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Beyond displacement: territorialization in the port city of Buenaventura, Colombia

Melanie Lombard [a], Jaime Hernández-García [b] and Isaac Salgado-Ramírez [c]

ABSTRACT

In (post-)conflict contexts, territorial struggles are strongly associated with the displacement of communities, whether rural–urban or intra-urban. Here, we argue for refocusing attention on territorialization processes as a means of understanding the dynamics and consequences of contestation between vulnerable minority communities and powerful groups. Focusing on the majority Afro-Colombian city of Buenaventura in the Pacific coastal region, which is simultaneously Colombia's most significant port and one of its most neglected cities, we explore processes of de- and re-territorialization. Beyond tropes of displacement and resistance, territorialization offers a conceptual lens for understanding territorial struggles as complex events, in terms of the physical and symbolic effects of de-territorialization on communities and individuals, and re-territorialization as plural, disruptive practices of re-existence. This suggests the need to focus on everyday experiences as well as specific time- and space-bound moments of struggle. In this way, a territorialization approach permits a deeper understanding of the social production of territory with multiple elements relating to identity, symbolic practices and time–space dimensions.

KEYWORDS

Buenaventura; Colombia; territorialization; (post-)conflict; displacement; resistance; everyday; Afro-Colombian

INTRODUCTION

Territorial struggle in conflict contexts is often associated with displacement, commonly understood as 'the of leaving one's place of residence' (Celestina, 2015, p. 368). Traditional associations between displacement and intensifying armed conflict, or local factors such as poverty and state absence, have been superseded by more complex accounts suggesting the importance of dynamic local economies and strategic resources (Pérez, 2001), the need to understand displacement's temporal dimension (Celestina, 2015), and the association between displacement and territorialization (Osorio, 2009). This article explores territorialization processes in urban Colombia

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as a means of transcending standardized categories in (post-)conflict contexts through a focus on the beleaguered port city of Buenaventura. While research in such contexts often focuses on displacement, primarily rural–urban but also increasingly intra-urban, here we propose an alternative focus on territorialization as a means of understanding social and power dynamics in urban environments shaped by violence and conflict.

Recent critiques highlight 'the banality of displacement' in (post-)conflict contexts such as Colombia, as individual identity is superseded by 'the creation of the category of the "displaced" as a normalised phenomenon' (Oslender, 2016a, p. 13). Alongside this homogenization of the 'displaced', such categorization transforms the violence of this process into a 'mundane, banal social fact' (p. 11), hiding the diverse experiences of local populations 'caught up in a context of terror in the rural areas' before the moment of displacement (Oslender, 2007, pp. 756–757). The association of displacement with violence in Colombia, and specifically with non-state armed actors, perpetuates the concept's narrowness and obscures the state's contributing role in pursuing infrastructure and development projects. Moreover, the highly individualized category of 'displaced' is limited temporally and spatially, seen as a fixed condition relating to events that have already happened rather than ongoing processes (Velez-Torres & Agergaard, 2014; see also Celestina, 2015).

Here we propose a focus on territorial processes – specifically, territorialization, de- and re-territorialization (sometimes denoted by the acronym TDR) which relate, respectively, to the social production, loss of control and reconstruction of territory – as a lens to go beyond usual tropes of displacement and resistance in conflictive contexts. Understanding territory as socially produced by multiple actors, we argue for this reconceptualization in order to refocus attention on territorial processes that affect urban communities in terms of power, social relations, identity and representation, with a temporal dimension that accounts for everyday experiences. Drawing on recent debates in political geography framing territorial struggles as contested, relational and multiscalar (Clare et al., 2018, p. 311; see also Zibechi, 2008), we propose transcending displacement's focus on specific, spatially and temporally bound moments of dispossession, to explore more insidious (de-)territorialization processes occurring at different times and places which affect communities in multiple ways, and their everyday experience of these along diverse temporal and spatial dimensions.

We ground this argument in the port city of Buenaventura on the Colombian Pacific coast, a setting with uniquely rural–urban and ethnic characteristics. Territorial questions are critical in this space that is urban and yet intimately entangled with its rural hinterland and history. The biodiverse, minerally rich and riverine nature of the Pacific region which surrounds Buenaventura has been a magnet for exploitation by corporate, state and other actors involved in port expansion and extractive activities, resulting in widespread displacement of rural communities, but also more subtle and long-term processes of de-territorialization, across both rural and urban dimensions. Yet this landscape is also fundamental to the territorial imaginary of the city's mainly Afro-Colombian residents, mobilized in their territorial struggles. Inhabitants of the city's low-income neighbourhoods, especially at the water's edge, are subject to regular threats of eviction and displacement from armed actors and the state, sometimes overlapping in the context of port expansion (Jenss, 2020). For many this constitutes a double displacement (López, 2019), as they have come to the city after expulsion from their rural lands. At the same time, communities have mobilized to resist such processes and defend urban territory which they have been involved in producing, through processes of re-territorialization. Looking beyond a single moment of dispossession or the individualized category of 'displaced', a focus on territorial processes enables a deeper understanding of the social and power relations which shape these struggles.

Applying a territorial lens also suggests understanding urban settings such as Buenaventura as 'a dynamic and disputed process, which is bound to a specific and multiscalar social context that harbours multiple temporalities' (Schwarz & Streule, 2016, p. 1004), resonating with the port

city's entanglement in both legal and illegal global networks that underpins struggles in the city, but also its singular and place-based characteristics. Following calls to go beyond the usual knowledge production circuits, Schwarz and Streule (2016) advocate provincializing urbanism, looking at cities within their own particular circumstances in order to deconstruct universalist claims through contextualization, and to attend to the differentiated conditions in which social relations and knowledge are produced. In Buenaventura, this lens reveals the significance of Afro-Colombian urban movements' mobilization of specific territorial imaginaries, which have been explored in the rural setting of the Colombian Pacific as 'a region–territory of ethnic groups' (Escobar, 2008, p. 2), but less so in the urban context. In this way, the paper adds to both territorial and postcolonial debates in urban studies and human geography, presenting an alternative theoretical lens to displacement which aims to capture processes at once deeply embedded in Buenaventura's local and regional contextual specificities, and simultaneously entangled in global networks.

In order to understand territorial struggles in Buenaventura, we draw on interviews with communities, officials and local organizations, undertaken as part of a participatory research project (2018–2021) exploring the disjuncture between the 2016 peace agreement and daily lived experience in three Colombian communities (Buenaventura, Tibu and Vistahermosa).[1] The eight core interviews drawn on here were with a local official working in an office related to planning; two members of the Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN, a local social movement); two youth/ artistic leaders; a priest engaged in social work with Afro-Colombian communities; and two neighbourhood social leaders. Documentary evidence was also reviewed, including local planning documents and the archive of Don Temístocles Machado, a social leader involved in the defence of communities' territory in Buenaventura who was murdered in 2018.[2] Finally, we draw on additional key secondary accounts, particularly CNMH (2015) and Garzón (2020), as well as media reports. This was necessary to complement our findings given the constraints on primary research in this violent context (Jenss, 2020), while also acknowledging and highlighting existing work undertaken in the area by local researchers, often in close collaboration with local communities.

In the next section we review recent debates which bring together Latin American and Anglo-European conceptions of territory, with an emphasis on diverse ontologies, and explore territorialization processes for their potential in understanding urban struggles. Buenaventura is presented through a focus on social and spatial dimensions influencing territorialization there. The analysis of these processes explores three specific cases in the city, which together show how territorial struggles may encompass and exceed moments of displacement and resistance in spatial and temporal terms, in order to reveal the symbolic and representational dimensions of territorial relations beyond simplistic tropes.

TERRITORY AND TERRITORIAL PROCESSES

Conceptualizing territory

As part of moves to decolonize territory, recent work in Anglophone political geography brings into conversation an established Latin American literature on the practical and theoretical mobilization of territory for resistance by social movements, with Western conceptions (Halvorsen, 2019). Responding to the 'epistemology of absences' (Escobar, 2016) in Western liberal thought, which has historically marginalized alternative concepts of territory, decolonizing involves 'opening up territory to multiple overlapping and entangled practices and ideas that exist within any historical and geographical context' (Halvorsen, 2019, p. 794). Transcending the framing of 'land, terrain, territory' associated with the modern (Western) nation-state (Elden, 2010) – critiqued as narrow, Eurocentric and statist (Clare et al., 2018) – this more expansive conception defines territory as 'the appropriation of space in pursuit of political projects', involving multiple

(state and non-state) actors and political strategies (Halvorsen, 2019, p. 791). Such pluralist views uncover 'the myriad of alternative practices of territory' (Clare et al., 2018, p. 304): more than mere abstract governmental spaces, territories enclose multiple scales and are produced by multiple subjects (Schwarz & Streule, 2016, p. 1006).

These conceptions draw on earlier work emphasizing territory's relational aspect over its material or spatial nature, as 'territory … is the result of the production of actors' (Raffestin, 2012, p. 126). This has informed relational perspectives highlighting the coexistence of multiple types of territory, or 'multi-territoriality' (Haesbert, 2013), where multiple actors seek to exercise territoriality in the same space. In turn, this may result in overlapping territorialities, defined as 'the use and control of territory for political, social and economic ends', undertaken and contested by diverse actors with claims to the same spatial area, including the state but also civil society and other actors (Agnew & Oslender, 2013, p. 123). Highlighting the unstable nature of the state's authority where territorial struggles occur (López, 2019), this reinforces the notion that, within a given territory, '[m]ultiple spatial relationships and relational constructions of power are produced' (Clare et al., 2018, p. 306). In this sense, then, power is central to territorial processes, as part of social relations that produce territory (Fernandes, 2005, cited in Halvorsen et al., 2019, p. 1455; see also Zibechi, 2008). However, rather than a straightforward expression of resistance to domination, the entanglement of territory and territorial strategies implies the coexistence of domination and resistance within a given territory (Halvorsen, 2019; Sharp et al., 2000), explored further in the analysis.

These debates also owe a debt to conceptions of territory advanced by Latin American social movements, particularly representing campesino, indigenous and Afro-descendant groups in the 1980s and 1990s, which emphasized territory's pluralistic character, but also its political significance (Porto-Gonçalves, 2002, cited in Escobar, 2015; Zibechi, 2008). In post-neoliberal Latin America, where rural populations have been ravaged by the military–industrial–agribusiness complex, social movements in both rural and urban areas have once again deployed territorial claims to contest this. However, in contexts of resource extraction, Rasmussen and Lund (2018, p. 388) propose that territorialization may be 'a resource control strategy' by which powerful groups (including the state but also other actors such as private capital and organized crime) deploy a set of actions to control a given space, its resources and its people. While Anthias (2018, p. 13) similarly highlights the 'territorializing effects' of local interactions with resource extraction in Bolivia – where hydrocarbon development has emerged in and shaped areas designated as indigenous territories – she shows how these are also part of a much longer history of racial and power relations.

Territorialization refers to the 'social production of territory' (Schwarz & Streule, 2016, p. 1007), which may take place, for example, through organized land occupation by peasant farmers (Routledge, 2015), as well as through actions by state and other actors. Yet, territorialization goes beyond struggles over space or land to incorporate elements of identity, representation and negotiation with other actors (Escobar, 2014). This points to the dynamic nature of territory, and its constantly changing function, in terms of 'the insertion of other activities linked to new or transformed relations' with the physical or social environment (Raffestin, 2012, p. 130); but also highlights its contested nature, as struggles over territory often reflect divergent representations as well as claims by different groups.[3] This is critical in the context of Buenaventura, where diverse representations of territory are leveraged as part of power struggles over space, particularly in relation to informal waterside neighbourhoods threatened by port expansion, and communities' mobilizations to defend their own territory in response. The framework of territorialization, de-territorialization and re-territorialization (TDR) (Raffestin, 2012; see also Halvorsen et al., 2019) has been used to describe contested territorial processes, and this is explored further below for its potential to transcend displacement categories in favour of capturing territorial struggles, in Buenaventura and beyond.

Territorialization processes

The association of territory with rural social movements has been mirrored in the focus of research from Latin America and beyond (e.g., Escobar, 2008; Routledge, 2015). Only recently have researchers turned their attention to urban areas, proposing a 'grounded' concept of territory which focuses on power relations in urban settings (Schwarz & Streule, 2016, p. 1001; see also Clare et al., 2018; Halvorsen et al., 2019; Zibechi, 2008). A territorial approach can highlight the role of social and hence power relations in shaping urban territory, as territory is produced, defined and negotiated by all social subjects on an everyday basis, and is an element of social power, as suggested above. This necessitates a focus on everyday interactions around urban territory, in terms of its materiality, meaning and regulation, particular the latter as, 'territorial regulations … frame the political and social processes of negotiation with regard to land use' (Schwarz & Streule, 2016, p. 1005), and reflect specific relationships of power and knowledge. In particular, struggles over land are frequently associated with processes of territorialization, which can be seen as the process(es) by which territory is produced, emphasizing not just the legal titling of land but also the social and power relations which surround it. Here, we employ these concepts to understand urban territorialization processes under conditions of extreme repression and violence in Buenaventura, with a focus on communities caught amid the city's 'contradictory territorial development' (CNMH, 2015).

Within this approach, urban conflict and contestation provides a key locus as '[t]erritories are produced in the very instances when subjects struggle over territorial practices, meanings and tenures of urban space' (Porto-Gonçalves, 2001, cited in Schwarz & Streule, 2016, p. 1007). While land is a constitutive component of the territory of modern states, it is also central to struggles for territory from below, as '[w]ithout land and its resources as the material base, it is impossible to weave the social fabric of the territory' (López, 2019, p. 256). The territorial expression of power relations can be seen in contestation over spatial boundaries, which are 'a statement about possession or exclusion' (Sack, 1983, cited in Blomley, 2019, p. 234). Under Western notions of property, such constructions tend to reduce complex bundles of rights and social relations to an individualized relationship between the owner and the land. Nevertheless, the relationship between property and territory cannot be assumed; the two may 'combine in many culturally and historically conditioned manifestations', including other forms of territorialized relationships with land such as collective or temporary ownership (Blomley, 2019, p. 235). In contexts where different forms of territorial property come into contact with individualized Western conceptions, territorial struggles may ensue. In Buenaventura, the legal recognition of collective land rights for rural Afro-Colombian communities has had specific implications for urban territorialization processes, explored further below.

Within networks of territorial relations, and particularly with regard to struggles over land *qua* territory, contestation may lead to de- and re-territorialization processes. While inherently neither good nor bad (Haesbert, 2013), de-territorialization often involves a loss of control over territory. While sometimes productive for strengthening popular mobilization, such as when social movements overturn 'preexisting institutional structures', it may also entail dismantling social movements' territorial institutions, or their displacement from occupied land (Halvorsen et al., 2019, p. 1459). In Colombia, de-territorialization is associated with the country's increasing insertion into global economies, and the consequent rural devastation and forced migration caused by the development of extractive industries such as gold and oil (López, 2019, p. 252). If alternative territorial models are seen as threatening (potential) gains of international capital and other non-state actors, such processes may have violent outcomes, including forced displacement, killings and even massacres, all of which have characterized territorial struggles in the Colombian Pacific (Agnew & Oslender, 2013). However, de-territorialization is 'not … synonymous with mobility' (Haesbert, 2013, p. 152), and may occur without displacement,

when populations are unable to move through their lands, or when they cannot use their territory because of the presence and threat of armed actors (Oslender, 2004b). In Buenaventura, this has entailed individual alienation and changing social relations, reinforced by the rupture of traditional place-based economic, social and cultural dynamics, for example, due to the transformation of the river into a mass grave,[4] or changing daily activities and processes due to 'invisible borders' and other controls on community mobility (CNMH, 2015, p. 305), discussed below.

Importantly, while territory can be the object of contestation, it can also be the 'resource of struggle' for social movements and communities (Agnew & Oslender, 2013, p. 127). Amid processes of displacement and de-territorialization, the construction of new territories through re-territorialization offers resistance to power as exercised from above (Clare et al., 2018). Through the creation of 'new spatial relationships and subjectivities', the exercise of organizing and self-managing territory, in urban as well as in rural settings, produces 'new ways of being' (Clare et al., 2018, p. 314). This is suggestive of the constant unfolding relationship 'between the deterritorializing capacity of the state and capital … and the everyday reterritorialization of the movements themselves' (Clare et al., 2018, pp. 314–315). In this way, re-territorialization can be 'a form of power' for communities who have experienced the double displacement of rural–urban and intra-urban forced moves (López, 2019, p. 257). In Buenaventura, the development of alternative territorial conceptions by local movements, and their realization in cases such as the urban humanitarian space outlined below, is an affirmation of Afro-Colombian communities' place-based, territorial ontology, in the face of dominant notions of property and ownership (PCN, 2000, cited in Escobar, 2014, p. 85).

Drawing on theorizations discussed above, we aim to transcend socio-spatial understandings of territory to see it as relational, imbued with power and integral to everyday urban practices. Building on Schwarz and Streule (2016) triad of materiality, meaning and regulation, we explore how the materiality of territory in urban Buenaventura is intimately entangled with its meaning, in terms of its ontological dimension, and its specific significance for (local) social movements; and how both may come into contact and conflict with urban and rural regulatory regimes, through processes that are shaped by and in turn shape such regimes. In the next section we outline the social and institutional context of Buenaventura, including relevant legal and planning frameworks, in the setting of the wider Pacific region.

BUENAVENTURA AS SOCIO-TERRITORIAL CONTEXT

Urban–rural relations and the significance of *Ley 70*

The port city of Buenaventura is located on the Colombian Pacific coast, within the municipality of the same name in the southwestern department of Valle del Cauca (Figure 1).[5] The municipality of Buenaventura has an extension of 6297 km^2, of which only 21 km^2 correspond to the urban area (DANE, 2019, cited in Cobo et al., 2020). However, 92.7% of the municipality's population live in the city of Buenaventura, with a population of 423,927 inhabitants, of which 92% are Afro-descendant (Alcaldía de Buenaventura, 2013; Cámara de Comercio, 2020, p. 7). The city of Buenaventura is divided into two zones: Cascajal Island, where the city centre and main port infrastructure are located; and the continental area, which is mainly residential neighbourhoods developed along the Avenida Simon Bolivar, where port infrastructure increasingly encroaches. The city as a whole is administratively divided into Comunas. Rural–urban migration to Buenaventura was motivated by its economic opportunities in the mid-20th century, but in recent decades has been primarily due to forced displacement, territorial dispossession and the 'geographies of terror' produced by extractivist and paramilitary activities in the rural Pacific region (Oslender, 2007, 2008). Displaced communities' historic ties to their land are disrupted as 'survival often depends on mobility', yet their retention of traditional practices
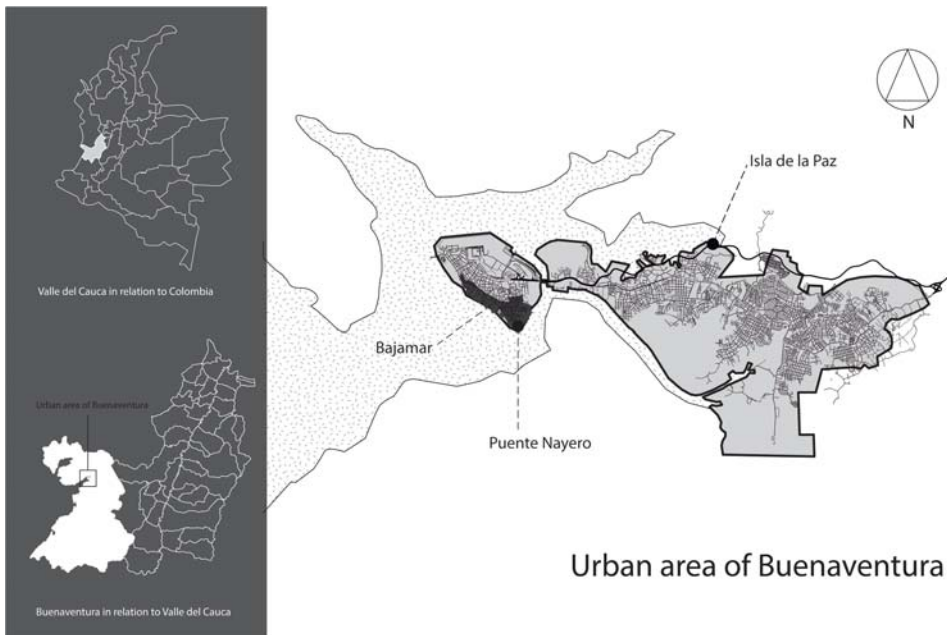
Figure 1. Location of Buenaventura, Colombia: urban area and case study sites. Sources: Authors, elaborated with information from official maps (see https://www.buenaventura.gov.co/articulos/mapas-de-buenaventura) (accessed October 17, 2020).

and social relations in the urban environment complicates rural–urban divisions (Zeiderman, 2016, p. 820), signifying instead a 'rural–urban continuum' (Arboleda, 2004).

Buenaventura's starkly divergent social and industrial development has, some argue, rendered it 'a port without community' (CNMH, 2015). On one hand, as Colombia's leading port, handling 30% of all imports, Buenaventura is central to national economic strategy (Alcaldía de Buenaventura, 2020). State narratives present an imaginary of a global city, linked to international economic circuits, with the prospect of wealth and a high quality of life. Future plans suggest that, 'Buenaventura will be a city port with green production, with the aim of realising the potential of the special economic zone for exports, in order to position the city nationally and internationally' (Alcaldía de Buenaventura, 2013, p. 42). Its strategic role in the Pacific Alliance free-trade agreement, signed in 2011, cements its national and international economic significance (Alves & Ravindran, 2020). On the other hand, Buenaventura remains one of Colombia's poorest and most unequal cities, as the wealth generated by the port largely bypasses the local, mainly Afro-Colombian community (Zeiderman, 2016). In 2018, the city's poverty level was 66%, well above the national median of 49%, and in 2017, more than 65% of the population lacked formal employment (Cobo et al., 2020). Following the port's privatization in the 1990s, local people are overlooked in favour of external employees, or contracted on highly insecure terms with few benefits (Nicholls & Sánchez-Garzoli, 2011).[6] Since the early 20th century, the central state has repeatedly promised basic infrastructure which has not materialized beyond the port complex (Alves & Ravindran, 2020). In 2011, 65% of households lacked sewerage and 45% drinking water; and life expectancy, at 51, was 11 years lower than the national average (Nicholls & Sánchez-Garzoli, 2011).

The historical development of Buenaventura has been shaped by its 'colonial geography' (Alves & Ravindran, 2020, p. 190), which itself must be understood within the social, cultural and ecological context of the Colombian Pacific region (Escobar, 2008). The exploitation of

colonial (and neo-colonial) economic interests in the area, and related territorial conflicts, engendered three key processes with determinative influence on the city (CNMH, 2015, p. 38). First, the violent submission of original indigenous communities during the Spanish conquest and early colonial period, which dramatically reduced their population; although the 'inhospitable' Pacific humidity, heat and jungle kept Spanish control at bay until the 18th century, when the first pier was built in Buenaventura (Alves & Ravindran, 2020). Second, the forced inclusion of Black populations brought from Africa as enslaved workers in local gold mines and sugarcane plantations during and after the colonial era, which resulted in Buenaventura's significance as a slave port, even after abolition in 1851 (Alves & Ravindran, 2020). Third, 'absentee' management by hacienda and business owners, who preferred to live in Cali or Popayan, mirrored today in the ownership and control of the port by 'white-mestizo Colombian and international elite' groups from Bogotá and beyond (Alves & Ravindran, 2020, p. 200).

After slavery's abolition, Black populations from other areas increased the numbers of Afro-descendant communities in the Pacific region, establishing socio-spatial units with strong territorial links (CNMH, 2015) in the 'aquatic space' of rivers and coastal areas (Oslender, 2004a). The region is home to about 1 million people, of whom 95% are Afro-Colombian (Escobar, 2008, p. 19). In 1993, this historical territorial appropriation was formally recognized by Law 70, which established a judicial process to provide collective titles to Afro-descendant communities for rural territories which they occupy and use for traditional productive activities. Following constitutional reforms in 1991, the establishment of the *Ley de Comunidades Negras* (as it is locally known) recognized the historic tenure of Black communities over river basins in the Pacific region and established the figure of communal councils (*consejos comunitarios*) through which communities could organize and govern themselves. Amid the optimism of the early 1990s, Law 70 seemed to offer the possibility of visibility, rights and political recognition to Afro-descendant communities across the Pacific region and in Colombia more widely. Instrumental in and strengthened by this process was the Proceso de Comunidades Negras, a network of social organizations in the Pacific region based in Buenaventura, with more than 20 years of history of articulating Afro-Colombian communities' demands for political, ecological and cultural autonomy (Escobar, 2014; see also Oslender, 2016b).

Despite the historical achievement that Law 70 represents in Colombia, observers suggest that it failed to live up to its promise, particularly relating to Afro-Colombian movements' claims around identity and territory (Oslender, 2016b). Between constitutional debates and the law's formalization, these claims were diluted, and the category of territory was replaced by 'collective land ownership' based on the distribution of empty or unused land (*tierras baldías*) for collective titling, rather than redistribution (Restrepo, 2013, p. 95). Nevertheless, by 2008, 5 million hectares of land had been assigned via 132 collective land titles in the Pacific region (Agnew & Oslender, 2013). In the municipality of Buenaventura, there are currently 44 communal councils, of which 31 have collective titles, with the remaining 13 in process (Cobo et al., 2020). However, Law 70 is contested by groups who challenge its 'exclusionary' benefits (Oslender, 2004b), often relating to lands rich in natural and mineral resources, whose exploitation by third parties (whether public or private) is prohibited without prior consultation with the community.[7]

This contestation was highlighted by a PCN member, who explained that collectively titled territories:

> belong neither to the municipality nor the state; they are not individual private properties, but rather collective private properties. Collective titling does not mean public property; it [the property] has an owner who has to establish limits with other [properties]. This bothers people, although they are not bothered by the existence of individual private property. (interview 3)

Distinguishing communal from both public and individual private property, this respondent highlights an important characteristic, namely the right of communities to exclude third parties, which challenges Westernized conceptions of individual property rights. Additionally, the law's lack of provision for urban communities has been highlighted by observers of territorial struggles in Buenaventura (Garzón, 2020; Zeiderman, 2016), explored below.

VIOLENCE AND TERRITORIAL STRUGGLES

While Buenaventura has suffered direct and indirect effects of Colombia's 50-year armed internal conflict, this is one of several factors contributing to the city's extremely high levels of violence. In 2006, its homicide rate was around three times the national rate at 121 per 100,000 inhabitants, although by 2013 this had fallen to 48 per 100,000, compared with 33 per 100,000 at a national level (HRW, 2014; World Bank, 2020). In the early 2000s, the FARC guerrilla control of neighbourhoods in the city was displaced by paramilitary groups, allegedly defending political and economic elite interests. Subsequent struggles between different groups for control over drug trafficking routes and local terrain led to eruptions of violence throughout the early 2000s and 2010s. Since 2006, an increased military presence has apparently contributed to declining homicide rates; however, evidence suggests that killings have been superseded by disappearances, torture and 'invisible borders', which divide rival gang territory with potentially lethal consequences for anyone crossing them without permission (HRW, 2014). Moreover, the peace process embarked upon in 2016, itself increasingly tendentious, has had little effect in Buenaventura, which remains a city 'neither at war nor at peace' (Jenss, 2020, p. 2).[8]

In fact, conflict and violence in the city are strongly related to territorial disputes. These involve three groups with contradictory territorial visions, operating in the municipality's rural and urban areas: first, groups with a 'developmentalist' vision, including private actors, but also potentially agents of the state; second, armed actors, including guerrillas, paramilitaries and criminal groups; and third, communities and their representative organizations (Cobo et al., 2020, p. 7). While territorial conflict in urban Buenaventura is often attributed to control of trafficking routes (CNMH, 2015), recent critical analysis suggests that violence and insecurity in Buenaventura go hand in hand with the imposition of the neoliberal development model (Alves & Ravindran, 2020; Jenss, 2020; Oslender, 2004a; Zeiderman, 2016). This is given weight by the fact that terror and displacement seem to occur most frequently in areas where port expansion is planned or projected. Stalled social mobilization resulting from the port's privatization, alongside the rise of paramilitary groups and criminal gangs seeking to control the flows of illegal alongside legal exports (Cobo et al., 2020), have combined with the rapacious expansion of port infrastructure to afflict everyday life in the city's 'violated geographies' (Jaramillo et al., 2019), populated mainly by Afro-Colombian communities.

The routine forms of violence encountered by Buenaventura's Black residents suggest a 'dystopic geography of racial dispossession and racial violence' (Alves & Ravindran, 2020, p. 189). Since 2000, the most commonly reported crime against the person in the municipality of Buenaventura has been forced displacement, accounting for 95% of all such crimes between 2000 and 2020 (Alcaldía de Buenaventura, 2020). In 2013 alone, more than 13,000 residents were displaced from their homes in Buenaventura (HRW, 2014). Particularly vulnerable are informally developed neighbourhoods established by migrant and rural–urban displaced groups at the water's edge, where 'being close to the water affords them the opportunity to sustain themselves through fishing, transport, or traveling to and from their lands along the rivers' (Nicholls & Sánchez-Garzoli, 2011, p. 6), reflecting the significance of such territory for communities' economic activities, identity and well-being. Yet, their location reinforces these areas' strategic importance for both legal and illicit trade. The city's 'contradictory territorial development' is attributed to

the tension between the 'rural–urban continuum' of Afro-descendent socio-territorial organiz-ation, and formal, centrally planned development which aims to secure the port for the national and international economy (CNMH, 2015), a tension which is apparent in the municipality's planning frameworks.

Planning and territory

The Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial (POT) is the main planning instrument for Colombian municipalities. The Colombian concept of *ordenamiento territorial* was established in legal terms by the reformed 1991 Constitution, alongside the recognition of Colombia's ethnic communities and their land rights, discussed above. It is effectively a planning/zoning instrument with the remit of administering physical space, but also seeks 'the restructuring of the state's administra-tive authority and functions', in the context of decentralization that reforms sought to inculcate (Asher & Ojeda, 2009, p. 293).

Buenaventura's current POT is valid from 2014 until 2027, and is in the process of being updated. The existing document briefly addresses Afro-descendent communities' territorial rights and expectations, explicitly linking these to territorial conflict. Highlighting the complex-ity of planning amid diverse laws with territorial inference, *Ley 70* is briefly mentioned as one of the multiple relevant pieces of legislation (Alcadía de Buenaventura, 2013, pp. 4–5). The docu-ment underscores the difficulty of municipal planning in a context where every land-use decision involves negotiating with 'community and ethnic actors, institutions at departmental and national level, with particular interests' (p. 6). In particular, the POT singles out *consejos comu-nitarios* which, it states, often, 'assume a position of authority without having been granted [title to] even one square metre of land' (p. 6), suggesting an enduring ambivalence towards this legally constituted figure. This view was echoed by a local official, who told us that:

> One of the main issues that we need to consider is that the POT defined land uses for this whole area …
> [but] in order to advance the [collective] titling process … what the POT had [already] defined was not
> taken into account. … The POT defined urban expansion areas, with uses fundamentally oriented
> towards logistical port infrastructure, and then subsequently collective titles are awarded in this area …
> and this creates conflict. (interview 1)

This expresses the evident tension between the recognition of communities' rights to territory and autonomy, and the development goals of the local authority.

This points to the fundamental divergence in views of territory held by the state from those held by communities, and 'the different understandings of [ethnic and territorial] rights between Afro-Colombians and state officials' (Asher & Ojeda, 2009, p. 297), with brutal outcomes for Buenaventura's communities, caught amid the often coinciding pressures of port expansion and armed groups. As one local social leader told us:

> We will keep on explaining why people are being displaced, what is behind all of this. The territory is the
> reason; we are located, the Black ethnic population … in territories that are today earmarked for port and
> touristic expansion. What does this mean? That violence in Buenaventura is not coincidental, but has the
> objective of generating two processes: on one hand, 'emptying' [land] in the urban context as in the rural,
> and on the other hand, undertaking this systematically. (interview 7)

Thus, both the violence that is constantly remapping the territory of Buenaventura (Oslender, 2004b), and the planning tools which also seek to do this, are seen as part of a deliberate and coordinated strategy for the systematic appropriation of territory, in physical and symbolic terms.

In the next section we explore these processes through analysis of three empirical cases which illustrate different dimensions of territorialization and the everyday struggles which these

engender. The territories that are currently contested by powerful groups were not just appropriated but often also physically produced by original settlers, as we explore in the first section, focusing on the process of reclaiming land from the sea in the 'Bajamar' area. In the second section, we examine how communities experience de-territorialization over time, even while they resist displacement, through the case of Barrio Isla de la Paz. At the same time, as Jaramillo et al. (2019) remind us, in Buenaventura's 'paradoxical territory', regimes of violence are constantly challenged by communities through everyday political and creative practices of resistance and re-existence. In the third section, focusing on the humanitarian space of Puente Nayero, we explore re-territorialization processes by which communities respond to and resist claims by powerful elite, state and armed actors. It is through such processes that territory may be (re)defined as a collective space composed of all the indispensable and necessary places in which men and women, young people and adults, create and recreate their lives (PCN, 2000, cited in Escobar, 2014).

BEYOND DISPLACEMENT: TERRITORIALIZATION PROCESSES IN BUENAVENTURA

The production of territory in urban Buenaventura

The area known as Bajamar is seen as paradigmatic of Afro-Colombians' long struggle for territory, life and identity in Buenaventura. While the reality of displacement and violence in this area is inescapable (Jenss, 2020; Zeiderman, 2016), this occurs alongside, and frequently obscures, wider territorialization processes. The territorial condition of Afro-Colombian communities has been defined by the PCN in terms of symbolic and time–space dynamics (PCN, 1994, cited in Oslender, 2012). The symbolic dimension relates to what PCN calls the logic of the river, giving consistency to the territorialized memory that is part of identity formation through narratives of place and specific practices of the Pacific region; while time–space dynamics relate to a space of everyday social interaction that produces territory itself. Both of these dimensions are realized in Bajamar, in the production of territory which physically and symbolically undergirds other aspects, explored below.

'Bajamar', which can be translated as 'mud flats' (Alcaldía de Buenaventura, 2013, p. 24), is the term popularly used to denote a large informal area on the densely populated Cascajal Island, close to Buenaventura's centre and primary port area. According to a local social leader, the 11 neighbourhoods in Comunas 1 and 4 which make up Bajamar are characterized by 'stilt houses on the island of Buenaventura … all those communities who live at the shoreline' (interview 6). Originating in the late 1970s, this collection of neighbourhoods was established by rural migrants who self-built houses at the water's edge, gradually filling in the tidal area with earth and rubbish in order to consolidate their neighbourhoods (Batista & Solano, 2002; Cobo et al., 2020). The same respondent described the community process of claiming land from the sea:

> The people of Bajamar reconstructed land claimed from the sea, the people themselves; we helped to build by filling in with rubbish, with waste. … I remember in Morrocoy a street that was just scrubland and water, and the same community filled it in and now it is a paved street. (interview 6)

Some areas claimed from the sea are now unrecognizable as such due to their degree of integration into the urban fabric. They have been estimated to house around 110,000 residents (Zeiderman, 2016).

From around 2005, port expansion, climate change and paramilitary violence have converged to threaten waterfront residents with violence and displacement (Zeiderman, 2016). Although violence in the area has diminished, the uneasy peace that has followed is attributed to a deal between armed actors, who made 'a pact to survive without giving up the control of the territory'

(Alves & Ravindran, 2020, p. 195). At best, the state has been indifferent; at worst, complicit (Castillo et al., 2018). The current POT (Alcaldía de Buenaventura, 2013, p. 5) establishes Bajamar land as public property, suggesting that, 'in consequence, the inhabitants of these areas cannot be granted property titles'. Moreover, in the port context, such property falls under the responsibility of DIMAR (the Maritime Authority) and the Port Authority rather the municipality, although these agencies must consult with the municipal authority in order to grant licences for use. The POT prescribes communities' relocation due to environmental risks, including tsunamis. On this basis, and coinciding with development to construct a new sea wall – including the Malecon Perimetral del Mar, a centrally located, touristic pier – some residents have already been relocated to Ciudadela San Antonio, a new housing estate located in Comuna 12, 2 km inland and around 10 km from the city centre. While living conditions in San Antonio are supposedly improved, relocation entails the loss of communities' access to economic and social opportunities which initially brought them to the central waterfront area, along with their territorial connections.

In these neighbourhoods, social mobilization and resistance have coexisted with conflict and inequality for many decades. Such neighbourhoods have been persistently portrayed as a 'badlands', detached from port infrastructure and characterized solely by violence, with 'the racialized depiction of inhabitants as "other"' in local, national and international media, as well as planning documents (Jenss, 2020, p. 5). In fact, these communities have retained traditional economic and cultural activities such as fishing (in boats or by hand for the *piangua* mollusc, which mainly women fish for), producing *Viche* (alcoholic drink), and community self-organization. The physical production of land has therefore been accompanied by the symbolic production of territory. As a PCN member explained:

> An important characteristic of ethnic dynamics is that they are territorialised, not sectoral nor related to the population. That is why the concept of ethno-territorial organisations is recognised.[9] The [Community] Association for Land Claimed From the Sea is an ethno-territorial organisation.[10] [Such organisations] have a territorial space, that is a space of life, and it is defended as such. (interview 3)

The more recent emergence of the concept of *tierras ganadas al mar* (land claimed from the sea), used in preference to the term 'Bajamar', has both a symbolic and a political inference, as it highlights the productive nature of these communities' struggles, in the construction of new territory for displaced groups to live and maintain their community networks (CNMH, 2015).

The communities' defence of land gained from the sea is a daily struggle, reflecting the time–space dimension of territory, in terms of its use and production through everyday social interaction, in the face of constant threats from the expanding port and tourist infrastructure, as well as from illicit trade networks and criminal actors. While communities argue their claims on the basis of ancestral territorial rights, they simultaneously assert that 'their domestic space is the shore, a sea-related space of sociability' (Machado, 2018, cited in Jenss, 2020). Yet, beyond their everyday productive capacity, these territories' significance encompasses a symbolic dimension. CNMH (2015, p. 79) highlights the High Court's suggestion (in case 005, 2009) that, 'One of the elements contributing to increasing violence against Afro-Colombian communities in their territories, has been legal and illegal pressure deriving from development patterns that deny their cosmovision'. In this sense, the territorial production of land claimed from the sea is representative of these communities' historical territorial struggles, which is simultaneously a struggle for life.

Everyday experiences of de-territorialization

These threats of potential and actual territorial struggle are expressive of the 'double displacement' described by López (2019), as informal neighbourhoods established by displaced

communities are dispossessed or evicted. Yet, while territorialization usually entails the appropriation or production of territory, de-territorialization does not necessarily always entail outright displacement, but may relate to dynamics which are spatially and temporally diffuse, including loss of control over land, and consequent distortion of social and productive processes (Oslender, 2004a). Here, we explore de-territorialization processes in an informal inland area, focusing on everyday occurrences and moments of violence, which have so far pre-empted actual dispossession.

Barrio Isla de La Paz, located in Comuna 6 in the continental area of Buenaventura, was originally established in the 1960s by Afro-Colombian communities from different parts of the Pacific region. At that time, the land was unoccupied and considered rural, as it was outside the city boundary. While residents did not have legal title to the land, their traditional autonomous organizational practices and economic activities of fishing and agriculture, alongside urban processes of housing construction and employment in the port, resulted in a relatively consolidated neighbourhood (Cobo et al., 2020; Garzón, 2020). However, the lack of legal titles, combined with the neighbourhood's location close to the Buenaventura Port Society's headquarters and the main route into the port area, have left it vulnerable to de-territorialization processes throughout its existence. These have manifested in frequent legal or violent threats, which have sometimes overlapped (*El Espectador*, 2020), reaching a nadir with the killing of community leader Don Temístocles Machado in 2018. Yet these critical moments in the neighbourhood's history occur against the backdrop of residents' everyday experiences, and it is only by paying attention to both dynamics that the logic and consequences of de-territorialization are revealed.

The Via Alterna, a bypass road for goods vehicles accessing the port, runs directly through Comuna 6, physically dividing its neighbourhoods; its environmental effects are felt daily by residents. The road's initial construction in 1999–2004, and subsequent widening in 2017–19, unleashed territorial disputes. It opened up the area to port activities and increased land values, while the neighbourhoods' informal status emboldened third parties' opportunistic and fraudulent claims of possession (Garzón, 2020). Residents of Isla de la Paz recount that during construction of Via Alterna, in the early 2000s, individuals alleging ownership emerged, laying claim to the land (CNMH, 2015). These claims were accompanied by threats of violence, as residents explained: 'He [the alleged owner] appeared in 2003 saying that he owned this, that he had the title from INCORA,[11] that if we did not clear out, this territory would become our grave' (CNMH, 2015, p. 147). In 2004, representatives from Comuna 6 petitioned the Municipal Council for titles, resulting in the implementation of a mass titling programme for four neighbourhoods, including Isla de la Paz. However, in 2006 the process was suspended by the Housing Technical Office on the basis of a third-party claim to a plot of land corresponding to the area being titled. The resolution that halted the process gave the alleged owner 30 days to prove ownership by producing legal documentation. Although this proof never transpired, the titling process has remained suspended for the last 13 years (*El Espectador*, 2019).

Alongside these critical moments, residents experience everyday pressures of de-territorialization. The neighbourhood football pitch, used daily by the neighbourhood's children and young people, is the object of recurrent contestation by individuals claiming ownership of the land, coveted for its potential as parking and storage space for heavy goods vehicles. Since 2012, the community has been under renewed pressure to cede the land or sell it at derisory prices (Cobo et al., 2020). Residents have awoken to find vehicles parked on the pitch, and excavators have turned up without warning to demolish the goal (Garzón, 2020). In 2016, a house on the edge of the pitch was demolished by armed and hooded men. Local leaders convened a workgroup to rebuild it, bolstering the community's sense of ownership (Cobo et al., 2020); however, residents fear that local authorities are complicit. In 2015, a resident recounted how, 'It's the only pitch that we've always had here, and the municipal administration has [now] given permission to individuals to turn it into yards and warehouses' (CNMH, 2015, p. 148). The constant threat of

dispossession, underlain by intimidation, has resulted in the de facto weakening of public space for the community.

At certain points this latent conflict has exploded into violence. In January 2018, Don Temístocles Machado, a social leader in Comuna 6, was killed by hitmen in Barrio Isla de La Paz, where he lived (*El Espectador*, 2018). Don Temístocles had been advocating for the resumption of mass titling suspended in 2006, and his murder was apparently related to his land advocacy activities (Garzón, 2020). His personal archive contained many years of evidence of threats (*El Espectador*, 2018), alongside extensive correspondence with public bodies about the community's claims for land rights and public services. Particularly notable in these agencies' responses is their apparent lack of authority to resolve the conflict, and consequent referral to other agencies. This is suggestive of a lack of knowledge about land ownership within the municipality, which was reinforced by the admission of a local official that:

> There is a cadastre that is not up-to-date, that does not really and legitimately reflect which plots are privately owned, because land business is a very complex, very complicated issue, and it is not known if these properties belong to the Councils [*consejos comunitarios*], third parties, or private entities. (interview 1)

This points to 'overlapping territorialities' which reinforce the land's uncertain status.

The claims of the Afro-Colombian communities settled on this land, based on its previously rural condition outside the city's perimeter, appear to have been recognized under *Ley 70* in a *consulta previa* undertaken during road widening in 1999. This process was not repeated when the road was widened in 2017–18, apparently because the city's expanding boundaries meant the land was no longer considered rural (Garzón, 2020). The law's lack of provision relating to *urban* Afro-Colombian communities' territorial claims (Zeiderman, 2016) points to its narrow, geographically fixed and idealized conception of black subjectivity, which disregards the changing nature of community (from rural to urban) and contextual shifts (as the city grows) (Garzón, 2020). This situation intersects with the neighbourhood's informal status and unclear land tenure, combining with institutional repudiation of claims and powerful interests in the area to produce de-territorialization without displacement, in terms of the ongoing threat of potential violence and eviction, backed up by actual violence, and the resulting sense of fear and harassment among the community, which impedes their use of public space.

Spatial tactics of re-territorialization

While de-territorialization processes can be highly damaging, they may simultaneously contain a generative impulse, as the basis for re-territorialization by communities. The idea of re-territorialization goes beyond simple resistance or the act of staying, to imply territorial resignification through spatial strategies (Oslender, 2004b). Such strategies propose indeterminate practices opposed to the dominant spatialized power (Crang, 2000), particularly through practices of occupation. The case of Puente Nayero demonstrates the logic of re-territorialization, in the community's defining, communicating and enforcing a set of relations (of access and exclusion) through the deployment of spatial arrangements, specifically boundaries, zoning and inside/outside distinctions (Blomley, 2019).

Located in Barrio La Playita (Comuna 4), situated on land gained from the sea, Puente Nayero is a street whose name derives from the Naya River, where its community of around 1000 inhabitants originates. Nayera families began to arrive in Buenaventura half a century ago, initially 'voluntarily' in search of opportunities that state abandonment denied them in their territory of origin; then, particularly as a result of the horrific Naya Massacre in 2001, displaced by paramilitary violence.[12] In the Afro-Colombian neighbourhood of Puente Nayero, the preponderance of the community over the individual has prevailed, and the settlement layout recalls rural regional traditions. This collectively defined territory is constituted by a lack of

sharp division between public and private space; stilt houses arranged along the 'street' (main bridge), with their respective access bridges, as components of a larger community space; and doors which are always open, allowing family, neighbours and friends to circulate in a historically constructed network (Castillo et al., 2018).

On 15 September 2014, based on a request from the community to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Puente Nayero was established as a Humanitarian Space. The community made this request for the protection of its residents, in the context of increasing violence in the area since 2012 (Castillo et al., 2018; SJR, 2012). Supported by human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Church, and drawing on a concept developed in rural Colombia, the community petitioned the Court for a protective injunction; approving this in 2014, the Court urged the Colombian government to fulfil the injunction, resulting in army patrols, and a subsequent decline in paramilitary incursion and violence. Additionally, Puente Nayero physically delineated its boundaries with a gate and signage, allowing residents some degree of control over who enters. As the only urban Humanitarian Space in Colombia, this designation represents a political statement and reclamation of Afro-Colombian communities' ethno-territorial rights in Buenaventura (Castillo et al., 2018).

Beyond the political and security implications of this process of territorial appropriation by the community, there is a strong symbolic dimension. The name of the community is suggestive of its role as a bridge (*puente*) between urban and ancestral territories, mediated by the Pacific Ocean (Castillo et al., 2018). In this sense, it is an extension of ancestral territory, as a local social leader explained: 'I have created a concept, which is the concept of extended territory, that we are working on. … Extended territory is the link between the [rural] population of the Naya and the humanitarian space' (interview 7). This complex network of interconnections between rural and urban areas, and their socio-territorial development, is contrary to developmentalist visions of Afro-descendant territorial models as ancient and backward-looking (CNMH, 2015), and resonates with the idea of a rural–urban continuum. In this sense, it recognizes the relationship between territory and Afro-Colombian communities' ways of life, which was explained by a youth leader as follows:

> Territory is not only physical space, but also everything that it means, the cosmovision, ways of doing things, lifestyles, and so on … we are not only defending the rights to possess territory, we are defending a lifestyle or lifestyles that have sustained us. (interview 5)

In this context, Puente Nayero is a political proposal which aims to preserve the life project of Afro-Colombian communities in Buenaventura's urban environment, as expressed by the local leader:

> The Afro people in the Pacific, but above all us the Nayeros, we have a very colloquial phrase, that life is not possible without territory, and what does this lead [us] to? To fight for territory, because it is part of our life. (interview 7)

The idea of 'extended territory' implies a process of re-territorialization underlain by struggle, both physical (in the sense of protecting and erecting barriers to the neighbourhood), but also symbolic, in opposition to the dominant symbolic referent of the city, the port as development model. In this sense, the Humanitarian Space designation needs to be understood beyond its legal meaning as a tactic of re-territorialization which establishes an alternative narrative of urban Buenaventura, while also emphasizing the importance of territory's relational aspect, in terms of rural–urban concepts of place. In other words, it re-territorializes a particular knowledge of place by evincing an invisible geography–world through political means (Crang, 2000).

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have argued that displacement and dispossession in (post-)conflict settings are not just related to disputes over natural resources and drug trafficking routes, but also, and particularly in the urban context, to the social production of territory, linked in symbolic and time–space dimensions and reflected in everyday experiences of territorialization. Beyond standardized tropes of displacement and resistance, territorialization offers a conceptual lens for understanding these struggles as complex and ongoing events in terms of the physical and symbolic effects of de-territorialization on communities and individuals; and the potential for re-territorialization within plural, disruptive practices of re-existence (Jaramillo et al., 2019), that not only reconstitute violated geographies but also affirm a deep relation with ancestral territory. Territory in urban settings has been theorized through a focus on materiality, meaning and regulation, revealing its relational, power-based and everyday nature. Our interrogation of territorialization processes in Buenaventura presents localized interpretations of territory which enrich these debates. Beyond places of settlement and reproduction, the three cases explored in the context of Buenaventura showed how territory is an expression of collective memory and of life itself.

On this basis, the relational ontology which links subjects, people and territory (Escobar, 2014) could also be seen as a political ontology, in which socio-territorial movements propose the extension of ethno-territorial rights to urban communities in Buenaventura (such as the Association for Land Claimed From the Sea). However, this also highlights the limitations of *Ley 70*, which was restricted to granting collective *land* rights in rural areas, undermining movements' claims to ethno-territorial rights, while excluding from its provisions the rights of *urban* Afro-descendent communities. In fact, territory in this sense is not simply an outcome of property relations, but has deep significance for communities' identity, legitimation and autonomy. Beyond collective land titles, this conception of territory refers to places historically inhabited by Afro-descendant communities, and highlights the interdependent relationships between land, nature, and inhabitants (Escobar, 2016). The PCN's representation of territory as situated within and reproduced by time–space dynamics and symbolic referents is key, as this conceptualization of ethno-territory opens up new spaces of thinking and ways of relating to place and space that are only just beginning to be explored in both rural and urban settings (Castillo et al., 2018; Escobar, 2014).

Territorial struggles in Buenaventura continue. Signs of hope can be detected in the aftermath of the *paro civico*, a city-wide protest that took place in Buenaventura over 21 days in 2017. The *paro* and the collaborative movement that supported it aimed to make visible residents' profound social and economic problems, and their abandonment by the national state (Jaramillo et al., 2020). Despite (or because of) the ensuing unfulfilled central government promises, 2019 closed with the election of a new mayor from the *paro civico* movement, Victor Hugo Vidal. Territory is central to the new administration's agenda, which seeks to reverse historic injustices against local populations. The administration has drawn up a new Municipal Development Plan (Plan de Desarrollo Distrital, 2020–23), approved in April 2020, which aims to 'Reduce the systematic violation of the economic, social, cultural and ethnic-territorial rights in the District of Buenaventura' through a strategy of territorial planning. While the developmentalist model endures in Buenaventura, pursued by central government and actualized in ongoing plans for port expansion, the potential for the representation, discussion and realization of alternative ontologies and imaginings of territory appears more possible now than ever, although recent violence (with homicides and disappearances increasing once again) indicates the long and arduous road to achieving this. At the same time such developments, contextualized within the long history of territorial struggles in Buenaventura, are part of the continual remaking of the concept of territory (Haesbert, 2013).

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NOTES

1. Of 55 interviews carried out in Buenaventura, 31 were identified as relevant to its central themes, and were partially transcribed and coded according to three main categories (conflicts, peace initiatives and agreement implementation gaps). From an emerging 'conflicts' subcategory – relating to tensions around the use, possession and control of land and urban space – we selected eight interviews as key sources for this paper.

2. The archive, donated to Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (CNMH) in 2016, is available at http://www.archivodelosddhh.gov.co (accessed October 27, 2020).

3. This resonates with work on the 'subjective nature of place', which shapes and forms part of the struggles of social movements, and (place-based) communities more broadly, around both rural and urban space (Escobar, 2008; Oslender, 2002; Lombard, 2014).

4. Referring to the apparent use of the river and estuary to dispose of bodies or body parts by criminal actors.

5. In this article we use 'Buenaventura' to refer to the port city (as opposed to the municipality), giving clarification when we refer to the wider surrounding area.

6. In 1993, under President Gaviria, Buenaventura's port was privatized, transferring management from state-owned Colpuertos to the Buenaventura Port Society, a mixed-economy company owned by private national and international investors (83%), Buenaventura public authorities (15%) and the Colombian Ministry of Transport (2%). The five terminals managed by the Port Society, which make up the port complex, are owned by different private companies, including the TCBuen terminal owned by Spanish group TCB.

7. *Consulta previa* is the legal obligation to consult communities about development projects (including extractive, infrastructure and territorial development) before they can be undertaken; in theory, communities can suggest amendments or even impede projects, although in practice this is often weakly enforced.

8. The 2016 peace agreement sought to end conflict with the FARC, Colombia's biggest guerrilla group; but other guerrilla groups persist, alongside paramilitaries and criminal gangs, all present in Buenaventura. The agreement, which presented the innovative concept of territorial peace, largely addresses rural conflict zones to the exclusion of urban areas (Cairo et al., 2018).

9. This concept emerged with the 1991 constitutional reforms to describe organizations such as the PCN, which 'sought to vindicate [black] cultural and territorial rights' (Escobar, 2008, p. 190).

10. This recently formed organization defends territorial and political rights of Afro-Colombian communities settled on land gained from the sea (in 'Bajamar' and other areas), evoking rights to rural ancestral territories from where they were displaced, as the basis for these 'urban' claims.

11. The Colombian Institute for Rural Development, created in 1961, with responsibility for administering land distribution programmes.

12. This refers to the murder of at least 100 indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant inhabitants, and the terrorization and displacement of at least 3000 more, by members of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), Colombia's most significant paramilitary organization during the 1990s and 2000s. For more information, see https://www.coljuristas.org/nuestro_quehacer/item.php?id=292 (accessed March 2, 2021).

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