of analysis of social reproduction is making the ‘private’ work of the house public in order to make it count (MacKinnon, 1982). In Western countries, this thinking gave rise to the Wages for Housework movement (Cox and Federici, 1975; Nash, 1975; Picchio, 2003); current activism in Cauca demands not monetization but visibility of household labor. Another key point is emphasizing the gendered nature of labor, and asserting the value and productivity of women’s labor and the labor of other devalued persons (Cameron, 2000; Wright, 2006). Together these theorizations broaden the ‘economic gaze’ to count previously invisible labor and value, and expand the range of rhetoric available to discuss what ‘the economy’ is (Federici, 2004).

Regardless of the diverse intentions of activists and social movements to publically assert their economic identities, these overlapping efforts are indicative of a proliferation of possibilities in the economic realm. Economic activists across Latin America deploy diverse framings to link together their frequently divergent desires into larger networks (Bidegain Ponte, 2014; Perreault, 2008; Roper, Perreault, & Wilson, 2003). Their collective work is intentionally public, and it attempts to claim ownership over economic practices and identities. Further, these efforts represent Southern challenges to the globalizing tendencies of late capitalism.

¹ The term ‘afro’ is shorthand for *afrodescendiente*, which identifies a person of African descent in Colombia.

Relinking the social and the economic

In this section I analyze three separate moments to demonstrate how rural peoples across Cauca are rallying against the colonial present – and its constituent parts of Capitalism, juridical and legal regimes that travel with free trade agreements, extractive industries, militarized police forces, and so on – that they live and feel on a daily basis. These organizations that I had the opportunity to work with are collectively working to sediment a *campesino* identity that transcends ethnic identities, develop a peasant public politics, effect an inward oriented regional economy, and re-introduce social relations and costs into economic practices. I first discuss the work of scholar-activists and a rural women’s group to activate historically-based political identities and create economic justice. Then, I examine the work of the Our Colombia Foundation as it brings together peasant, *afro*, and indigenous organizations under the guiding principle that ‘another world is possible’. Next, I focus on a ‘Peasant Fair’ in Cajibío and the work of making oneself visible and legible to another. Taken as a whole, these represent a portion of the work to reclaim Cauca from ‘foreign interests’ and cultivate an economy that is more just, inclusive, and reflective of peasant desires. More importantly, this economy is based in economic practices that these groups and actors define as their ‘own’.

Following the work of J.K. Gibson-Graham and other scholars who employ feminist political economy, I examine how economic subjects in across Cauca, Colombia practice active economic citizenship to argue that peasant identities and economic practices are performed in, and intimately tied to the Colombian countryside as well as in the products rural actors produce and exchange. I recognize that seemingly hegemonic economic formations do not act universally or unilaterally on subjects, but they also make and form economic subjects.

Meeting of the Women’s Groups of El CIMA

Professor Antonio Campos began the session by breaking down the economy, bringing it back to rural livelihoods, and re-establishing the connections between people, places, and economic subjectivities. Antonio is a gregarious and natural facilitator, who is perfectly capable of easily moving between feminist economic theory and humorous anecdotes with a group of non-academics. He begins his work in El Bordo by asking the group of more than 50 women, a research team of 11, and a few more people from related organizations ‘what is the economy?’. The question hangs over the space as we all consider that seemingly impossible question. A small hyperactive squirrel monkey chirps in its nearby cage. I am unsure of whether it is a rhetorical question, and I dare not speak up for fear of further marking myself as an outsider. Antonio laughs at our reticence

and proceeds to tell us his answer ‘eco comes from the Greek word for house and the suffix means to manage’. An economy for our work is located in the quotidian realities that those in attendance face every day. We could quickly decenter our focus from (inter)national economic policies and money, and focus our attention on how our lives are placed in households and intertwined with our neighbors. This work is especially poignant in rural Colombia, where rural livelihoods are still firmly placed in localities.

The women from the Committee of the Integration of the Colombian Macizo (el Comité de la Integración del Macizo Colombiano, CIMA) were present because, as Thelma reminded us, ‘women are household leaders and they *need* a space to organize themselves, proved for all (“*todas y todos*”), and a place of support’. To that end, everyone present took a moment to share the reason for their presence. A woman from El Rosal was there because she lives injustice every day when she is not afforded an equal say in household decisions. She was seeking ‘economic justice’ – a reality in which she can control the house as an equal. The *compañeras* from Santa Rosa were concerned about the movement away from community-oriented economic networks and the pervasive suspicion that now exists after the fall of the *guerrilla*. And so the introductions proceeded around the circle, until everyone had introduced her or himself.

In this traveling space, work begins from the position that those present have experienced continued dispossessions and active marginalizations since Spaniards first arrived in the area during the 16th century. Central to creating this identity is articulating the loss of a set of economic practices and identities that were previously prevalent across the countryside, but have become less prominent since the 1950s. To make his point, Antonio argues:

“The economy took root and revolved around the fire in the house. How do we feed ourselves in order to maintain the life of the house? How does one feed the family? How does a family reproduce itself? The challenge we find is that increasingly we do not produce what we eat. And we saw the same changes in disposition with peasant technology. They have been forgotten in favor of other technologies.”

The subtle ideological shifts that Antonio draws to the fore of the groups’ collective imagination are crucial to understanding Colombia’s particular form of capitalism. First, the ways in which capitalist social relations have unfolded across Cauca and enrolled new economic subjects have been incredibly uneven and progressed in fits and starts. Large tracts of the Colombian countryside were

enrolled into global circuits of capital through narcotics production and trafficking (Corva, 2008). More recently, the Colombian state has pursued large economic development projects as a strategy to secure the country. These projects have tended toward exploiting natural resources at a large scale, such as hydroelectric dams or selling sub-surface precious metals, while cracking down on informal operations through occupational health and safety laws. In spite of its uneven progress, the deepening of capitalist social relations has provided for significant changes in individual and community action. This leads to my second point, peasant communities in Cauca had primarily relied upon non-monetized modes of production and exchange in order to manage households and communities. The particularities of Cauca's 'moral economy' were fundamentally based in mutual trust, through which neighbors would lend their labor during 'slow periods' to support another. Further, exchange relations were primarily carried out through barter relations. Taken together, we see a movement away from informal, community-oriented, and inherently social modes of production and exchange across Cauca, towards an impersonal market that relies upon monetized exchanges and selling one's labor.

After nearly 40 minutes of speaking to the group, pushing us towards the notion of an economy that is plural, lived, and placed in the household, Antonio ceded the floor to Thelma who brought the discussion back to gendered notions of economic justice. As peasant, afro, and indigenous women, Thelma argued, "In this model of economic justice, *we* [women] have the right to decide how, when, and what we produce." Thelma paused to look around and gauge our reactions to what she had said. Her intervention ran counter to the commonly held knowledge that work happens outside of the house – in the fields or the city – and she was provoking the women in the audience to recognize the economic value of their labor. Thelma proceeded to remind everyone that,

"Women's work has not been recognized by economic analyses. We are here today to make visible (*visibilizar*) the work of the women from the Macizo. In this vein of economic justice, we especially emphasize the work of small producers and the role of rural folks. We need to think about how we can reconstruct the logics of the *campesino* economy"

Thelma and Antonio had spent 80 minutes orienting the participants who were seated under a thatched roof in El Bordo. Their combined efforts had challenged everyone in that space to set aside their preconceived notions of what *the economy* is and does, and replace it with *an economy* that is full of people, diversity, contradictions, and historical relations. The peasant economy they were working to realize flourishes in the social relations between producers and consumers, and it lives in the

farmer's markets where *campesinos* work to be visible and raise the awareness of fellow Colombians. Their explicit intent was to de-link lived and experienced economies from the nebulous financial capital vision of *the* economy, in order to forge a collective peasant identity that deliberately stands in contrast that particular economic imaginary.

As the meeting progressed, everyone split into smaller groups and each group was instructed to reflect on their home communities as they existed twenty to forty years ago (that depended on the age of the participants), and their community in 2014. It was an exercise that intended to push each member and group to confront the frequently significant, yet subtle, changes that have occurred within their lifetimes. Unbeknownst to me, I would facilitate one of the group's discussions with essentially no preparation. I knew the theory and had seen others direct the process, but I had never actually served that role before. The research team from the Universidad del Cauca assigned me to a group of women from Santa Rosa, Cauca.

Santa Rosa is hardly a blip on a map. It is hard to find, and it is more difficult to actually visit the municipality. It is a 13-hour *chiva* (local bus) ride from Popayán, the departmental capital. In spite of its apparent isolation, Santa Rosa is a microcosm for Colombia's recent history. The municipality today has gone through a planning process to formalize its layout; a 'better' highway and two buses to Popayán per day, a Pentecostal church, one high school; and hosts a nurse who visits one day per week. As of 2014, the community had one main road that physically connected it to the wider world, and it served as a hub for the surrounding communities who live higher in the mountains to bring their products to market in Popayán.

My work during the following two days was to engage with these three women from Santa Rosa, and unpack their personal experiences as economic actors while Colombia lurched towards a violent and hyperactive capitalism. We were instructed to describe Santa Rosa as it was in 1990, a date that coincided with the earliest decade that all three women could remember, and in its 2014 state. The research team instructed each team to identify: agricultural practices (cultivation, livestock, artisanal, processing, and bringing to market), social actors, institutions, flows of goods (within the household and within the community), natural resources, and practices of food production and consumption. This collective autoethnography, of sorts, would serve as a moment to reflexively engage their communities' shifting realities during the past generation, or more.

In this next step, we began the process of cultivating expertise from the community teams. The women from Santa Rosa appeared a bit uncomfortable at first, which I attributed to the fact that they were unsure of my presence and the childlike assignment that we were given. I explained to the women that I knew absolutely nothing about Santa Rosa. Not even where I might look to find it on a map. They chortled at my ignorance and playfully mocked me for ‘not knowing anything about Colombia’. We quickly settled in to our task and they helped me to become familiar with Santa Rosa. They described how the hamlet sits above the banks of the Caquetá River. It is surrounded by fields that are under cultivation or used for pasture. The central range of the Andes rises high immediately to the east. I had a better idea, at least, but this description was not our task, so we moved on to examine how Santa Rosa was a generation earlier.

The team asked me to draw a map of Santa Rosa – which is a problematic proposition for a geographer who had no idea what Santa Rosa was like – so we could begin to map the agricultural practices that are prevalent in the area. Maria Josefa took mercy on my ignorance and intervened in my version of cartographic hell. She added the Caquetá River, a general street map of the municipality, some of the surrounding fields, and the nearby jagged Andean peaks. Elodia looked at Estela and said, “1990, right?”. Estela nodded to the question and continued to draw a sheep on the map that our team had just finished.

Elodia looked back at me and she began to describe how she remembered Santa Rosa during the 1980s and early 1990s. Elodia was the oldest member of the group, and her earlier memories would help our group to ground ourselves in this deeply personal history.

“In 1990, the *guerrilla* was in charge in Santa Rosa. Between the 1980s and the 1990s the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) both were in charge at different moments. The *guerrilla* had good aspects to their rule. For example, they kept vices like alcohol from destroying the community. Men didn’t get drunk and hit women like they do now. But the *guerrilla* had bad aspects, too. They instituted a strict set of rules, and strictly enforced the rules. Those who did not comply with the rules were severely punished. At that time there were no judges or police. The *guerrilla* were the state.”

I was shocked to hear Elodia’s frank recollection of Santa Rosa that was bordering on a longing description. Estela and Maria Josefa did not disagree with this characterization of this difficult time.

Maria Josefa even added, “That is how it was. It was strict, but fair. Everyone knew the rules and the consequences.” The women from Santa Rosa had piqued my interest at this point. First, I knew that this representation of the community in 1990, meant that today’s version of the municipality faces uncertainty despite the ‘arrival of the state’. Second, I wanted to know how a *guerrilla* group had asserted itself into the community’s economic livelihoods and identities.

Prior to the arrival of transnational capital flows in the 1980s, Santa Rosa was embedded in regional trade networks. The women from Santa Rosa told me the majority of people consumed whatever goods they produced, and then traded and bartered anything that was left over. People in the municipality commercialized a few products – primarily derived from sheep wool – that they produced from local lumber and livestock. By our reference year of 1990, Santa Rosa maintained its importance as a regional economic hub, but it is important to note that the women from Santa Rosa forcefully argued that the nature of this economic activity remained a self-sustaining regional economy that was firmly rooted in small producers and consumers.

Estela elaborated on the nature of life in Santa Rosa around 1990:

“People ate what they produced in their own gardens. They exchanged whatever was left over through barter. There was the highway through Santa Rosa, but we did not use it to take our crops to the market. The vast majority of what the people in the municipality of Santa Rosa produced would meet the needs of the community. Santa Rosa had a nurse who cared for the health of the people in the community, but people had to travel to Popayán to receive most health care.”

Santa Rosa was a place that produced food and goods to meet the needs of the community. In 1990, the market was a place where one gossiped about the last *fiesta* or shared a cup of *agua de panela* (sugarcane water), not an abstract thing that served as an analogue for capitalism. Community members did transform primary products into to other goods to sell in nearby cities, but their work was limited. Maria Josefa, Elodia, Estella, and I spent nearly 30 minutes describing Santa Rosa one generation ago. Table 2-1 lays out their characterization of Santa Rosa’s central economic features, but this misses crucial practices of production, exchange, and consumption.

Cultivars	Corn (yellow and white), sugarcane, beans, <i>chacha fruto</i> , squash, and <i>chayote</i>
Livestock	Cows, sheep, guinea pigs, pigs, chickens, trout, and black fish
Artisanal	Wool blankets, baskets, gold, and various hats
Processing	Wool, roof tiles, and cheese

To market	Wood and livestock (cows and sheep)
Natural Resources	Páramo and the Caquetá River
Social Actors	<i>Guerrilla</i> , a traveling nurse, and high school

Table 2-1 Santa Rosa, Colombia in 1990

Colombia was certainly articulated in global capital flows in 1990, and narco dollars represented a significant portion of those flows. Santa Rosa was not a part of that world high-flying, hedonistic world. The defining logics of the municipality’s economy were fundamentally based in reciprocity, solidarity, and trust. Estela aptly described the economy by saying, “we worked together, because we were all that each other had.” Households maintained their own gardens near the house and a larger plot outside of the town. Santa Rosa’s economy consisted of managing seed supplies between growing seasons, working the garden(s), maintaining community resources such as the river, and lending one’s labor to neighbors or family members when they needed extra help shearing their sheep or harvesting wood. The cycles of reciprocity ebbed and flowed with the changing seasons from wet to dry in the Andes. A neighbor who had a truck would let Elodia’s family transport their blankets to Popayán’s market free of charge. Elodia’s family would share their cows after they slaughtered one.

Narcotics did affect the municipality. Prior to the 1990s, the region was involved in opium poppy production. Maria Josefa, Estela, and Elodia were all adamant that this work was done because ‘outsiders’ had moved in and forced farmers to grow opium poppies, or displaced them with (threats of) violence. Narcocapitalism is capitalism’s most ruthless iteration. According to the women from Santa Rosa, their community experienced a significant depopulation during this time, especially as men left the municipality (personal communication 29.August.2014). It was simply too dangerous to remain for anyone who sought to avoid ‘that kind of work’. There were, however, some benefits to these external demands. Elodia argued that it strengthened the community’s resolve to work together and to define their successes collectively. Surviving the *narco*s was proof to community members that they were strong as a unit. When the *guerrilla* made inroads in the area, opium harvesting was put to an end. It was a vice, after all, and it attracted too much attention from the Colombian state and their international allies.

The women from Santa Rosa continued to fill in their map as we chatted. Their ‘popular cartography’ placed the litany of economic activities and flows on to the landscape. I asked the women how they could include the *prestamo de mano* (lending labor) on the map, because it seemed to

be a defining feature of their economic livelihoods. Estela, Elodia, and Maria Josefa readily pointed to the sites where they would trade their labor, but we could never resolve exactly *how* to represent these flows. It was easier to draw cheese going to Popayán, than it was to denote neighbors exchanging their surplus goods through barter. That we were unable to reconcile these different types of flows was an informative moment. Though the municipality relied primarily on production for auto consumption to carry on, the women were uncomfortable depicting the non-monetized flows within Santa Rosa. We were reflecting back on distant economic identities through today's lens. Even though the women from Santa Rosa were able to recall the communitarian orientation that prevailed, they struggled to fully immerse themselves in that past.

The women from Santa Rosa and I had been working for a couple of hours, and we had reached the end of the work day. We broke for dinner, but we still had a significant amount of work to do. Most of the other groups had already finished their description of their contemporary situation. Estela, Elodia, Maria Josefa, and I were behind, so we decided to reconvene after dinner.

As I ate dinner with a few of the other facilitators, I reflected on our busy morning and the work that these women – and a few men – were seeking greater economic autonomy, awakening a collective consciousness to actually existing diverse economic practices, and valuing women's work. These women want to be recognized in an economy. They want their work to be valued. They are in the process of awakening their consciences to the plurality of economic activities that they have enacted in their lifetimes.

The women from Santa Rosa and I resumed our work after dinner as we jumped ahead 24 years to the reality of 2014. Maria Josefa, Estela, Elodia and I had decided to only explain how the municipality had changed, and we would leave the rest of the work for the following morning. Estela began quickly by explaining that the *guerrilla* had left in the mid 2000s, because the state finally 'arrived'. This was an extremely painful time in Santa Rosa that still weighed heavy on Estela, Elodia, and Maria Josefa's minds. More importantly, the expulsion of the *guerrilla* marks an important shift for Santa Rosa's economic actors.

Members of the army's counter *guerrilla* battalion engaged the municipality to expel any remaining illegal *guerrilla* members and to assert the state's presence. Some from the army closed off the two

bridges that cross the Caquetá River, and they waited on its eastern banks to detain or engage anyone who attempted to flee the community. Then two separate teams entered Santa Rosa from the north and the south – both of them using the highway as their breach point. Despite its small size, the last vestiges of the *guerrilla* from the 13th Front of the FARC impeded the army's progress for some time. Eventually, the army 'succeeded' in clearing Santa Rosa.

The women from Santa Rosa continued to share this somber story while finishing our map of the municipality from 1990. Maria Josefa explained that this happened during the days of the 'false positives' in which Colombian armed forces were given bonuses for the number of *guerrilla* fighters they could bring in dead or alive. The three women argued that some of their community members who were not in the FARC or ELN were killed and falsely accused of being in the *guerrilla*. Lucky community members were able to flee the municipality or survived the battle for the hamlet.

A more fitting description of the arrival of capitalism's forces could not exist. The market actually arrived with a firefight. Kothari and Harcourt (2004), argue development and violence are intimately interconnected processes that coexist in the Global South. Arturo Escobar (2004) links the economic violence to European modernity as celebrated and necessary phenomena to 'develop'. The state's arrival coincided with deep social upheaval – as many people left Santa Rosa for good – and profound economic shifts that continue to define current economic identities in the municipality. I asked the women from Santa Rosa whether their community had improved since the army's operation to reclaim the municipality.

Estela and Elodia were reluctant to declare that things had 'improved'. Estela argued that new vices have reached the town, primarily alcohol and domestic abuse. Elodia explained that, "Now a man can get drunk, go home, and hit his woman and nothing happens. At least when we had the *guerrilla* there were consequences for breaking the rules." The women from Santa Rosa attributed these changes to external influences arrived when the *guerrilla* were forced out of the municipality. Then came the state and its institutions (such as the army, police, etc.), but the police are ineffective at protecting women. Indifferent, really. Estela and Elodia pointed out that the police were much more interested in 'watching out for the *guerrilla* or *narcos*. The municipality also experienced a profound outmigration when the state 'arrived'. Many of the men fled because they knew that they were prime military targets to be a 'false positive'. As many from Santa Rosa left the area to move to larger cities

or near family in different municipalities, the familial ties along which barter exchanges and lending labor flowed disappeared.

Once the *guerrilla* had ‘fallen’, Santa Rosa became a site of intense focus from the Colombian state. The municipality went through an organized planning process to rationalize its layout and infrastructure. The Ministry of Transport invested funds to improve the highway that passes through the community. As a result of these improvements, there are two *chivas* (rural buses) per day that pass between Popayán and Santa Rosa. An improved transportation system also produced marked changes in the municipality’s prevailing economic and trade practices. Principally, most households no longer produce for self-consumption or to sustain the household. Community members produce to sell their products in the market in Popayán, rather than selling their goods in Santa Rosa or exchanging them through non-monetized exchanges. Community members receive higher prices in the departmental capital, even though it is a more than twelve-hour bus ride. This change in disposition represents a significant shift towards capitalist practices and identities, as the women from Santa Rosa now see themselves as pieces in a capitalist economy. Their community produces goods to sell either at the *galería* (market) in Popayán or to large grocery chains. Coincidentally, they also buy their goods there. Their economic livelihoods are mediated by external forces.

I asked the women from Santa Rosa if we could complete the same characterization of the municipality as it is in 2014. Table 2-2 outlines the community’s primary economic activities and livelihoods, and resources according to Maria Josefa, Estela, and Elodia. Santa Rosa maintains a high level of ecological and natural biodiversity due to forest preserve outside of the municipality. The forest preserve protects tributaries to the Caquetá River and the home of the tapir and the incredibly rare spectacled bear. As for the institutions that are now in Santa Rosa, they built a new school and a health center. The health center has a doctor, though most people still must travel to Popayan to receive anything beyond the most basic health care.

Cultivars	Corn (yellow and white), sugarcane, beans, <i>chacha fruto</i> , squash, and <i>chayote</i>
Livestock	Cows, guinea pigs, pigs, chickens, trout, and black fish
Artisanal	Baskets and various hats
Processing	Roof tiles, cheese, yogurt, and <i>arequipe</i>
To market	Wood and cows
Natural Resources	Páramo, the Caquetá River, biodiversity, and Forest Preserve

Social Actors	New high school, medical center with a doctor, Pentecostal church, and Mayor's office
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Table 2-2 Santa Rosa in 2014

The women from Santa Rosa and I decided that this was a good time to break. We had been busy discussing and drawing the municipality's economic realities for more than 6 hours, and I was personally exhausted even though I had scarcely lifted a finger. Remaining focused and engaged in a foreign language always drains me. Elodia, Maria Josefa, and Estela had enough of my seemingly pointless questions. It was time for some music and dancing.

After breakfast the next morning, we jumped into our work. We had two hours before each group would share their work, and we still needed to discuss any other significant changes in Santa Rosa's economic realities and draw our map of Santa Rosa in 2014. Maria Josefa wasted no time. She began by looking over our two lists of products, economic activities, social actors, and natural resources. Maria Josefa reflected on the differences between the lists and said, "There have been changes in products, crops and economic practices have led Santa Rosa to the regional market." Maria Josefa was not referring to a physical location, but to 'the market' in capitalist terms. Estela interjected, "We no longer care for sheep or produce wool products." Maria Josefa went on to say, "We're consumers now. We consume what others produce for us, and we buy it at the market" (Maria Josefa was referring to an actual market here).

The women from Santa Rosa began to tell me about the profound changes in their economic subjectivities and dispositions during the previous 24-year period. These changes have been part of the state's directed interventions that have sought to develop and grow a market in which actors specialize – to a degree – in their production habits, purchase products from elsewhere, and integrate themselves in the capitalist market. The Colombian state has hoped that deeper market relations and interdependencies will reduce violence across the country. To that end, they have financed SENA (*El Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje*, National Learning Service) technicians to help 'modernize dairy product production' in the municipality. SENA sent a few technicians to teach people in Santa Rosa how to turn the milk their cows produce into yogurt and *arequipe* (caramel), and following safe food practices in all steps along the way. SENA's training in Santa Rosa was part of the municipality's "walking towards progress" (*caminando hacia el progreso*) program that intended to diversify the economic livelihoods of community members (Alcaldía de Santa Rosa, 2012). These are

subtle pathways to disciplining new capitalist subjectivities. It is important to note that the women from SENA were not overly critical of this process. Estela, Elodia, and Maria Josefa were generally matter-of-fact about the new orientations of their economic livelihoods.

SENA training across the countryside attempts to support individuals and communities as they move towards producing products to sell via the capitalist market. These are simple products that require little, to no, capital investment and basic technical training. They are instilling the most basic form of neoliberal entrepreneurship across the landscape. Individuals and communities are encouraged to be self-sufficient and produce for their own benefit. These training processes combined with improved transportation access to larger markets in Popayán, and beyond, have led to the ‘natural’ conclusion that this new mode of production and exchange is better. Yet, the women from Santa Rosa were quick to undermine a narrative of progress. I asked them if they felt more secure or if the situation in the community had improved with these improvements. Elodia said in response,

“I don’t know if things are better. Everything costs money now. Making yogurt to sell at the market in Popayán means that we have to purchase sanitizing equipment and chemicals. We need to pay to transport what we produce to the city. We have to go to Popayán to sell anything. And, now that we do not produce all the things that used to produce, we need to buy other necessities for life. We buy food at the store. We eat cheap and easy food. Pasta has replaced quinoa. We buy bread. We buy jeans and t-shirts at Exito instead of wearing the clothes that we made in our own houses. All the money that we make is not enough to support us. Everyone wants to buy more...something newer. Who wouldn’t want a new motorcycle?”

This is, in a nutshell, how capitalist progress has felt in Santa Rosa. It is not enough. An improved highway has created the opportunity for the municipality to access ‘the market’, and vice versa. Technical training from SENA has been part of a process that has undermined a sense of self-sufficiency, and what economic activists call “autoconsumption”. It has introduced dependency on a globalizing market that cares very little for the people in the community. These shifts in disposition have also played upon insecurities that emerged during the army’s siege on the municipality. Continuing to enact a *campesino* identity in the face of capitalism runs contrary to the municipality’s progress and is *atrasado*, or backwards.

The violent moment of expulsion has also propagated a pervasive sense of skepticism and mistrust between neighbors that has fundamentally transformed economic identities and practices. In 1990,

Santa Rosa's economy was built upon solidarity with one another and reciprocity between community members. There was a basic trust and empathy between actors that formed a collective economic identity. As Estela previously described the ethos that undergirded the economy, "we worked together, because we were all that each other had." By 2014, that economic identity had disappeared. Most households no longer practice barter exchanges because 'they do not trust their neighbors like they used to'. Maria Josefa added, "Today, we only barter between close family members. My brothers and sisters, mostly. Or close *compañeras* (lady friends). I don't know if I would get a fair deal from most neighbors."

Not surprisingly, lending labor has experienced a similar fate of being pushed to the side. Estela added, "We have replaced solidarity and reciprocity with doubt and uncertainty. When one does not know if they can trust their neighbors for a fair deal, what can one do? That is why we buy and sell at the markets." Here we find the seductive nature of capitalist social relations and the core of these new capitalist subjectivities. Capitalist livelihoods confront an uncertain future on a daily basis, and capitalist identities are forged by doubt. That is, in Santa Rosa, one cannot be certain whether they will be able to afford seeds after a bad harvest, whether climate change will make the region water poor, and how to proceed in a place that has been defined by violence since the state sought to expel the *guerrilla* in the early 2000s.

The women from Santa Rosa are reluctant capitalist subjects and they had gone to El Bordo, Colombia in order to identify something that they had lost. In their case, it was a collective sense of trust, solidarity, and reciprocity that eroded over their lifetimes. Part of that is a result of the breaking of familial ties as Santa Rosa was depopulated while it struggled with opium poppy harvesting and around the army's siege of the town. Estela, Elodia, and Maria Josefa also made it painfully clear that these emerging economic identities are part and parcel of spreading capitalist relations across Colombia, which has involved active contributions from various sectors of the Colombian state. Their experiences, so far, illustrate how a market – as a physical location to buy, sell, and otherwise exchange goods – shifted to *the* capitalist market. They had become consumers over a 24-year period. These different women's groups from across El Macizo coalesced – and continue to come together – in order to awaken a collective identity in the face of gendered violence, epistemic erasures, and long-term exclusions. Their continued meetings have required them to define their own economic experiences, histories, and futures. Finally, the research team and El

CIMA are providing women with a safe space to share their lived experiences in which their knowledge is valid, valued, and expert. As Thelma and Antonio reminded everyone while we wrapped up our workshop, “How do we begin to reconstruct the logics of the *campesino* economy? By valuing *our* work, and by consuming familiar products from familiar people.” This refrain would come to play a prominent role in my research on economic plurality in Cauca.

The meeting of the Small Producers of Cauca and ‘dreaming in concrete’

Economic activism takes many shapes across Cauca, as numerous (international) non-governmental organizations work with communities on a number of issues ranging from post-conflict reintegration to agricultural production. Colombia is full of organizations that are working diligently to improve the country. I had frequent encounters with NGOs while doing my research. The presence of some NGOs was surprising to me, some were well-known international organizations, and others were focused and driven. The Our Colombia Foundation (FCN) falls into the final category. The foundation consists of a group scholar-activists who live and work in southern Colombia, a loosely connected collection of facilitators, and an international web of funders. Here, I focus on the work of activating a peasant economic identity.

This group of people consisted of mostly male peasants, indigenous peoples, and Afro-Colombians who had been invited by the *Fundación Colombia Nuestra* (Our Colombia Foundation, FCN). In their view, rural Colombians are facing a loss of rural identities as subsistence peasant livelihoods are no longer viable in a capital-intensive industrial agricultural model. Younger generations are abandoning the countryside in favor of Colombia’s cities. International politics militate against small farmers while favoring large farms and agricultural production for export. Genetically modified crops are becoming increasingly prevalent. And, most importantly, land is becoming scarcer, especially as it continues to become a valuable commodity and agriculture more capital intensive. This group, and countless others just like it, are engaged in a long struggle to reclaim practices and maintain economic identities in an increasingly detached field of social relations. Their struggles, though not new, have taken a new sense of urgency in Colombia as rural activists come together and confront a globalizing countryside.

I first crossed paths with Juan Constanza at a scholar and activist event that a group of radical praxis oriented scholars from the Universidad del Cauca had hosted at the university for a few years. The

professors and activists who constituted the organizing panel had chosen the title *Tramas y Mingas* (Frameworks and Communal Labor) – referring to the collective experimentation and knowledge production that happens in the spaces of the conference. After listening to a series of presentations from activists and practitioners, Juan stood up and shared an impactful ‘intervention’ about the imperative nature of the work that we had recently learned about. Juan was involved in a project that Ingrid Yakumanda had presented to us about the process of bringing indigenous, afro, and peasant communities together to galvanize a collective peasant identity and to articulate a public politics in Cauca. Juan passionately expanded upon their work by saying,

“We humans are like frogs. If you place us in a pot of boiling water, we’ll jump out immediately. It burns and we try to survive. *But*, if you place us in a pot of cool water and turn the heat on, we will sit there and boil to death. I know this because I am a biologist. We humans are turning up the heat on our own pot every day, and we don’t even realize how hot the water is getting. Our economy consumes more and more every day, and we *campesinos* control our future less and less every day. It is becoming illegal to save seeds for the next harvest. Agriculture is more industrial every day. Climate change has already shortened the growing season and intensified the dry season. We need to wake up!”

I approached Juan after the session and I told him that I appreciated his intervention and I wanted to know more about the work that he and Ingrid were doing. I wondered how their work to link these varying marginalized groups managed to speak across colonial ethnic categories. Juan simply replied with, “Come to our next meeting in two weeks.” I could not resist that blunt of a reply. It almost came across as a challenge to figure it out for myself.

Two weeks later, I found myself embarrassingly out-of-breath as I walked along a gravel road outside of Silvia, Cauca. Most people in Popayán erroneously refer to this area as “Guambia”, a term that stems from the linguistic classification of the indigenous languages for anyone from the area. The *guambianos* are generally people from the Nasa and Misak indigenous group. Their languages are equally unintelligible to someone who is not familiar with either of them, and their traditional dress is similar enough in passing to pass for exact matches for anyone who is not paying attention. I was not sure where I was headed. I had been told that the workshop might be held at the Misak University, at the indigenous mayor’s office in Silvia, or in San Fernando. Towns are not clearly marked in this part of the world. There are no signs that clearly provide toponyms.

So I continued to trundle along a road in this arrestingly beautiful landscape. High Andean peaks surrounded me. The clouds occasionally broke and the bright cobalt sky briefly appeared. As I passed through a small collection of houses, I saw an older Misak man walking with a young man. I greeted the pair and asked “Sorry to bother you, but do you know where the Misak University is? I am participating in a workshop there, but I don’t know where it is.” The man told me that I had to turn around, head down the mountain until I found a fork in the road. There I needed to turn around, head down the road that I did not choose earlier, cross the “big bridge over the river, not the small one”, and walk up the road for a while. He told me that I would find the campus up there.

He was right. I did find the massive building. It was hard to miss, frankly. It stood out in a landscape that is full of small houses with outhouses. The enormous building is octagonal and surrounded by a metal fence (another odd feature in this corner of the world). The campus was empty and my heart sank. These events are usually full of people, lively conversations, and an unavoidable hustle and bustle. I managed to catch the attention of a man who was cutting the grass, and he walked over to talk to me. I asked him if the university was hosting a workshop today. The man looked around incredulously and told me that there was no such event today, but one of the professors was inside and I could talk to her. As I passed through the gate, I noticed the tantalizingly bitter smell of a fire burning. It is a smell that always conjures nostalgic feelings for me, and brings me back to childhood days of campfires and adventures. It felt like an inviting welcome.

I passed through the door into the university’s main building. Inside it is an open space, with a *fogón* (bonfire) at its heart. The fire was low when I got there, because only one professor was in. My heart sank as I realized I was either incredibly early – which is entirely early given my western punctuality – or that I was not in the correct place. The professor emerged from behind a whiteboard on the other side of the room and we chatted for a few minutes. I asked her whether she knew of the workshop. It is a small and closely-connected community. I had done enough fieldwork to know that word travels fast in these parts, so someone had to know what I was looking for. She told me that the director of the university was at an event on the other side of the river and up the mountain. Perhaps that was what I was looking for. I thanked her for her time, took one last deep breath of the damp smoke-filled air, and began backtracking.

My journey lasted another 58 minutes after I left the Misak University. I sent a message to Juan Constanza, in the hope that he had not started his workshop and he would tell me where to go. He did not respond. I walked down a path to a small hydroelectric dam. That was not what I was looking for. I passed another Misak man and asked him for directions. He showed me a small opening in the barbed wire fence around his pasture and told me to walk straight up the mountain to the other side of the pasture (a challenging feat for someone who was not accustomed to the altitude), where I would find the main highway that I needed to follow for about 10 minutes, before finally finding the road that I needed to San Fernando. I followed his directions, and, lo and behold, I found the road, and another Misak man who was headed in the same direction. We walked up the road together and chatted until we reached the *Cooperativa las Delicias*. I would stay at the cooperative for the next two nights while I worked with people from differing communities across northern Cauca to build peasant alliances and identities that transcend ethnic identities.

The Cooperative is located in San Fernando, Cauca. It emerged during the 1970s in response to foreign development projects that attempted to support alternative development projects in rural Colombia. A Swiss non-governmental organization provided money and training to the community to create a processing center for dairy products and to purchase collectively-held land for the community. This was partially in response to increasing demands for land in the area, but it was also part of a larger movement to fund self-sustaining projects that would provide long-term income for rural communities, rather than continuous investments. Members of the Cooperative produce cheese and *kumis* (a yogurt-like drink) to sell in the region. The community also has a few ponds full of lake trout that they farm and sell between Popayán and Cali. The FCN purposefully selected the Cooperative because of its sustained success as a community-run organization that continues to provide for the well-being of San Fernando.

The *Encuentro de los productores pequeños del norte del Cauca* (Meeting of Small Producers of Northern Cauca) was one of many that the FCN had organized between Cali and southern Cauca with a number of *campesino* organizations in order to: galvanize locally rooted and regionally oriented economies, support production for auto consumption; reclaim *campesino* identities and knowledges; putting people – as living, breathing, and thinking economic agents – social relations, and the environment at the center of an economy; connect rural producers and consumers; and, collect ideas and evidence of the work that localized peasants are doing and identify gaps and weaknesses in their

strategies. Taken as a whole, this work in these sessions was intended to be used to support the FCN as it sought funding from French and Swiss donors. Every individual and organization had been invited by FCN because they represented a rural small producer. Juan, Ingrid, and the rest of the team from the FCN had organized the room to facilitate small group breakout sessions.

I was late and the work had already begun. Juan Constanza shared the FCN's history that began in working with Nasa and Misak communities to develop oral histories. Today, three main foci guide all of their work. First, they promote relationships of mutual respect to renew a vision of territoriality and facilitate innovative agreements between different actors in Cauca. Second, their work strengthens advocacy organizations and diversified family farming as the nucleus of rural households and communities. Finally, strengthening social and political subjects with the ability to assert themselves in the public arena, and support initiatives that strengthen an economy based in living well (*buen vivir*).

Juan commented to us that the FCN and the organizations present at the meeting were working towards a framework for an "alternative development in Cauca" that was firmly planted in the alter globalization movement that continues to flow from the World Social Forum. Juan Constanza and his team from FCN drew an enormous map of Cauca – complete with rivers, important mountains, and local cities – and placed it on the wall. The *mapas parlantes* (talking maps) were the feature that united us and focused our work over the course of a weekend as we would 'dream in concrete'. To that end, Juan reminded us that our work ought to strive to empower and be grounded in the local specificities of life in northern Cauca.

"We understand rural territories as socially constructed spaces, produced from the combination of material resources – like natural resources – and the intangible resources of cultural heritage. A community's collective memory, identity, worldview, organization, rules, and knowledges. We must be very careful when we use the word 'development'. We seek to avoid even the subtlest overtones of colonialism and oppression of the capitalist model that prevails globally today. The argument that 'capitalist development' is natural, obvious and inevitable is self-defeating in our work. However, given the widespread acute crisis, the search for alternative roads is a priority and traditional rural communities are key in constructing alternatives."

The work was revolutionary in its intent, but it was limited in its scope to real, tangible work that everyone could do in their own organization and community. Fighting against global capitalism cannot be lost in lofty discourses. Instead, it must be effected through changes in practices, value,

and identities. Juan continued to push those who were present in the Cooperative. He said to the audience,

“There are two principal goals that are guiding our work at the Cooperative. First, we are arriving at the environmental limits of what our land can support. We are experiencing a tightening of land access and dwindling natural resources, like water. Second, all across Cauca we continue to see a ‘modernization’ of the countryside and moving towards agroindustry. This is making it costlier to be a peasant. But third, in response to these challenges, we – in this room – are part of a movement through which new territorialities are emerging in a multicultural environment.”

On that note, Juan Constanza approached the end of his work for the morning. He and Ingrid then provided us with instructions to begin SWOT analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats) for the organizations that were present. I was taken aback by the presence of this tool of business as a means to galvanize a public politic and an alternative economic reality. Juan insisted that it was an important activity for each organization to carry out, because there each community ‘faces different realities that they must address’. The team from the FCN later told me that they employ SWOT analysis in their meetings because it “Makes the participants reflect on their communities’ history, present, and future.” It is an activity that is intended to draw in the participants’ focus and ground them in their communities while they ‘dream in concrete.’

‘Dreaming in concrete’ should have been the title of the workshop, because the trainers used the phrase so often. Juan, Ingrid, and the rest of the team were well aware of the fact that their work requires that all participants engage with seemingly abstract global forces, distant futures, and idealized identities. The work requires all participants to dream, imagine, and create a future that is different from their present situation. It is inherently abstract, but the team from the FCN want to effect real, tangible changes in practices and identities, so they constantly bring everyone back to the material present. What are the *actual practices* that are threatening their community? What strengths or weaknesses does their organization *have*? What are the real opportunities and challenges they will likely face? As far as everyone in the Cooperative was concerned, there was little benefit to rail against Capitalism, because, though it might be therapeutic, it would not help anyone analyze their present situation and realize a better future. So, each person dreamt in the concrete and tangible features of our current world. Using those features, however diverse, as an impetus for future action.

For example, a group of Misak trout farmers from an indigenous community just below San Fernando. Mauricio Paredes represented the group on the first day. The fish farming cooperative that he represented was already a well-established organization, but it was entirely dependent on outside forces to function. Mauricio's trout farm was known as AGUACUL, and it purchases frozen sterile female rainbow trout eggs from Troutlodge – a company that is headquartered in Washington state – to raise in a few small ponds outside of Silvia, Cauca. Troutlodge has an effective monopoly on the trout egg business in Colombia. AGUACUL's growing ponds divert water from the river that flows by them and they release their effluent directly in to the river. They maintain smaller pools for hatchlings that do not require the same amount of flowing water. Mauricio is well aware of the environmental challenges that AGUACUL creates, it is a form of monoculture that requires high levels of inputs to function and it produces increased levels of waste.

AGUACUL is relatively small, by some standards. Among the groups present at the *Encuentro*, AGUACUL was a productive and large business. They sell tons of fish every year across Cauca, but they were not happy with a business model that is input-intensive, leaves them exposed to transnational capital, and produces high levels of waste. In effect, it was inefficient and it embodied everything that was wrong with shifting production and consumption patterns across northern Cauca. AGUACUL continued to sell fish, but they are participating in a globalized consumer-driven economy. It is an uncomfortable position for AGUACUL's members – as they recognize their total reliance on Troutlodge for most of their inputs, and their role in exploiting precious water resources – to perpetuate an economy that they seek to escape, or, at least, change its trajectory. To Mauricio, this arrangement – purchasing eggs and supplemental materials such as hormones from Washington, through a vertically integrated monopoly, to pump full of food and grow in a pond, and sell in a market in southern Colombia – embodies the unequal and colonial power relationships that have persisted across the Americas for more than 500 years. The majority of the profits go to Troutlodge, while AGUACUL provides the majority of the manual labor and physical resources only to receive a minimal profit. The majority of the risk falls on AGUACUL, because if, as Mauricio fears, “If the climate continues to change and the páramo dries up, we'll have thousands of eggs and small fish and nowhere to sell them. Or, what if the price of eggs increases by 10%? We cannot raise our prices by that much, because no one will be able to buy that fish.” AGUACUL is a producer that has essentially no control over its product. Troutlodge determines the quality of the fish, they sell the

hormones necessary to ensure that 99.99% of the fish eggs develop as female, and they are the only licensed fish egg dealer in all of Colombia.

AGUACUL represents the sort of economic arrangements that many rural producers across Cauca fear. Certainly, all of organizations that were present at the workshop in San Fernando were very wary of similar situations. Each organization professed their uneasy dependence on ‘outsiders’ in order to continue to produce their products when they shared the results of their SWOT analyses. There was a palpable fear of their role as wholly dependent producers that motivated the organizations to participate in the Meeting of Cauca’s Small Producers.

Mauricio enlisted my help when he heard I was born in the United States. He explained AGUACUL’s situation and asked if I knew anything about fish eggs or fish farming. I told him that I do not, but I would be happy to help, in whatever way that I could. I asked Mauricio what he hoped that I could do when I called Troutlodge. He told me that they would like to avoid the salesman who they deal with in Bogotá, because he receives a commission from each order. I made no promises to radically change their situation, but I would help. These are the small examples of strange power relations that are at play in these settings. These actors are looking for a way to realize radical changes in their livelihoods, redefining the terms in which they engage a globalizing world, and they asked me to help because I speak English. They hoped that I would be able to broker a better deal between *gringos*, and they feared that they were paying a higher price than others would. Mauricio and AGUACUL tried to undermine the system from within. Much to our disappointment, I was not able to help. Troutlodge offered me the same high price and told me that I need to contact their sales agent in Bogotá because he ‘was licensed to sell fish eggs in Colombia’.

The time for our SWOT analysis had ended and Juan invited one member of each group to draw the strengths their group had identified onto the map of the area. We moved to the next part of the meeting that focused on affirming the groups’ successes and recognizing the hard work that everyone does on a daily basis. The ‘talking map’ on which groups of people were coloring was massive. It was more than 20 feet wide and 6 feet tall. They were placing their organizations’ strengths on the map, ensuring that they included everything that their group discussed. Figure 2-1 shows how busy the scene was as quick discussions were necessary to orient the groups on the strange map.



Figure 2-1 Workshop participants draw on the 'talking map' (Source: Fundación Colombia Nuestra 2013)

Everyone returned to the center of the room in order to share their group's work with the rest of the workshop. Before we began, Juan reminded all of us that – though the workshop was a 'safe space' to support each other – 'we need to think with a critical mind, because we do not want reproduce *another form of capitalism*'. This proved to be a difficult task throughout the meeting, as many people present were there on behalf of their small producers. AGUACUL represented the largest and most established organization of those present. More than half of the organizations had an idea they were hoping to develop in order to improve their home community's economic reality, and the remaining groups were there with the hope of ensuring the long-term viability for their organization. They were all searching for economic growth, but every group had been invited because they fit the vision of economic practice that FCN hoped to support. Their organizations were politically motivated to support *campesinos*.

The groups began to present their SWOT analyses to everyone else. Juan and Ingrid asked everyone to pay close attention to their strengths and opportunities. The weaknesses and threats were

important, but Ingrid pointed out that this activity was intended to help everyone ‘imagine and create the world that we want to make, not illustrate what we’re afraid of’. Juan quickly interjected, “Remember, we always need to return to Cauca’s specific situation. We need to focus on the specific realities of small producers and our particularities.” Bearing that in mind, each the group stood up near the map and shared their analysis, paying particular attention to the economy that they wanted to make real. It was a challenging process for most of the groups, yet the activity presented a greater challenge for already established organizations.

Our day officially ended at that point, but our discussions continued well past dinner. Later that evening I spoke with Mauricio about the particular challenges that AGUACUL faced, and he told me that it ‘was difficult to change paths after continuing in one direction for years, and the organization needed to reimagine its position as a small producer.’ Nelson Ulcue, who represented a cheese maker that had been in business for more than a decade, agreed that it was challenging to stop the momentum that they built up over years. The other organizations were less inhibited by institutional memory and inertia. Their entire presence at the meeting of the small producers was an exercise in imagining an unrealized future. As we sat around the fire, drinking from a bottomless cup of homemade *chirincho* (homemade liquor), we continued to reflect on the difficult nature of creating a peasant economy that does not replicate the worst aspects of consumptive capitalism.

I asked the men who were seated around the fire with me what they hoped to accomplish through their participation in the workshop. Most frankly explained they wanted more connections among other peasant organizations. I missed the finer point of their argument, and commented that it sounded to me like they wanted endless growth and more money. Mauricio stared into the fire for a moment and then said, “we want to be more responsible to our community.” Andrés Restrepo added, “No, that is not what we want. We want to make peasants stronger and ensure that they do not need to depend on outsiders. We are independent people and we don’t want to be seen as backwards or traditional.” I was glad to have asked the question, however ungraceful, because this was the crux of their work. Their work sought to build an economy that values peasants, their knowledges and practices, and recognizes them as productive members of a multiethnic society. Juan bade us goodnight as he left for the night, we put more wood on the fire, Luis Restrepo poured another drink for everyone, and we set about the business of sharing stories and experiences.

We all woke early the next morning, and, after a quick breakfast, we returned to work. The day began with Juan returning to the previous day's work to remind everyone of our trajectory so far. Juan began by saying, "This collection of small producers came here to develop projects to support their efforts to bring a product to market." He went on to indicate that FCN would do their best to help them in that project, but they needed to secure external funding in order to accomplish. The leaders of FCN would meet with a group of French funders about two months after our workshop to present them with a proposal to fund a regional economic development project. I was surprised to hear the word 'develop' so frequently, it is, after all, a loaded term that connotes all the wrong sorts of economic activities for peasants in Colombia. The goals of the FCN and the participant organizations were to galvanize a different economy that allows for more benefits to accrue to Colombia's peasants, as Juan would argue.

"We are here constructing hope in the face of multinational forces, genetically-modified seeds, and free trade agreements. We are also confronting national forces like the lack of state support in our projects. We are here to develop a project that supports a regional economic market that does away with capitalism's intermediaries and supports a market for us producers. We also need to define a public identity as peasants in order for people to value *us and our work*."

The organizations then broke into two separate groups. The first group was a collection of organizations that were well established and seeking to cut out intermediaries from their production and reduce their reliance on external actors. The second group was made up of organizations that were there to develop an idea into a larger goal, but were not at the point of selling an actual product to anyone. Everyone had been given the same direction – develop action strategies to strengthen 'our' peasant economy, ensure that we peasants eat what we peasants produce, affirm and value peasant identities in the economy, improve communication between producers so that a *panela* (sugarcane) producer in one part of Cauca would share local prices with a producer in another part, and fight to keep profits and benefits of production in the hands of the producers. I joined the group that consisted of the organizations that were developing an idea to turn into a product.

Members of this group necessarily spoke in more uncertain terms about their work, as they were unsure of what might result from this workshop. However, they used their changing relationship to transnational capital as an impetus to act and secure their futures. Group members had experienced the shifting nature of economic relations accelerate in the past decade in Colombia as the Colombian state continues to secure the landscape, rendering it safe for investment. Industrial farms

– the modern equivalent of a *latifundia* – continue to appear anywhere there is productive land, and peasants cannot afford to not sell their small plots of land. Members of the group zeroed in on the problem that profits continue to flow outward. Andrés Restrepo argued,

“Our current economy takes profits away from the sites of production and the producers themselves. This money accumulates in the hands of those who consume the products. This makes it necessary for those who produce to buy food in order to eat, *even though they are producers*. The money leaves us and we are left with very little, even though we do the majority of the work!”

According to the producers, surpluses that are generated do not stay with those who produce. The capitalist economy has devised countless strategies to dispossess small, rural producers. The irony of the situation was not lost on the group members. Productivity meant dependence, to these people, and their work in San Fernando was an attempt to change that reality. The group members went on to discuss strategies to circumvent capitalism and effect an inclusive and consensus-driven organization. As funding was a primary concern, the group emphasized the creative steps they could take to secure the necessary money to start their business. Nelson recommended a ‘rotating fund’ where everyone contributed funds on a regular basis, and contributing members were allowed to access those funds interest free after contributing for a set period. Andrés suggested that organizations within a community band together and pool their resources in order to lower the entry costs for each organization.

Richard Harrison, who represented the Peasant Movement of Cajibío (*Movimiento Campesino de Cajibío*, MCC), interjected to share his experiences with the peasant community in Cajibío. He explained how the peasant community came together to design and carry out a study to identify everything they produce on their lands, how they exchange their products (i.e. sell or barter), what the community consumes, and how they obtain these goods. This study effectively allowed the MCC to demonstrate that the peasant community produces more than enough to support the community, but they sell most of it in markets in Cali or Popayán. Not surprisingly, the peasant community also buys nearly everything they need in those same cities. Richard Harrison pointed out that the study was important for two reasons. First, it was empowering for the community to design and carry out the research that demonstrated how much the community produced. Second, it supported what they already knew. The peasant community was very productive, but entirely dependent on outsiders. Peasants were undermining their own wellbeing by buying and selling elsewhere. Richard Harrison

ended with the rhetorical question, ‘why should we produce so much only to buy and sell everything?’ It was a question that hung in the air as everyone reflected on Cajibío’s experiences.



Figure 2-2 Depiction of the current peasant economy on the left, and the desired economy on the right (Source: Author)

Figure 2-2 is a sketch on a scrap of paper that Richard Harrison made to demonstrate Cajibío’s peasant economy. As it was in 2014, goods, resources, and money flowed outwards. Richard Harrison then drew the new economy that they hoped to effect that is inward-facing, between peasants. The MCC were working to strengthen Cajibío’s peasant community, solidifying an ‘identity as social and political subjects with the ability to affirm themselves, create, and organize initiatives that strengthen an economy of living well.’

We broke for lunch after a few hours of work. Juan Constanza quipped, “all of this thinking requires a good peasant meal to stimulate our brains.” We ate a soup that contained quinoa leaves and quinoa, chicken from San Fernando, and cheese produced at the cooperative. Our lunch was a peasant identity in practice. The food was provided in exchange for labor and assistance. The soup contained the economic subjectivities that Juan, Ingrid, Richard Harrison, Mauricio, Luis, Andrés, Nelson, the team from the FCN, and the rest of the participants wanted to revive. The peasants who

were present provided the food in solidarity with one another to support the group as they struggled to develop an economy that served their needs from a peasant perspective.

We had a few pressing matters to take care of in the final session of the workshop. While the participants ate lunch, Juan, Ingrid, and the rest of the team from the FCN had read through the action-oriented goals that the two groups had produced. They compiled those goals into a singular list that summed up the work that happened at the meeting of the small producers of north Cauca. The document focused on creating an economy that began from a peasant identity and constructed networks of inclusive, consensus-driven, and inward looking organizations. The first document that we explored was titled *Politics of Defending Our Identity*, and it synthesized contributions from the participating organizations. In it, the contributing organizations argued that they all must,

“To value and recover peasant identities with a strong sense of belonging to a culture and territory. An identity that evolves over time and allows for full development in harmony with nature and the cosmos. To articulate and share the principles of the peasant communities and organizations. Taking back *lo propio* (our own) rescuing, valuing, and respecting the Law of Origin and principles of the Elders from different communities and groups of people. Beginning from the particular identity of Nasa and Misak peoples, peasants, Afro-descendants, and *Mestizos*, taking back the unity of peoples, interethnic and multicultural unity. Valuing our relationships, our ways of living together (*convivencia*), and alliances between organizations and communities.

Rescuing the knowledges of *our history*, and recovering and strengthening the dignity of being people who work the countryside, small producers, and rural people who support and feed all Colombians. The identity and dignity of having a different and alternative path and thought. Be proud of what we are, our roots, our territories, our cultures, and lifestyles. Be proud to take on this task of being protagonists in the construction of another world, another society.” (emphasis added)

The FCN, through their capacity building workshops, are working to reach across identity lines in order to build alliances between traditionally rural and historically exploited segments of Colombian society. Colombia’s indigenous peoples, afro-descendent, and peasants have been actively marginalized as antithetical to a modernizing economy, either as impediments to development or quant vestiges of a bygone era. Regardless, Colombia’s peasants are coming together as peasants who have a unique identity that is historically rooted in their communities as multiethnic self-sufficient producers. This identity is liberating and decolonial as it seeks to move beyond colonial identities, emphasizes voices from the margins, and reflective of the multiplicity of ways of knowing the world.

The multiethnic group from which the FCN seeks to forge its peasant identity includes the two main indigenous groups from northern Cauca. Both the Nasa and Misak communities have kept Cauca's 'traditional' indigenous movement at arm's length. They have selectively engaged with regional and national groups, preferring, at times, to forgo these indigenous networks to align with non-indigenous agencies. While afro-descendants enjoy many of the same legal protections afforded to indigenous peoples in Colombia's 1991 constitution, their organizations have tended to focus on Colombia's black population as a distinct group. Even *mestizos*, who do not constitute any legally recognized group, are identified as crucial to the peasant identity. Collectively, these distinct ethnic groups constitute Colombia's rural population.

Juan continued to lead the discussion as we moved to a peasant economic identity. He shared the group's synthesized *Politics to Strengthen Our Economy* with everyone. It read,

"Create our own, sovereign, and autonomous economy that is oriented towards collective welfare and social justice. A participatory and consensual economy so that all live well. An economy that goes beyond simple monetary relations that see nature as a source of wealth extraction and people as mere consumers. An economy that gives importance and a place to all other non-monetized forms of social relations and administration of goods and services that allow us to recreate society, culture, and territory.

Strengthening the local and regional economy by increasing our production capacity prioritizing consumption for ourselves and exchange [between us], and leaving surpluses to sell internally and externally through direct relationships with consumers...Rescuing and strengthening ancestral and current forms of community economy such as the *Minga* (communal labor), the lending labor, bartering, Cooperatives Solidarity Economy, and others. Promote internal circulation of capital, goods, and services at the regional level, between different regions, climatic zones, and sectors. Finding a balance between producing for external and internal consumption in order to avoid dependency and vulnerability to the [global] market...Promoting a healthy, organic, and agro-ecological farming, diversified according climates, rescuing, and preserving traditional agricultural knowledge and our traditional varieties of seeds, keeping our territories free of genetically modified organisms and agrochemicals, and without external seed control."

Economic practices have a cost to actors in Cauca. Producing good to sell cheaply in southern Colombia's larger cities has not created improved wellbeing for rural communities. In fact, they have frequently experienced the opposite. As they have attempted to integrate more fully into the capitalist market, they have experienced declining returns on investment, rising debt, rural depopulation, to name a few. In response, the peasant economy the FCN and participants are trying

to instantiate is based in solidarity, reciprocity, and working in concert with another. This economy draws actors inwards, values peasants as modern agents, and keeps the benefits of economic activity with those who do the work that makes the economy function.

Juan and the team from the FCN began to wrap up the meeting of the small producers of Cauca. They implored all participants to return to their communities and continue the hard work of connected actors and organizations. Their work as a multiethnic network of peasant producers and to awaken a peasant consciousness had only begun.

The Peasant Fair, seeking visibility, making aware, and dignifying

The Peasant Fair represents another moment in these differing – yet intersecting – movements to demonstrate the process of ‘making visible’ (*visibilizar*), ‘making aware’ (*concientizar*), and ‘dignifying’ (*dignificar*) fellow rural producers and consumers to galvanize a *campesino* identities. The Peasant Fair (*Feria Campesina*) in Cajibío, Cauca was a one-day event to celebrate peasants. Small producers from around Cajibío came to the central park in Cajibío that lies in the northeastern corner of the municipality. There is a small covered sports field, where the fair was held. The rest of the park is lined by trees that provide relief from the hot Andean sun. On the northern end of the park there is a police station that is surrounded by sand bags. Everyone had come together under the covered sports field. The Peasant Movement of Cajibío had erected a stage at one end for people to stand on and share their experiences as peasants. The participating organizations each had tables that lined the outside of the field, and they had also set up a cultural presentation in the middle of the field. A banner hung on the side of the stage that said, “Food is a right, not a commodity! Food sovereignty now!”

The peasant fair was organized by the Peasant Movement of Cajibío in order for the area’s peasants to make themselves visible and to make others aware of the work that peasants do. Recognizing that Colombia’s economy had shifted towards a consumer oriented economy that relies on chain stores, the peasants of Cajibío pushed back against the relatively recent phenomenon of buying all the household’s needs by shopping at one store. Most importantly, the MCC intended for everyone who attended the fair that day to realize that people are behind the things they buy and their labor is embodied in those goods. When peasants buy their goods at the store rather than from a neighbor, it undermines everyone’s wellbeing.

I strolled around the fair connecting with old friends and meeting with the *campesinos* who were present about the importance of redefining peasant identities to a broader Colombian public. The MCC and the local chapter of the *Vía Campesina* had brought in peasant from around Cajibío so they could connect with other rural producers and meet the people who buy the foods the farmers plant, care for, harvest, and exchange. I stopped at Jeffrey and Josefina's table to discuss what they had brought to the fair. Jeffrey was a stout and jovial farmer who was happy to talk about his work and his passion. He had handmade peanut butter, an incredibly piquant salsa, caramels and sugar-covered coconut treats, four different types of fertilizers and soil enhancing mixtures they prepare on the farm, and popcorn. Jeffrey and Josefina readily discussed the collective effort they exert to keep their farm functioning, and they insisted that I sample all their offerings, especially the salsa. As Jeffrey and I discussed the peasant fair and MCC's work to assert peasant identities, he commented to me that in the peasant economy "[one does] not accumulate points here, but we give *ñapa* (a little extra) for *buen vivir* (living well). Similarly, we do not do 'sales' but people can come to negotiate with us. But, to what extent do you bargain? Here we do not sell major brands, but we provide an identity [to producers and consumers]. That is the farmer's market." Jeffrey was exploring how direct relationships between farmers – or producers, as they often call themselves – and consumers mark this idealized peasant economy as distinct from the relationships between producers and consumers at a supermarket.

As Josefina, Jeffrey, and I continued talking they emphasized how their work on the farm and their identities as rural peasants were embodied in the products they sell and exchange. Jeffrey and Josefina shared a hypothetical situation in which they would barter their organic fertilizers with an imagined neighbor in exchange for transportation to the farmers' market in Popayán. Jeffrey and Josefina asserted that barter exchanges between rural farmers in a quintessentially peasant activity. Jairo Tocancipá (2008) posits that barter (*trueque*) exchanges transcend strictly economic value, and serve to (re)produce rural economic identities. These non-monetized practices are also rejections of free trade agreements, effect food autonomy, and Western capitalism.

A group of peasant children approached the microphone, and Richard Harrison introduced them as the youth members of the Peasant Movement of Cajibío. They were there to sing the *Hymn of the Peasant Movement of Cajibío* to those present at the peasant fair.

Hymn of the Peasant Movement of Cajibío

We will fight all well together
With the Peasant Movement of Cajibío.

Raise our voices, we shout slogans
And with our hands, we sow flags
With identity, on our land.
And youth, forging culture
It is flourishing, peasant lives
Leaders who sow, all the seeds.

I feel in my culture, and in autonomy
In my blood run, rivers of joy
That we find, in the spiritual
And in the peasant dream, becomes reality.
It is strengthened, the organization
As a tool, before the oppressor
So that one day, without fear
We will say we are, people power.

That all over the countryside, food is born
And our sovereignty, prevails
And that unity, becomes productive
In the peasant, his life is dignified.
You who wakes up, in the early mornings.
You see on the horizon, a sun of hope
You love the land, because it's your home
And when you die, you'll hug her.

These children represented Cajibío's hopes, demands, and visions for the future. Here, in these peasant spaces, one can find capitalism's margins, where contradictions flourish and capitalism – as a set of relations and practices – feels messy and incoherent. Few people who were present in Cajibío that day would argue that maintaining a plot of land with dozens of crops – some that they will only sell, some for medicine, and still more for the household to consume – is the most efficient way to support a household. But, as a farmer named Samuel Curtidor pointed out to me, “efficiency is not the only way to measure effectiveness.” Effectiveness in these places that global capitalism is only beginning to ‘discover’, is an agricultural system that functions without significant external inputs of capital, supports clean production of foods, collective seed maintenance, and is necessarily consensus driven.

Richard Harrison then approached the microphone to tell the crowd about the work that the MCC is doing to support Cajibío's peasants. Richard Harrison is a peasant, through and through. He maintains his small farm, while he works endlessly as a spokesperson for the *Congreso de los Pueblos* (Congress of the People) and with the MCC. He is, also, engaged in peasant struggles around the globe. He had previously traveled to Syracuse, New York in an exchange with organic farmers from the area. Richard Harrison continues exploring other ways for his farmland to produce by engaging with a global network of support. He began his intervention with the innocuous question, “how much does an egg cost?” Richard Harrison was not interested in an actual price. He wanted us to think about what we pay for one egg to make a point concerning the fundamental difference between capitalism's nebulous *market*, and the direct relationships between consumers and producers. The MCC and all the peasants at the Peasant Fair hoped to effect through their collective labor.

“Sure, any one of us could go to the supermarket and buy an egg for a couple hundred pesos, but what does that egg cost? It costs much more than 200 pesos. Buying an egg from the supermarket erases the work that *we peasants* do every day. We are in those eggs. Our hard labor to work the soil, feed the hens, collect the eggs, and care for the earth's resources as we do all of this work is in those eggs. Each egg holds our peasant identity. Buying an egg directly from a peasant tells those women and men that you value their work and identities.

When we buy eggs from the supermarket we make ourselves poorer. We undermine our own existences by buying eggs that are sold as cheaply as possible. This production model requires peasants to cut costs and lower their own standards of production. It increases environmental degradation. We send our resources out of the region without protest.

Buying an egg directly from a peasant might cost a few more pesos, but we don't hide anything in that price. We protect our own environment and use organic fertilizer that we produce. We care for our animals and feed them well. We earn enough money in that egg to support our production. It also recognizes the value of the work that we peasants do, and it makes us peasants value our own work."

Richard Harrison's deep analysis of the egg and its importance to *campesino* livelihoods left an impression on me. At its most basic level, Richard Harrison called for peasants to value themselves and their labor. He was deeply concerned with the willingness of peasants to succumb to the apparent ease with which they could sever their direct relationships consumers and other producers. Buying and selling products through the supermarket appears to be easier, but it undermines peasant lives and identities. Shopping at the *galería* (local farmer's market) often includes negotiation over prices, quantities, and perceived quality of the goods under consideration. Shoppers will either ask for a lower price because the strawberries are soft or the tomatoes are small, or they will ask for a *ñapa* (extra) to compensate for the defect. It is a tradition that Colombians practice with dramatic enthusiasm. Richard Harrison, however, takes issue with peasants negotiating prices, "When we ask for a price reduction, we – ourselves – begin to not value our own work." There is a cost to these actions, and Richard Harrison is working to make others aware of the costs of these negotiations.

Discussion

If the 'free market' is more a political project than an economic project as Bendaña (2004) argues, the collective efforts of economic activists in the Global South take on new relevance. The work that Antonio Campos, Juan Constanza, Richard Harrison, and their organizations do, does not intend to unravel capitalism entirely. Their goals are more modest, yet radical. They seek to enact an economy that works for them instead of exploiting them. An economy that values their contributions. An economy that is emancipatory. At the most basic level, they want to enact an economy that is productive rather than consumptive. Activating an economy in which *campesinos* are recognized for their identities and valued for what they do to enrich Colombia's social and economic spheres, requires a fundamental re-working of economic practices and relationships. These peasant organizations mobilize affect to build an economy that is responsive to *campesino* desires and reflective of the realities of peasant life.

Their activist work attempts to sediment economic identities and practices that transcend ethnic boundaries in rural Cauca, and placing *campesinos*, places, and peasant livelihoods at the center of its work. The movements to forge peasant identities that transcend ethnic boundaries are

profoundly diverse, yet they all reflect efforts across Cauca to build a multiethnic peasant future. These collective movements are a reaction to the intensification of industrial agriculture and extractive industries in Cauca. But their organizing for a regional economy rooted in a peasant identity is not a simple reaction; it is a positive imagining that relinks the social to the economic, and vice versa. Peasants continue to reap few benefits as Colombia's GNP grows. *Campesinos* have fought back as the economy continues to devalue their peasant identities in favor of a market where participants are defined by their identities as consumers. Explicitly stating their value as producers casts doubt on the totality of consumer capitalism by linking their peasant identities to the labor embodied within the crops they harvest and the goods they produce. In these spaces of reclaiming an economy, they do not allow their labor and lives to be disembodied from their products.

Furthermore, the peasant identity being crafted neither relies on nor ignores ethnic identities. Instead, the *campesino* identity these organizations are attempting to cultivate intentionally transcends historical racial and ethnic boundaries. FUNDECIMA and the women from Santa Rosa are working to value women, their experiences and knowledges, and awaken a female peasant identity that empowers women as economic agents. The Our Colombia Foundation brings together *afro*, indigenous, and *mestizo* small producers to develop strong connections between the groups and to eliminate intermediaries. The end goal is a regionally-oriented economy in which the benefits accrue to the rural peasants. The Peasant Movement of Cajibío and their members are unapologetically seeking recognition as valuable and productive economic agents whose work is appreciated. Their work also focuses on consumers in order to illuminate how their purchasing decisions are actively undermining the countryside's economic livelihoods. As Juan Constanza once responded when I reflected on the ethnic diversity of the Meeting of the Small Producers of North Cauca's, "It doesn't matter if someone is white, black, indigenous, green, or orange. It only matters that we are all rural peasants, and we are all struggling to improve our situation as peasants in Cauca" ("*No importa si una persona sea mestizo, negro, indígena, verde o naranja. Sola importa que somos todos campesinos de las partes rurales y estamos luchando para mejorar nuestras realidades como el campesinado del Cauca*"). Ignoring the different histories and material realities of Cauca's rural populations is a problematic proposition, but Juan's point that their experiences as *peasants* are what unifies these diverse groups. Building upon their commonalities to preserve the diversity of the Cauca's peasants and construct a better future.

Some of the activism I have described takes on the issue of gender relations within the peasant identity. It was surprising to hear the women of Santa Rosa express nostalgia for the time of the *guerrilla* – but the geographies of the state they reported show how the Colombian state’s attachment to industrial agriculture and extractive industries over peasant production, and opposition to the guerrillas, leaves the Colombian state no interest in supporting peasant economies nor greater support for women in gender relations. Santa Rosa has endured dramatic shifts since the early 1980s. The *guerrilla* strictly enforced a behavioral code that, somewhat surprisingly, ensured that women were safer and less precarious. Once the Colombian military displaced the *guerrilla*, the women from Santa Rosa reported a rapid increase in domestic and sexual violence against women. The battle with the Colombian Army and National Police resulted in a significant drop in the male population of Santa Rosa as many were killed or preemptively fled out of fear of the armed forces. The results for the women from Santa Rosa – and many women around Cauca – are increasing levels of precarity for women.

The multiscale actions of these collective organizations are placed in localities and based in transnational solidarity networks. Non-monetized modes of production and exchange continue to be rediscovered and represent a repackaging of capitalist social relations and placing social reproduction front and center (Quijano, 2006). In the three cases that I highlight in this chapter, there are two primary avenues through which activists channel their energies. First, peasants work to *visibilizar* (to raise awareness) their work, identities, and value. These groups are struggling to be seen, and therefore recognized, across rural Cauca. Juan Constanza and Ingrid’s workshop to develop a peasant public politics is one example of placing *campesinas* and *campesinos* in the Colombian national gaze.

Second, the women working with FUNDECIMA, the peasants associated with FCN, and those who participated in the peasant fair all explicitly seek to *concientizar* (make aware) rural and urban Colombians on the roles and values of peasants. They seek recognition of their livelihoods, practices, and bodies within Colombia. To that end, Colombian peasants were working with the national government to establish legal protections for peasants as crucial to Colombian national patrimony. Collectively, these efforts demonstrate a Southern example of ‘politics beyond the state’ that is open to possibility and creativity during a moment of retreating leftist politics across Latin America (Pearson and Crane, 2017). These groups were all working towards claiming ownership over their economic livelihoods. ‘Owning’ a constellation of economic practices and identities to these diverse groups and actors allows them to build their own future.

The various moments of activism I have presented here all strive to make visible and strengthen a regional economy that unites peasants. It is not closed off to outside economic activities, nor does it intend to unravel capitalism. The movement's goals are much more modest. These activists seek to enact a regionally-oriented peasant economy that is responsive to northern Cauca's situation. It reflects the specific experiences of the area – as dispossessed and exploited since Europeans arrived to the continent, but in different ways over time – and intends to build an economy that works *for peasants*, rather than benefitting from peasants. As Richard Harrison argued, these actors are working to change the mindsets of peasants and shoppers alike, to construct an economy that values peasants and their contributions. This economy is focused on being productive, not consumptive, and it is emancipatory.

Conclusion

Activism in Cauca appears to be ubiquitous and never-ending. Cauca, as an administrative center dating back to the early colonial period, has served for centuries as a zone of production and extraction for other parts of world. There is gold, ample water, and a climatic variety that allows for diverse agro-industrial production. Rural Caucanos are not satisfied with this status quo, and they continue to work together (where possible) to change Cauca's material realities and re-introduce social relations into their economic identities and practices. This work is made more urgent by the continued attacks against peasant leaders across Colombia. In 2015, more than 300 peasant leaders were killed throughout the country as they continue their struggles to assert *campesino* identities and rights.

The Our Colombia Foundation, Peasant Movement of Cajibío, Congress of the People, the Women of the El CIMA Foundation were collectively working to sediment a *campesino* identity that transcends ethnic identities, develop a peasant public politics, effect an inward oriented regional economy, and re-introduce social relations and costs into economic practices. I examined the Meeting of the Women's Groups of El CIMA and scholar-activists and its efforts to activate historically-based political identities and create economic justice. Next, I explored the work of the Our Colombia Foundation as it brings together peasant, *afro*, and indigenous organizations under the guiding principle that 'another world is possible' to link organizations and actors from disparate communities and develop policies to develop an economy of producers. Finally, I focused on a 'Peasant Fair' in Cajibío and the political work of making oneself visible and legible to another. These three moments represent how affect is mobilized to

develop radically different economies that make explicit the social relations embodied within products and exchanges. First, peasants work to raise awareness of their work, identities, and value. Second, these groups are struggling to be seen, and therefore recognized, by making Colombians aware of the values of peasants and their labor.

Building non-capitalist economies that are grounded in a *campesino* identity is hard work, especially in a neoliberalizing hyper-capitalist state like Colombia. Where the Colombian government looks to the deepening of capitalist social relations as the answer to social and political violence, rural Colombians fear the permanent loss of peasant culture. The Women from Santa Rosa discussed how the shift toward capitalist wage labor produced fundamental shifts in community social relations. Lending labor was quickly replaced with a distrust between neighbors that could only be ameliorated with payment for services. Regardless of the motivations, a non-capitalist economy is a project that will never be complete.

Building relationships that transcend ethnic identities in rural Colombia pushes back against nearly 500 years of imposed gendered and racialized identities. Raising the awareness of all Colombians around the work that peasants do through their work, and placing *campesino* bodies, identities, and practices at the center of these efforts employs a public politics that challenges these histories.

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Chapter 3 – *La economía armónica*: more-than-human geographies, harmony, and diverse economic practices in Cauca, Colombia

In January 2016, the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca – or CRIC – celebrated their 45th year of struggle for ‘unity, territory, and culture’, and they installed their new High Council in a ceremony in La Maria near Piendamó, Cauca. This was a celebratory and life-affirming event for thousands of members of the CRIC that drew to the fore the indigenous movement’s successes and strengths. It was often punctuated with somber reminders of fallen activists and the work that remains. Following the installation of its new councilors and the requisite cleansing ceremony, the *guardia indígena* – or indigenous guard – who were encircling the crowd held their *bastones de mando* high in the air, sang the hymn to the indigenous guard (*himno a la guardia*), and set off to continue their struggles. The indigenous authorities and indigenous guard climbed on their *chivas* and returned home to their communities, invigorated by the installation of their new leadership, and empowered by their historical milestone. The CRIC are one of Colombia’s oldest indigenous movements, and their stubborn ability to persist in the face of five centuries of genocide defines their political identity.

Members of the *resguardos* (legally protected indigenous territories) around Caldon, Cauca and quickly resumed their struggles for ‘unity, territory, and culture’ by ‘liberating Mother Earth’. On February 22, 2016, nearly 50 members of the surrounding indigenous lands sought to comply with the CRIC’s platform for struggle and liberate Mother Earth. Their main goals were to 1) recuperate land for the *resguardos* and defend their ancestral territories; and, 2) expand their current *resguardos*. The indigenous guard took to the streets in the community to distribute flyers explaining the group’s presence to vehicles as they passed by. Their communal labor had the goal of reclaiming two large sugarcane farms – Canaima and La Emperatriz – by clearing their fields of sugarcane in the name of the indigenous community in Caldon. The pamphlets they passed out stated, “The indigenous communities of Munchique, Huellas, Corinto, and López Adentro are here in these farms...complying with the order to liberate *Uma Kive*, our Mother Earth.” It went on to say,

“And [the earth is damaged like this] all over the world. Because of this, *Uma Kive* has expressed the suffering of disequilibrium caused by monocultures, genetically modified organisms, and mineral extractivism for some time. She shouts that she cannot handle more” (ACIN, 2016).

In northern Cauca, the sugarcane fields are enormous. There are currently more than 400,000 hectares under sugarcane cultivation between Popayán and Cali, Colombia. The Pan-American Highway transects the fields that go on as far as the eye can see. According to these indigenous actors, the group of indigenous activists reclaimed these massive farms as a challenge to the lack of harmonious relationships between people, animals, plants, water, and the land itself when it was under industrial monoculture. Recovering the land and returning it to more harmonious uses allows their mother to flourish and return to equilibrium. Mother Earth has been so thoroughly exploited that she shouts out to people in an attempt to be heard.

Life on capitalism's fringes is messy, and these moments are illustrative of Colombia's cognitive dissonance. The Colombian state continues its never-ending search for economic reform and the centuries-long colonial project of rationalizing the Colombian landscape, and instituting capitalist social relations and practices. Indigenous Colombians struggle to remain, pushing back in very public displays to remind everyone else that they still exist. As the Colombian state moves towards its desired hyperactive capitalism, countless indigenous Colombians refuse to participate in the journey, or, at least, participate only on their own terms. They are not misguided luddites who fear an unknown future. On the contrary, these actors know too much. Through various (social) networks and institutions, collective memories of Colombia's violent history, and lived experiences, indigenous Colombians have seen the actually existing dystopian neoliberal reality. They have known dispossession, alienation, exclusion, and genocide. Indigenous Colombians seek to maintain their heterogeneity and differences, rather than diving headlong into hyper capitalism.

While critical geographers have carefully interrogated human relationships with the more-than-human world, much of this work has explored Nature in the industrialized North through anthropocentric lenses (Braun, 2005; McCune, 2014). A growing body of literature has conflated economic harmony with 'sustainability' or 'green' living', essentially attempting to force Southern and indigenous thinking into a more benign form of capitalism (Acosta, 2012; Bell, 2016; Brockington, 2012; Gudynas, 2011a; Shear, 2014) Among indigenous peoples in Colombia's Andes, these approaches miss the point and can easily overlook Southern and indigenous knowledges. In the case of indigenous peoples in the Andean highlands, *Madre Tierra* (Mother Earth) is a powerful and living being who provides for all life on Earth. Indigenous people seek to respect their Mother and live within boundaries of her productive capacity. Indigenous activists characterize to this relationship with Mother Earth *armonía* (harmony). However,

harmony is not an attainable goal. Rather, harmony is a way of comporting oneself and orienting oneself within a socionatural world, seeking a balance between actors (Nader, 1990). It is continuously (re)enacted through unfolding relationships between the human and more-than-human world. Harmony is an affective disposition, insofar as it connotes loving and respectful relationships between humans, Mother Earth, and the more-than-human world (Zimmerer, 2015). Harmony is also peaceful relations toward another. Indigenous communities build peace every day as communities that are engaged permanently with their communities' *planes de vida* (life plans) and their struggle for rights.

In this chapter, I employ a diverse economies perspective to untangle the performance of diverse economic identities and practices that persist in rural Colombia, and which are permeated with notions of harmony. In the first section, I weave together political ecology and diverse economies to examine how a harmony-oriented more-than-human nature produces a very different economy. I then examine economic subjectivities and difference to understand how rural – and primarily indigenous – Colombians are asserting natures and identities that fundamentally require ‘an-other’ way of interacting with, and relating to, Nature (Walsh, 2012). In the third section of the paper, I trace the trajectories of ‘harmony’ among Cauca’s indigenous activists and how they relate to nature. I trace how *nasa* activists employ a more-than-human concept of life – that includes humans, plants, animals, elements, and the cosmos – to create an economy that is inextricably linked to *Madre Tierra*, and accounts for her wellbeing in economic thinking and actions. In the final part of this article, I suture together economic difference and plurality with diverse indigenous conceptualizations of Nature, in an attempt to conceptualize an economy that is based in harmony between humans and non-humans. I conceptualize the economy as open sites of contestation in which economic identities intersect. I ask, what is harmony among northern Cauca’s *nasa* communities, and how does harmony manifest itself in economic identities and practices? In the end, I argue that a more-than-human framing of nature allows researchers to see, feel, and examine the heterogeneous economic logics and practices that thrive in the global South’s indigenous hinterlands.

Ecologies, harmony, and more-than-human natures

I begin from the position that human-environment (human-nature or even human-nonhuman) relations are complex and that these relationships to nature are contradictory, full of conflict, and often ill-defined. Placing my research in the realm of political ecology allows me to examine indigenous peoples’ forms of access to and control over land, resources, and their implications

for livelihoods (Peet, Robbins, & Watts, 2011). Treating nature, culture, politics, humans, and the more-than-human as closely interrelated processes and not ontologically distinct categories allows me to challenge the concept of a clear divide between humans and nonhumans (Braun, 2005). Conceiving 'nature' in this fashion creates a space in which nature becomes a field of contestation in which claims over property, assets, resources, and a politics of recognition becomes possible (Peluso and Watts, 2001). As such, I focus on the intimate and loving relationships that become visible in a more-than-human world (Escobar, 1999; Lorimer, 2012).

Nevertheless, political ecology is heir to a problematic Western tradition of scientific ways of knowing nature, ways of knowing which cannot be simply applied to the struggles of indigenous peoples in Cauca. Situating nature within western scientific traditions begin with the creation of an external and knowable nature (Collard, Dempsey, & Sundberg, 2015). Europe's Renaissance buried affective and spiritual relationships to nature deep in a primitive history, and moved towards emancipating Man from Nature (Escobar, 1998). To better know and understand the world around them, scientists and enlightened thinkers advocated for a separation of human cognition into a rational and analytical being, and a spiritual and emotional being (Maturana and Varela, 1988). Affect was dismissed as irrational, and a lesser form of knowing, while rational scientific thinking became *the* way to know phenomena. A crucial part of this movement necessitated the separation of Man and Nature, so that humanity's objective gaze would analyze, know, and rationalize the surrounding world (Mignolo, 2003).

Political ecology has tended to situate diverse ecological and economic practices within Capitalism, effectively foreclosing the possibility of understanding diverse ecological and economic practices on their own terms (Moore and Robbins, 2015). Political ecology has often been attuned to the unique logics that underpin specific socionatures, but has failed to contextualize the economic practices that flow from those socionatures. For example, the challenging and varying high elevation conditions of the Andean highlands have united humans, plants, animals, and climate in complex relationships that rely heavily on bartered seed exchange networks to propagate locally-adapted plants and knowledges (Zimmerer, 1998; Zimmerer, 2006), yet little geographic analysis has examined these networks from a perspective of recreating and reenacting indigenous worldviews. Still more have interrogated the uneven production of nature to fit economic desires (Castree, 2008; Smith, 1990). Expanding these concepts, Heynen and Robbins (2005) argue that neoliberal capitalism creates new institutions and practices to mediate the human-environment interaction by inserting new layers and forms of governance in

the human-environment equation; and through the privatization of the state-held resources; enclosure of the commons; and, valuation of complex ecosystems. Yet, the 'production' of nature is only one approach to interrogating the relationships between economic practices and Nature. These 'situated knowledges' of the production of nature emerge from, and (re)produce the particularities of Western scientific knowledge production practices and circulate as 'facts' (Haraway, 1991).

Postcolonial scholarship has formulated multiple critiques of Western knowledge production. An examination of the politics of knowledge production shows that the dichotomous representation of indigenous and scientific knowledges positions indigenous knowledge as a (coherent) antithesis to scientific knowledge (Agrawal, 1995). The intellectual traditions of postcolonial theory privilege the voices that originate at the margins over the dominant western discourses; despite this inclination, western and indigenous knowledges are not entirely separable. These knowledges, instead, are a "multiplicity of multiplicities" (Watson and Huntington, 2008). Nature is not singular, in this sense, as it is continuously co-produced around the world. A more-than-human nature would be better conceptualized as natures as there is no one hegemonic indigenous Nature that characterizes all indigenous peoples across the globe (Turnbull, 2000). These natures do not exist 'out there' as a knowable object of study. Instead these are created through loving, familial (e.g. Earth as mother), and affective relationships that require other ways of knowing and feeling nature's presence. Through my research in Cauca, Colombia, I have found that "harmony" between humans, Mother Earth, and the cosmos provides a productive opening to examine more-than-human geographies of indigenous livelihoods. In my research, I seek to understand how humans and a more-than-human world interact and co-produce a nature that is based between harmonious relationships between multiple actors, and argue that indigenous understandings of harmony deserve scholarly attention.

Bruce Braun (2015) locates the discipline's ability to creatively engage with other ways of relating to socionatural worlds in its inability, "imagining and engendering just and sustainable alternatives to existing political, economic, and ecological practices" (pg. 239). Yet, these limitations do not mean that people around the world are not working to challenge hegemonic political, economic, and ecological formations. Indeed, their work transcends these ideological boundaries. Braun goes on to argue that, "We might also locate the discipline's inability to imagine alternatives in its widespread and principled rejection of prescriptive or normative approaches to political or ecological change and its widely-held suspicion of utopian thought"

(pg. 239). However salient Braun's critiques of geography are, I challenge the idea that radical work is somehow utopian. Utopia is a distant and, seemingly, unreachable horizon. Utopian thinking, toward which various movements have oriented themselves, is not the *only* way to approach that distant horizon. Despite geography's movement toward critical geographic scholarship beginning with the qualitative revolution and marked by efforts to 'decolonize' the geography today, the discipline struggles to engage radical thinking and praxis in the Global South. In the case of indigenous peoples in the Americas, geographers fail to comprehend the distinct positionalities and cosmovisions that populate the landscape. In fact, Eduardo Kohn (2013) argues that indigenous peoples do not simply enact distinct worldviews, but they occupy different worlds that are populated by beings and forces that do not exist in the Northern world. Indigenous economies are enacted in the present, focusing, instead, on concrete actions today while remaining oriented to harmony. I look to the vision of harmony as a way to conceptualize the radical, life-making work that indigenous actors engage in on a daily basis. From indigenous actors and their emphasis on harmony, I derive the notion of a harmonious economy.

How, then, can we situate the concept of 'harmony' within these constellations of meaning? Harmony has been imagined as a frictionless existence where humans seek to minimize conflict (Jamieson, 2000). Indigenous peoples in Colombia, however, are not conflict averse or in search of a 'frictionless' existence. Indeed, they continue to cultivate a political identity that is actively hostile to colonial histories and imperial realities (Mignolo, 2005; Tattay, 2012). Recognizing that indigenous livelihoods and bodies have been defined by violence since the late 15th century, others have examined the concept of conviviality as a means to conceptualize the flows of affection and jealousy in Amazonian indigenous social relations (Overing and Passes, 2000). Conviviality is most effectively characterized as an affective sociality with multiple pathways of positive and negative (jealousy, hatred, greed, and conflict) features that are part of communal living (Overing and Passes, 2000). Yet the concept of conviviality primarily relates to Amazonian indigenous peoples, and, more importantly, it does not extend to the *Madre Tierra* or cosmos. Conviviality is primarily limited to relationships among indigenous peoples, and how those social relations are full of affection.

The *Buen Vivir* (Living Well) movement that has emerged in Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia building from an indigenous cosmovision to construct an economic imaginary that incorporates Nature into a broader political imaginary (Gudynas, 2011b; Harcourt, 2013; Thomson, 2011). *Buen Vivir* remains a highly contentious movement as it has not been translated into post-growth

economies in Andean countries (Agostino & Dübgen, 2012). Indigenous actors, however, seek to maintain and promote harmony with the world around them by maintaining the reciprocal relationships between humans and more-than-humans, and emphasize how these complex assemblages are deeply intertwined. Indigenous ecologies are not neatly separated from economic practices and identities of these same communities. Rather, they are mutually constituted in relation to another.

It is crucial that we contextualize these ecologies as manifestations of social movements' specific dreams about Mother Earth from the perspective of the communities and their territories (Escobar, 1999). Ethno-territorial indigenous movements present an ontological challenge to Western scientific ecologies and economic thought. These groups shun notions of 'development' as a teleological trajectory towards a newer form of capitalism, seeking, instead, to build a more comprehensive notion of 'development' that emphasizes the ability of life to flourish. Development as has been practiced by western institutions – as a collection of economic practices, tools, and strategies – entirely misses the central demand of these communities that seek to persist and remain; rather than be flattened, sanitized, and homogenized by global capitalism (Escobar, 2008). These movements defend other ways of living and being.

While scholars in Latin America have examined how local environmental knowledge systems can persist in the face of globalization (Gómez-Baggethun, 2009) and maintain their identities (Flores & Ianiero, 2010), or interrogated how indigenous social movements have emerged to struggle against colonial categories (Bustamente González & Londoño Mora, 2009), relatively little attention has focused on examining how indigenous peoples are asserting and recreating Southern natures (Albán A. & Rosero, 2016). Latin American identity-based social movements have coalesced to develop alternative politics that contest and challenge capitalism's place in the region (Wolford, 2010; Yates and Bakker, 2014). Movements to (re)claim indigenous lands place the market logic of neoliberal governance against the 'traditional' collective rights of indigenous groups (Perreault, 2005; Zibechi and Hardt, 2013). These political interventions present an important moment into the transnational character of nature/culture movements (Escobar, 1999). Ecologically-oriented social movements negotiate the landscapes of environmental degradation and conservation of biodiversity. In Colombia's Andean highlands, the multidirectional interrelationships between humans and more-than-humans are simultaneously intertwined at various scales. The relational nature of how humans and Mother Earth interact reflects indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing (Escobar, 2013). Indigenous movements

manifest themselves as expressions of Mother Earth's dreams that flow from indigenous communities and territory.

The politics of, and conflicts over land and nature in Colombia reflect the intimate ways in which they are related to indigenous identities. Humans are not central in this approach, rather, they are embedded within Nature. An approach that de-centers humans while emphasizing the more-than-human geographies opens the field of analysis to examine how a de-centered nature allows for the emergence of diverse economic identities and practices (Whatmore, 2006). I use the term 'more-than-human' geography to conceptually re-link humans and non-human nature and take seriously the non-binary constellations of nature and society relations (Johnson and Murton, 2007; Panelli, 2009). A more-than-human approach to interrogating indigenous relationships to the world also allows me to privilege the contingent moments and strategies to enroll Mother Earth into human political struggles (de la Cadena, 2016; Heatherington, 2010). A more-than-human geography, then, conceives of nature as socially-produced and relationally constructed between placed peoples, landscapes, and lifeworlds.

Economies as topographies of contestation and difference

Crucial to this project is the recognition that economies are assemblages of actors, places, and materials that are awkwardly brought together through economic activities. I attempt to move beyond understandings of indigenous economic practices as pre-, post-, or non-capitalist that frame economic activities and identities as less-than capitalism. These approaches tend to assume that 'traditional' economic practices are in their death throes, in spite of evidence that indicates to the contrary. For example, some researchers have endeavored to make sense of Andean economic livelihoods by applying western economic logics of production and exchange in their analyses (see Mayer, 2002). More academic inquiries interrogate the unseen aspects of traditional economic practices, but these often commit to an anthropocentric approach and recognizes economies as merely human assemblages (see Scott, 1985).

Economic actors enact and constitute economies, and not the other way around (Narotzky and Besnier, 2014). This intervention challenges the hegemonic economic discourses of Capitalocentrism (Gibson-Graham, 1996; Gibson-Graham, 2006). We cannot know or understand the practices and assemblages that form a harmonious economy as some (lesser) form of capitalism, or taking place within capitalism. A harmonious economy has its own place, logics, subjectivities, and trajectories. This project examines the discursive creation of an-other

economy. This form of economy existed prior to mercantile and neoliberal capitalisms, and it persists today in relation to capitalism, but it is not subsumed within it.

De-centering European modernity, and de-centering even ‘capital’ itself, provides feminist political economy with the tools necessary to interrogate economies otherwise (Gibson-Graham, 2006). This project seeks to create ethical alternatives to capitalism(s) and incorporate economic practices that challenge capitalism. A ‘community economy’ becomes the new sites of economic practice and knowledge and it is perpetually in a state of becoming (Gibson-Graham, 2006). An imperative of opening the realm of economic possibilities is the need to highlight hidden and alternative practices that constitute the terrain of an economy. The project seeks to unite activists and academics to change the discourses of ‘the economy’ to more effectively interrogate alternate economic possibilities.

A diverse economies approach requires imagining ethical alternatives that are neither imposed, nor exclusionary and that are politically empowering. Gibson-Graham’s notion of the community economy provides a concrete way in which to unlearn and relearn by pushing scholars and activists to deconstruct capitalism into its constituent pieces and examine economic practice as (potentially) non-capitalist (Gibson-Graham, 2006). Bringing the diverse economies literature together with a more-than-human framing of the world enables me to ask how uncommon logics shape and enable different economic relationships to emerge.

Community economies emphasize four main areas. First, these economies base their practices of production and consumption on what is necessary to personal, social and, ecological survival. Second, these arrangements attempt to ethically appropriate and distribute social surplus. Third, the community economy seeks to establish the conditions of whether and how social surplus is to be produced and consumed. Lastly, communities establish how a commons is produced and sustained (Gibson-Graham, 2006). This list is not a checklist of ethics, but it represents how a community economy is qualitatively different than a Capitalocentric one.

Among Cauca’s indigenous peoples, economic practices and livelihoods illuminate how these four steps can be enacted daily. First, more-than-human harmony requires humans to produce not necessarily what *might* be considered necessity for humans, but only that which is sufficient to support households with enough extra to survive a bad harvest in the case of unforeseen production issues. Household management practices ensure animals have enough resources to

support themselves, for example allowing for ‘weeds’ to grow in the garden because other animals can eat them. Second, in addressing issues of social surplus, indigenous economies employ an ethic of not only harmony, but also solidarity between indigenous communities. *Nasa* actors plant and harvest their crops to support other indigenous communities in different climate regions of Cauca, harvesting extra crops to exchange with indigenous communities first. Third, in the case of these indigenous economies, this means addressing questions of surplus in relation to potential poor harvests, but also to support barter exchanges with other communities. The place of barter in more-than-human harmony is currently contested. Lastly, for indigenous communities the commons is Mother Earth, and communities maintain their Mother Earth by striving toward harmony between the human and more-than-human.

The diverse economies approach, however robust, emerged from a location of challenging or destabilizing stagnant (neo)Marxist theorizations of class, classed bodies and identities, and valuable ‘economic’ practices. Redefining class identities has maintained a central place in this body of work (Gibson-Graham, Resnick, & Wolff, 2000), but translating class-based Marxian analysis to the global South is a problematic process that requires an imposition of European experiences of industrialization and class formation on indigenous peoples in Colombia. Western class subjectivities and identities do not hold purchase among indigenous peoples in Cauca, and, indeed, many parts of the Andes. In these interstices, we begin to find the limits of a diverse economies approach. If indigenous peoples frequently do not identify as ‘classed’ individuals, then research should be attuned to the lines along which they define themselves in relationship to the rest of the world. In response to this gap, some scholars have begun to incorporate plural worldviews and emergent relationships to nature as a means to amplify the possibilities of a diverse economies approach (Gibson-Graham and Miller, 2015; Johnson, 2014; Matthews, 2015; Roelvink, 2015).

In the next section I examine how indigenous actors in Cauca, Colombia, understand, speak of, and perform a set of diverse economies with an emphasis on the harmonious. This paper is based on research carried out in northern Cauca during 10 months of fieldwork in 2012 and 2014. I attended and participated in nine indigenous events that involved ‘harmonizing and refreshing’ actors’ relationship to the land. These events ranged from the massive *Congreso Extraordinario del Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca – CRIC* (Extraordinary Congress of the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca – CRIC) and Young Indigenous Leaders of Cauca (*Líderes jóvenes de los pueblos indígenas del Cauca*) to the small meeting of indigenous administrators from the

indigenous university. The importance of harmony was ubiquitous and assumed a prominent role in my research gradually. Employing an ethnographic approach that relied heavily on casual discussions and participant observation allowed me focus on harmony's centrality to indigenous social relations because I participated in harmonizing rituals repeatedly. I finally realized the importance of harmony while listening to an audio feed of an indigenous court as it heard the case of a group of FARC guerrillas who were accused of killing two members of a local indigenous guard. As the judgement opened, the more than two thousand indigenous actors collectively engaged in a cleansing ritual to ensure that 'no one there was in a state of disequilibrium with Mother Earth and their indigenous brothers and sisters' (ACIN, 2014).

Performing harmonious economies and ecologies

In this section I examine how indigenous actors frame a more-than-human ecology through their words and actions; specifically, I attempt to locate harmony in these constellations. I then examine how these actors situate themselves within these more-than-human assemblages to understand where humans and more-than-humans lie in this landscape. Finally, I trace how indigenous relationships to the more-than-human world are defended, enacted, and made possible through a contentious relationship with the Colombian state. I look at *nasa* worldviews from northern Cauca to explore how a *nasa* conceptualization of *madre tierra* is productive of diverse and harmonious economic practices that flow from nature, rather than produce a singular Nature.

Wilmer – an indigenous activist from northern Cauca who joined the indigenous movement during the mid-1980s – and I spent some time discussing the way that he thinks of harmony and its historical importance within Andean cosmovisions. Wilmer told me,

“When one speaks of harmony with nature, it signifies that one is constantly searching for it as life purpose, even though it is not always fully achieved. Speaking of harmony before the Spanish invasion does not mean that we lived in a paradise, rather we sought equilibrium – or a middle point – between different demands as a livelihood. It is something that one did not always achieve, but there was the intentional practice of concepts such as consensus, reciprocity, complementarity, and comprehensiveness. We were definitely not ‘noble savages’ or the opposite...we were people in search of equilibrium and harmony.”

For Wilmer, as for other indigenous activists I spent time with, harmony serves as a basis for an ecological orientation from which diverse economic practices and identities flow. Wilmer's long history within the movement is apparent by his understanding of the indigenous movement's work as never settled. Wilmer portrays harmony as a struggle that indigenous peoples,

communities, and organizations are constantly engaged in. Harmonious actors seek balance in their lives and actions, in which good actions equal – or outweigh – bad actions. Indigenous livelihoods in northern Cauca are – and have been – threatened by encroaching transnational capital, persistent legacies of unequal access to land that can be traced back to colonial administration of the area, and the presence of leftist *guerrillas* and rightwing paramilitaries.

Harmony is an unfolding process that indigenous actors are continually working to maintain in their lives. Constantly managing and engaging economic relations offers an opportunity for indigenous actors to assess how their individual – and collective – actions are contributing to (dis)harmony. Fabian Chocue – an indigenous activist and elder – and I spoke at length about harmony for *nasa* communities following a day of workshopping in rural Cauca.

“During the harmonizing rituals the *nasa* establish relations with the nonhuman, with Mother Nature and those elders and cultural heroes who have passed on, whose strength and knowledges remain in these sacred sites. The experiences of connecting with these places, memories, and beings are everyday practices for the *nasa* community. These rituals to harmonize *nasa*, plants, animals, Mother Earth, and the cosmos cleans the imbalances within the territory may be affecting the community.”

Fabian illustrates two very important aspects of *nasa* relationships to Mother Earth. First, he emphasizes the landscape as a collection of sacred sites in which *nasa* history lives. Their territories are a biography of resistance, persistence, and cultural diversity that cannot be erased as long as *nasa* communities continue to enact those histories. Second, it is also crucial to recognize the everyday nature of these relationships to the Andean highlands (Gómez and Ruiz, 1997). Creating and maintaining harmony between humans, plants, animals, and Mother Earth is not an extraordinary event, insofar as it permeates daily life, as indigenous peoples continue to struggle (*luchar*) to maintain their identities and livelihoods against foreign forces. Each day the *nasa* remaining in these sacred places, maintaining their indigenous histories and cultural plurality, is a day of resistance in the face of centuries of dispossession and cultural erasures. The *nasa* concept of territory – as a living embodiment of *Madre Tierra* – allows indigenous people to resist and struggle against the ‘global forces that threaten’ *nasa* survival (Larraín, 2005; Portela, 2000).

In another instance, I sat with Abel Henao during a lunch break. Abel Henao was a *nasa* participant in the *Congreso Extraordinario del Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca* (Extraordinary Congress of the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca) in October of 2014. We chatted about the historical roots of contemporary indigenous struggles as we ate plantain soup. Abel was

excitedly discussing the cultural importance of liberating Mother Earth as an act of harmonization and fit the *nasa* politics of persisting as an act of resistance.

“Questioning the dominant dichotomies between nature and society, involves, at the same time rethinking the established divisions between objectivity and subjectivity. This means that being *nasa* also implies a specific way of perceiving the world, present and past, human and non-human, natural and cultural. For example, why are we interested in the liberation of *Madre Tierra*? The feeling of liberation the *Tierra* comes from the elders, their dreams, and their wisdom. It is a fundamental theme for us and for all of humanity. We have a planet that is totally decomposed. The climate is unpredictable because we have polluted the Earth and taken so much from her. Territories have been forced into commodity production, put up for sale to further exploit them [and their resources], destroying life. The *Tierra* is not a commodity, she is our mother and we should liberate her [from exploitation]. Exploiting the land in service of Western capitalism, serves to make the land sick and our work seeks to liberate the *Madre Tierra* from th[e sickness of commoditization and exploitation].”

The *nasa* have long memories, and their collective histories represent one of the Americas’ only examples of an indigenous group that was never fully ‘conquered’ after the arrival of Europeans. The *nasa* (also known as the *paeces*) were able to retreat to their ancestral home of *Tierradentro* once Europeans began arriving to the area. *Tierradentro* is an unforgiving part of the Andes that is completely surrounded by the central range of the Andean cordillera, and nestled between two volcanoes – Puracé and Nevado del Huila. Europeans struggled to simply enter the region, eventually focusing their colonizing projects in other, more productive parts of present-day Colombia. Today, *Tierradentro*, Cauca is a central site of *nasa* resistance and their history of persistence in the face of colonization, and the locus from which the *nasa* political project of asserting a public indigenous identity took root (Rappaport, 2003). Continually cultivating harmony in these places activates these memories, unites humans with the nonhuman, and constructs territories as complexly imbricated landscapes of human, natural, and spiritual desires.

Harmony in the liberation of Mother Earth

Today, indigenous communities around Colombia see their work in this context, and they frame it as liberating their mother from exploitation, pillaging, and ongoing violence. Industrial agriculture, for example, through an indigenous worldview, is a symptom of disharmony between humans and Nature (Jamieson, 2000). Mother Earth is exploited by global capital, and she was taken from indigenous communities during colonization. The colonial era introduced rationalized scientific natures that separated indigenous spiritual experiences from ways of relating to the world around them. This politics of liberation seeks to free life from the hands of western, consumptive and exploitative economic practices. Liberating Mother Earth begins with

the physical and spiritual relationships that indigenous peoples maintain with the land. Indigenous agricultural practices are a physical relationship that connects land itself and human agricultural practices.

Here, I would like to emphasize the affective and empathetic relations that indigenous communities across Cauca perform when they liberate and cleanse Mother Earth. Lori Gruen (2004) argues for an empathetic orientation towards a more-than-human world as a strategy to motivate 'ethical action' toward the world. For Gruen,

“Empathetic engagement with different others is a form of moral attention that not only brings into focus the claims that the more than human world make on us but also helps to shift our moral attention. We can recognize animals, for example, as creatures with whom we share a way of being in the world, but if we think we experience the world in the same ways, we are much more likely to engage in narcissistic projections and miss what is important and valuable to them from their point of view” (2004, pg. 34).

Paying particular attention to the performance of these empathetic engagements and the ethics that orient these actions, creates an opening to make sense of indigenous natures and environmental ethics (Lorimer, 2007). Referring to the earth as mother provides a glimpse into an indigenous worldview that persists in Cauca today.

According to Joanne Rappaport, the Nasa recognize the physical locations where the livelihood of their history lies (1985). In this sense, some lakes, mountains, boulders and rivers, are identified in the Nasa imaginary. Historically important places, such as the birthplace of a *cacique* or a place where the Nasa defeated the Spanish are inscribed with enormous significance as they represent spaces and moments of cultural reproduction. In this respect, these spaces are constructed as mythical and historical references, which reflect the recognition of the indigenous territory (Findji and Rojas, 1985). The landscape is also dotted with the everyday indigenous spaces that reflect Cauca's multiple indigenous groups. A *nasa* house and garden represent two specific quotidian spatialities, and the Association of Cabildos of North Cauca characterizes the re-creation of these garden spaces as:

“Productive restructuring includes recovery and improvement of the model Nasa *tul*, is presented as an important strategy for food autonomy of indigenous families and productive base of reconstructing the Nasa worldview, which integrates different production processes with simultaneous processes of conservation of natural ecosystems and resources for life. From the local level, and from the thrust of *tules*, "the fabric of the earth with food plants, bits of mountain but already planted ... to eat", one can reconstruct an environmental and cultural fabric, where the "*The'wala*", traditional doctors, and the elders guide

what to plant, how to plant and how much to plant, as exercises of autonomy, territoriality, culture, and unity” (ACIN, 2009).

Harmony is, in this view, inherently an ecological orientation that seeks to place humans within a greater world. It is a way of relating to ‘nature’ and performing those relationships. A harmonious economy is an extension of that as economic practices, exchanges, and identities flow from nature. The earth is their mother, and she provides them with food, shelter, water, and air. She provides them life. In southwestern Colombia, rural and indigenous actors argue that all living things are a concrete expression of Mother Earth’s life-giving powers. For example, southwestern Colombia’s rivers and freshwater sources are born high in the Andean central range. Here, the Nasa and Misak indigenous groups – who are the ‘people of the water’ – maintain sacred territories that are the source of life for the region. Water is life, and without it nothing and no one can survive.

Harmony, according to the representatives from the *Asociación de Cabildos de Indígenas del Norte del Cauca* (Association of Indigenous Towns of North Cauca), is the “respectful use of Mother Earth. Searching for harmony between the components that form Nasa unity – spirits, people, and Nature. Territorial control – exercise and apply environmental authority as [our] own institution. Indigenous regulation of the use, management, and conservation of natural ecosystems and resources for life. Food autonomy – diversifying production and distribution in reciprocity and equity with Nature. Carry out regular diagnoses and evaluations of the inflow of external resources and their [positive and negative] from the perspective of community autonomy” (ACIN, 2009).

Wilfredo and I met during an indigenous youth event held in Popayán in early October of 2014. Wilfredo was an Yanacona man who lived in an urban *resguardo* in Popayán. He commented to me, “not only do people come from territory, but territory comes from people.” That is, territory is an active construction between people and land. For rural, and primarily indigenous Colombians, territory is a more-than-human assemblage that flows from a relationship to nature in which humans and the world around them are endlessly co-constituted. Territory is ideally a harmonious partnership between humans and land.

Indigenous communities seek harmony in their communities by developing life plans. In these life plans participating members of the ACIN have proposed that communities work for the "construction and reconstruction of a vital space in which one can be born, grow, remain and

flow. The plan is a narrative of life and survival, is the construction of a road that facilitates the passage through life, rather than simply building a methodological planning framework" (ACIN, 2009). These planning documents involve a comprehensive community planning process that lays out an indigenous community's values and then projecting those values hundreds of years into the future.

I would like to look back to the vignette that begins this chapter to help me explore how liberation and cleansing efforts demonstrate a moment when Cauca's indigenous peoples enact a more-than-human commons. In February of 2016, members of the indigenous guard lined the streets of Caldono, Colombia. In this part of northern Cauca, the Pan-American Highway transects the sugarcane fields that go on as far as the eye can see. There are more than 400,000 hectares under sugarcane cultivation for biofuels. These fields are the physical embodiment of exploitation and are the result of a lack of harmonious relationships between people, animals, plants, water, and the land itself. Recovering this specific tract of land and returning it to more harmonious uses allows their mother to flourish and return to equilibrium. These indigenous peoples are liberating the Mother Earth to plant seeds – more than just one – to care for water, and to establish a food sovereignty that goes against capitalism's excesses.

Caldono occupies a precarious position in Cauca, as it is where indigenous peoples live on unrecognized territories, and it has been a flashpoint between the Colombian state's security apparatuses and economic dreams, paramilitary and guerilla groups, and narcotraffickers. Though the pamphlet the indigenous guard distributed on the road only identified Western capitalism as the motivating force behind their actions, their ability to take back their land and re-make it as living territory is a push back against more than capital intensive Western industrial agriculture. It is a rejection of the varied forms of oppression and domination that pervade the Colombian countryside and disproportionately impact indigenous peoples.

My research partners' efforts to frame their actions as resisting industrial monoculture as an embodiment of Western capitalism is central to understanding the 'Southernness' of this challenge. These liberatory actions shift what Walter Mignolo (2000) calls the 'locus of enunciation' from a Northern perspective of nature as a technoscientific consequence produced by and through capitalism, to Nature as an oppressed and sentient power force. Liberating these lands purposefully highlights the differing worldviews that motivate the indigenous peoples' struggles for territory in their homelands.

These struggles to *pervivir* are more than rejections of an economic model and its concomitant knowledge systems on nature. It rejects coloniality – the oppressive vestiges of colonialism and the creatively repressive tools of imperialism – as a comprehensive mode of oppression for Southern minds that colonizes indigenous peoples’ thinking and actions. In northern Cauca, indigenous struggles to persist also push back against a litany of forces. According to a recently published report from the *Tejido* for the Defense of Life and Human Rights group of the Indigenous Association of North Cauca (ACIN). During the first three months of 2017 a collection of 10 small indigenous communities in North Cauca, has experienced nine murders committed in indigenous territories, four separate caches of explosives uncovered, seven instances of paramilitary groups leaving propaganda and threatening pamphlets in indigenous communities, and three attempted murders of indigenous peoples. The *Tejido* for the Defense of Life and Human Rights group goes on to argue the presence of these armed actors are “deharmonizing the territory, altering the community harmony and putting the lives of people and the integrity of the community at high risk” (CRIC, 2017).

The ceremony began after the first day of work. The ‘liberation’ was complete, insofar as the community had proclaimed their intentions and began to occupy the land. There was no violence to speak of, the optics of the moment were perfect – indigenous actors with their *bastones de mando* in hand spreading out across the land and cutting down sugarcane – and everyone was relieved the day had proceeded without a hitch. Reporters had been there to document their efforts and the indigenous media were also documenting their perspective. The easy part was over and those present knew the next steps would be more challenging. There would likely be legal challenges, contentious relations with neighbors, talk of indigenous peoples being impediments to economic activity, and all the land needed be cleared and returned to small-scale biodiverse agriculture from sugarcane monocrop.

These deep disharmonies cannot simply be addressed by a liberation. Indigenous peoples then engage in a large cleansing ceremony. Cleansing ceremonies are ubiquitous among indigenous communities across the Andes, but I would like to describe one of these ceremonies in detail to better ground this discussion in concrete words and actions. This cleansing ceremony is an example of how indigenous peoples practice being in common with nature and enact a decolonial commons that is rooted in indigenous worlds. Performing these indigenous identities within Cauca’s more-than-human landscape takes on diverse forms. Before the next steps could

be taken, the community members needed to assess the remaining energies that dotted the landscape, as well as the bodies and spirits of the indigenous peoples who were present. Here, I suggest, we begin to see the centrality of the open indigenous body that is constituted through its intersections with the world around it. These moments to cleanse oneself seek to ensure that she or he is in the proper state of mind before engaging the land. Failure to do so would surely introduce different negative energies into the earth herself.

Cleansing oneself, opening the body and its energies to the world and cosmos, reflective practice to gaze inward to identify sources of negative energy, identify potential energies to balance out the sources of negativity, and it situates an indigenous mind and body in an indigenous world. Tod Swanson (under review) calls indigenous bodies' openness to Nature and the surrounding world the 'shared body' that is constituted through the body's interactions with Nature. In this sense, the body's borders are fungible and humans acquire Nature's properties and qualities through intimate and physical relations with Her. By consuming her products. By opening one's mind to her energies. By remembering her history. By working her soil to make her productive.

Cleansing ceremonies begin with a roaring bonfire and deep introspection. A *The'wala* (Nasa Yuwe for 'shaman') was called to the site to assess the situation. The *The'wala* are the gateway to traditional environmental knowledge and represent a living 'database' of the unique properties plants, are able assess (dis)equilibria within indigenous bodies and society, lead harmonization rituals, and communicate with the landscape (Osorio Garcés, 2007). After the *The'wala* identified the sources of disequilibrium, the long-term work of harmonizing the territory and its occupants began. The *The'wala's* assessment indicated that some actors who had reclaimed the territory were affected by motivations that ran contrary to the project of liberating the territory and returning it to harmony. Therefore, cleansing began with the 'liberators' cleaning themselves before they began to uproot the sugarcane plantation.

There are two components of a community economy within in this vignette. First, by opening their bodies and energies to the world and cosmos enacts a more-than-human commons that reflects the worldviews of northern Cauca's indigenous communities. Within this commons, indigenous peoples seek to plant their thoughts, energies, and actions in a harmonious web by performing a liberating actions and cleansing ceremonies. Inviting a *The'wala* and examining the state of human relationships to Mother Earth also seeks to re-establish the conditions under which surplus is produced, distributed, and consumed (Gibson-Graham, 2006).

The approximately 30 remaining indigenous actors started the following morning by preparing their bodies to cleanse the territory. First, the *The'wala* offered each person a handful of mixed herbs that he had mixed specifically to counteract the biting (*picante*, in Spanish) energy that pervaded the indigenous actors. Each person rubbed the herbs together in their hands, looked toward the east, and blew over the herbs to blow away the negative energies. Next, they took a drink of *aguardiente* (homemade liquor), spat some on each hand, and, beginning at their head and working down, each person brushed their liquor-covered hands over their bodies. The *The'wala* was sure to remind everyone to always brush away from their centers to move the negative energies out of their bodies. This cleansing ceremony opened human bodies and minds to the more-than-human landscape they were embedded within and sought to situate their bodies and energies in this world.

Indigenous bodies are not neatly delineated. Instead, as Swanson (under review) posits these bodies are open and constructed through their relationships to the world around them through the “shared body.” The cleansing ceremony is an example of the open more-than-human world that indigenous actors in Cauca navigate as they struggle to persist. Indigenous peoples performing these identities through ceremony and liberation are an example of Bernard Perley’s ‘critical indigenities’ (2014), through which indigenous peoples continue practicing their belief systems. Yet, performing this more-than-human economy is highly contingent.

‘Liberating’ land is one part of the indigenous project of reclaiming indigenous territories and saving them from the exploitations of Western Capitalism. These acts assert indigenous dreams over territory and reclaim it from foreign visions of development. Yet, liberation is only the first step toward truly liberating territory and the cleansing ceremony marks the beginning of the ‘work’ of liberating these spaces and reestablishing relationships between Mother Earth and humans in a more-than-human web. These sites and knowledges are examples of what Bernard Perley (2011) calls “emergent vitalities” through which subaltern, marginalized, and, frequently, indigenous knowledges are not dying. Rather, these performative knowledges are vibrant and being recreated in playful ways. Liberation and cleansing are only two examples of how indigenous actors perform their identities today.

Planes de vida as a tool for liberating Mother Earth

Indigenous communities collectively create *planes de vida* (life plans) on a regular basis, and the timeframes they use to convene and weave their experiences into a newer iteration of a life plan depends on each community. For example, a *resguardo* would generally meet annually to revisit the community's life plan, whereas the CRIC generally hosts a regional planning even every five or ten years. These life plans have emerged in response to the Colombian state's efforts to rationalize and normalize national economic planning. The Colombian government manages a few different efforts to quantify Colombian lives, and these are especially troubling to Cauca's rural peoples (the controversial Agrarian Census or the National Development Plan) as they focus on the economic value of their lives. The National Development Plan lays out Colombia's national five-year strategy to grow capitalist economic relations – focusing specifically on wage labor, macroeconomic indicators, and economic productivity. The Agrarian Census intends to measure the amount of land in Colombia that is under production, fallow, and underutilized. According to some of its opponents, this is part of the process to render technical the landscape, seeking to identify inefficiencies and redundancies in Colombia's food production system.

Thus, life plans emerged as an active rejection of the Colombian state's push towards development as an economic teleology. Life plans offer indigenous peoples opportunities to frame their futures on their own terms. More importantly, the process of (re)creating a life plan for a community values the plurality of indigenous values and the specificity of each community's experiences by empowering them to actualize their own future. These are empowering moments of determining one's own hopes and dreams. During a workshop to orient students at the indigenous university, Nelson Cuetocue, who was a 'Community Educator' for the CRIC in 2014, told the students,

“Life plans try to answer, ‘who are we [as a group]?’ We do not have an end or goal. We are always creating ourselves. We ask ourselves ‘where have we come from?’ ‘How are we.’ ‘Where are we going?’ A development plan is an entirely different process that focuses economic progress towards a single point that the state determines” (personal communication 18.September.2014).

As Nelson sought to orient a group of students who were studying with the Autonomous Indigenous Intercultural University, he began his lesson by explaining how indigenous peoples' worldviews differ from Colombian state's vision. Western visions of economic development were at the forefront of the students' minds at that moment as the Colombian Department of National Planning was gearing up to carry out its semi-regular national Territorial Ordering

census. The incompatibility of economic development and growth with community Life Plans offered a valuable insight to how indigenous communities define what is necessary for indigenous communities and Mother Earth to survive (Gibson-Graham, 2006). Anchoring their Life Plans in the past, present, and future demonstrated a distinctly indigenous perspective on a community economy.

Washington Wala commented to me that life plans are an opportunity for indigenous individuals and communities to reflect on a long trajectory of indigenous peoples. Washington said, “The life plans are how we reflect on unique histories in Colombia. What will we be like in three months? Five years? 10 years? 50 years? 100 years? 500 years?” This is an orientation that runs contrary to capitalism’s imperatives to maximize capital gains and growth, and it opens indigenous actors to the long-term impacts of their decisions. Continually re-engaging with the life plans helps indigenous communities to write their cultural values into socionatural relations. For example, indigenous peoples have our own development oriented from our own worldviews and laws, in many cases we have captured these worldviews, laws, and development through what we now call life plans, permanence, or models of land use planning.

I once asked Wamán Orozco, who was a program director in the CRIC at the time, why indigenous communities have life plans. Wamán stopped for a moment and looked around his office, perhaps searching for a way out of my inane line of questioning, and he said to me, “*Don Nicolás*, we do this so that we can have a tomorrow.” Wamán’s incredibly polite tone notwithstanding, he offered the most profound and insightful description of Cauca’s indigenous movement. Indigenous peoples have been subjected to systemic erasures for centuries in the Americas, yet they continue their work in order to celebrate their existence and affirm their indigenous values and difference.

In the vein of liberating Mother Earth from unharmonious uses, indigenous actors and groups place themselves in the more-than-human world and take a long view of human existence on Earth. During a contentious meeting about the future of large extractive industries in Cauca, a representative from an indigenous community member from Cauca forcefully interjected, “mining has to be done in the correct manner...that does not destroy Mother Earth. We are passengers in this world.” Others who participated in the meetings referred to their indigenous communities’ roots with the phrase, “since time immemorial...” Indigenous communities are

enmeshed in long histories in places, that require a deep memory of conquests, resistance, and persistence.

A Nasa cosmovision

Nasa relationships to nature are not abstractions about a distant object of study. Instead they are (re)made daily through agricultural practices and discourses they deploy about the relational geographies of the indigenous body and space. The *Nasa* production system *tul* (household garden) is not only a technological and productive model that seeks to provide food for the household. The *tul* reflects the *Nasa* cosmovision that seeks balance between hot and cold, and sweet and spicy. The *tul*'s layout seeks to maximize the Earth's balance between hot and cold plants, spicy and sweet, which should always be in equilibrium according to their competing qualities. For example, there are warm-blooded animals and cold-blooded animals that are also enmeshed in these more-than-human assemblages that affect the system's ability to continue. The physical layout of the garden cannot have a concentration of cold plants in one particular spot without any hot plants nearby. Failure to promote harmony between the will lead to damage in the land. There is a competition between cold and warm plants that affects the soil's quality. If the land were out of balance, then the Earth's productive capabilities are dramatically reduced. Her ability to provide food is hampered, and the food she produces perpetuates imbalances in the (more-than) humans who consume it. Separating or isolating the plants and animals will lead to plagues and diseases not only in animals and plants, but in humans as well. This more-than-human web unites cold, cool, hot, sweet, bitter, and spicy plants in order to achieve more-than-harmony harmony.

The flows of these energies offer some insight to the nature of a harmonious account of this more-than-human geography. Washington Wala – who is a university-trained biologist – argued that indigenous knowledges and relationships to Mother Earth are the result of knowing plants, animals, and the Mother Earth. He once told me,

“The wisdom and ancestral knowledge of our elders have shown that sustainable agricultural techniques, produce purer, fresher, and more food with a higher concentration of minerals, lower production costs, less environmental pollution, and less erosion. Our ancestors learned through time to touch the spirit of each plant and found it through the light of knowledge with which we learned to cure, heal, and synchronize the spirit and human energies with animal and plants' spirits.”

The human body for the *Nasa* is a territory composed of water, rock, mountains, hills, hollows, roots, stems, buds, leaves, and so on. They have developed a topological geography that is made

manifest on the human body through their language system. The *nasa* body serves as a point of reference to perceive the surrounding world. The *nasa* body's two axes are oriented to map the relative geographies that connect indigenous people to the land. One axis splits the body into left and right halves, while the other divides the body into 'ahead' and 'behind' Each half is anchored in the land and reaches up to the cosmos, being the natural dimensions that are most easily elaborated (Portela, 2002).

Bartering: sufficiency and solidarity

Respectful use of Mother Earth and her resources is a crucial component of maintaining harmony in the more than human world. I would like to return example of the indigenous garden, or *tul*, to examine how maintaining diverse crops, producing for household consumption, and barter exchanges are all examples of how harmony is enacted through an indigenous economy. Sufficiency has become a central organizing logic of the harmonious economy, as it seeks to produce enough to support life without exceeding Mother Earth's ability to produce. Henry Restrepo – a leading voice of the Association of *Cabildos* (Towns) of North Cauca – characterized this complex relationship during a conversation,

“Among other criteria, we propose that the [household production] systems must have crop and livestock components in sufficient quantity and permanently to meet the proteins, vitamins and carbohydrates demands of families according to their cultural patterns as well as to generate income required for meet other demands such as health, education, shelter, and clothing.”

Trueque (barter exchanges) is another concrete example of how rural, indigenous communities define sufficiency and perform indigenous economic identities. *Nasa* actors plant and harvest their crops with the intent to produce more food than is necessary for a single household, and the surplus is destined for the roaming regional barter events. Small amount excess products are bartered and reflect the affective and ethical relations between the human and more-than-human worlds (Barron, 2015; Johnson, 2014). This relies on an economy as conceived of in the historical sense as household management.

I attended a large *trueque* that was sponsored by the municipality of Silvia in September of 2014. People began arriving to the central square in Silvia around 7:30 in the morning. A few walked down to Silvia with their bags, yarn, cheese, yogurt, potatoes, and onions. Others paid an enterprising *motoratón* (motorcycle driver who offers rides to people for a fee) for a ride to the square, or arrived on the local Toyota Land Cruiser minibuses. The *chivas* (colorful local buses) first arrived around 8:15 A.M. from the lower altitudes. These communities sent plantains and

bananas, avocados, peanuts and peanut butter, and other assorted tropical fruits. That is when the action picked up steam.

The day's *trueque* was a relatively unique occurrence because it was organized by the municipality of Silvia, Cauca. Silvia a tourist destination that is well-known across Colombia for its indigenous market every Tuesday morning. The municipality had hosted this large regional *trueque* for a few years to draw in tourists, generate income, and raise the municipality's profile as a center of 'traditional Colombian identity' (personal communication, 6.September.2014). Representatives from the municipality circulated through the tables recording any exchange they witnessed. Normally, a *trueque* would not involve this level of formality. Communities that were loosely connected through social and kin networks would typically organize and host a *trueque* when staple crops were harvested. Despite its uniqueness, the *trueque* was packed.



Figure 3-1 Chivas waiting to carry people home after a day of trueque. Silvia, Cauca.

As a loaded *chiva* neared the central square in Silvia, people perked up and everyone turned their heads in order to see who was arriving. I strained my eyes to see the other side of the block. Martha, an older woman from nearby San Fernando said to her son, "Jhon run and see who that is. We have to exchange our yarn." Jhon hurried off to get a better view of the arriving bus. He returned at his community's table in a few moments and reported, "they're from Caloto. Hand

me the yarn, mom.” Jhon was off, running to their table immediately, hoping to get fruit or *panela* (blocks of brown sugar) in exchange for his yarn. Martha and Jhon had a backup plan ready, too. They were ready to barter *kumis* (a slightly fermented cow’s milk beverage) in case the people from Caloto were not interested in yarn.

Jhon and Martha are one example of an economic relationship that played out hundreds of times that day in 2014. *Trueques*, like this relatively large one, are overwhelming events. People speeding around from table to table. A band playing music and dancing away from the trading area. The ubiquitous presence of the Colombian National Police and Army – especially at *trueques* in more rural corners of Cauca.

In these interactions, we see families and households building a diverse economy exchange by exchange, and the boundaries between surplus and necessary to support a household’s social reproduction begin to blur. Martha and Jhon plant, grow, and harvest extra – or, at least consume less – in order to exchange the remaining (“*lo que sobra*”) harvest to help meet the household’s daily needs. Jhon excitedly explained how the *trueques* ‘benefit everyone involved because they eliminate the intermediaries’. He pointedly explained how he and his mother directly gained through bartering, “in the end, we get to keep more and directly support other communities. We’re maximizing our work.” Attending *trueques* and (re)enacting these non-monetized exchanges are a practical step to achieve the greatest benefit for indigenous communities. As Jhon argued, it was a rational decision that does the most good for these individuals, families, and communities.

Yet, bartering represents much more to indigenous communities. *Truequear* (to barter, or bartering) is a means of cultural survival and resistance in a place that is pregnant with histories of oppression. *Trueques* are regular events that are hosted in various communities throughout the department. The move between a few of the larger, more accessible municipalities depending on the time of year. This particular *trueque* represents a ‘new’ form of event. As I previously stated, the *trueque* was hosted by the municipality of Silvia. It has existed in this current form since the late 1990s, but frequent and regular *trueques* have their roots in the early 1970s as the indigenous movement gathered momentum across Cauca. The municipality had developed an invoice, of sorts, that was intended to quantify the amount and value of the goods that were exchanged during the day. Two teams of four or five people circulated around the square to record the day’s

exchanges. A problematic and fascinating task that perfectly illustrates the uncomfortable spaces of modern indigenous actors.

The municipality of Silvia also markets its annual *trueque* as a tourist attraction, building on Silvia's reputation as the self-proclaimed 'Switzerland of the Andes'. Silvia is already well-known to backpackers for its Tuesday morning market in which primarily indigenous people from the surrounding communities come to buy and sell agricultural products. The municipality hopes to build on that. Foreigners, like me, come to gawk at the 'traditional' culture, and, maybe even, participate. The cultural voyeurism notwithstanding, *trueques* still hold significant cultural value for rural indigenous peoples. Cash poor, rural households must produce 'extra' in order to participate in the *trueque*. Households intentionally sow and harvest extra to serve in lieu of money. Overproduction for barter exchanges quickly challenges the notion that these goods are extra, in the sense that the house has no use for them. These large *trueque* events – and the countless smaller barter exchanges that unfold across Cauca every day – build solidarity between primarily rural, indigenous communities, challenge the concept of 'surplus', and provide a site for the exchange of ideas and life in an environment of cultural difference (Tocancipá, 2008; Quijano Valencia, 2012).

Trueque is an opportunity to see and participate in the socialized economy. Trueque happens once households have collected everything that they will need from their own fields during the current season. Families and communities will send people to engage in the (frequently) non-monetized exchanges that are the *trueque*. Those who participate in these events often seek out people who have come from different geographic locations. That is, people who come from the mountains will seek out those from warmer, lower locations who harvest and produce goods that they cannot grow or produce in their geographic location. Most importantly, these exchanges connect hot, temperate, and cold climates, bringing 'hot' plants to 'cold' areas. Those who live in 'cold' places cannot access 'hot' plants without these exchanges, and the help the residents in cold landscapes to maintain an internal harmony.

Yet barter is a challenge for the harmonious economy, in that households must decide whether to barter their surplus or save it for the household in case there is a poor harvest. As the earth continues to warm, indigenous peoples who live in southern Colombia's Andean highlands are preoccupied as their wet and dry seasons are becoming increasingly unpredictable. Harvests are less reliable than they were a generation ago. The wet season is shifting from a few months of

nearly constant drizzle, to one of episodic inundations and longer dry spells. The dry season is becoming hotter and drier, and some rivers are drying out during these prolonged spells. The challenges of barter must now confront the less reliable climatic conditions while continuing to support ‘excess’ production to support *trueques*.

Prior consultation – defending Madre Tierra

Liberating Mother Earth is for not only production with an eye to harmony, but also defending *Madre Tierra* from what indigenous communities call “*capitalismo occidental*” (Western capitalism). Meetings to allow prior consultation open a space for indigenous communities to push back against the Colombian state’s development plans by performing their indigenous worldview and speaking to the Ministry of the Interior. This “prior consultation” (*consulta previa*) is required under Colombian law – which draws upon a complex network of international laws and agreements, such the Charter of the Organization of American States, the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the ILO Convention 169 – when and where the state’s development plans intersect with indigenous territories and peoples. During my research in 2012 and 2014, I attended more than ten meetings between representatives from the Colombian state and indigenous communities. The meeting sites varied depending upon whether they were discussing large-scale mining and hydroelectric dam construction, or enforcing environmental controls on ‘artisanal mining’ operations that have cropped up in indigenous territories.

In one large meeting between leaders from *Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca* (Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca, or CRIC), indigenous representatives from Cauca’s regional *cabildos*, and technocrats from the Colombian Ministry of the Interior as well as the Ministry of the Environment, the parties were discussing the possibility of siting large-scale mining facilities across southern Colombia. Throughout the daylong meeting, representatives from the Ministries of the Environment and Interior were presenting plans to develop mining across Cauca, but Colombia’s laws present government ministries with conflicting legal precedent to follow. The Colombian state is the sole institution that can grant access to extract subsoil resources and minerals. In the case of indigenous lands, Law 21 of the 1991 constitution grants indigenous communities the right to prior good-faith consultations to approve of economic development projects that will impact the community’s territory. These meetings were a part of complying with the legal process to consult with indigenous communities.

The room itself was a long narrow classroom on the main campus of the Autonomous Indigenous Intercultural University in Popayán. Our building was situated in the back corner of the University so we would not be subjected to the constant comings and goings that can distract people near the main gate. Posters of fallen indigenous leaders line the walls of the classroom, and the room is painted in the ubiquitous red, green, and white. The classroom itself was full to capacity, as nearly 70 indigenous representatives from Cauca's various *resguardos* were present. Wamán Orozco, a Councilmember who was serving a two-year term the CRIC's High Council, led the meeting. He sat patiently as representatives from the state presented their arguments for why the state wanted to allow large new mining operations across Cauca. He managed the conversation for the entire day, frequently ceding the floor for his fellow indigenous interlocutors to make their case. He never once took a note, yet Wamán always remembered who had argued which point and he took them in order in his calm, measured voice. Wamán's arguments frequently returned to the concept of prior consultation with indigenous communities. He was concerned that indigenous communities have not been afforded their legal right to determine whether a project can proceed. At one point Wamán was clearly frustrated by the discussion and he asked, "What about prior consultation with my indigenous brothers and sisters if there are already more than 100 mines 'legally' operating across Cauca right now?"

The Ministry of the Environment sent a geologist, hydrologist, and an ecologist to present the state's case for environmental responsibility and stewardship to the indigenous leaders. The room was set up with the state's representatives all sitting in a few desks in the front corner of the room. Representatives from the CRIC's High Council had a table opposite the team from the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of the Interior, with the remaining indigenous leaders were filling the desks that faced the front of the room. The physical arrangement lent itself to the oppositional discussions that ensued. Indigenous leaders were wary of the supposed benevolence of economic development. The discussions that emerged from the meeting were predictably speaking to their differing positionalities and offered little movement from any of the participating groups. Indigenous representatives voiced their concerns over the lack of benefits to local communities that would be affected by mining activity. They pointed out that jobs always go to the 'outsiders', and, perhaps more importantly, large-scale mining activity 'always attracts' armed paramilitary groups in Colombia. The token geologist presented research that indicated the proposed mine site was rich in gold deposits, and a Canadian-backed mining company was keen to construct a mine that would benefit all. Curiously, each of the five governmental representatives who spoke during the meeting attempted to appeal to the

indigenous representatives who were present by claiming ‘we’re all Colombians’ and hoping the least common denominator of citizenship would sway some indigenous people in the crowd.

That the discussion occurred is not surprising, but the process of the dialogue was intriguing and illustrated the fundamental differences that informed their respective viewpoints is reflective of the diverse worldviews that continue to hold purchase across Colombia. In the end, the different groups present spoke past each other for a few hours. The Colombian state and its representatives were speaking to Colombian economic activity and development, unable to understand why a group of people would ever oppose large mining operations. The state’s representatives effectively began to cast indigenous peoples as impediments to Colombian economic prosperity. The geologist took the microphone from Wamán and proceeded to discuss the unique geologic features that would minimize the potential risks of any mining activities to the neighboring communities. She indicated that potential mine sites were to be constructed to the highest engineering standards, all effluent would be stored in ponds in areas that were seismically safe, and, crucially, the area’s unique geology made these large gold deposits relatively easy to access.

Predictably, the indigenous representatives were not satisfied with her ten-minute presentation. Wamán recognized a young indigenous man in the back of the room who stood up. The young man politely thanked the team from the state for their presence and he then asked, “How can you guarantee that the project is safe? These large mines always have spills and failures. If we are all Colombians, then why is it that Canadians get to mine *our* gold? They get rich and we indigenous people are poorer than ever.” Exploiting resources for someone else’s gain is a sensitive subject among indigenous peoples in Cauca. Foreigners have freely extracted the region’s abundant natural resources since Spaniards arrived in the 16th century, taking all the profits as well, leaving death and degradation behind.

Prior consultation exists in Colombia for indigenous actors to exert control over matters that affect their lives. They have a legal right to engage in dialogue before any major development plans can proceed if their territories or lives are impacted by the projects. Yet, representatives from the Ministry of the Interior treated the meeting as if it were a formality, that, once completed, would empower the state to approve the mining projects. Many of the indigenous leaders who were present took issue with the process. One man from Caloto said, “The state treats prior consultation as if they can do whatever they want after telling us about the plan, but

that is not how it works. You come to consult with us before the project begins, and you *ask* us if we approve of the project. The answer is always ‘no’ until we say yes.” The conversation then focused on two proposed large dam projects in Cauca as examples of when prior consultation was treated like an informational session, rather than an approval process.

In this meeting, Wamán and the other indigenous activists were present to remind the Ministry of the Interior that indigenous rights had to be respected and that ‘prior consultation’ is not a *de rigueur* process that automatically provides the government with permission after holding a meeting. Rather, prior consultation is a procedure by which the government must engage indigenous communities that would potentially be impacted by a government-sanctioned plan, and ask indigenous peoples for their permission. The state must comply with the communities’ demands and address their concerns. The handful of representatives from the Colombian government who were present at the meeting in October did not appear to recognize the fundamental claims their indigenous hosts made that day. The members of the CRIC who were present in the classroom performed an indigenous identity in opposition to transnational capital, extractive industries, and emphasized their unique positionality as *pueblos originarios* in Colombia to reject the state’s claims. The indigenous individuals – and the communities they represented – coalesced to present a united front to the government. However, this ignores the numerous indigenous communities that had individually formed community-level corporations and negotiated directly with transnational corporations. The politics of these intersecting forces come together during these moments of prior consultation.

The indigenous actors who were present that day were concerned that large extractive industries simply take too much. They do not respect Mother Earth, enrich her, or nourish her. The massive environmental degradation is a symptom of an economic system that is out of balance. It does not treat the earth like one should treat its mother. Transnational companies are able to persuade the Colombian state to sell the rights to subsoil resources in spite of the limited economic benefits – most of the jobs created for Colombians will be low paying, unskilled work – and high environmental costs to remediate the mining sites afterwards.

Crucially, this entire process reflects the state’s inability to recognize, much less understand, indigenous peoples on their own terms, and refusal to recognize the validity of their claims to knowledge (Holifield, 2012). Not one of the experts who were present were able to speak to the cultural significance of water, the implications of knowing the earth as their mother, or how

massive development projects fundamentally clash with an indigenous worldview. Despite the national laws mandating “prior consultation” with indigenous communities, the process offered little real hope for blocking the proposed projects, much less achieving consensus between the interested parties. The adversarial nature of the meeting and the diverging worldviews that underpinned each group’s position, all but ensured that a productive and agreeable outcome was impossible. In fact, Colombian Vice President – and former Minister of the Interior - Germán Vargas Lleras complained that the prior consultation process has become, “a mechanism to demand ransom from investors and leaders from the proposed public works by those who are not part of the consultation process” (El Tiempo, 2016). The only predictable result was that each group was able to place the blame for the meeting’s failure squarely on the other group’s stubbornness.

Discussion

Indigenous communities are (re)constructing economies that are diverse, inclusive the harmonious economy accounts for uncommon actors, actions, and relationships. Most importantly, the *economía armónica* incorporates Mother Nature, in all her forms – air, water, insects, plants, and animals – in its *planes de vida*, not in balance sheets. I do not seek to quantify harmony as something that can be rendered technical. Rather, harmony is an affective disposition that informs and shapes how indigenous peoples interact with a more-than-human world. This movement frames humans as one part of the more-than-human assemblages that constitute their socionatural worlds, rather than *the* defining feature of Nature.

Specifically, I draw on a the ‘liberation’ of sugarcane plantations in Northern Cauca and the subsequent ‘cleansing’ of the territory. I attempt to suture together these disparate strands of thinking to posit these actions are emblematic of an indigenous socionature that decenters humans within these spaces and worlds to perform an indigenous community economy. Harmony is actively created every day through community-oriented actions. The lines around which these communities define themselves are overlapping and fluid. Often, community is defined in simply geographic terms – a municipality, *resguardo*, or department. In other moments, a community’s demarcations are less clear. Actors will define their community variously as indigenous, peasant, and more-than-human. All actions take place within this context, and must keep the community as the most important factor in guiding decisions and actions.

In this setting, the economy is more than the production, exchange, and consumption of commodities. Economic practices are an orientation toward harmony. Harmony pervades an economy by focusing primarily on the economy as household management. Individuals and families seek to satisfy their own needs by producing enough to meet a household's consumption demands broadly defined. A harmonious household economy begins from the notion of sufficient and responsible production practices. Producing significantly more than a household requires is exploitative and irresponsible, and it is often done for selfish financial gain. Nature and an economy are co-constituted within harmony. Harmony calls for the household's *tul* to incorporate the *nasa* vision of balance, which is made manifest by maintaining diverse cropping practices. Diverse crops maintain an autonomous household, and maximize Mother Earth's life giving powers. Further, enacting these placed-based economic and ecological identities invokes an 'us' versus 'them' identity that builds from the position that colonial identities persist.

Conclusion

Beginning my analysis from an emphasis on diversity, I examine how accounting for harmony in a more-than-human ecology decenters humans in economies and opens theoretical possibilities for new economies and natures to emerge. A harmonious conceptualization of nature allows for economic practices that are grounded in sufficiency, balance, and indigenous cultural identities to emerge. This approach stands in contrast to a wealth of Marxian analyses that focus on the 'production of nature' (see Smith, 1996; Harvey, 2006). Social movements based in ecological difference frequently emphasize their movements as resistance, but in the case of Colombia's indigenous peoples it is better framed as persistence. Both are equally active endeavors, but 'persistence' highlights the ongoing colonial struggles that Colombia's indigenous peoples have been fighting since Europeans arrived to the Americas. The idea of lasting against more than 500 years of attempted erasures better reflects the power relations involved in the struggles. Capitalism has been laid bare by critics for its tendency – and desire – to flatten time, space, and difference as it incorporates new territories and enrolls new actors. Historically constructed economic discourses persist strategically and continually metamorphosing. These novel economic strategies – or capitalists seeking to circumvent capitalism's inherent contradictions – are opportunities that emerge in response to capitalism's tendency to produce the conditions that bring about its own destruction. Coincidentally, each of capitalism's failures to develop and homogenize, is a victory for cultural diversity and specificity (Rist, 2002; Quijano Valencia, 2013).

I look to a diverse economies approach because it is analytically open, receptive to imagining ethical alternatives that are politically empowering, and it seeks to examine economies within their unique socionatural contexts. Gibson-Graham's notion of the community economy provides a productive avenue to unpack economic practices from a perspective that allows for economies that are full of contradiction, incoherent, and plural. I situate the diverse economies literature in conversation with more-than-human conceptualization of nature to investigate how uncommon logics shape and enable different economic relationships. To Gibson-Graham, a community economies approach emphasizes four main areas: first, these economies base their practices of production and consumption on what is necessary to personal, social and, ecological survival; second, these arrangements attempt to ethically appropriate and distribute social surplus; third, the community economy seeks to establish the conditions of whether and how social surplus is to be produced and consumed; finally, communities establish how a commons is produced and sustained (Gibson-Graham, 2006). I have argued these four characteristics of a diverse economy are present among Colombia's indigenous peoples, and they are performed and reworked in the more-than-human sites of exchange, production, and consumption.

While, indigenous people live in a world where the earth is their mother, plants and animals are crucial actors, and economic prosperity not measured by the GDP. Indigenous actors emphasize the need to maintain their "own" modes of economic activity, relating to Nature, and autonomy in the face of continuing conquest. Reorienting socionatural worlds through actions. If, as Gibson-Graham argue, diverse economies research requires unlearning and relearning to think and do in productive and open ways. Abundance as open, "diverse, and autonomous forms of life and ways of living together" (Collard, Dempsey, and Sundberg, 2015, pg. 323). I add to the community economies literature by making epistemological difference and plurality explicit. By examining indigenous framings of, and relationships to nature, I place the community economies approach within an indigenous mode of thought.

In the community economies literature, nature has tended to be implicit within the research. In this chapter, I have strived to make nature explicit by examining how differing and traditional ontological foundations of nature have been overlooked. By focusing on indigenous economies, we can see how their cosmovisions are central to enacting indigenous economies. Cauca's indigenous peoples are constantly working toward creating and maintaining harmony between humans and Mother Earth by enacting a commons in a harmonious indigenous economy,

accounting for her wellbeing through the life planning and prior consultation processes, and redefining what is socially necessary through practices of production and surplus exchange.

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Conclusion

This project is firmly planted in hopeful geographic scholarship. Not hopeful as abstract, distant, and utopian, but grounded in daily work of indigenous peoples and peasants who are making a more just, inclusive, and diverse world in southern Colombia. It is work that does not pretend to be sure of the future that will result, but it is certain that the only way to create a different world is to act. Some of the people who I worked with freely called this an alternative. Others were reluctant because ‘alternative’ begins from a place of active marginalization in relation to the ‘mainstream’. However we frame the work that is happening and the future it strives to effect, the work is urgent and radical. The goals of my research partners were heterogeneous and unsettled. The actors involved in the work participated for various reasons. Despite the real presence of violence across Colombia, and a recent history that was even more violent, the work and its practitioners have hope in an endless supply.

The spatialities of this work were varied, multiscalar, networked, and frequently contentious as diverse groups struggle against coloniality’s multiple modes of oppression. These exclusions are made manifest across Cauca by various branches of the Colombian state and its legacies of colonial exclusions, in the country when peasant rice farmers had their stores of rice seeds confiscated because they suddenly violated the terms of Colombia’s 2012 free trade agreement with the United States, or within indigenous communities themselves as some ‘bothersome’ people are barred from their community for creating too many headaches for the community. In that context, I have looked to the productive efforts to reclaim indigenous and peasant identities, re-define spaces, and construct futures through activism. I have placed this work within the context of decolonial thinking and to argue that Southern positionalities matter in the context of when, how, and where these actors speak. More importantly, by taking the indigenous and peasant thinking and praxis seriously, their words guide my theorization and shape my project in fundamental ways.

In chapter 1, I examined the work of the Autonomous Indigenous Intercultural University to cultivate thinking-feeling indigenous students by building unity across difference. The UAIIN is a pluriversity that values diverse knowledges and ways of being. This work is inherently hopeful and future-oriented. I argue that a decolonial university deploys a pedagogy that is deliberately empowering to students because it democratizes knowledge production. There is no expert who

students must defer to; rather, students and professors create knowledges together and share those knowledges.

I argue that the UAIIN is a pluriversity within a university that seeks to practice an indigenous model of higher education that serves as a site for collisions of ‘jagged worldviews’ (Little Bear, 2000). Decolonization is not a straightforward process. The UAIIN embodies the contradictory currents in Colombia’s indigenous movement. The prevailing indigenous discourses condemn the state for its failure to comply with accords, yet there is an simultaneous movement to comply with the state for greater recognition. Administrators and program directors alike stated their desires to create a model of education that is reflective of the histories and realities of indigenous peoples in Colombia. The UAIIN is also going through a formalization process with the Colombian Ministry of Education to gain recognition for the diplomas that the UAIIN can provide its students. I argue these practices are pragmatic responses to Colombia’s situation.

The UAIIN’s pedagogical strategies employed during the RMT’s lessons on dreaming and mathematics were intended to push students into the specific worlds and worldviews from their communities by examining relationships to the world. Students, professors, and administrators all learn to do through active lessons. Participants also unlearn and relearn through the lessons in the UAIIN’s mobile and emplaced classroom. These lessons demonstrate the crucial work of engaging the indigenous worlds that continue to thrive (Kohn, 2014). Re-vivifying indigenous cosmopolitical plurality begins from the position that reality includes many worldviews, many worlds, many ways of being, and many ways of knowing the world, cosmos, and life.

The UAIIN’s administrators recognize its precarious position ‘outside’ Colombia’s university system, and I felt these contradictions acutely during my time with the RMT. My role as outside expert also highlights the challenging and contradictory work that happens in the Indigenous University. Professors and administrators seek to keep the Western world at arm’s length by employing indigenous professors, who are steeped in Cauca’s indigenous movement, to orient newer generations of indigenous political actors. At the same time, the UAIIN is seeking recognition from the Colombian state in order to become a degree-granting institution, and their work has been heavily reliant upon alliances with outside academics (both Northern and Southern) and transnational solidarity networks. I build on Guyatri Spivak’s (1988) notion of ‘strategic essentialism’ to argue the UAIIN is engaged in dual movement toward satisfying the Ministry of Education’s requirements and toward an intercultural educational model that I call

‘strategic universalization’. This movement toward and away from the state’s normative educational expectations marks the UAIIN as a site of collision. Accreditation from the state shifts the university’s goals from ones that exclusively address indigenous livelihoods, to an institution that incorporates aspects of the Western university that it set out to avoid. However, this movement toward standardization and recognition is a strategic effort to further improve the situation for indigenous peoples in Cauca.

In the second chapter, I examine a series of meetings, workshops, moments, and actions that all work towards forging a regional peasant economy that is based in recognizing peasant economic practices and identities. Economic activism in Cauca seeks to forge an economic peasant identity that recognizes the racialized legacies Colombia’s colonial era and their material impacts today, but transcends these racial and ethnic boundaries. Economic activists deploy a peasant identity to claim ownership over their ‘own’ economy and build alliances to further advance their struggle.

I focus on the hard work that disparate rural individuals, communities, and organizations engage in to develop and perform a *campesino* identity across Cauca. I examine the meetings of a women’s group from southern Cauca and my interactions with three women from Santa Rosa, Cauca as they engaged in a historical community assessment to identify economic shifts within the community since 1990. I then look to a meeting of small producers in northern Cauca to understand how peasants came together to activate a peasant identity and built peasant networks of support. Finally, I turn my attention to the Peasant Fair in Cajibío to highlight how peasant organizations are working with peasant communities to emphasize the social aspects of economic relations. In each of these cases, the economic activists are making peasant work – and peasants – visible. Bringing social relations to the fore of their exchanges so that consumers are aware of the work that is embedded within the products they consume. Finally, the economy these activists were building is not one that hopes to overthrow a global capitalist system. Instead, they are working to build an economy that recognizes the value of peasant work and supports their livelihoods.

I examine how these diverse peasant efforts to decolonize peasant economic identities and livelihoods. These varied economic activist movements intersect at three crucial moments. Peasants are struggling to make others aware of the work and care that undergirds rural *campesino* livelihoods. Peasant organizations and activists are working to become visible as valuable in a

national economic imaginary. Finally, these groups are building multiethnic networks that coalesce around an idealized regional peasant identity. The combination of making peasants visible and raising awareness of their value fundamentally connects a *campesino* identity to rural Cauca. A crucial aspect of maintaining *campesino* agricultural practices and identities is preserving local biodiversity and natural resources while strengthening traditional familial agricultural practices. This project is a direct reaction to foreign agricultural practices that supplant diverse, small-scale, and resilient food production systems with enormous swathes of land that produce only one product, corn for example, and force indigenous people away from agriculture and engender dependence on external products and intermediaries.

In the final chapter, I examine the role that indigenous cosmovisions play in shaping indigenous economic arrangements. Indigenous economies are firmly rooted in the hopeful action of enacting and maintaining harmony as a means rejecting Western capitalism and reasserting indigenous worldviews. In this chapter, I employ a diverse economies perspective to untangle the performance of diverse economic identities and practices that persist in rural Colombia, and which are permeated with notions of harmony. I examine indigenous economic subjectivities and difference to understand how rural – and primarily indigenous – Colombians are asserting natures and identities that fundamentally require ‘an-other’ way of interacting with, and relating to, Nature (Walsh, 2012).

I trace the trajectories of ‘harmony’ among Cauca’s indigenous activists and how they relate to nature. I examine how *nasa* activists employ a more-than-human concept of life – that includes humans, plants, animals, elements, and the cosmos – to create an economy that is inextricably linked to *Madre Tierra*, and accounts for her wellbeing in economic thinking and actions. In the final part of this chapter, I suture together economic difference and plurality with diverse indigenous conceptualizations of Nature, in an attempt to conceptualize an economy that is based in harmony between humans and non-humans. I conceptualize the economy as open sites of contestation in which economic identities intersect. I ask, what is harmony among northern Cauca’s *nasa* communities, and how does harmony manifest itself in economic identities and practices? In the end, I argue that a more-than-human framing of nature allows researchers to see, feel, and examine the heterogeneous economic logics and practices that thrive in the global South’s indigenous hinterlands.

I trace four principle characteristics of a community economy through five separate moments during my fieldwork to argue that an indigenous community economy is performed and brought into being in Cauca. First, these economies base their practices of production and consumption on what is necessary to personal, social and, ecological survival. Second, these arrangements attempt to ethically appropriate and distribute social surplus. Third, the community economy seeks to establish the conditions of whether and how social surplus is to be produced and consumed. Lastly, communities establish how a commons is produced and sustained (Gibson-Graham, 2006).

I argue these four components of a community economy are remade through five different moments of indigenous activism. First, I explore the ‘liberation’ of sugarcane plantations and the subsequent cleansing. Second, I examine how Life Plans are a response to practices of economic development that are being imposed across the Colombian countryside by Bogotá’s economic policies. I then look to the *nasa* cosmovision for an example of everyday natures of the household. Fourth, I examine a *trueque* in Silvia, Cauca to highlight how indigenous peoples define sufficiency and surplus in Cauca. Finally, I explore a meeting between indigenous communities and representatives from Colombia’s Ministry of the Interior to demonstrate where indigenous and Western worldviews are made incompatible. In each of these five instances, I draw on Gibson-Graham to argue that an indigenous community economy must take seriously the ontological and epistemological differences of indigenous peoples.

I also argue in this chapter that the interrelationships between Nature and economies have been undertheorized to primarily focus on Western capitalism as the driving force in creating nature. I diverge from capitalcentric form of economic determinism, and develop the notion of a harmonious economy (*economía armónica*) as crucial to how indigenous relationships to Mother Earth engender qualitatively different economies. This approach is attuned to the specificities of the diverse socrionatural worlds that indigenous peoples inhabit and create, and it seeks to make sense of economic arrangements from their perspectives.

I originally went to Colombia to research the coca leaf as a means to economic development, but after a few interviews I quickly realized that coca development is generally not of concern to the CRIC, indigenous peoples, or rural peasants. My research questions were wrong and did not reflect the concerns of life in Cauca, so the project quickly shifted away from the coca leaf. I opened my research to my collaborators and asked them what was important in their lives. As a

result, my project shifted toward the work that indigenous and rural peoples were engaged in to dream a new economic reality into existence. In spite of Cauca's – well deserved, frankly – reputation as a dangerous place that is full of erasures, dispossessions, and violence, rural indigenous peoples and peasants are eternally hopeful. They continue to struggle against their stolen histories and their realities of their own colonial present in order to maintain their heterogeneity. Indigenous and *campesino* activism are steeped in Cauca's colonial history, and are simultaneously emancipatory, seeking to build more just futures for everyone in Cauca. I remain inspired and deeply affected by my collaborators' generosity and creativity, their work, and the futures they hope to bring into existence.

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- Little Bear, Leroy (2000). Jagged Worldviews Colliding. In M. Battiste (ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, pp. 77-85. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Walsh, Catherine (2012). “Other” Knowledges, “Other” Critiques: Reflections on the Politics and Practices of Philosophy and Decoloniality in the “Other” America. *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*. 1(3), pp. 11-27.

Appendix– Data collection instruments

English data collection instruments

Interview Questions for Indigenous Activists

What is the history of coca? Can you tell me about the history of coca here?

Why do people in this area grow coca? Why have they in the past?

What purpose does development serve?

What do you think about development projects?

What should the goals of development projects be?

What were the goals of Coca-Sek?

What happened with Coca-Sek? Were you involved? How?

Who benefited from the Coca-Sek project?

Does the indigenous community need development projects?

Why is it important to have/create indigenous economies? Indigenously oriented economies?

Are these reactionary economic movements? That is, are they created in response to other economic forces as a means to correct economic injustices?

How are development projects that the CRIC design different from a typical development project? Why are these differences important?

How have you been involved in supporting indigenous groups and causes? Why do you feel that it is important to support these movements?

Interview Questions for Development Officials

What should development projects achieve?

For the country?

For the locale?

For people here in Cauca/Popayan?

Why are these goals the most important?

How do you determine which development projects are the worthiest of implementation?
...who deserves development projects?

Why is it that economic development is the solution?

In what ways are indigenous communities involved in the development process? (planning, etc.)

What are the challenges of carrying out development projects in indigenous areas?

What do you know about Coca-Sek?

Why did it fail?

Questions for Government Officials

What is the government's stance on coca?

Why is coca illegal?

What are the goals of development projects in Cauca?

Who do these projects benefit at the local level?

At the departmental level?

At the national level?

At the international level?

In what ways are indigenous communities involved in the development process? (planning, etc.)

What are the challenges of carrying out development projects in indigenous areas?

What do you know about Coca-Sek?

Why and how did it fail?

Spanish data collection instruments

Preguntas para los activistas indígenas

¿Cuál es su puesto en la organización? ¿Con quienes trabajan?

¿Qué piensa usted de los proyectos del desarrollo?

¿Me puede dar un ejemplo de un proyecto específico del desarrollo? ¿O sea me puede contar la historia de un proyecto? ¿Quién apoyó a este proyecto? ¿Tuvo éxito?

¿Cuáles son las metas del desarrollo? ¿Qué cree usted que los objetivos del desarrollo deben ser? (¿Quiénes deben manejar a los proyectos del desarrollo? O ¿Cuáles deben ser las metas?)

¿Tiene la comunidad indígena una necesidad para proyectos de desarrollo?

¿Para que sirve los proyectos del desarrollo? ¿Y quienes sirven estos proyectos?

¿Cuál es la diferencia entre un programa de desarrollo diseñado por el CRIC y un proyecto típico? ¿Y por qué son importantes estas diferencias?

¿Por qué son claves la reciprocidad y la solidaridad en el desarrollo? ¿Cómo es una economía de
¿Y como fortalecen o apoyan a las economías basadas en reciprocidad y solidaridad?

¿Cuándo se sabe cuándo ha sido exitoso un proyecto? ¿Cómo se determine éxito o fracaso?
¿Hay ciertas medidas que se usan?

¿Cuáles fueron los objetivos de la Coca-Sek?

¿Que ocurrió con la gaseosa Coca-Sek? ¿Participó usted? ¿Cómo?

¿Quiénes se beneficiaron con el proyecto Coca-Sek?

¿Cuál es la historia de la coca? ¿Me puede contar un poco más acerca de la historia de la coca?
(¿Para que sirvió? ¿Quién la cultivó?)

¿Por qué la gente de esta zona cultiva la coca? ¿Por qué cultivaban la coca en el pasado?

¿Cómo se ha involucrado con los grupos y las causas indígenas? ¿Por qué es importante apoyar a las causas indígenas?

Preguntas para funcionarios de desarrollo

¿Cuál es su puesto aquí en esta organización y a que se dedica? ¿Con quienes trabajan? (por ejemplo un grupo específico? ¿O un pueblo?)

¿Usted puede pensar en un caso específico del desarrollo? ¿Y me puede contar un poco más del proyecto? (¿Qué fue?, ¿Qué intenta lograr?, etc.)

¿Para que sirven los proyectos del desarrollo? ¿Y para quienes?

¿Cuáles son las metas de los proyectos del desarrollo? ¿Que cree usted que deben ser objetivos más importantes del desarrollo y como lograr estas metas?

¿Por qué son estos objetivos, la más importante?

¿Qué intentan a lograr los proyectos del desarrollo?

¿Para el país?

¿Para la población local?

¿Para la gente aquí en el Cauca / Popayán?

¿Cuándo se sabe cuándo ha sido exitoso un proyecto? ¿Cómo se determine si fuera un éxito o un fracaso? ¿Hay ciertas medidas que se usan?

¿Cómo eligen a los proyectos de desarrollo?

¿Quienes merecen proyectos de desarrollo?

¿Tiene la comunidad indígena una necesidad para los proyectos? ¿Por qué?

¿Las comunidades indígenas que participan en el proceso del desarrollo? ¿En qué manera? (planificación, etc.)

¿Cuáles son los desafíos de llevar a cabo proyectos de desarrollo en las zonas indígenas?

¿Qué sabrá de la historia de gaseosa la Coca-Sek?

¿Por qué fracasó el proyecto?

Preguntas para funcionarios gubernamentales

¿Cuál es su puesto aquí en esta organización y a qué se dedica? ¿Con quienes trabajan? (por ejemplo un grupo específico? ¿O un pueblo?)

¿Usted puede pensar en un caso específico del desarrollo? ¿Y me puede contar un poco más del proyecto? (¿Qué fue?, ¿Qué intenta lograr?, etc.)

¿Para qué sirven los proyectos del desarrollo? ¿Y para quienes?

¿Cuáles son las metas de los proyectos del desarrollo? ¿Que cree usted que deben ser objetivos más importantes del desarrollo y como lograr estas metas?

¿Para qué sirven los proyectos del desarrollo? ¿Y para quienes?

¿Cuáles son las metas de los proyectos del desarrollo? ¿Que cree usted que deben ser objetivos más importantes del desarrollo y como lograr estas metas?

¿Por qué son estos objetivos, la más importante?

¿Qué intentan a lograr los proyectos del desarrollo?

¿Para el país?

¿Para la población local?

¿Para la gente aquí en el Cauca / Popayán?

¿Cuándo se sabe cuándo ha sido exitoso un proyecto? ¿Cómo se determine si fuera un éxito o un fracaso? ¿Hay ciertas medidas que se usan?

¿Cómo eligen a los proyectos de desarrollo?

¿Quienes merecen proyectos de desarrollo?

¿Tiene la comunidad indígena una necesidad para los proyectos? ¿Por qué?

¿Las comunidades indígenas qué participan en el proceso del desarrollo? ¿En qué manera?
(planificación, etc.)

¿Cuáles son los desafíos de llevar a cabo proyectos de desarrollo en las zonas indígenas?

¿Qué sabrá de la historia de gaseosa la Coca-Sek?

¿Por qué fracasó el proyecto?

¿Por qué ha tomado una posición tan fuerte contra la coca y a los proyectos del desarrollo que incluyen la coca como componente?

Curriculum Vitae

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EDUCATION

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Ph.D., Geography, expected May 2017
Committee: Kristin Sziarto (Advisor), Anne Bonds, Ryan Holifield, Tracey
Heatherington, and Anna Mansson-McGinty.
Dissertation: *Decolonizing indigeneity: Indigenous struggles to reclaim spaces, identities, and
futures in Cauca, Colombia*

Texas State University-San Marcos, San Marcos, Texas
M.S., Geography, August 2009 (Dr. Frederick A. Day, Advisor)
Thesis: *Factors Affecting Gentrification in Austin, Texas, 1970-2000*

St. Norbert College, De Pere, Wisconsin
B.A., Political Science and Spanish, May 2006

EMPLOYMENT

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Assistant Lecturer, Department of Geography,
2016-present

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Teaching Assistant, Department of Geography,
2009-2016

St. Norbert College, Adjunct Instructor of Geography, Fall 2011

PUBLICATIONS

Peer reviewed articles

Sziarto, Kristin; McCarthy, Linda; **Padilla, Nicholas L.** (2014). Teaching critical thinking
in world regional geography through stakeholder debate. *Journal of Geography in
Higher Education*. 38(4), pp. 557-570.

Under Review and In Revision

Padilla, Nicholas L. Decolonizing indigenous education: Revitalizing Mother Earth in an
indigenous pluriversity in Cauca, Colombia.

Book reviews

Padilla, Nicholas. 2012. *The Corner of the Living: Ayacucho on the Eve of the Shining Path
Insurgency*. By M. La Serna. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*.
8(3), pp. 363-364.

Other publications

Padilla, Nicholas. 2012. Forging Indigenous Economies in Southwestern Colombia. *Panther Geographer*, 9(1).

GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS, HONORS

Fellowships

Advanced Opportunity Program Fellowship, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2013-2016

Summer Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship to study Quichua, Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Summer 2010

Summer Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship to study Quichua, Center for Latin American Studies, University of Pittsburgh, Summer 2010 (Declined)

Mary Jo Read Fellowship, Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2009-2012

Grants

Mary Jo Read Travel Award (\$1,300), Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Spring 2017

Graduate Student Travel Award (\$250), Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Spring 2017

Mary Jo Read Fieldwork Grant (\$2,000), Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Spring 2014

Graduate Student Travel Award (\$500), Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Spring 2014

Mary Jo Read Travel Award (\$1,000), Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Spring 2013

Graduate Student Travel Award (\$500), Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Summer 2012

Clinton Edwards Fieldwork Grant (\$1,000), Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Summer 2012

Graduate Student Travel Award (\$500), Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Fall 2011

Mary Jo Read Travel Award (\$1,000), Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Spring 2011

Foreign Language and Area Studies Travel Award (\$775), Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Summer 2010

Awards and Honors

Outstanding Service Award, Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2010-2011

Norbertine Leadership & Service Award, St. Norbert College, 2006

Dean's list, St. Norbert College, 2005-2006

Pi Gamma Mu, St. Norbert College, 2005

Presidential Scholarship, St. Norbert College, 2002-2006

PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

Papers Presented

- 2017. “Decolonizing nature and liberating *Madre Tierra* – persistent Southern natures. Paper presented at the American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting. Boston, Massachusetts.
- 2016. “*La economía armónica*: accounting for Mother Nature, non-humans, and the more-than-human in economies.” Paper presented at the Dimensions of Political Ecology Conference. Lexington, Kentucky.
- 2015. “Decolonizing indigeneity: Indigenous struggles to reclaim spaces, identities, and futures in Cauca, Colombia.” Paper presented to the Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
- 2015. “Indigenous education in Cauca, Colombia: Reawakening Mother Nature and sowing the seeds of harmony.” Paper presented at the Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting. Chicago, Illinois.
- 2015. “Parenting while in the field: potty training, teething, and performing slow science.” Paper presented at the IGU’s Gendered Rights to the City Conference. Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- 2015. “Decolonizing indigenous education: Reawakening Mother Nature and sowing the seeds of harmony.” Paper presented for the Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. Latin@ Studies Speaker Series, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
- 2013. “Cultivating indigenous economies in southwest Colombia: indigenous development and *madre tierra*.” Paper presented at the Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting. Los Angeles, California.
- 2011. “Eradicating spaces of coca culture: the discursive creation of drugs in Colombia.” Paper presented at the Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting. Seattle, Washington.

Sessions Organized

- 2017. “Producing Illicit Agricultures & Natures” session co-organized with Garrett Graddy-Lovelace (American University). Dimensions of Political Ecology Conference. Lexington, Kentucky.

Panel Participation

- 2017. “Indigenous struggles against the slow violence of coloniality in Colombia: ‘Persistence’ as a Southern challenge to the concept of ‘resistance’.” Part of the Quiet Social Movements & Everyday Life in the urban Global South: Towards New Geographies of Social Change sessions at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers. Boston, Massachusetts.
- 2017. “Potty training in the field: Parenting in graduate school”. Part of the Graduate Student Health and Wellbeing sessions at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers. Boston, Massachusetts.
- 2015. “Capitalism cannot ‘do’ anything: accumulation by dispossession and real people.” Conference on Critical Geography. Lexington, Kentucky.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University Teaching Experience

Instructor, Geography 497 – Study abroad in Tena, Ecuador (June 2016, 2017)

- Multi-methods fieldwork course in Ecuadorian Amazon;
- Collected geographic and ethnographic data in collaboration with indigenous guides;
- Explored on indigenous geographies and relationships to nature.

Instructor, Geography 600 – Perspectives on Geography, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Fall 2016-2017

- Geography capstone course examined contemporary geographic thought;
- Students engaged in directed geographic research.

Instructor, Geography 564 – Urban Environmental Change and Social Justice, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Spring 2016

- Large (approximately 20 students), face-to-face course that explores the geographies of justice and environmental change in the United States;
- Students led classroom discussions and completed group research projects.

Instructor, Geography 464 – Environmental Problems, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Fall 2015

- Large (approximately 25 students), face-to-face course that examined contemporary perspectives on environmental governance in the U.S.;
- Emphasized geographic dimensions of environmental governance: shifts in scale, changing significance of territory and boundaries, and emergence of transboundary networks.

Instructor, Geography 421 – Geography of Latin America, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Spring 2015

- Small (approximately 10 students), face-to-face upper-level seminar survey course on historical, political economic, and cultural geographies of Latin America and Latinos/Latinas in the U.S.

Instructor, Geography 110: The World – Peoples and Regions, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2013-2016

- Large (approximately 40 students) online format course that explored region formation, global interconnections, political economy, and critical geopolitics.

Instructor, Geography 110: The World – Peoples and Regions, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2012-2013

- Led a face-to-face lecture format (50-200 students) explored region formation, global interconnections, political economy, and critical geopolitics;
- Coordinated two teaching assistants who led discussion sections.

Instructor, World Regional Geography, St. Norbert College, Fall 2011

- Led a small course hybrid (face-to-face and online) course;
- Explored region formation, global interconnections, political economy, and geopolitics.

Head Teaching Assistant for Geography 110: The World – Peoples and Regions,
University of

Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2010-2011

- Coordinated resource and materials sharing among the course's three teaching assistants;
- Collaboratively established teaching outcomes, pedagogical strategies, and student assessment for discussion sections.

Teaching Assistant for Geography 110: The World – Peoples and Regions, University of
Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2009-2011

- Instructor for six 25-student discussion sections;
- Guide students' writing, class comprehension, and preparation;
- Discussion sections debate contemporary issues such as globalization, land reform, neoliberalism, and development.

Other Teaching Experience

Strengthening Families instructor, Howe Neighborhood Family Resource Center, Green
Bay, Wisconsin, Spring 2007

Elementary Spanish instructor, St. Norbert College, Children's Language Institute, Spring
2005

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Research Assistant, Center for Institutional and Professional Development Expected
Learning Outcomes Grant for Geography 110: The World – Peoples and Regions,
2010

- Researched stakeholder positions related to Turkey joining the European Union to create a large lecture stakeholder debate
- Identified and reviewed literature related to pedagogical approaches to teaching world regional geography courses and active learning strategies

Texas State University-San Marcos, San Marcos, Texas

Graduate Research Assistant, Department of Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk
Management, 2007-2009

- Reviewed and implemented university employee occupational protection programs, such as hearing protection and laboratory safety protocol
- Inventoried University's extremely hazardous materials and reported the findings to the Texas Commission on Environment Quality and the EPA

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE AND AFFILIATIONS

University Service

Undergraduate Project Assistant, Geography Department, University of Wisconsin-
Milwaukee, 2011-2013

Critical Geography Mini-Conference Planning Committee, Geography Department,
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2010
Lectures Committee Member, Geography Department, University of Wisconsin-
Milwaukee, 2010-2014
Graduate Student Representative, Geography Department, University of Wisconsin-
Milwaukee, 2010
Student Representative to the Board of Trustees, St. Norbert College, 2005-2006
Student Representative to the Executive Committee on External Relations, St. Norbert
College, 2005-2006
Treasurer, Student Government Association, St. Norbert College, 2005-2006
Student Representative, Committee on Undergraduate International Education, St.
Norbert College, 2005-2006.

Community Service

AmeriCorps VISTA, Howe Neighborhood Family Resource Center, Green Bay, Wisconsin
2006-2007
Volunteer After-School Tutor, De Pere Middle School, De Pere, Wisconsin, 2003-2005
Volunteer Teaching Assistant, English Opens Doors (*Inglés abre puertas*), Ministry of
Education of Chile, Santiago, Chile, 2004

Affiliations

American Association of Geographers
Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers
Latin American Studies Association

LANGUAGES

Spanish (advanced speaking, reading, writing)
Quichua – Napo, Ecuador dialect (basic speaking, reading, writing)
Study Abroad experience: Santiago, Chile 2004; Tena, Ecuador 2010