THE VALUE OF THE SACRED: EXTRACTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN TERRITORIES
OF THE COLOMBIAN AMAZON

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the value of the sacred knowledge of the Indigenous Amazonian nations of Predio Putumayo, Colombia, given by the forest's spirits to cope with legacies of colonialism that still mediate their relationship with the modern world. Following analysis of the relationship between Indigenous nations and national governments in the region, it is argued that such sacred knowledge is vital to overcome extractivist models that after fifty years of internal war in Colombia are threatening the Amazon rainforest and its inhabitants. By addressing specific points of contention between these parties, such as the lack of understanding of the interplay between material, sacred and ecological aspects of Indigenous territories, this study seeks to contribute to the resolution of deep-rooted, cross-cultural territorial conflicts, and towards viable and necessary agreements between government, policymakers, and Indigenous populations. Combining Knowledge Mobilization (KMb) and Investigation Action Research (IAR) methods with theories of communicative action, cybernetics, political ontology and the Indigenous premise of *buen vivir* (good living), this work contributes to an emergent discussion in both Anthropology and the world stage, leveraging its unique position at an intersection between policymakers, leaders, academia and local communities.

Keywords: Indigenous, Sacred, Law, Amazon Rain Forest, Extractivism, Political Ontology.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine la valeur du savoir sacré que les esprits de la forêt transmettent aux nations amazoniennes autochtones de Predio Putumayo, en Colombie, pour dépasser aux héritages du colonialisme qui continuent d'agir comme médiation dans leur relation avec le monde moderne. Après une analyse de la relation entre les nations autochtones et les gouvernements nationaux de la région, il est avancé que ces connaissances sacrées sont vitales pour surmonter les modèles extractivistes qui, après cinquante ans de guerre interne en Colombie, menacent la forêt tropicale et ses habitants. En abordant des points de discorde spécifiques entre différents groupes d'acteurs, tels que le manque de compréhension de l'interaction entre les aspects matériels, sacrés et écologiques des territoires autochtones, cette étude donne lieu à une enquête complète pour résoudre les conflits territoriaux interculturels profondément enracinés et progresser vers des accords qui fonctionnent et qui engagent le gouvernement, les législateurs et les populations autochtones. Combinant les méthodes de mobilisation des connaissances et de Recherche Action Participative (RAP) avec les théories de l'action communicative, la cybernétique, l'ontologie politique et la prémisse autochtone du *buen vivir* (bien vivre), ce travail contribue à une discussion émergente à la fois en anthropologie et sur la scène mondiale en tirant parti de sa position unique en tant que carrefour entre les législateurs, les dirigeants, les universités et les communautés locales.

Mots clés : Autochtone, Sacré, Droit, Forêt Amazonienne, Extractivisme, Ontologie politique.

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List of Abbreviations

AICO – Autoridades Indígenas de Colombia

AZICATCH – Asociación Zonal Indígena de Cabildos y Autoridades de la Chorrera

BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa

C-MPI – Multidimensional Poverty Index in Colombia

CAAAP – Centro Amazónico de Antropología y Aplicación Práctica

CEDES – Centro de Estudios Especializados

CICADA – Centre for Indigenous Conservation and Development Alternatives

CIT – Confederación Indígena Tairona

CNA – Censo Nacional Agropecuario

CNMH – Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica

CONPES – Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social

CRIC – Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca

DANE Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística

DGAI – Dirección de Asuntos Indígenas, Rrom y Minorías

É – Étnico

ECLAC – Economic Commission for Latin America and The Caribbean

ECV – Encuesta de Calidad de Vida

EfMPI – Ethnic Focused Multidimensional Poverty Index

ÉMPI – Ethnic Multidimensional Poverty Index

FARC – Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia

FPIC – Free Prior and Informed Consent

FUCAI – Fundación Caminos de Identidad

IGAC – Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi

ILO – International Labor Organization

IMF – International Monetary Fund

KMb – Knowledge Mobilization

MPC – Mesa Permanente de Concertación

MPI – Multidimensional Poverty Index

OPHI – Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative

OPIAC – Organización de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonía Colombiana

PAR – Participatory Action Research

PC – Prior Consultation

PND – Plan Nacional de Desarrollo de Colombia

PNRA – Palenquero, Negro, Raizal, y Afrodescendiente

REB – Research Ethics Board

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SEIP – Sistema Educativo Indígena

SSHRC – Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Program

Glossary

Amazoniar	Relearn from the ones who have been forgotten.
Ambil	A paste made from the slow cooking of tobacco leaves with vegetable salts in water.
Buen vivir	Good living.
Caguana and Manicuela Juice	Traditional cassava juice made by Amazonian Women.
Casabe	Processed wild yucca.
Cauchería	A system based on the extraction and commercialization of rubber.

Cepo	Stocks are restraining devices that were used as a form of corporal punishment and public humiliation.
Chagra	A hectare of land where Amazonian families grow their food and teach their children about cultural and ecological relations. *Chagras* have productive periods of maximum five years. After that period, *chagras* are given back to the forest and twenty years later, they are reclaimed and used again by the same family.
Coca	*Erythroxylum coca.*
Colonos	Mestizo settlers coming from other regions.
De-Indigenization	Abandonment of Indigenous identity.
DeTerritorialization	Forced displacement of people from their lands.
Development	A discourse developed after WWII by industrialized and hegemonic countries of the north.
É	Ethnic Dimension.
Eco-Logic	The logic of the place.
Ego-Logic	Logic of the ego.
Extractivism	Systematic practice that transforms nature into economic capital through the over-exploitation of ecological systems.
Fɨmaide	Freedom.
Flexibility	Uncommitted potentiality for change.
Government	Government refers to a transient group of people occupying some of the institutions of the State.
Inori	To act in the world.
Maguaré	Pair of massive horizontal drums used throughout the amazon to transmit information over long distances.
Maloca	Traditional Amazonian house.
Mambe	Pulverized coca leaves mixed with ashes of *yarumo* leaves (*Cecropia Peltata*).
Mambeo	Chewing pulverized coca leaves mixed with ashes of *yarumo* leaves (*Cecropia Peltata*).
Mojojoi	*Ancognatha scarabaeoides* larva.
Muyai	Indigenous boys that worked for the Peruvians.
Noi	Mandatory early daily bath in the river.
Planes De Vida	Life Projects.
Resguardo	Indigenous reservation.

Science	The scientific knowledge that, in direct service of a specific political agenda, disregards other forms of knowledge beyond its own falsifiability criteria.
State	The state must be understood as the group of permanent institutions that make a country work. State' policies are general guidelines that should direct the actions of the State towards the long-term well-being of the country's citizens.
Syringa	Rubber.
Terraje	A system of exploitation in which the Indigenous people who did not own land had to pay with labor to the owners of the Andean haciendas in order to have a small piece of land where they could live and grow their own food.
Totuma	Recipient made of the fruit of *totumo*
Uai	The word of teaching.
Yetarafue	Sacred Rules of Putumayo.
Yuca Dulce	*Manihot Esculenta*

Acknowledgments

Writing a thesis is a journey. When I started this expedition almost four years ago, I knew my starting point, but I did not know where I would land. As with any other journey, I had to pack everything I thought I would need, so I packed all the theories I had inherited from previous travelers. I was fortunate to have the company of some of them, such as Eduardo Kohn and Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, who were also members of my committee. With their work, integrity, and storytelling, they inspired me to discover my path as I walked. I could not have started or finished this journey without the unconditional support, timely advice, and words of wisdom I received from Colin Scott, my mentor, who always believed in me and allowed me to grow alongside him.

Before all these great men, some exceptional women pushed me in the right direction. I am referring to Margarita Serje, my friend and eminent academic at the Universidad de Los Andes, who always supported me in my career. I must also mention Kristin Norget, another distinguished academic who gave me the keys to McGill and taught me the Value of the Sacred. My aunt Ruth Chaparro, director of Fundación Caminos de Identidad – FUCAI, extended her familiar hand and showed me the path I had to take. Ruth also introduced me to one of the most admirable people I have ever met: Fany Kuiru, of the Jitomagaro clan; a courageous Amazonian leader and a direct descendant of the people of the Sun. Fany lit my way to her community, La Chorrera, in the Colombian Amazon, where she took the time to take me to the Malocas and introduced me to the rainforest's wise cacique guardians: Caciques Manuel, Victor, and Don Calixto. They showed me how to convert my heavy box of theoretical tools into a light and delicate Amazonian basket, carrying words of tobacco, coca, and sweet yucca on my return.

In this new ancient world, I also had the pleasure of meeting Profe Otilia, an Amazonian archaeologist at heart who is on a personal quest to save her territory's material culture and teach the new generations about their past so they can build a better future. Profe Otilia told me: "We Amazonians know many things, and we love to talk about them so that others can learn. We do not write much, though; maybe you could do that." I think I have done that in this work; at least the few things I have been able to transcribe under

Prologue

This thesis seeks to broaden approaches to conflict resolution in cross-cultural contexts between Amazonian nations and the Colombian government, while contributing to the Free, Prior and Informed Consent — FPIC process. Although the thesis involves applied and action-based research, I will illustrate how this does not detract from the focus of the research, but that action and community participation strengthen the research results. Action and research can be effectively combined to push the boundaries of anthropological research, through negotiations that take place in multifaceted spaces and through listening to the voices of those participants who have long been ignored. One of the most important objectives of this research is to explore the possibilities for the emergence of "diplomatic spaces" in which both Indigenous worldviews and the goal of "Development" are effectively translated and thus considered in policymaking in Colombia.

Today, academics, government institutions and NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) are recognized as knowledge producers when formulating policies or developing projects around multicultural contexts, but in many such contexts, it remains difficult to find information coming from Indigenous perspectives. A consequence of this disparity is that when policies are created to address an issue affecting Amazonian communities, community members become a target population and not the producers of knowledge. Therefore, as the object of analysis of this research, my conclusions relate to hierarchical interactions in decision-making scenarios, where transcultural negotiations – or in other words, transepistemological negotiations – are necessary. Additionally, the main object of observation will be the work carried out to overcome such disparity by various actors: AZICATCH, a grassroots Indigenous organization; the National Administrative Department of Statistics DANE, as an institution of the national State; FUCAI, an independent NGO; and myself, an academic researcher and intermediary.

The inspiration for this research came in 2015, when I was starting my PhD. At that time, I had several conversations with Hernando Muños, a legal representative of the

Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon — OPIAC. During these conversations, Hernando told me that the organization had a pressing need to measure the risk of vulnerability of the Collective Rights of Indigenous populations, especially in the Amazon, since the only way the Colombian government used to measure such violations was by "counting corpses." As a consequence, when the Colombian government recognizes such violations, it is already too late. Hernando brought this need to my attention because my previous work experience allowed me to participate in DANE's 'interethnic' team, which designed methodology for the process of prior consultation with ethnic groups in the Colombian National Agricultural Census — CNA 2014. This process marked the beginning of a better relationship between DANE and national ethnic organizations. However, the situation of Hernando's ethnic organizations and other participants raised many ontological concerns.

At the time, these concerns were not addressed because they went beyond the objectives of the consultation and because we did not have the experience to address them. Although I had considerable knowledge of the Latin American and Colombian context, the Amazonian world was a completely different universe from the context in which I had grown up. I was born in the capital of Colombia and grew up in a rural area of the Tequendama region, an ancient and sacred place in the Andes that was part of the Muisca Confederation. I was named after a priest who worked at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, where my parents met in the 1970s. This reflects the influence of Liberation Theology on my parents and, therefore, on my life. It can be said that, ideologically, I am the result of a fortunate encounter between the Catholic Church and Marxism in the 1970s, which coincided in an interesting place and at a remarkably interesting time.

That mix between religious, revolutionary and Andean philosophies is the triad that has formed and sustained the concepts that govern my actions and the lenses I use to inspect and see the world. Over time, I understood that this information is relevant to my position as a researcher, as the way we see the world influences and biases our actions and, therefore, has an impact on the work we do with communities. This realization led me to understand that, despite our training, we need to be aware that authority and knowledge reside within the native inhabitants of the places where we work.

However, this is not what happens in decision-making scenarios of the state. My experience working with DANE showed me that while the government is aware of its lack of knowledge about ethnic or Indigenous peoples, when attempting to design appropriate public policies, the government (or government representatives) is not aware of its epistemological biases, and consequently, of how its decisions and actions can jeopardize other ways of knowing and living in the world. This problem was expressed by Fany Kuiru, an important Amazonian leader of the Uitoto nation and member of the Asociación Zonal Indígena Cabildos y Autoridades de la Chorrera — AZICATCH, which would become a central Indigenous organization in my research.

Kuiru outlined the concerns of her people following the 2016 Peace Treaty between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (known as FARC) at a conference organized by the Center for Indigenous Conservation and Development Alternatives — CICADA, which took place in Quebec in 2016. At that conference, Kuiru argued that although all of Colombia's Indigenous nations welcomed the end of the internal war, this treaty did not have the full participation of their organizations. Therefore, the agreement did not consider that what prevented the exploitation of these territories by extractive companies was, to some extent, the fear produced by the presence of the FARC in the Colombian Amazon.

Amazonian advocates around the world, such as the well-known anthropologist Wade Davis (who has worked for several decades in the region) shared the same concerns. In his book One River (2016), Davis claims that those 50 years of internal war in Colombia, while devastating in human losses, prevented the incursion of large extractivist actors who have eroded vast Amazonian territories in other parts of Latin America. It can be argued then that Indigenous organizations in Colombia shared broadly similar concerns, which is not the FARC leaving the territory, but the actions that the national government and other "modern" actors may take if they see the jungle as their neighboring countries seem to do: as an asocial vacuum, an unpopulated space without socio-ecological complexity waiting to be exploited. What Gavin Bridge (2001) calls "a ghost acreage."

According to different sources, since 2016, 350,000 hectares have been deforested in the Colombian Amazon (an area approximately eight times the size of Montreal). Such devastation has been accompanied by the murder of 269 Indigenous leaders who openly opposed the government's extractivist agenda, of whom 167 were killed during Iván Duque's presidency (as of June 8, 2020) (Source: INDEPAZ). The shocking figures that have been compiled to date accompany the failure to adequately consult the Indigenous population, which highlights the importance of carrying out research such as this.

There are different spaces in which Indigenous organizations are fighting to change these dangerous "modern" representations as they struggle to participate in decision-making scenarios that may affect their modes of existence. One of these spaces, and perhaps the most successful, is the legal sphere. According to the Colombian Constitutional Court and the International Labor Organization — ILO convention 169, any plan, policy or project that may affect Indigenous nations in Colombia must obtain the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of the affected communities, in processes known as Prior Consultation. This means that, legally, the future of the Amazon rainforest in Colombia must be decided with the Amazonian Indigenous nations.

However, the Colombian government has downplayed these consultations by treating them as mere economic negotiations. For example, in my research I witnessed that most of the Prior Consultation processes ended up simply estimating the cash value of the impacts to be paid to Indigenous peoples, rather than respecting their sacred concerns, preventing future negative impacts, and rehabilitating damaged places and relationships, as is required by the law. This recurring behavior that I observed during these processes led me to ask: Why is the Colombian government treating the Prior Consultations as "economic negotiations" and second, why are Indigenous nations bringing their "sacred" concerns to the table? In this dissertation, I argue that the answer to these questions can be found in the different ways in which people learn to know the world. That is, in this case, in the differences between modern and Indigenous epistemological systems.

To define such concepts and find the differences between these systems, I have used the work of authors such as Latour, on Actor-Network Theory; Bateson, on

Cybernetics and Ecology of Mind; Scott, on Indigenous Ontologies, Ethics and Practical Knowledge; Blaser, De la Cadena and Escobar, on Political Ontology; and Kohn, on Amazonian Semiotics and Anthropology Beyond-the-Human. In exploring the work of these and other authors, I use Bateson to argue that a crucial difference between the "modern" epistemological system and the Amazonian one is what I call the "modern error," which is the human/nature divide, which imagines the individual as a unit separated from its environment and from everything that does not follow its own logic.

According to authors such as Latour and Habermas, there are basically four dimensions to this exclusively human world: the Economic, the Cultural, the Legal and the Political. These dimensions are perceived as independent spheres that regulate each other. However, as these authors point out, such independence is only discursive, since the political, legal and cultural dimensions are rather the three legs of a table, supporting the weight of an unstable economic system. The Amazon, on the other hand, is a less rigid and more complex system, which follows a logic that is not exclusively human, since its interactions take place between diverse entities that are not dissociated from nature, such as humans, spirits, plants and animals. Consequently, as a Territorio de Vida[1] (territory of life), the Amazonian world can be imagined as a network of known and unknown associations between similar but always different minds or mental processes. Some of these associations are perceived as sacred and immutable, others as fluctuating and mundane.

After reviewing the models of these different realities, I assert that prior consultations should not be seen as economic negotiations, but as "diplomatic spaces" where deep ontological differences must be dealt with. However, I have noticed that, often, communication in these spaces and the achievement of consensual agreements are hindered by unresolved historical claims that create problems in communication between the parties, with inequality, lack of trust and dishonesty being the most common. Another major problem in these cross-cultural conversations is that the learning limitations of each system lead to a lack of ontological intelligibility and thus to what Blaser and Viveiros de Castro

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[1] *Territorios de vida* (territories of life) are areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities that comprise an important part of the planet's remaining biodiversity. Visit https://www.iccaconsortium.org/.

have called "uncontrolled equivocations." This leads to assumptions such as the idea that Indigenous sacred matters correspond to mere "Religious beliefs" and that "Development" is a common goal for all populations. The problem of equivocations, to be precise, is not that something can mean, exist or behave differently in different worlds or realities. The problem, instead, is **not taking into account** the different relationships something may have with us or with other actors in different contexts. The problem is **to fail to adjust our behavior** on the assumption that these unknown differences and relationships do not matter.

This thesis suggests that to overcome the problems in these diplomatic spaces, new or discarded information must be added to the existing Amazonian-modern system. I am referring to information such as forgotten historical issues and sacred relationships that exist in Amazonian territories. In the search for such information, I focused on the relationships that the modern world has had with the Amazon, from the perspective of the Uitoto, Muinane, Okaina and Bora nations. To do so, I traveled in 2019 to the Indigenous town of La Chorrera, located in the middle of the Resguardo Predio Putumayo, in the Colombian Amazon.

Using Participatory Action Research — PAR as the main method of the research, I set out to find the fundamental ontological differences between Amazonians and moderns, as well as the premises, messages, tautologies or redundancies in this relationship. I also chose PAR to support the autonomous work of both the local school and AZICATCH, the regional Indigenous Organization. In doing so, I discovered that PAR is the most ethical methodology when working with populations that are still immersed in contexts with colonial legacies, as it allowed me to cultivate true horizontal relationships with community members. In addition, PAR allowed me to use a post-human and post-development anthropological approach by adopting the main research techniques used by the nations of La Chorrera, to work hand in hand with human and non-human actors. By this I mean techniques such as the use of ritual elements, the request for permission and the uninterrupted listening to the narratives and accounts of the elders.

Some of the narratives I used in my thesis came from a book that AZICATCH and I plan to publish shortly. In this book, I compiled voices from the Putumayo about what was known in the early twentieth century as the rubber boom. This was a critical time in the history of these nations, as over a 40-year period, the Anglo-Peruvian rubber company, also known as La Casa Arana, enslaved and nearly annihilated these Indigenous populations. I also drew on an award-winning undergraduate thesis I helped edit, written by Amazonian leader Fany Kuiru. In it, Kuiru discusses the role of women in resisting the ethnocide that took place during the rubber boom, as well as the imposition of the national educational model by Capuchin priests. In addition, to understand the current situation in these territories, I attended several virtual meetings and presentations by other influential Amazonian leaders. Finally, the NGO FUCAI gave me access to their archive in Bogotá, which I used as a primary source for the myths I translated in my research.

During my fieldwork, I discovered that the Putumayo nations are committed to transforming the political, cultural and legal dimensions that connect them to the modern world. Such transformation aims to challenge the instrumental rationality that has historically been imposed on the forest. The knowledge and guidelines for doing so have been provided by the sacred plants of tobacco, coca and sweet yucca, and are sustained by the sacred principles of Yetarafue, which are seen as the main fibers of a *Canasto*, a woven basket that connects all beings. These laws that guide the life and actions of these nations emerged from the interaction between humans and the non-human entities that inhabit the territory.

This information is generally revealed in a three-stage format, through the stories and myths told by the elders of La Chorrera. In the first stage, a wise character gives advice to an inexperienced individual who, in the second stage of the story, ignores the advice and ends up being severely punished. In the third part of the myths, the inexperienced individual, or someone else, manages to overcome the challenges in which others have failed, learning from the advice given by the elders and from the interactions shown in the previous story. As such, these myths describe the learning process of Beings who need to realize that they are part of a unity in which Self, other and environment are entangled in a

complex system, where the actions of the Self always come back as positive or negative acts of reciprocity.

In these narratives there are also dangerous entities that have forgotten such a connection. Entities that have been separated from their environment, or from their other parts; entities whose potential has been denied, whose stories are incomplete, entities that are sick. These entities of the Amazon world threaten the balance of life itself because they reject and destroy difference, pretending to become all there is. A wise person, however, should not try to eliminate these entities or ignore them, because if s/he tries, such actions may consume, corrupt, sicken or even kill him or her. The Amazonian answer to dealing with those dangerous entities is that one must face them, embrace them, and incorporate them into one's system after a process of transformation. In other words, those incomplete and dangerous entities must be restored so that they can return to the plexus of the *canasto* of life.

The laws of Yetarafue and the knowledge of transformation brought by the sacred plants are constantly used in the Chorrera. An example is the process of transformation of both the headquarters of the Casa Arana and the educational model imposed on them by the modern world. The Casa was for a long time a "white" building with a modern sense. It was a structure alien to the territory and its people. It was a necklace of jaguar teeth that represented suffering, pain, misery, and death, when Peruvians owned it. However, under its foundations lie the blood and bones of the ancestors who suffered the consequences of the rupture of the Yetarafue principles, after the children were exchanged for axes at the beginning of the Modern-Indigenous relationship. Therefore, as a representation of the clash between two different worlds that almost destroyed these Indigenous nations, this building had to be *endulzado* (sweetened) to give it an Amazonian meaning. To transform La Casa Arana, to give meaning to its history of death and slavery, its story had to be completed so that it would be like all the stories of the Putumayo region. Or, simply, it was necessary to "re-story" the house by projecting that fatal episode into one of resurgence and learning, so that its existence would make sense.

Today, from the outside, the house looks the same as it did a century ago, but it is different on the inside. Instead of merchandise, dungeons, weapons, stocks, and enslaved people, it has classrooms, dormitories, books, pencils, colors, cheerful children and committed Indigenous teachers working to give the best of their knowledge to the new generations. It is still the Casa Arana, but it is also the school Casa del Conocimiento. Therefore, it means death/life, past/future, ignorance, and knowledge, which is a more complete and adequate form of Amazonian representation.

Thus, the Casa Arana became one of those places that has embedded in it powerful stories and emotions that link the past and the future, the metaphorical and the sacramental, the memory of the elders and the imagination of the young. This is how the Putumayo nations have given new meaning to the Casa, to teach their new generations to recognize themselves as protagonists of their own history, while instilling in them respect for sacred laws. In short, by following the sacred principles of the Yetarafue as a guide for using the "master's tools," these Amazonian nations did not dismantle the ancient house of the master. On the contrary, they reclaimed it and transformed it to offer it to the future as compensation for past actions against their children.

In this paper, I propose that on a larger scale, Indigenous nations in Colombia have partnered as National Indigenous Organizations such as OPIAC, ONIC and AICO, to confront the Modern system together. To this end, these Organizations have been performing a slow and dangerous dance to reconnect the Colombian State with their sacred laws of Indigenous life; laws such as the Yetarafue, also known as *Leyes de Origen*. The first step in this centuries-long dance is to learn the rules already established and recognized by the government. The second step is to transform those rules to resonate with the laws of origin. The last step is to demand the transformation of the state in accordance with the national laws that control and regulate its actions. I refer to laws such as the rulings of the Colombian Constitutional Court and Free Prior and Informed Consent.

Through the constant repetition of these steps over the years, the current progressive legislation in Colombia was achieved. As stated at the beginning of this section, this legislation could make the difference between a new extractivist boom, and a work

dedicated to the protection of the Colombian Amazon basin. However, as these Amazonian nations can teach us, no story has only one side. This means that some individuals will probably continue to destroy the Amazon, perhaps with the support of the Colombian government. However, there will also be others willing to give their lives to protect and restore it, such as the guardians of the rainforest. But they can no longer do all this conservation work alone. They need modern allies willing to protect the future of the Amazon, which is also the future of our children, since we are all part of this complex life system called planet Earth, which is reaching a critical point.

Being part of a complex web suggests that our daily actions are important, since a small variation in them can bring about substantial changes and the transformation of the entire system. This is true for all individuals, but especially for us scholars. The transformational capacity of any system is nothing but its ability to learn, receive and process information that is different from its own. Therefore, if we listen to the words of the sacred plants of tobacco, coca, and sweet yucca we can understand how to embrace difference and create reciprocal relationships beyond our previously learned schemes of knowledge. This latter transformation may be what Escobar and Indigenous activist Moira Millan have called "una revolución del pensamiento" (Alvarez, 2019), a revolution of thought; a revolution that can fix the "modern error" that is threatening the cultural and biological diversity that enable our existence.

Chapter I

Introduction

In the Colombian Amazon, shamans from the Uitoto, Muinane, Okaina and Bora nations communicate with sacred plants to confront contemporary extractive projects. They also do so to heal the suffering of their relatives, establishing a link between the Indigenous peoples and their environment that suffered tensions during the 20th century, when their people were enslaved and killed during the rubber industry boom. Beyond alleviating the pain and grief inflicted by colonial or extractive logics, this complex healing process involves reconciliation and rehabilitation of relationships between human communities, the forest and rivers' spirits, and the Colombian State[2]. Although these Indigenous nations have made critical strategic advances in terms of their internal organization, the legacies of colonialism pose a challenge in dealing with impoverishment, intergenerational integration, and the always-difficult relationship with the national Government[3] and other external actors.

This difficulty dwells in the way people learn, live and act in a world, for the Amazonians inhabit a reality where the spiritual, political, economic, and environmental, as well as the temporal dimensions (past, present, and future) are intertwined in what they consider the sacred fibers of the *Canasta del Buen vivir* (good living basket). When one of these sacred fibers is broken, the rest of the basket's fibers are affected along with the well-being of the people. On the contrary, a mainly economic dimension called "the cornerstone of the development of capital accumulation" motivates the State and other external actors in these territories. This is a way of understanding "Development[4]" that has consistently

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[2] The State should be understood as the set of permanent institutions that make a country function. State policies are general guidelines that should direct the actions of the State towards the long-term welfare of its populations.
[3] Government refers to a transitory group of people who occupy some of the institutions of the State.

[4] A discourse developed after World War II by the industrialized and hegemonic countries of the North.

brought poverty, violence, pain, disease, and environmental degradation to the Amazon and its people.

How can the sacred meanings of Indigenous territories be valued beyond the processes of commodification?

This issue was addressed by Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization (1989), which required signatory countries, such as Colombia, to consult Indigenous groups on any plan, project, or administrative or legislative measure that could affect their ways of existence, i.e., their traditions, values, beliefs, customs, and relations with their habitat. Twenty years later, the Colombian Constitutional Court (2009) would make this requirement effective by demanding Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) as a guiding principle for such consultations. However, these intercultural dialogues are highly problematic and arguably undiplomatic, as the parties rarely agree on the impacts of projects and how to manage them. Hence, the consulted communities rarely exercise their FPIC. This leads to the emergence of crises, as projects that are not suspended end up endangering the affected communities' existence.

In this sense, many disciplines have documented the conflict between Indigenous communities, governments, and extractive industries in Latin America: political science, anthropology, sociology, linguistics (Weitzner, 2017; Norget, 2011; Serje, 2003; Cepek, 2012, Chomsky, 2008). While this multidisciplinary view is an ideal starting point for understanding the challenges that arise when multiple modes of existence collide globally, it lacks an active and participatory approach to address these conflicts. By exploring the challenges of "diplomatic spaces" (Stengers, 2011; Latour, 2013), my study advances the field towards an understanding of the possibilities and proposals for practically addressing such ontological questions.

The use of a Participatory Action Research – PAR model in anthropological research ensures that any solutions proposed within these spaces have stakeholder investment, allowing for a more robust and sustainable examination of the problem at hand. By prioritizing actionable, community-based methodologies such as PAR and Knowledge Mobilization, this project offers an example of how anthropology can break away from

patronizing research models, positioning itself as a "purveyor" of diverse knowledge and an ally to marginalized populations. I argue that anthropology should not be seen only as "the gatekeeper of human diversity exploration," as proposed by Jegede (2015), but as a field that exposes hidden or "invisibilized" knowledge, helping to bridge otherwise disconnected information and ultimately broadening our relationships within the world. These contributions, along with techniques and knowledge used in academia, grassroots communities, and the State, can help explore unknown versions of history and counter-narratives that propose multiple alternatives to "Development."

Specifically, this research aims to contribute to the reconciliation of cross-cultural conflicts by improving communication between stakeholders and fostering grassroots participation. To this end, this thesis analyzes the problems arising at the intersections of the rights, laws, and norms governing these two distinct cultures, or rather, these different epistemological systems: the Western and the Indigenous. Thus, unlike most Anthropology theses, this research does not focus on a single human group but on the differences between two major systems used to know and construct the world: the one used by the Indigenous nations in the Amazonian town La Chorrera (an ancient but truly relevant system) versus the "modern" Western[5] model, echoed by the Colombian government.

This thesis aims to propose and implement a methodology in real case scenarios where both systems, modern and Indigenous, can work as equals and mutually attend to their differences. The first step of the methodology consists of analyzing the participating global and local systems to identify each actor's history – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – as well as the common and differential patterns of normalization and learning. This analysis is important because in cross cultural conversations, the parties should be aware not just of the variables, assumptions and biases that guide the decisions of the Other but also of their own.

This thesis's second and central hypothesis is that most cross-cultural complications are closely related to each party's epistemological learning system's

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[5] See Latour, 1993.

restrictions. However, the possibilities of overcoming these problems depend on their ontological constraints. In other words, a system's ability to acquire and process new information (or learn it) is correlated with its level of flexibility; that is, the ability to recognize and act according to different constraints imposed by changing relationships, context, or realities.

Most living systems have flexibility or *uncommitted potential for change[6]*. That flexibility is achieved by using organs capable of processing variations of information in the system that would result in processes of self-regulation and change. Nevertheless, suppose the system lacks such organs or they have atrophied. In that case, the body or its parts can be taught to respond to the difference by gradually allowing new or discarded information to enter. Think of protein-based vaccines, which use harmless bits of protein or protein shells that mimic a virus to generate an appropriate response. Similarly, I theorize that the "inoculation" of new information into a social system can be achieved by adjusting the system's constraints in practical situations so that its institutions gradually require the adaptation of the entire system to incorporate and process that new information.

To develop the hypothesis just mentioned, this thesis has been divided into six main chapters: (i) the *Introduction* and Theoretical Toolbox, (ii) *Plants Die*, (iii) *People Die* (iv) *People are Plants and Plants are People*, (v) *Action and Politics*, and (vi) *What is the Value of the Sacred?*

After the Introduction, I explain that our epistemological system creates our ontology, or in other words, the way we learn about the world creates our reality by recognizing, reinforcing but also neglecting certain relationships. Such reality, however, reinforces our epistemological system in a constant loop characteristic of homeostatic systems. The variables that inform our way of knowing the world are broken down in *The Theoretical Toolbox*, showing different concepts proposed by authors such as Latour, Stengers, Blaser, Kohn, De Castro, Bateson, among others, to identify and analyze the structures that sustain both modern and Indigenous reality.

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[6] See (Bateson and Bateson 1987, p.503).

The first premise of this thesis developed in this first chapter is that the separation between the social and natural worlds is a "modern error" that neglects, disregards, and obliterates those relationships that may have contradicted the privileged position that the West claims for itself. The concept of "error" in my argument should not be understood as a "simple mistake," but rather I use the notion of error in this research as an essential part of the learning process. "Errors," from a cybernetic point of view, provide essential information that allows individuals to adjust and improve their behavior. The problem, however, arises when the error is not identified as such by the acting individuals, ignoring the feedback communicated by their environment which, instead of correcting their behavior, creates the destructive habit of reproducing and copying the error in their future actions, revisions, and the world they see (Bateson, 1972, p. 407, 291).

The repetition of this modern error consolidated an economic system that imposed its destructive logic on broader ecological systems, giving rise to an environmental crisis that affects nature and human beings, who were never truly separated from nature. In short, in the first part of Chapter One, my aim is to propose how this division allowed the formation of a colonialist mentality in modern individuals who saw the world as an endless pantry of raw materials waiting to be transformed into economic capital, or what I call the *El Dorado* syndrome. I propose that overcoming this situation requires revisiting the "modern error" to shift the boundaries of how and what moderns learn about the world. The second step in this methodology is therefore to integrate data from outside its own system to prevent the modern error from reproducing itself within those revisions. This does not mean obliterating, neglecting, or disregarding the knowledge gained by modern science, for this too would replicate the logic that contains the error; instead, I propose to redesign the affected system by including the previously neglected, disregarded, and obliterated variables that moderns have discarded.

Where to start and how to process such information? Where to find these variables?

In the methodology section, I suggest that one place to start and find the variables that the moderns have disregarded is outside their own system: in nature and through the different actors dismissed by the modern system. These include animals, plants, and spirits,

but especially the knowledge of those who are considered non-modern humans, those who have resisted "modern logic" and have maintained those despised variables in their own traditional systems. As will be shown in Chapter Two, some of these groups have been fighting against modern systems for centuries and have slowly changed them to the point of creating spaces and the necessary conditions for people of modernity to join their cause as allies.

To exemplify how this "modern" logic has affected several Indigenous nations in recent history, I will detail a series of historical events that affected the livelihoods of Indigenous people in the Amazonian nations of La Chorrera, Colombia. To do so, I will explore the local, national, regional, and international context that created the conditions that nearly annihilated these proud and resilient nations. This humanitarian crisis resulted from neglected cyclical projections in which the interplay of interconnected global systems augmented the modern error. Likewise, these nations' strategies are connected to the responses of broader Indigenous networks (human and non-human) that have made small but significant advances to confront similar problems, advances that in the Colombian case gravitate around the national and international legal system. A legal system that restricts and problematizes dominant economic interests and invites new actors and new epistemologies to participate on equal terms in decision-making processes.

What are these other epistemologies? Or, in other words, what and how do these Indigenous groups learn and build their world? What can we learn from these Indigenous systems to renew our understanding of the planet to avoid and repair current and future crises, both social and environmental?

I suggest that Gramsci's Objective and Subjective conditions are necessary to overcome the instrumentalization of nature known today as extractivism. The former (Objective conditions) would result from irresponsible *eldoradoesque* behaviors. Simultaneously, the latter requires an ontological turn to value other alternatives to "Development," such as those contained in the concept of *buen vivir*. I assert that the value of the sacred relationships contained in that concept must dwell beyond the human being's improper manipulation, for that restriction is precisely what makes them sacred. Moreover,

when we speak of the sacred, we are talking about the human relation with fragile and crucial nodes that are key to Indigenous survival because they allocate sets of human and non-human relationships that enable diversity (bio and cultural). In other words, what Amazonian communities consider sacred has a profound ecological and ontological importance at its core.

Although it would be interesting to test that ontological importance through "modern" science, it is better to leave that for other researchers to explore since that endeavor would contradict this thesis's purpose. One of the main arguments of this research is that if something is considered sacred to Amazonian communities, it is not because there is little knowledge about it; on the contrary, there is vast and rich information about it, which is fundamental to what we learn about the world and how we do it. That is consistent with other Amerindian ontologies; for example, in Scott's words, "The sacred is the abstract framework for apprehending the particularities of everyday hunting and the management of a territory" (Scott, 2013, p. 163). This type of knowledge does not need to be useful to "moderns" or to those Fals Borda calls "the developmentalists, experts, academicians and entrepreneurs" (Fals Borda 2001, 31; Lomeli and Rappaport, 2018), nor does it require their approval or interpretation to have value. It is quite the contrary, as it seems that every time moderns find value in something from the Amazon, their sacred existence, along with that of Amazonian peoples, ends up compromised.

Furthermore, if Indigenous values and sacred relationships in *buen vivir* are understood only from the perspective of modernity, we would at best appreciate only those relationships intelligible to modern human logic. Anything that might challenge that logic would be categorized as "religious," "spiritual," "artistic," or "folkloric," negating its value within a larger complex system that is not always so "logical." Therefore, to avoid this mistake, I propose that these forgotten categories be incorporated into the analysis, which does not necessarily mean ignoring Western knowledge. On the contrary, such inclusion would open the possibility of integrating other equally important logics, other categories, other histories, and other laws such as those of the Amazonian *planes de vida* (life plans), which embody the larger community of life within which they are embedded. This ontological "turn" would be the last step in rehabilitating our modern knowledge.

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Narratives about the rubber boom, forced labor, and natural resources are just a few examples explored in Chapter II, *Plants Die.* This chapter's historical and contemporary exploration has been essential in moving toward functional agreements between government, policymakers, extractive industries, and Indigenous populations. In those agreements, specific points of contention gravitated around the lack of understanding of the interplay between the material, sacred and ecological aspects of Indigenous territories and the importance of these associations in overcoming the colonial legacy. Although the same sacred law and a shared history against colonial logics govern most Indigenous life projects in Colombia, I have chosen the Amazonian collective *planes de vida* because they are mainly oriented towards a conception of *buen vivir*, as exemplified by the people of La Chorrera. This implies notions of well-being in the context of human and more-than-human relationality with health, healing, and environmental rehabilitation.

From these Indigenous perspectives, the personal, the human, the social, and the ecological are intrinsically intertwined. To illustrate this and to provide an antithesis to the history told in the second chapter, the third chapter, *People Die,* relates my findings on a history told from below (Lomeli and Rappaport 2018) through the stories of Amazonian nations, which account for their present and their plans for the future. That information is the product of bibliographic and archival reviews, myths, stories, songs, and written material such as theses and research done by members of the communities themselves (most of it unpublished and never translated into English). To this end, this research has explored the processes of Knowledge Mobilization (KMb) carried out by the Asociación Zonal Indígena de Cabildos y Autoridades de La Chorrera – AZICATCH, local Indigenous organizations and other Colombian organizations such as the NGO Fundación Caminos de Identidad – FUCAI, and El Centro de Memoria Histórica – CNMH (National Center for Historical Memory). I have also relied on the work carried out by the Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística – DANE (Colombian National Department of Statistics) and international organizations such as the Center for Indigenous Conservation and Development Alternatives (CICADA[7]), based at McGill University.

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[7] Visit https://cicada.world/

The work of AZICATCH offered in that chapter presents its own version of the known history in the Predio Putumayo, where the descendants of those who witnessed the rubber boom recognize their participation in such events, not as mere passive victims but as actors, which in turn leaves valuable lessons for the younger generations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Knowing their own history and being critical about their past roles is, as suggested by Lomeli and Rappaport (2018), an act of liberation initiated by these nations. The structure of this storytelling has a three-stage format that is characteristic of Amazonian myths and tales: a first part in which the limits are explained to the inexperienced, the crisis that ensues after such limitations are ignored, and the learning and resurgence that occurs after reflecting on the transgressions.

The synthesis of these limits, crises, learning, and resurgence is presented through my own lens in Chapter IV, *People are Plants and Plants are People*. This reading helped me explore ontology among the four nations that inhabit La Chorrera in the Resguardo Predio Putumayo: The Murui-Muina (Uitoto), Okaina, Bora and Muinane. This chapter presents my understanding of the fundamental ontological questions that, I argue, are addressed in most Amazonian foundational myths, questions such as what is the nature of Being? What are the sources of knowledge? How do the Amazonians know the world and how can they demonstrate that they know it? In this chapter I also explain how the recovery of their territories has been a key process that goes hand in hand with the recovery of *Buen Vivir* (Good Living) that the sacred plants of tobacco, coca and sweet yucca advise in the *Planes de Vida* (Life Plans) of these four nations.

The aforementioned ontological exploration was crucial in "creating" two practical products shown in chapter five, *Action and Policy*: a web platform called Mangure.red[8] and an Ethnic Multidimensional Poverty Index (ÉMPI). These two products were developed to respond to my commitment to support AZICATCH's plans to overcome legacies of colonialism that continue to plague their territory. Specifically, Mangure.red has been designed to communicate this Amazonian people's history and knowledge to their younger generations and potential allies within modernity, and the ÉMPI model to

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[8] Visit http://manguare.red/en/

reconcile their *planes de vida* with the Plan Nacional de Desarrollo – PND (National Development Plan) and other national and regional policies.

Finally, Chapter VI, *What is the value of the sacred?* summarizes my conclusion and the overall results of this research, using this reinvented anthropological model to demonstrate how human, other-than-human, academic and Indigenous knowledge are not necessarily mutually exclusive but can be understood as complementary systems of relationships that co-produce or renew knowledge. The contribution of Amazonian peoples is essential because it presents different ontological associations that can foster and diversify Western academic understandings. At the same time, this thesis exemplifies a cooperative research model that disintegrates harmful power structures between academic and State institutions.

In short, the fact that Amazonian *sacred* knowledge is deeply correlated with biodiversity, ecosystem stability and resilience, means that sharing this knowledge has implications for the resilience not only of the Amazon rainforest but of the entire planet as a larger ecosystem of which the Amazon is a vital part. Public policies and development projects must consider sacred knowledge to effectively address impoverishment and environmental degradation in the Amazon region, and to support the Buen Vivir sought by its inhabitants in their Planes de Vida. To this end, this thesis offers a methodology based on Participatory Action Research to support "diplomatic spaces" such as those required by FPIC, where the sacred relationships present in Indigenous territories can be valued beyond market commodity interests to resolve historical and neglected issues that erode the Indigenous-Modern relationship. Such research advances diplomatic spaces of representation where Amazonian knowledge can inform policymakers about how to see Others and the environment as co-constitutive entities.

Theoretical Toolbox

Aside from Arturo Escobar's work (1998; 2016; 2018), little research has been done on improving the socio-economic conditions of ethnic groups in Colombia through the co-production of knowledge, including research, experience, policy, and practice. Even scarcer are efforts to prioritize what Amazonian communities themselves can propose for interventions and policies in their region. This lack can be attributed to restrictions on access to the Colombian rainforest, the internal armed conflict, and the relative recession of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) policies (Aylwin, 2014; Rodríguez, 2014).

In general, intercultural negotiations between the State and Indigenous populations are unfamiliar paths to which neither party has acclimated in this context. Some of the most significant obstacles to successful dialogue are the lack of intelligibility, trust, openness, and fairness, which prevent the parties from co-producing or renewing knowledge (Habermas, 1989). I argue that to address these communication problems adequately, intercultural dialogues must be examined through the lens of "diplomatic spaces" – i.e., the space for negotiating multiple ontologies; that is, realities or ways of understanding relationships that constitute their worlds (Stengers, 2011; Latour, 2013). This study is important because intercultural dialogues must deal with the clash of different peoples, interests, temporal orders, ecologies, methodologies, and the long history between national governments and Indigenous groups.

Authors such as Latour (2004; 2007), Stengers (2000; 2005; 2011), de la Cadena (2010), and Blaser (2009; 2016) add that these problems are characteristics of "modern" or "reasonable politics" since current political systems represent a hierarchical division of the world in which Western scientific knowledge and "the social sphere" are above traditional knowledge and the so-called "natural world" (de la Cadena 2010). This bias of reasonable politics occurs in asymmetric relations contexts since the starting point is not always the same for everyone, which prevents the parties from realizing that they are often not on the same page when they start negotiations.

The authors mentioned above argue that such complexities require a different kind of political representation, thus proposing the concept "cosmopolitics": a "notion according to which the cosmos is always an emergent condition resulting from disagreements between divergent worlding practices involved in the discussion, where 'cosmos' refers to the unknown constituted by these multiple and divergent worlds, and to the articulations of which they might eventually be capable" (Stengers, 2005, p. 995). Mario Blaser (2009) gave the term an inflection of his own and suggested that treating conflicts just as epistemological differences (i.e., as ways of knowing the world) reinforces "modern" scientific and privileged positions by placing Indigenous concerns under the category of "cultural beliefs" rather than political positions rooted in an ontological reality. Alternatively, Blaser (2016) proposes that the best way to resolve issues of that kind is by applying what Viveiros de Castro (2004b) calls "translation to control equivocation [9]." This translation process involves both parties maintaining and acknowledging differences rather than finding a common referent between them. In short, Blaser argues that finding common ground is not always beneficial, as it leads to assume that reality is discovered or constructed from what the different worldviews agree upon. Instead, Blaser suggests that better steps can be taken towards addressing the Indigenous peoples and the State's concerns simultaneously by maintaining the difference.

I will propose an example of equivocation in which two different worldviews converge, in which understandings are not necessarily equal: for example, oil can be understood both as a fossil fuel that brings economic growth to the Colombian government and, among some Indigenous communities of the Amazon, as the blood that cleanses and invigorates mother nature. Although "equivalent" in the sense of having a shared referent, both perceptions represent different relationships in different worlds: one is exclusively human, while the second is alien to the human; moreover, depending on the frame of reference, one may be seen as logical and the other as illogical. The misconception of this equivocation, I argue, has given rise to unresolved historical and contemporary disputes.

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[9] The equivocation is not what prevents the relationship from taking place, but what founds and drives it: a difference in perspective (Castro, 2004, p. 8).

A translation project of this nature entails two main challenges. First, there must be an agreement between the parties to find and honor a solution that amends both concerns equally. Second, as proposed by Latour's (2007) Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and Bateson's (1972, 1972a) "pattern connecting," to identify those homonymous actions, equivalences, and differences between the two systems must be found by an (unbiased) intermediary able to navigate between different ontologies.

How to reconcile the different epistemological and ontological differences in a translation process to control equivocation?

To recognize our differences with someone or something else, we do not necessarily have to know who we are or who we are not. This is because people navigate through personality traits and do not always remain within a single category, so personal behavior varies within a range of learned responses in particular situations that allow for such responses (Mischel, 2014). Consequently, a person may, for example, be very altruistic in specific contexts and, at the same time and under different constraints, be selfish. Therefore, what is considered "normal" does not necessarily correspond to an individual's personality but to the situations that a person usually encounters. In other words, we must have an idea of what those parties have done in the past to recognize the differences between them. Hence, the limits of their responses and actions can be better understood.

Such a review can give us insight into the parties' past responses to identify patterns that we want to fix in the future. For example, suppose we want to modify a typical response of subject "A" in situation "X" toward individual "B" or vice versa. In that case, we can do so by changing the information of how "A" represents "X" and "B" in his/her mind. There are two steps to follow to change the information that A has about X and B. First, A can be provided with information about X and B that s/he did not have, and second, B and X must be presented several times in different contexts, and practical realities than the ones A usually recognizes (Brown, 1991; Roffman, 2008; Lankton and Lankton, 1983).

Applying this method to broader groups, I argue, allows us to use history to identify biases and the limits that our epistemological systems or cultures impose on what we think we know. This is crucial not only for solving cyclical problems – as it helps to identify

recurring errors and further our learning processes – but is also useful for addressing problems involving the unforeseen actions of other, sometimes unknown, actors.

What follows is a general review of the academic theoretical framework to discern those modern limits, those normalized situations that hide and feed the modern error. This first part is also a toolbox to build the first hypothesis of this thesis, where I will present and adjust the theoretical tools, concepts, and ideas proposed by other scholars. I claim that to solve the modern error and shift the boundaries of what and how moderns learn about the world, it is necessary to add new, different, and external data to such a system. At the same time, one must adjust the way of processing that information. Otherwise, the error may end up replicating itself in future revisions.

Prelude: The Social

In his book, *Reassembling the Social* (2007), Bruno Latour offers two meanings of the concept "social." In the first definition, Latour argues that the social is part of society, something that is not entirely natural, biological, or economic: something that "must achieve, reinforce, express, maintain, reproduce, or subvert the social order" (ibid, p. 3). This approach, according to Latour, is a product of Durkheim's nineteenth-century legacy in sociology. It can be said that for Durkheim, who never formally defined the concept of "the social" (Greenwald, 1973), society is a by-product of Collective Consciousness or solidarity (Parson, 1949): which "holds societies together" (Durkheim, 1984, p.123). As both Durkheim and Latour would agree, society is a tautological concept that resembles the ether of the late nineteenth century – that is, an invisible substance that fills the substantial void, something that no one knows what it is, although it is everywhere –. Hence, "the social" is not economics, political science, or biology, but it is what connects them all.

The second approach is based on the work of another nineteenth-century thinker, Gabriel Tarde. According to Latour, "Tarde always complained that Durkheim had abandoned the task of explaining society by confusing cause and effect, replacing the understanding of the social bond with a political project aimed at social engineering" (Latour, 2007, p.13). When Latour speaks of social engineering, he is not referring only to

the use of psychological manipulation to gain access to people's personal information but to the political role of nineteenth-century sociologists who promoted industrialization and modernization. According to Latour, this "confusion of causes and effects" explains the circular situation of the Durkheimian concept of the social, taken as an omnipresent force that transcends and controls individuals. Finally, Latour illustrates his point of view by drawing on Tarde's statements, arguing that the job of a social scientist should not be to describe the diffuse concept called society but to find the *associations* between biology, psychology, economics, philosophy, metaphysics because that is what social scientists should study: *associations*.

Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is based on this approach, which highlights the relationship between the social sciences and philosophy. This association between social science and philosophy allows researchers to explore metaphysics from actors and agencies that are traditionally disregarded as "politically relevant" (ibid, p.52). Suppose the social world is about associations rather than an abstract entity that connects human beings to institutions. In that case, non-exclusive associations between an unbounded set of actors are open to consideration. However, to explore otherwise neglected networks, it is also necessary to distinguish between "intentionality" and "agency," understanding intentionality as an actor's capacity to plan an action in pursuit of a goal. In contrast, the agency is the defining characteristic of an actor in affecting their own or others' plans and actions.

To illustrate this difference, I will relate a personal experience. My friend Andrés, a renowned Sikuani shaman from the Resguardo Santa Teresita del Tuparro, located in the Vichada region[10] of Colombia, told me one day in the courtyard of his house: "Tomorrow is going to be a scorching day." I asked him: "How do you know?" and he replied: "Listen to that bird.... 'cuuua cuaaa'... he [the bird] only talks when it is going to be very sunny." The next day, Andrés got up before dawn – earlier than usual – and headed to the "morichal" to pick some palm leaves that his wife would later use for weaving baskets. Me? Well, I spent most of the day at the Areita stream near his house. That was the only

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[10] From the Indigenous word Witzara, which means where the jungle begins.

place my overheated Andean body could find, where I could escape the 40-degree Celsius heat that invaded the plains of Vichada. A few months later, I went to Universidad de Los Andes in Bogotá to deliver my ethnographic report. The report described how Andrés "believed" that the bird had predicted the weather. That day, before going to the university, I consulted the weather forecast. Max Henriquez, a well-known Colombian meteorologist, had anticipated another sunny day, so I left my house without an umbrella. However, soon after, I ended up soaking wet in the middle of a sudden *aguacero* (downpour). I thought, "I should have brought that 'Cuua cuaaa' bird with me."

I do not pretend to say that the bird makes sunny days possible, nor that Henriquez causes rainy days, since neither of them, as individuals, can have a direct agency in this. Nor do I mean to say that the bird has been more accurate than the scientific specialist since it is possible that on other occasions, the bird has misinterpreted or skipped the information that allows it to predict sunny days, as happened to Max Henriquez that day. Instead, I want to emphasize that both Andres and I relied on our beliefs, seeing them as accurate information to plan our days. That is where these two actors or actants – to appeal to Tesnière's terms – gain agency regardless of whether or not they intended to affect our decisions. When I tell this story to my colleagues in the social sciences, they more readily accept the weathercaster than the bird as a social actor or actant. Why is this important? Because the story of the Cuua-cuaaa bird is an example of the same kind of human and other-than-human relationships that can be found in more complex decision-making processes and the bias of some so-called "experts."

If we were to analyze the scenario above under the lens of Latour's ANT, we would conclude that Max Henríquez, the Cuuua-cuaaa bird, and the visible or invisible beings living in the Amazon rainforest become agents or actants, whether or not they have intentionality. These associations between humans and other beings who have agency are precisely what Tarde and Latour (2007) called "other metaphysics," or ways of structuring and living in the world (ibid, p.61). Before exploring other metaphysics, however, social scientists must identify their own epistemological bias to understand how they came to know what they think they know. Specifically, social scientists must first recognize the limits of their own epistemology.

Nature, the Scientific and the "Modern" Epistemological Limit

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, two significant developments influenced how Western thinkers structured the world during the Enlightenment era. After Descartes' dualism – the division between mind and matter and thus humanity and nature – Western knowledge became the most important authority, placing humanity above everything else in the world. Second, European kingdoms, such as France and Spain, began to separate the Church from the State's power to increase revenues by improving the administration of lands and populations (Lynch, 1969; Walker, 2008). After these structural reforms, the States oversaw politics, law, and public spaces. The Church was limited to private spaces to be the guardian of ethics and faith, as well as in charge of catechizing and "educating" the colonized or Indigenous populations (Ramón, 2002).

Along with these developments, science became the most accepted method of gaining knowledge of the world. While the natural sciences focused on nature, the social sciences studied human affairs. Compared to other species, humankind was considered the most adept at acquiring knowledge because of its presumed unique capacity for complex reasoning. However, societies that did not share Western values were labeled as "pre-modern," and, in turn, the Western "modern' model was placed at the top (Latour, 1993). In Europe and colonized territories such as America, India, and Africa, this hierarchical division was naturalized through sets of rules or policies dictated by governments to protect the emerging elites' interests (Appadurai, 1995). It was then, through top-down educational and communication techniques, that the Western world spread what Horkheimer calls "cultural homogenization" (Horkheimer, 1974), which justified the reification, contempt, and exploitation of those who did not share the same logic of "moderns."

Thus, the Western world ended up privileging what is known as "instrumental rationality": the justifications of the means to achieve an end. Reason gives value only to what can be used to fulfill human purposes and objectives, which, within capitalist societies, is capital accumulation (Horkheimer, 1974, Marx, 2013). Ultimately, the division between the West and the rest of the world (and between the human and the non-human) allowed the objectification of entities considered different or "non-human" and the

proliferation of a capitalist worldview where nature must be transformed into merchandise (Heidegger, 1977). However, despite efforts to separate politics, religion, reason, and belief during the Enlightenment, this has never been the case. As Latour points out in his book "*We Have Never Been Modern*" (1993), if an anthropologist were to write an ethnography about the "moderns," "[Their] tribe of scientists [would claim] that in the end, they are completely separating their knowledge from the needs of politics and morality...to the eye of the beholder, however, this separation is never evident, or is itself only the by-product of a much more mixed activity, some tinkering in and out of the laboratory." (Ibid, p.102).

For Latour, modernization is essentially a project that seeks to establish a planetary order by providing a utopian vision of a well-planned future. This utopia is dictated by Western political and economic institutions, which use scientific parameters of falsifiability to self-legitimize and override "pre-modern" modes of knowledge, such as religion. This conclusion coincides with that of other scholars, such as Gregory Bateson (1972), who writes: "we tell ourselves that we choose our philosophy by scientific and logical criteria, but in reality, our preferences are determined by the need to shift from one posture of discomfort to another. Every theoretical system is an evasion, tempting us to escape from the opposite fallacy" (ibid, p.51).

Therefore, it is safe to assert that humanity and nature, or humans and other-than-humans, are not divided beyond discourses. Latour asserts that "if there is one thing we all do, it is that we construct both our human collectives and the other-than-humans that surround them" (ibid, p. 106). Accordingly, following his example on the ethnography of moderns, he writes of the social scientists that "[their] informants claim that they have access to Nature, but the ethnographer sees perfectly well that they have access only to a vision, to a representation of Nature that [they] cannot clearly distinguish from politics and social interests." (Ibid, p.102). Simply put, these divisions are nothing more than conceptual constructs based on epistemological variables, which may be real for those who have been raised in the epistemological system that depends on that division. However, these divisions do not necessarily obey different epistemological systems nor natural laws.

As Horkheimer (1974) has pointed out, a significant problem with this epistemological myopia is that humanity may try to privilege nature, but any action against nature is an action against humanity. This paradox arises because if we try to repress external nature, we also repress our inner nature, our freedom to follow our instincts, creativity, and desire for happiness and pleasure. Horkheimer stresses that what makes people part of nature is what makes us human; therefore, legitimizing nature's exploitation by turning it into a reservoir of resources legitimizes people's dehumanization and exploitation. Hence, environmental abuse becomes social abuse and vice versa. In short, the domination of nature and people's dehumanization are two sides of the same coin.

El Dorado

This limiting modern scientific and epistemological view has been adopted by most Latin American governments, which may partly explain why there is no single government in Latin America that has proposed a development model detached from extractivism[11]. It can be argued that these countries' leaders may suffer from a condition often referred to as the "El Dorado" syndrome. To elaborate, the main clause of this "syndrome" is the firm conviction that the leaders oversee a country full of hidden treasures and vast riches waiting to be discovered and offered to the rest of the world. This hallucinatory syndrome can have several symptoms, such as the so-called "resource triumphalism," whereby these governments pretend that extractive economic development simply depends on the "dynamics of capitalism such as competition, profitability, the demands of capital markets, corporate concentration" rather than on the availability of natural resources (Bridge, 2004, p. 240; 2001, p. 2151).

Another significant symptom is not being able to recognize the historical links between the economy and nature, which leads patients (i.e., government leaders) to deny the direct impact of economic growth on environmental degradation (ibid). A further indicator of this condition is a belief in "ghost acreages," i.e., "an asocial void, an unpopulated space without socioecological complexity that exists outside of time and

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[11] Cuba could be an exceptional case that requires further investigation.

space" (ibid, p. 2154) from which an abundance of raw material can be extracted without social or ecological consequences. The cause of this disorder, which inhibits the distinction between reality and fantasy, is the historical and ongoing effort toward the "purification" (or silencing) of the native histories and ecologies of places, transforming landscapes invested with social, spiritual, and historical relevance into mere physical space. (p. 2161) Once these places are transformed, the *now open* spaces (*terra nullius*) require the exhaustive and creative work of being filled with fantastic and utopian narratives that can express the patient's desires and longings, fantasies such as the colonial legend of El Dorado.

What I call the "El Dorado syndrome" is what Gavin Bridge called "contemporary narratives of representation" in his 2001 article *Resource triumphalism: postindustrial narratives of primary commodity production.* In this paper, Bridge notes a growing body of research dealing with extractivism and Indigenous peoples. However, there is a common thread among most of them in that they: "(a) highlight the power asymmetries between mining companies and Indigenous peoples, (b) focus on the political struggles that take place between companies, Indigenous peoples, and the State over access to resources, land rights, income distribution, and environmental impact, and (c) describe these struggles in explicitly moral terms, using the language of justice, human rights, and Indigenous rights" (Bridge, 2004, p. 239). To these propositions, Bridge responds that productive and consumer economies are not separate, as is often represented in geographical imagery. By linking these two economies, Bridge exposes the material flows and representational narratives of "resource triumphalism" or "ghost acreages" that facilitate the lives of some but at the same time generate resistance from those whose livelihoods have been compromised by the depletion of their lands.

The purpose of this segment is to follow Bridge's work to demonstrate the different reactions and associations that occur when extractive practices are imposed on Indigenous systems. In this case, the word "Indigenous" does not refer to a human group linked to a specific ancestry but to something broader: an order that may or may not include humans. An Indigenous system can be seen as a series of relationships that have reached an optimal balance between the different agents, biotic or abiotic, a balance governed by what can be

called the logic of place or *eco-logic*. In contrast, extractive practices impose exogenous orders created within an anthropocentric system produced by a rationality that justifies all means to fulfill selfish purposes. Other authors and I have called this the ego's logic or *ego-logic* (Norris, 2016; Prettyman, 2018). In essence, this section seeks to propose that ethnocide and ecological holocausts in South America – along with the despicable acts that Indigenous populations have had to endure – are not the product of irrational individual actions but the result of an exogenous extractivist system and a logic larger than its perpetrators.

From Conditioned Subjects to The Subjective Condition

According to Gramsci (1988), once we become aware of the "objective conditions" of a crisis (namely, environmental degradation), there is another condition that must be met before a change can be achieved. In this regard, he points to "the subjective condition" as something that can be achieved once a set of groups affected by common problems work to find solutions. Several cases of this "subjective condition" lead us to think that there can be a consensus around a common problem. Take, for example, the massive marches around the world known as climate strikes, where different groups such as workers, feminist groups, environmentalists, academics, and students demand that action be taken to address climate change. Such protests echo centuries of resistance by Indigenous populations who have been subjected to disruptive economic models, environmental degradation, deterritorialization, enslavement, and systematic extermination, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Therefore, if we assume that environmental degradation is the objective condition, it is essential to inquire into the various forms of consensus building among different groups who share the same modern problems but not the same modern thought process.

Lévi-Strauss shed some light on this problem in 1962, in his book *La pensée Sauvage*. His work was inspired by Ferdinand Saussure's (1857-1913) contributions to linguistics and semiotics, which analyze three main elements of human language: the referent, which is a thing; the signified, which is the meaning of the thing; and the signifier, which is what the thing symbolizes. For Lévi-Strauss, there are two ways of structuring the

world[12]: *pensée Sauvage* and scientific thought. Levi-Strauss explains that these two different models coexist in a universal system at the unconscious level, so these models are not culturally specific. According to Lévi-Strauss, myths are to *pensée Sauvage* what history is to scientific thought. On the one hand, myths are never told in the same way, so they have a synchronic floating meaning; that is, *the pensée Sauvage* shapes its meaning in relation to social practices at a given time. On the other hand, science operates in a system of meanings that acquire a specific value throughout history.

Although the proposals of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism and Saussure's linguistic semiotics were epistemologically sound enough to influence Anthropology after the 1960s, they did not have the same effect on other disciplines such as economics, sociology, or political science. Indeed, these fields remained largely Eurocentric in their worldviews. Nevertheless, structuralism might have initiated a revolution[13] in that both *pensée Sauvage* and the scientific thought are contemporary and equally valid intellectual ways of representing reality using the same fundamental rule of structuring: the binary opposition[14].

It can therefore be assumed that Lévi-Strauss ended up challenging the privileged position of post-17th century instrumental rationality, which placed "Western knowledge" at the center of the world – which was widely accepted through Descartes' equation *cogito ergo sum* – (Descartes, 1960, p.249). This brought about changes in anthropology, in the form of what is known as "the linguistic turn": a method proposed by the Anglo-Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, which uses linguistic analysis in philosophy. Thus, it can be argued that the integration of anthropology and the linguistic turn also contributed to bringing Philosophy and Anthropology closer together.

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[12] Structuralism argues that the culturally and historically specific transformations and permutations involved in the production and reproduction of human languages and social institutions are structured by binary oppositions (masculine-feminine, culture-nature, cooked-raw, etc.).

[13] When I use the word "revolutionary," paraphrasing Gordon Childe, I am not referring to a sudden and violent catastrophe; it is used here for the beginning of a progressive change (Childe, 1950, p.3).

[14] In semiotics, binary opposition refers to two logically opposed and mutually exclusive signifiers that encompass a universal discourse, e.g. nature and social, death and life, etc.

However, the problem with structuralism lies in its self-imposed limitations since it focuses on general systems and not on individual cases. Because of its universal character based on binary oppositions, it portrays the world as if there were only one reality, which is perceived differently by different cultures. In other words, it is a valid critique of modern reasoning, but at the same time, it makes use of the same elements that prevail in the modern world. Moreover, binary oppositions may not universally construct meanings and reality. With this in mind, it becomes necessary to explore other ways of approaching modern problems outside modernity. An alternative approach to this question has been proposed by other social scientists in the "ontological turn," which is an intellectual movement that seeks to explore what exists in the world beyond Western ontology. In short, it sets out to explore the realities that are constructed in relationships outside the Western world and that have been ignored or are yet to be known.

Ontological turn

Understanding the ontological differences between traditions is a challenge for the social sciences. However, these challenges may allow the sciences to broaden what we think we know about the world. In this sense, anthropologist Eduardo Kohn has taken a broader perspective as he explores other ways of knowing, representing, and thinking beyond the human. In his book *How Forests Think,* Kohn (2013) combines his own ethnographic experience living with the Runa people in the Ecuadorian Amazon with his knowledge and explorations in biology, the Quechua language, and semiotics. He argues that both humans and other-than-humans use signs to communicate; as a result, all living things end up inhabiting those signs. As he points out, "we all use signs as canes that represent part of the world to us in one way or another. In doing so, signs make us who we are" (ibid, p.9). This idea that humans and other living things use signs to communicate led Kohn to propose an anthropological study of broader networks of relationships – composed of human and non-human actors –, challenging researchers to learn to embody these nonhuman views (ibid, p.132).

Unlike Donna Haraway (2014), who explores human relationships through biological relationships, Kohn uses Anthropology to study the social relationships of other-

than-humans, such as those of animals, plants, and spirits. In his book, he also delves into non-ethnocentric models such as those found in the Amazon, with the goal of understanding what the author calls *sylvan thinking*[15]. For example, early in his book, Kohn makes an important distinction between signs and symbols, stating that signs are used by all living things, while symbols are an exclusive part of human language. This distinction helps Kohn present an interesting argument that echoes De Castro's claim about humanity as a moral condition (1998). Kohn explains that morality is also distinctly human because a moral system requires symbolic references (ibid, p.133). Therefore, if we are to understand the other-than-human, we must go beyond our moral system.

One might think that Kohn's argument is a dualistic model trapped in binary oppositional reasoning – which might seem a remnant of the structuralist legacy of Lévi-Strauss – especially since it differentiates humans from other-than-humans, symbols from signs, and the living from the non-living. While it is true that Kohn makes use of terms that at first glance would appear to be opposites, the author does not view them through this lens – for his intention is precisely to abandon the conceptually dichotomous heritage of the West – but rather conceptualizes them as complementary ideas. As such, the author's proposal is to bring these complementary ideas together in a system where multiple realities are intertwined. These ontologies are central to the Quechua Indigenous concept of *buen vivir,* which has been adopted and adapted by different Indigenous groups throughout Latin America, including those in the Amazon region.

Introduction to *buen vivir* (good living)

Eid & Aliaga (2013) have referred to *buen vivir* (good living) as a prevailing and unstructured paradigm at all levels, which is based on "the harmonious and multidimensional relationship between all elements of Mother Earth (...) and is based on the principles of reciprocity, complementarity, and redistribution, rather than on the accumulation of goods and resources" (ibid, p. 233). For many Indigenous communities in Latin America, such an approach does not correspond to a new development paradigm; on

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[15] The type of (non-symbol-based) thinking used by humans and non-humans (see Kohn, 2014).

the contrary, it constitutes an alternative to the hegemonic state of affairs, since most Indigenous populations have resisted what the West calls "Development" through the principles formulated in *buen vivir*. Consequently, this alternative to development contrasts greatly with economic models and extractive economies such as the one in Colombia, which is based on capital accumulation, consumerism, and overexploitation of people and natural resources (Acosta, 2013; Escobar, 1998; Gudynas, 2011; Kuiru, 2014).

Indigenous populations in Latin America use different names to identify this common concept [16] (Acosta, 2013; Gudynas, 2011; Kuiru, 2014; Escobar, 1998), but essentially, *buen vivir* is the Latin American Indigenous manifestation of what can be called relational politics, or rather, the political manifestation of what is known in anthropology as "relational ontology" (Escobar, 2016). Particularly in Colombia, *buen vivir* is a concept based on the *ley de origen* (which I will explain in more detail in the next section), where, as stated by Eid & Aliaga (2013), well-being is not measured by economic growth but by reciprocal respect for each being that inhabits the planet (plants, animals, humans, spirits, soil, sun, moon, water, rocks, etc.) and the relationship that exists between them.

In Amazonian ontologies, as well as in most Amerindian ontologies, all beings experience and learn about the world through their bodies, which allows them to create their own images, realities, and connections with the cosmos and, therefore, with themselves (Escobar, 2016; Kohn, 2013). Because all beings have different bodies, there are different images or realities that are produced; therefore, we can all experience our world subjectively. Moreover, even if these other possible realities seem contradictory, chaotic, or unintelligible, it does not mean that they are more or less real or important than others, but rather that they could all be complementary[17]. In general, *buen vivir* can be understood as a way of living respecting the planet, even if not all possible relationships are understood or known, comprising worlds, realities, logics, dynamics, or actors (human

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[16] This cosmo-political alternative is known in other Andean countries (such as Peru, Ecuador or Bolivia) as Suma Kawsay, Suma Qamaña or Allin Kawsayor in Aymara and Kechua languages; Vida Plena para los Indígenas de la Confederación Indígena de la Cuenca Amazónica; or simply *buen vivir*.

[17] This can be explained with an example: in Andean ontologies, the collision of two opposing forces is not necessarily a bad thing, but an act of creation known as Tiku in which something new can emerge.

and other-than-human beings). Thus, based on mutual respect, people only take what is necessary to have a dignified life, making sure to always give back to others in the same way.

The point I am trying to get at is that the person and the world itself are completely subjective, not only for individuals but also for the set of relations in which that person exists. In an earlier section, I referred to Gramsci's proposal on how to achieve the subjective conditions for changing the causes of modern problems, focusing not on individuals but on their collective potential. On the same line, I argue that it would be appropriate to focus on the similarities and, above all, the differences between the set of relations that create and enable those individuals to be in the world. In other words, to understand how people experience the world, one should explore the constraints of a particular system rather than the individuals that are created in those systems.

Systems

In analyzing the premises of *buen vivir* and the anthropological work of authors such as Kohn, it could be said that none of them follow the theoretical proposals of Lévi-Strauss. Instead, they seem closer to what Gregory Bateson proposed in 1972, in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind.* In his book *Mind and Nature: A necessary unity* (1972), the anthropologist, sociologist, linguist, and biologist argues that it is a mistake to assume that the questions studied by sciences such as anthropology, sociology, economics, etc. are somehow disconnected. Based on his work in Cybernetics, he argues that the planet is a self-regulating system that includes other systems, what Lovelock (2007) would call the Gaia Hypothesis. He also agrees with most of the major authors whose work will be presented throughout this thesis (Viveiros de Castro, Haraway, Kohn, etc.) that neither the human being nor any other creature can exist in isolation.

However, contrary to what the aforementioned authors maintain, Bateson thinks that the way for humanity to understand its interconnection with the natural world is not by leaving aside areas related to valuational rationality such as religion. Rather, he proposes that in order to understand the connection between humanity and the natural world, individuals need to move away from thinking in instrumental terms and toward religion

and art (Bateson, 1987). In articulating this idea, Bateson offers a profound analysis of Western epistemology and a redefinition of the concepts he uses in his work. He also suggests that epistemology, understood as the study of how we know what we think we know, is the same as the never well-defined concept of culture. The author agrees with Latour in stating that language (and more specifically, scientific language after the establishment of Cartesian dualism) became the main way of thinking and relating to nature; however, for him, nature does not work like that at all.

Bateson sets out to elaborate his proposal inspired by Carl Jung's *Seven Sermons to the Dead* (2013). He borrows the terms *Pleroma* and *Creatura,* which differ from the Cartesian division in that they contain everything that exists in the world, although Bateson does not define them as separate or opposing concepts. Rather, he sees them as joint contrasts. *The Pleroma* is plenitude; it is everything that exists by itself or what Kant called *Ding an sich*: the thing-in-itself. For Bateson, the *Pleroma is similar to* Kant'*s Noumenal World*, which refers to the uncomprehended, unexperienced and uncontrolled world: the world of non-living things (Korsgaard, 1989). *Creatura*, on the other hand, is the living realm of creatures residing within the *Pleroma*. According to Bateson, these creatures must meet the following criteria to be considered living beings (1987, 19):

1. They must be a set of interacting parts or components.

2. The interaction between the parts of its parts must be triggered by information.

3. They must require collateral energy.

4. They should require circular (non-linear) determination chains.

5. They must have an effect on the difference that transforms the information that precedes them.

6. The classification of these transformation processes should reveal a hierarchy of logical types immanent to the phenomena.

Bateson maintains that no *thing* exists in *Creatura*, since all living beings are, in essence, minds, mental processes, and conglomerates of integrated parts that process and transform information. In other words, only *ideas* live in *Creatura*. For Bateson, information (or rather the exchange and comparison of information) is a central concept; it is what he calls "the difference that makes the difference," which is an exclusive characteristic of *Creatura*. In short, if an organism can compare different information and respond to this difference, this means that it *has/is* a mental process. Thus, all living organisms have/are mental processes. Kohn would agree with this idea in *How Forests Think* since he distinguishes between what is alive and what is not; for him, what is alive has the permanent capacity to learn.

Religious restrictions

Recalling Marx's accounts of religion (1843), I would like to propose a Latourian distinction between the modern idea of Religion (in capital letters) and the Batesonian concept of it (in lower case). Religion, as an institution separate from the State, was problematized by Marx in his text *The Jewish Question* (Marx, 2014); there, he wrote about the contradiction between religious limitation and political emancipation. From his perspective, religion is essential for capitalist and democratic states and vice versa, and at the same time, both are founded on promises of equality; while religion criticizes the amoral actions of the political sphere, the State promotes equal rights for all citizens regardless of their religious affiliation.

The contradiction to which I refer is that both the Church and the State make promises of equality, but neither of them would ever fulfil such promises since they themselves *are* the source of inequality. On the one hand, the former leads to freedom of Religion and its emancipation from the political sphere, but it does not lead to freedom *from Religion*. On the other hand, the latter announces equal rights to its citizens, as if each individual had the same privileges and opportunities regardless of their economic situation. As a consequence, people are caught in the middle of these contradictory dynamics, while inequalities prevail within civil society and are ignored by governments. I suggest that this

is evident in the emergence of secular democratic states with large religious populations, as is the case in Colombia and most Latin American countries.

However, Gregory Bateson took a different approach in his volume *Angels Fear* (1987). He draws attention to the importance of religious thought (with a lowercase r) because of the message conveyed by all religions: namely, that human beings are connected to something larger than their own individual selves. This notion of an integrated complexity is key to the study of self-regulating systems or cybernetics, which is, as I mentioned earlier, where Bateson based most of his work. This framework serves as the basis for a fundamental claim he makes, which is that humans are minds formed by other minds within a larger mind: a self-regulating system[18] formed by other self-regulating systems within a larger self-regulating system. To better illustrate this idea and better explain the connection between cybernetics and religion, I would like to introduce Bateson's concept of *servomechanisms*. What follows is my description of how religions may have served as regulatory mechanisms within social systems.

When Bateson states that every system is an aggregate of interacting parts and that the classification of these transformation processes reveals a hierarchy of logical types immanent to the phenomena or components, it is because there are different levels of organization in all living systems. The mechanism that allows all these systems to function together by receiving information from a more complex system is called *servomechanism*. Now, if the information coming from a larger, more complex system is blocked or if it is not understood by the subsystem, that subsystem would be rejected by the larger system until it eventually dies or is replaced by another subsystem that performs the same function in a better way. This body is also a system that is connected with other bodies, and in the same way, it has to regulate the information coming from the environment, which

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[18] From unicellular to eusocial and complex systems, too much or too little information (be it light, heat, water or food) can damage systems. Therefore, in an ever-changing environment, any living system must regulate the flow of information it receives and, at the same time, use that information as feedback to modify certain behaviors. As a result, an optimal balance can be achieved.

simultaneously regulates the information coming from external sources. In other words, every living system is connected to a larger one that controls it.[19]

For example, there are different enzymes within each cell that respond to certain biochemical reactions. These enzymes are regulators. However, these regulators are influenced by the cell to which they belong. The cell is a self-regulating system, as it regulates what enters through its membrane. But the cell is also part of an organ that sends information to it, for example, the heart. The heart is also a self-regulating system that has to regulate the information (blood, oxygen, etc.) sent to it by the circulatory system. In addition, the circulatory system also exchanges information with other systems that are connected to it, that are part of a body that is connected to other bodies, and these to an ecosystem.

This larger living or ecological system is what Bateson calls *The Mind*. For him, *The Mind* is not an individual, nor a collection of those, but a set of relationships, processes, or patterns that have been mystified or ignored after Science (with a capital "S") became the new paradigm, the *quintessential* instrument of the modern: the new narcissistic Religion chosen to deal with the non-human natural world. In this sense, I do not claim that religions are social subsystems; instead, the argument I have elaborated suggests that religions may have been for millennia socio-natural servomechanisms. By filtering complex information into basic sacred laws that individuals were to follow, religions maintain the constraints necessary to regulate human social systems that recognize their subordination to a larger one.

 In summary, cybernetics, religion, and the law of *buen vivir* clearly exemplify how every living system is connected to a larger one that controls it and how humanity is no exception. Furthermore, it becomes evident that the prevailing capitalist system, as a global economic hegemon, is a closed system that ignores this subordination and exchange of matter and energy with the environment. Consequently, it poses a threat to human self-

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[19] Control is the ability to use feedback information to regulate, adjust or improve the behavior of a system.

preservation because it is, in fact, an open artificial system that feeds uncontrollably on larger natural systems.

In this sense, I would like to argue that moderns erroneously assume that economic systems are closed due to a) the lack of correspondence between human and natural languages; b) the objectification of nature by instrumental rationality, which has unbalanced and compromised the self-regulating mechanism of the entire ecological system. Therefore, if the error is to be repaired, the current environmental crisis must be approached with a different logic than the one that created it. If so, a) it is imperative to understand the importance of biological communications and the relationships between humans and the wider networks of life, and b) economic values must not obliterate ethical and religious values in political decision-making.

Histories

The modern error to which I refer has led authors such as Donna Haraway to reflect on the implications of these systems on our planet. In the same vein as Bateson, she delves into biology and other disciplines to assert that humans, or better yet, Western humans, are not the center of the Universe. I assert that realizing that humans are but one node in a vast network of organisms that intertwine on the planet would open the doors to what Escobar and others have called a pluriverse: "a world where many worlds fit," as the Zapatistas of Chiapas say. The worlds of all peoples should coexist with dignity and peace without being subjected to diminishment, exploitation, and misery. A pluriversal world overcomes patriarchal attitudes, racism, casteism, and other forms of discrimination. Here, people relearn what it means to be a humble part of 'nature,' leaving behind narrow anthropocentric notions of progress based on economic growth" (Kothari et al., 2019, p. xxviii).

One such world is portrayed in Haraway's astonishingly revealing *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2014), in which she describes and seeks associations in social relations where other-than-humans have active roles, beyond reflecting mere human intentions. Haraway states that Isabelle Stengers' sense of

Cosmopolitics[20] laid the groundwork for her book (ibid, p.98), taking her on a journey to probe the limits of the modern world. Haraway's work draws on scientific concepts from biology such as mutualism and symbiogenesis to explain that humans grow, depend, and live in very close relationships with other "critters,"[21] even when they are not aware of it. However, becoming aware of these relationships is the only way to "become more capable of responding to the practice of the arts of living and dying" (ibid), a process she describes as *sympoiesis*.

Through the exploration of stories about interspecies relationships that seek to restore damaged places, Donna Haraway's book not only questions the division between the "natural" and the "social" but also challenges late existentialist and Heideggerian notions that portray humanity as a lonely, unbound species (ibid, p. 11). She develops three main points: first, she adopts a broader approach to the concept of *the social* proposed by Latour, as she points out that social scientists ignore that humans are also biological beings closely related to other species. Second, she exposes a divergent continuity from Heidegger's early writings (1977), which foresaw the dangers that a capitalist ideology and technology have posed on the planet, in what many have called the *Capitalocene*. The third, and perhaps most notable contribution, is at the end of the book, as the first two ideas blend to give rise to the ubiquitous figure of SF[22]; this method of tracking, as she calls it, draws attention to the use of technology[23] to create new forms of symbiosis with endangered species under the plea "Make Kin, Not Babies." This plea becomes a slogan that slowly drives humanity to change the values that would allow it to live on a damaged planet.

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[20] In Stengers' words, the first step toward an ecology of practices "demands that no practice be defined as 'the same as any other,' just as no living species is the same as any other." Approaching a practice means approaching it in its divergence, that is, sensing its boundaries, experimenting with questions that practitioners can accept as relevant, even if they are not their own questions, rather than posing insulting questions that lead them to mobilize and transform the boundary into a defense against its outside." (Stengers 2013, p.184).

[21] Microbes, plants, animals, humans, non-humans and machines (P.43).

[22] Science fiction, speculative fabulation, string figures, speculative feminism, scientific fact, so far.

[23] In her book, she delves into other disciplines, such as biology, to explore the possibilities of a transhuman world. As such, in Haraway's SF story, the most efficient form of human existence is only found by relying on science and erasing modern ethical, aesthetic, and religious beliefs; in essence, what Weber (1978) called "value rationality."

The main change that humanity assumes is not only the adoption of a certain form of population control: that fewer individuals choose to give birth. It also responds to the changes that occur when fewer people are born, such as seeing children as the most important asset of the community. As a consequence, the community protects the children and raises them as its own in a kind of cooperative parental care, which encourages infants to grow up and specialize in a particular symbiont. These cultural changes gradually diversify the senses of humans and allow technology to change human morphology, making humanity a truly social or "eusocial" species.

Haraway's figure in SF is relevant to this research because she raises the need to reflect on human behavior towards other species. She is a clear example of the *pensée Sauvage* for stories and myths. Moreover, she shares the same structure used by historians in that she links different pieces of information to create a single narrative. Simply put, narratives and stories are the contexts that give meaning to our words and actions. To quote Bateson, "narratives and stories are knots of connectivity between relevant information" (Bateson, 1979, p.24). However, the information conveyed in these narratives may be reinterpreted in diverse ways by different receivers. Similarly, other species may also have other narratives or other types of information[24] to communicate with humans. But receiving information does not imply that the receiver knows everything about the sender or understands all the information being sent. I will explain this learning process through my own SF story (science fiction, speculative feminist, speculative fab, science fact).

When a cassava plant photosynthesizes sunlight into organic matter, it receives information from the sun in the form of light energy and transforms it into chemical energy, but that does not mean that the plant knows everything about the sun or everything about light or chemical energy. Similarly, we can think of an Amazonian girl named Akna who eats cassava for lunch. She feels good and more energetic after the meal, but she cannot know everything about the plant just by eating that particular food. For example, she cannot know how the plant synthesized light energy into chemical energy to form a tuber. Nor can

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[24] In this sense, Bateson argues that all creatures in nature-from cellular levels to the largest structures, including human beings-exchange information with other creatures. This is what he calls biological communication.

Akna know everything about the sun, nor about the various processes that occur in her body after eating the tuberous root, such as the transformation of yucca into energy, cell growth, and repair.

There is also human communication, which is another system that humans use to transmit information. Thanks to human communication, Akna learned from her grandmother Itzel that cassava, the land, and the water are sacred. She also learned that cassava is planted by humans, so a few months before eating the root, Amazonian people gather the branches of the best plants from previous harvests and plant them. While this process takes place, Itzel, Akna's grandmother, prepares a sacred drink known as *caguana* to offer to the workers. Thus, thanks to human communication, Akna has some knowledge of how cassava is grown and also how it is processed, but she is also aware that she does not yet understand everything about cassava.

Now, let's imagine that cassava became extinct years after Akna's lifetime. Her Amazonian compatriots tell Akna's granddaughter, Martina, that this happened because a powerful corporation patented cassava as a transgenic plant, so they were not allowed to harvest the best branches of their crop for further planting. After this, an unknown pathogen appeared that suddenly wiped out the world's entire population of transgenic plants. Martina informed herself of what human experts had said about the plant. That is, she reviewed the works of biochemists, agronomists, etc., to get a better idea of what cassava was, how the plant synthesized light energy into chemical energy, and the processes that occurred in her grandmothers' bodies after eating the root. Despite how much she researched and read, Martina knew that she only had the idea of cassava that her own epistemological system allowed her to know, which in this case was only a description of what humans *think they* know about those processes but not what Kant called the *Ding an sich* (Beck, 1987*)* or the thing itself.

We can ask ourselves in this story: who had more knowledge about cassava: Itzel, Akna, or Martina? Although there is no single correct answer to this question, one person's answer may be relevant because it will show their logic and epistemological bias. Bateson would argue that we should understand the logic and epistemological problems within the

human language to realize that we will never know the truth about cassava; instead, we should ask about the functions of cassava and the relationship of cassava to other things and beings.

Logic

If the narrator of a story and the listener share the same frame of reference, which is the stated criteria or values used to perceive the world, and if the story follows patterns familiar to both, the listener is sure to find the information in the story intelligible. These patterns are also known as logic. However, the problem arises when these two premises are not met, as the listener may not follow what the storyteller is trying to communicate. This can occur because there is no single logic in human language. According to Aristotle, in human language, logic and scientific knowledge require a form of deductive mathematical reasoning that must contain two propositions or premises and a third part or *tertium comparationis,* which is something that the two main propositions have in common. The comparison of these three elements leads to a conclusion, which is deduced from the two main propositions. This is called a syllogism. For example:

All people are mortal;
All Amazonians are people
All Amazonians are mortal

Of the 256 possible classes of syllogisms that logicians identify today, there are only 19 that are considered valid[25], and only four of them are known as perfect because they serve to prove the rest (Mitchell, 1962). In the last example, "All people are mortal" is the first premise; "All Amazonians are people" is the second; the category of "people" is the third part; and "All Amazonians will die" is the conclusion. In the example, all

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[25] To be considered valid, the syllogism must have three terms: major, minor and the third part; the terms must not be longer in the conclusion than in the premises. The middle term must never appear in the conclusion. The middle term must be universal at least once. Two affirmative premises cannot give rise to a negative conclusion; two negative premises cannot give a conclusion. Two particular premises cannot give a conclusion. The conclusion always follows the weaker (particular and negative) part. At http://objetos.unam.mx/logica/validezInvalidez/index.html

propositions are considered "affirmative universals (A)," so this argument is called a syllogism in Barbara[26] (AAA).

The problem with the last syllogism is that for it to be considered true, it requires that we have a preconceived idea of the *tertium comparationis*; that is, what is meant by the category "people," which as I will explain below, is not a universal idea at all. To avoid this problem, Aristotelian logic is now interpreted through what is known as "Class Logic." Unlike classical Aristotelian logic, in which the individual defines the property of the "class," Class Logic uses an inductive approach in which the "class" – the group, or the set – is the one that defines the property. In other words, it is not the subject that points to the premise but the group itself that leads to a universal conclusion. A syllogism using the inductive logic of our last example would be:

"All Amazonians are people, and all people will die. Then all Amazonians will die."

This logic is very useful in mathematical processes, but perhaps not the best for understanding *pensée Sauvage* or non-human language. As Kohn (2013) has expressed, human communication differs from biological communication in the use of symbols, which indicates that what we learn through human language is essentially symbolic and that in order to have symbols, we need to create groups or classes that do not really exist in nature.

Kohn and Bateson relied on what Peirce (1974) called abductive reasoning, which, unlike deductive reasoning, does not seek to infer a truth but rather the best explanation of a phenomenon. In abductive reasoning, a hypothesis can be hypothesized based on comparisons of similarities and resemblances; that is, icons. Then, by casual inference, these similarities will show a set of relationships or indexes. A good example of indexes given by Gell (1998) is "smoke." Generally, we infer that if we perceive smoke in the Amazon rainforest, it is because there is a fire. But this is not always the case. In this

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[26] Name given by Pedro de España in his thirteenth century book *Summulae Logicales*

example, the presence of fire would be a hypothesis, which will be considered a theory if it encompasses all known variables and if there is no better or simpler explanation[27]. Using abductive reasoning, our syllogism would be:

"If all Amazonians will die, and all Amazonians are people, then people will die."

With this type of reasoning, no pre-established framework is required; therefore, we do not need to have a preconceived idea of what "people" means in order to arrive at a possible hypothesis because what "people" might encompass is inferred from the syllogism itself. Moreover, in contrast to deductive reasoning, in abductive reasoning, the hypothesis moves from some particular observation to a possible general idea. This is when abductive reasoning allows for cognitive enhancement through new ideas and creative thinking since these ideas and hypotheses are feasible but never ultimate or universal truths.

The relationship between abductive reasoning and art was famously addressed by the anthropologist Alfred Antony Francis Gell in his book *Art and Agency* (1998). In his work, he argues that art can inspire a *sensus commuunis*, which is when all the senses communicate a perception that emerges after the viewer experiences the work of art. For example, when a viewer stands before the image of a goddess, "we have (...) access to 'another mind' in this way. A real mind or a represented mind, but in either case the mind of a well-disposed person" (ibid, p.15). This means that, through abductive reasoning, the image becomes an index that communicates to the viewer the idea of integration with divinity. Thus, the image is an agent, but it is also a patient since it also receives something from the observer, such as empathy, admiration, or devotion.

Bateson (1987) develops this idea further and claims that abductive reasoning goes beyond the index of human agency. He coins the term "abduction," which refers to the appropriate logic for dealing with the syllogism of metaphors found in nature. For Bateson, metaphorical thinking in nature can be understood in terms of homology and equivalence, where in order to achieve communication, neither symbolic representations nor the

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[27] For example, think of Kepler's inference about the elliptical motion of Mars, or Newton's theory of gravity versus Einstein's theory of general relativity.

existence of common categories is required. Bateson's idea suggests divergence with Kohn in the sense that metaphorical communication is not necessarily based on semiotic relations since Bateson describes a type of continuous communication with nature, which does not need to be automatically mediated by representations or concepts because we all perceive the word in analogous dimensions.

Take, for example, the spine of all vertebrates. Although all species have different spines, there are apparent similarities between the spine of one species and that of the species that precedes or succeeds it in the evolutionary lineage. Another clear example is found in the similarities between a human hand and the wing of a bat: they are different but, at the same time, similar; one is equivalent to the other, perhaps not conceptually or functionally, but in a metaphorical sense guided by a similar context. There are several syllogisms in nature, which carry the same idea suggesting an evolutionary/adaptive relationship or pattern. Bateson proposes a name for these non-mathematical syllogisms used in metaphors: *Syllogisms in Grass.* Let us see what they look like:

Plants [28]die;

People die;

People are plants.

For Bateson, Grass's syllogisms are the only way in which human language can correspond to other beings in *Creatura*. As he states, "apart from [human] language, there are no named classes and no subject-predicate relations." (ibid, p. 27) In other words, metaphorical syllogisms allow communication with the rest of *Creatura* because these relations do not require a fixed or *a priori* class deduction that does not exist in nature. What matters in Syllogisms in Grass and in biological communication is not the subject, but the *tertium comparationis*, also understood as relations of phenomena. This explains

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[28] Bateson uses grass instead of plants.

why, for Bateson, "the Syllogism in Grass must be the dominant mode of the interconnection of ideas in all preverbal realms" (ibid, p. 27).

Thus, in our last syllogism – which at first glance might not make sense to non-Indigenous people[29] – the importance lies in the relationship between plants and people, which implies that the fate of one is the fate of the other. If plants die, people die, and vice versa. That type of logic and communication is still present in most Amerindian societies. As Scott (2013) suggests in his *Ontology and ethics in Cree Hunting: animism, totemism, and practical knowledge*, understanding the importance of figurative and relational processing of experiences and practical navigation in the world "can guide us on how to conduct a conversation across differences in the world" (ibid, p.159-165).

In the modern world, Bateson argues that the different forms of art (written, graphic, or even performative), myths, religion, and dreams (which are tangles of metaphors) may be the only areas in which metaphorical human language is still alive after the Enlightenment. Likewise, in Peirce's abductive reasoning, the power of a metaphor lies in the fact that it does not claim to reveal a categorical truth. Thus, metaphors in any of these fields should not be taken literally since their main purpose is to connect and convey ideas and reveal patterns. It is in this confusion between metaphorical language and fetishized Science that most of humanity's problems lie, for moderns in search of truth have sacramentalized the metaphorical soul of science. For Bateson, there is a clinical name for this type of human pathology: schizophrenia.

Metaphors

Generally speaking, the scientific method (with a lowercase "s") begins with making observations about a particular phenomenon, followed by a research question; the scientist forms a hypothesis or a testable explanation of the phenomenon and then makes a prediction based on that hypothesis. That prediction must be tested with evidence to

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[29] See: Vuh, P. (1960). *Las antiguas historias del Quiché*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.

become a theory, but later, in the presence of new evidence, that theory must be iterated by a new hypothesis and so on.

The main function of theories is to guide the observation and selection of facts in order to create a causal explanation of their relationships. This causal explanation has the ultimate goal of predicting and, therefore, gaining some control over a given phenomenon. As López Rivera (2011) states, theories select what should be visible and how to make it visible (ibid, p. 14), which means that theories also discard or make invisible other things. This process of discarding is necessary because most of the things we can perceive about the world come in waves of continuous analog signals, infinitely gradated in value, and constantly shifting in response to the most minute of variables. Thus, if we want to share our experience with others, we have to encode that information into finite, replicable, and perhaps less fluctuating data, for which we have to eliminate or empty out the "noise" that we consider non-essential or incommensurable.

Consequently, we privilege coarser and starker information, as in digital formats, where extreme values of data are retained to discern laws or patterns observed in the physical world. This transformation or sampling can be seen in human language, which could explain why, without practical experience, the receivers of such "digitized" or "verbalized" information may think of the world as a binary universe made of dichotomized structures held by logical-mathematical rules, where one thing cannot be the other: raw is the opposite of cooked; good is the opposite of bad; natural is the opposite of social; dead is the opposite of alive.

In addition, most scientific observations are made in sterilized environments in which variables can be controlled to discern patterns, general behaviors, or the responses of something. As such, theories describe and assume that similar things under the same category of the observed should have similar responses under similar conditions. Those categories, however, are arbitrary groups formed by subjective reasoning, physical, chemical, physiognomic, that give us an idea about how to behave or what to expect from something we may not know. In the words of Roffman (2008, p. 249), "metaphors transpose aspects of one kind of experience to another" therefore, it is safe to say that

theories are metaphors for what we select to know about arbitrary sets of things we form in the physical world, to predict the behavior of things similar to those in the observed set.

However, since for a person, "understanding something depends largely on a process of mapping a previously known structure into a new domain" (ibid, 250), any good scientist knows that no theory claims to become the absolute truth. Moreover, theories are always incomplete because language – as a means of apprehending and describing constructed scientific facts – is limited compared to the totality of what is known and unknown in the physical world (Latour & Woolgar, 2013). The former suggests that science cannot be objective because its theories are made of ideas, but those ideas are no-*things*; they are merely translations of experience and reflections, metaphors for what Levi-Strauss may have called *The Referent; Kant, The Noumenal World*; and Bateson, *Pleroma*. Think of Magritte's famous work *La trahison des images* (1928-1929), where he states "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" and apply it to the image you may have in your head of anything. An atom, for example. That image is not an atom. As I have explained before, human language is made of symbols, which are consensual representations of something in the physical world.

These consensuses are built from what Taylor (2006) calls the "Social Imaginary," which is the set of laws, values, institutions, and symbols through which a particular group or society conceives its world. In this regard, López Rivera (2011) also provided a perspective of his own and said that theories obey particular interests and should be understood as metaphors of the physical world shaped by social imaginaries. With this in mind, one would conclude that the social imaginaries that shape scientific theories (or metaphors of what exists) are filters that affect what the social sciences observe, examine, hypothesize and theorize. A particularity of the social sciences is that social imaginaries, cultures, and epistemological systems cannot be isolated in the same way as a specimen in a laboratory. This particularity implies that if the social sciences were to use the scientific method, it would be necessary to include the techniques and the duration of the observations that the method proposes, which can sometimes go beyond the life of a researcher.

So far, I have outlined how social science observations differ from scientific observations that take place in a laboratory. My next argument revolves around the contributions of life histories to the social sciences as a methodology that allows the researcher to discern certain patterns or logics to describe a collective behavior. By patterns or logics, I mean a series of events or actions that, after long periods of observation, can be grouped as typical or normal or atypical or abnormal. These patterns are ex-post phenomena, meaning that they can only be seen after the event has taken place. This is because people's actions, decisions, and responses are often influenced by unknown collective and personal variables that cannot always be controlled or accurately predicted. Therein lies the importance of history as a source of data in the social sciences: the longer and more specific the historical data, the more precise the patterns and accurate explanations that can be extracted, especially when it comes to social change[30].

This means that to study the laws, values, institutions, and symbols of a particular group or society, it would be more enlightening to study the history narrated by that particular group and not the version of history produced by a dominant group or by researchers born in a different epistemological system. According to Rappaport 2016 "we must evaluate them within their political contexts, instead of comparing them to some disembodied standard of historical truth." (Rappaport 2016. p. 37). In other words, to study group "A," it is better to use data from group "A" than data from observations made by group "B," because they may have different sets of laws, values, institutions, and symbols than group "A." By this, I mean to comment that a modern social scientist who relies solely on her/his own logic – which may be of the deductive cause-consequence type – to discern the patterns of a particular group (where it came from, where it is, where it may be going, or how it has changed over time), is most likely using a different logic than the one the group being studied uses to explain its own world.

If that is the case, the patterns discerned in the hypothesis may end up reflecting the researcher's set of laws, values, institutions, and symbols rather than those of the system

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[30] An important aspect to keep in mind is that, in general, patterns are discerned using the logic of the epistemological system of scientists, which is not necessarily the same logic of what is being observed or who is being observed.

or group under investigation. In addition, it would help to theorize where that group comes from, where it is and where it can go in opposition or comparison with the epistemological system of scientists. This error would not only risk placing the epistemological system of the researcher above the one under investigation but could also make invisible or deny the history of that other group, the importance of its laws, values, institutions, and symbols. – What I mean is not that one logic is more important than the other, but that a social scientist must be aware of their own logical biases and limitations in order to be willing to reform them, transposing aspects of their experience to that of the Other. When the scientist's experiences enter into conversation with new information (such as the narratives, laws of history, values, institutions, and symbols of another group), they must be open to the possibilities of commensurability and transformative consensus through a dialogic exchange between their own categories, logics, and, above all, limitations, those of the Other, and those that may emerge from their relationship.

Feelings and emotions

Hume states that, despite modern belief (Bateson, 1979; Neu, 1977), when making decisions related to others and ourselves, neither science nor people are guided solely by our conscious thoughts, logic, and reason. This is because we also feel the world, which leads us to respond unconsciously to it, guided by the information encoded in our own emotions and values. However, when we judge other people's actions, we are often unaware – consciously or unconsciously – of the information codes in their emotions and values. This lack of information can lead us to refute other people's actions or to judge them as irresponsible or illogical.

According to neuroscientist Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett, there are four possible internal states or emotions that our brains identify: pleasant, unpleasant, aroused, or calm (Adolphs & Anderson, 2018). Although those dimensions might be shared in the minds of most people (and perhaps other animate beings), as we live and gain experiences of the world, our brains situate memories of personal experiences in relation to those four basic emotional dimensions. The perception of those internal states in our bodies, in relation to the recurrence of similar life situations, creates a wider range of learned feelings – such as

trust, fear, sadness, hunger, happiness – but these are merely metaphors or reinterpretations of the four primary internal states, named differently according to a learned context.

What I mean to say is that feelings, sensations, emotions or values play a crucial role in decision-making processes, as they constitute meaningful information that guides us in our knowledge or ideas. Yet, neither our emotions nor our values are universal, as they depend on the context for feelings, sensations, and emotions fluctuate based on our personal life experience, hence such vital information is often not taken into account when dealing with another party's arguments, creating a coding error that compromises the desired outcome in decision-making processes. For now, I would like to suggest that being aware of our feelings and emotions, those of our counterparts, and how they arose, can help us make more informed decisions in seeking agreements with other Sentient Beings (Fals Borda, 1984).

Personhood

As I mentioned earlier, human groups may have different values for making categories, such as "personhood." In what follows, I will expand on the Amazonian and modern concepts of personhood, soul, and mind to argue that these are homologous terms that have been used historically in the West as metaphors for recognizing or denying individual or collective rights. However, that is not the case within Amazonian metaphysics, where every creature has the same soul (Montoya, 2015, Scott in Harvey, 2014), and all living beings are interconnected. This resembles the cybernetic model described by Bateson in the 1970s, which says that all living things are self-regulating systems within larger ones. In this account, I would also like to draw attention to the ontological turn as a proposal to contemplate other realities, other laws, other ways of thinking or knowing beyond the instrumental rationality used in Western scientific knowledge. To appreciate this, a good start is to contemplate models of *the pensée Sauvage* of other cultures, such as Indigenous knowledge, shamanism, witchcraft, or even religion, and try to understand their own logics and parameters of falsifiability and rectification.

In *Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism,* Eduardo Viveiros de Castro develops some of Philip Descola's interpretations of totemism, animism, and

naturalism (2004) and contrasts them with what he calls "Amerindian perspectivism." For Descola, totemism constitutes a classificatory system in which human behavior is structured according to the social life of other species. Animism, on the other hand, structures relations between humans and non-humans according to human social categories. Naturalism, on the other hand, is defined as the system in which the relations between culture and nature are natural because human society is "just another natural phenomenon." (ibid, p. 473). These interpretations, however, are considered by Viveiros de Castro as ways of objectifying nature and, in response, he introduces the idea of "multinaturalism" (ibid, p.473). His proposal points to the existence of many natures and a single culture, which is opposed to the Western multiculturalist philosophy that represents many cultures and a single nature.

Viveiros de Castro also argues that for Western cosmology, "human nature" implies a metaphysical discontinuity. In his words, "the status of the human being or person in modern thought is essentially ambiguous. On the one hand, humanity is an animal species among others, and animality is a domain that includes humans; on the other hand, humanity is a moral condition that excludes animals" (De Castro, 2004a, p. 475). This is because, in the natural sciences, human bodies are studied biologically, like any other animal, but in the humanities and social sciences, humans have minds and souls, which separate them from other beings.

However, I would like to emphasize that this ambiguous division is not universal. As I have explained in previous works (Gómez, 2016), the papal bull promulgated by Paulo III in 1537 (also known as *Sublimis Deus*) officially recognized Indigenous souls and their human condition, declaring it a heresy to enslave them.[31] However, a few years later, while the Spanish Crown doubted that Native Americans were people, the papal bull of 1550 declared them to be childlike during the Junta de Valladolid. Consequently, Native Americans did not know the "true" faith. These pronouncements implied that Native

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[31] The papal bulls were of significant importance to the Spanish crown because it was through the Alexandrine bull of 1493 that Spain acquired international recognition legitimizing its right to administer and evangelize the new territories (Weckman, 1976). Therefore, to deny the rights of the Indigenous groups granted by the Pope would jeopardize the Spanish Crown's right to control the new world.

Americans had rights but had to be watched over by the Church (Losada, 1971). Hence, the Indigenous populations of the Spanish viceroyalties were entrusted to missionaries such as the Jesuits to be educated in the Catholic faith. As such, they lived in designated places in rural areas clearly separated from citizens of European descent (Andrien, 2001; Schwaller, 2000).

An interesting counterexample of this ambiguous division is found in Lévi-Strauss's account (1961), in his book *Anthropologie structurale deux,* of a scene that took place before the Jesuits' quest to catechize the Indigenous populations of Central and South America. He recalls that "in the Greater Antilles, some years after the discovery of America, while the Spaniards sent inquisitorial commissions to investigate whether or not the Indigenous had souls, these same Indigenous were busy drowning the white men they had captured in order to find out, after long observation, whether or not the corpses were subject to putrefaction" (ibid, p. 384).

A structuralist interpretation of the above accounts would argue that both the Spanish and the American Indigenous populations were using different methods to make similar distinctions between who is human and who is not. However, as Viveiros de Castro (1998) and Latour (2004a) point out, both the Spaniards and the Indigenous were using different methods to reach their conclusion, but they may also have been pursuing different goals. On the one hand, the Spaniards were trying to establish whether the Indigenous peoples had souls in order to recognize their humanity and, consequently, their rights; on the other hand, the Indigenous groups might have been trying to identify what kind of body the Spaniards had, in order to establish what kind of people those Iberians were.

This is because, in Amerindian epistemologies, politics, ecology, and religion are not assumed to be separate spheres. In the Amazon, for example, humans, animals, and spirits are all persons; in general, each creature – or "critter," to borrow Haraway's term [32]- sees its own species as persons. Instead, they perceive other species as prey or predators. Let me exemplify this further. In the forest, peccaries see other peccaries as people, but

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[32] See Haraway, D. (2014). Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene: Staying with the Trouble. *Aarhus University Research on the Anthropocene*, 575-99.

they see humans as jaguars, while jaguars see humans as peccaries and so on. Thus, in the Amazon, unlike Western thought, all creatures have the same soul and culture. Therefore, personhood is not limited to humans; moreover, humanity is not a moral condition (De Castro, 1998). Therefore, when Amazonian leaders claim to represent and speak on behalf of their community, they are not only referring to humans but also to the animals and spirits that inhabit the forest.

Methodology

I have begun this chapter by proposing an archaeology of "the social and the role of the social scientist" to question the natural-social divide. I have argued that since such a divide does not exist beyond discourses, environmental and social crises should not be approached solely as "natural" or "cultural" phenomena. Moreover, delving into such a division reveals that knowledge – which in the "modern" world is constructed on the basis of scientific claims – should not be subject to an unambiguous logic, a single concept, or an ultimate truth. Thus, the combined efforts of the social and natural sciences (philosophy, anthropology, economics, sociology, political science, biology, physics, etc.) could lead to a better and more fluid interaction between the natural and the social. Moreover, such a revised scientific model would open channels of communication based on networks and other previously discarded epistemologies that were considered part of *the pensée Sauvage*. If so, the incorporation of often discarded actors present in shamanism, witchcraft, or even religion, as well as new variables and experiences, will help to test and find better scientific hypotheses through abductive reasoning.

To do so and to find this information, I began the first phase of my fieldwork in Colombia in September 2018, one month after Iván Duque assumed the Colombian presidential office. This was also the time when the National Development Plan of this new government was announced and then presented to the Mesa Permanente de Negociación – MPC in 2019. After long periods of negotiation with Colombia's main ethnic organizations, the Plan was approved, agreeing to an unprecedented budget of 10 billion pesos to invest in Indigenous territories. This victory was accompanied by government

commitments to adapt seven national surveys and censuses to learn about Indigenous values and needs.

During those days, early 2019, I was also completing a mandatory internship at the National Department of Statistics – DANE, which was part of the Neotropical Environmental Option of my Ph.D. studies in Anthropology at McGill University. At DANE, I was commissioned to develop a theoretical framework for an Ethnic Multidimensional Poverty Index – ÉMPI, based on Indigenous experiences and values. I argued that poverty, at least for Indigenous nations, should not be measured by the lack of assets or the failure to achieve Western standards of living but by the violation and vulnerability of their individual and collective rights that impede their *buen vivir*. A collective right of immense importance among Indigenous nations is that of collective territory, as it encompasses all the elements contained in Indigenous ontologies, given that territory comprises and connects all the different dimensions that affect Indigenous well-being. Therefore, this theoretical framework helped me to identify the need for diplomatic spaces endowed with channels to transmit the information contained in the spiritual, ecological, political, etc., spheres that make up *buen vivir* and Indigenous ways of existence.

I hypothesize that if the multidimensionality of the Indigenous (Amazonian) worlds contained in *buen vivir* were considered in government plans and policies before consulting communities, the pressure on negotiation spaces would decrease. As the proposed plans would already have the means to contemplate and address Indigenous concerns, the likelihood of consensus/agreements should increase. If so, Indigenous modes of existence would have to be translated into a "language" that not only registers their multidimensionality but can also be used effectively by policymakers. This process can be seen as knowledge translation. Likewise, a example of a Knowledge Translation tool is the use of statistics, transforming qualitative information transmitted by Indigenous or ethnic communities into a versatile quantitative spectrum. This type of knowledge translation could create an accessible database to which parties involved in Prior Consultation processes can turn for information on localized and often complex contexts. This process,

I argue, would improve the chances of the State's plans to receive FPIC from ethnic groups in Colombia.

How and where could I find this information to discern and then translate the multidimensional relationships of buen vivir?

Throughout the process of this research, I consulted Emma Wardell, a community organizer and research assistant at the University of Waterloo's School of Social Work. Her many years of experience facilitating and researching arts-based, participant-led projects provided me with the tools I adopted to design the processes to be used in this project. In addition, after corresponding with Professor Matthew Brown of the School of Modern Languages at the University of Bristol, I learned that in a violent context such as Colombia, art, unlike political or economic spaces, is an appropriate and safe channel to convey the voices of oppressed or victimized populations. This is the case of different projects that Professor Brown has undertaken with several grassroots organizations, such as the *Red de Lugares de la Memoria* presented at the 2018 Peace Festival and the Bringing Memories from the Margins Project – MEMPAZ, currently carried out in partnership with the National University of Colombia.

I decided to look for information to discern and then translate the multidimensional relationships of *buen vivir* through my contacts with OPIAC, but it was not an easy task. There may be several reasons for the difficulty in finding this information. First, Amazonian knowledge is rarely transmitted in written language. Information is dynamic and relational, a reflection of the world it describes. Thus, in the Amazon, information is transmitted mainly in life situations through stories, ceremonies, informal conversations, dreams, art, and daily activities. Second, the remote location of typical Amazonian communities creates communication barriers. For example, the community where I work is a fifteen-day boat ride from Leticia, the nearest city. Finally, it is important to note that many Indigenous voices that have dared to speak openly in exclusive political spaces have been silenced. In Colombia, in 2019 alone, 120 Indigenous leaders were murdered.

Phase one: "Institutions." (Sep 2018-May 2019).

I initiated the first phase of this informative research with funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council – SSHRC. This phase was designed to identify and work with the main Indigenous organizations, government institutions, and NGOs present in the Amazon region. In early September 2018, I traveled to Bogotá and then to Leticia (capital of the Amazon province) to establish relationships with both individuals and the institutions they represent. In generating these connections, I outlined common goals for collaborative work, namely, to explore the gaps in socioeconomic and environmental information and understanding that challenge Free, Prior, and Informed Consent – FPIC processes in the region.

When I returned to Bogota in 2019, I spoke with Professor Juan Daniel Oviedo, former director of the Doctoral School of Economics at the Universidad del Rosario and current director of the Department of the National Statistics System – DANE. With the collaboration of his team, we identified some challenges that had also arisen in previous consultation processes with that institution. For example, many criteria designed for urban contexts, such as housing, housing materials, income, work, education, health, and even poverty and development, are valued and understood very differently by ethnic groups. In other cases, these criteria are not even applied to them. As a result, their different modes of existence are ignored, resulting in the form of a statistical ethnocide, while public policies end up imposing urbanization on these populations. In short, there is not enough information to correctly characterize ethnic groups in Colombia, and therefore, by design, many public policies blur the difference.

Phase two: "The People." (May-August 2019).

The second phase of the research was financially supported by the Center for Indigenous Conservation and Development Alternatives – CICADA. During this phase, I traveled to La Chorrera, in the Colombian department of Amazonas, to participate in an internal consultation addressing challenges related to self-governance and information sharing. During this time, I built and strengthened relationships with the community, learning about their decision-making process and conflict resolution.

Part of this consultation involved participation in local initiatives of the community group AZICATCH to convey local history to both Indigenous youth and non-local populations. These initiatives, part of a Participatory Action Research model, would allow me to investigate the impacts of the rubber industry on Amazonian communities, including the dissemination of invaluable first-hand information and experiences gathered over the past five years. The specific projects to be carried out throughout my research were: the publication of a book, a workshop on Geographic Information Systems, and a traveling exhibition. I will expand on each of these.

This trip was the result of an invitation from Professor Fany Kuiru, from the Universidad del Rosario. She is a recognized Indigenous leader and the only Uitoto in Colombia to have completed a graduate degree. She taught me the challenges common to most Indigenous groups, outlining the legacies left by colonialism, such as deterritorialization, alcoholism, and impoverishment. She invited me to spend an extended stay in her community, La Chorrera, where I learned about the spiritual, political, ecological, and cultural work her community has undertaken to heal from this legacy. She explained to me that most, if not all of these problems, are not "Indigenous," as they appeared when sacred laws were broken, such as treating plants and animals as soulless beings or as merchandise, as is the case with industries such as rubber, cocaine, logging, cattle, mining, etc.

This statement, together with other conversations with the elders of La Chorrera, led me to think that the "sacred" is not something totally religious. It is not a moral concern related to some mysterious and all-powerful being, but a concept that comes from the forest, from the ecosystem, that implies the balance and health of the planet. Therefore, "sacred" in the Amazonian context is not simply an adjective but a concept that encompasses the constraints of the very delicate relationships between people and the forest that play fundamental roles in the survival of Amazonian communities. Briefly, I theorized, the "sacred" may be about responsible ecological knowledge.

Fany officially introduced me to the AZICATCH board of directors on June 10th, 2019. At their Casa de Gobierno, they asked about my presence in the Resguardo Predio

Putumayo and my research. I told them that I was a Ph.D. candidate at McGill University and a researcher at CICADA – a research center that had been an AZICATCH partner for at least two years. I read them the script of my REB and told them about my experience teaching workshops on Indigenous law in the eastern territories of Colombia, along the Orinoco and Vichada rivers, in 2010-2011.

I explained that during that time, I had had the opportunity to live with different Indigenous communities, such as the Sikuani, the Piaroa, and the Puinave, who inhabit the Amazon biome in Colombia. I told them that the workshops I conducted were part of a project for the empowerment of Indigenous organizations, sponsored by the National Hydrocarbon Agency of Colombia and the Center for Social and International Studies based at Universidad de Los Andes in Bogota. And finally, I explained how affiliation with these organizations allowed me to establish working relationships with Indigenous associations in Colombia, such as the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon – OPIAC, and the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia – ONIC, which simultaneously helped me to appreciate the issues of land rights and land use from the Indigenous perspective.

However, the AZICATCH executive board did not seem impressed. On the contrary, they seemed a bit reluctant to welcome my presence in the Resguardo. Then Fany intervened and added that I am the nephew of Ruth Chaparro, president of the NGO FUCAI, who worked with AZICATCH for more than 20 years. Immediately, the attitude of the board of directors changed positively, and I was invited to the Maloca to speak that same night with Cacique Manuel. Cacique Manuel's Maloca was located in the center of town and was guarded by a huge, well-fed Pit-bull. This caught my attention because it is unusual to see such a dog in a *resguardo*; first, because of the size of the animal and also because in the Amazonian Indigenous communities I met in Colombia, dogs are not pets. On the contrary, they are used for hunting and only get to eat the leftovers of what they hunt; consequently, if the dogs are not good hunters, they starve to death. I assumed that this Pit-bull was a fantastic hunter.

I had brought *mambe* (pulverized coca leaves) and Piel Roja cigarettes as an offering to show respect to the Cacique. It was around 7 p.m., and Cacique Manuel was sitting on a small bench in the middle of the *mambeadero*, shirtless and barefoot. On the wall behind him, there was a two-meter-high portrait of Jesus, the kind you only see in churches. This also seemed a bit atypical to me. I have seen many protestant Indigenous communities along the Vichada, Inirida, and Orinoco rivers, but these communities generally reject their ancient traditional values and try to imitate a *colono* (settler) lifestyle, so it was strange to find this huge portrait in a Maloca, a traditional and sacred Amazonian house.

I expected then some kind of Christian ritual or prayer, but there was none. There was not even a reference to Jesus or God. The Cacique received me in a completely different manner than I had been received by the AZICATCH executive council (who were also seated around him). Cacique Manuel, a very kind and quiet old man in his 70's, asked me what had brought me to the Resguardo. I answered that I was working on my doctoral thesis, whose main objective was to find a way to support the life projects of the Indigenous people by applying their traditional values to improve their relations with the government and other foreign institutions. I also told him that, as a student, I was committed to supporting any work they were already doing or planning to do in the community.

With the exception of Fany and Manuel's wife, all the people attending the Maloca were men, about 30 people in total. Then the cacique asked Fany (who was sitting across from me) why she had invited me to her community. This, I learned, is very unusual because the circle of the word (or *mambeadero*) is an exclusive men's space; women in the Amazon are not allowed to be there or participate, but Fany was an exception. She has been the only Uitoto woman allowed to be in that context. She told the cacique that she was there specifically to support a project with the local school "Casa del Conocimiento," which aimed to consult the whole community on the creation of a "museum[33]" or a place

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[33] The "museum" was a project of the Escuela Casa del Conocimiento that required internal consultation with the community. The initial objective of this space was to maintain the memory of the rubber boom at the beginning of the 20th century in order to make the past known to both the younger generations of the Resguardo and visitors from abroad. This idea was reformulated after the internal consultation and became two, a traveling exhibition with the participation

to safeguard the memory of the past in a space where students and the whole community could learn. Angelito, the vice president of AZICATCH, was also asked for his opinion. He said that if it was a project with the school, he would not interfere but then asked – sarcastically – that next time she brings someone with financial resources, not just a student. Fany kindly reminded him that it was not up to him to decide whether the project and my participation would take place because it was a decision of the whole council, that is, the *caciques* and *capitanes* of the 23 communities representing some 3000 inhabitants of La Chorrera. After that, Angelito chose to remain silent.

Later, Cacique Manuel spoke and said that he knew Fany, her actions, her family, and that he also knew my family and their actions for more than twenty years and that he was sure that I was not going to let any of them down, so he was going to speak on my behalf before the council. No one said anything after those words, and Fany and I were asked to leave the Maloca so they could continue discussing other matters. We left, and when we arrived at Doña Estelita's house (the person who was hosting us), Fany told me: "This is good. If Manuelito approves of our work, everything should be fine." And she was right. We had a meeting with almost 150 people where Fany and the school principal introduced me to the community and consulted on the "museum" project. They were all committed to this initiative and helped shape it by choosing a name for the project and its main objective, which was basically to reconnect their elders with the younger generations by communicating their own history. This history, they made clear, should not refer only to the dark chapter of La Casa Arana.[34] What happened before and after that period of time was equally important. Thus, my presence and my work with the school were approved. That same evening, I was invited back to the *mambeadearo*.

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of AZICATCH and a space in the school that could tell the story before, during and after the rubber boom, as the community claimed that their history goes far beyond the first encounter with "el hombre blanco" (white people).

[34] The Casa Arana alludes both to the Compañía Peruana de la Amazonía, formerly known as Casa Arana y Hermanos, which had control of Putumayo during the first half of the 20th century, and to the headquarters of this company located in La Chorrera, where thousands of Indigenous people were murdered. In the following chapters I will expand on the importance of this place.

Cacique Manuel welcomed me to the community and told me that I could count on him for whatever I might need. Angelito said that he accepted the will of the council but that he was not going to support or have anything to do with me or the project; then, he said that the cacique was responsible for me and what I could do or not do. Cacique Manuel said "I am an old man. I had many responsibilities when I was on the board of AZICATCH, which I created, and now I have more responsibilities as an old man. I have had to deal with politicians, presidents, businesspeople, and armed groups. I have literally been tied to a pole in my Maloca for days defending my people and my community. I have always proudly assumed the role and responsibility that the community has given me. That *is why* we are here. That is *why there is* a territory. That is why AZICATCH *exists. So,* if you say that this is *my* responsibility even though I am no longer on the AZICATCH board, I will gladly assume it."

Everyone was silent for a moment, and Angelito did not say a word. Then Juan Carlos Gittoma said, "I am the Secretary of Culture at AZICATCH, and I will work with Camilo to promote projects that are aligned with our *plan de vida* and our people. That is why I was chosen to be part of AZICATCH. This is my responsibility." "Very well, then you will talk to Camilo and see how you can help each other," said Cacique Manuel. Angelito said nothing. Once again, I was asked to leave because they had to talk about other matters. Cacique Manuel walked me to the door, and I thanked him for his support and for offering his Maloca to discuss my proposal. He told me that I had nothing to thank him for, "my Maloca is always open; we always meet every night to discuss what has happened and to plan what is going to happen," said Cacique Manuel. Once in the backyard, and to avoid the uncomfortable silence, I asked him about his Pit Bull: "I am sure he is a great hunter," I said. He replied: "Not really, it was a gift from my eldest son. He gave it to me before he left; that is why I take care of him (the dog)."

The next morning, Juan Carlos came to Estelita's house to talk about the work with AZICATCH, and more specifically, to share with me what the Secretariat of Culture has been doing. Juan Carlos told me that despite their isolation and the threat of violence hanging over them, the Uitoto, Bora Okaine, and Muinane nations of the Chorrera community had been working for over a century on various projects from their culture to

overcome poverty, environmental deterioration and foster social cohesion. In addition, since 2012, one hundred years after the creation of La Casa Arana, they also decided to invite the Colombian and international community to join efforts to overcome their colonial legacy.

Under the slogan "Sobrevivientes Victoriosos" (Victorious Survivors) and with the support of the NGO FUCAI, they initiated dialogues with the Colombian Historical Memory Center, which is a government institution aimed at commemorating the millions of victims of violence in Colombia. According to AZICATCH's *plan de vida* (see appendix E), their main objective is to find allies in the Western world to help them rebuild their social fabric and communicate the silenced suffering of the forest, elders, and ancestors, as the sacred plants of coca and tobacco told them that the only way to solve current problems and regain control over their future is to address the problems of the past.

Phase 3: "The Other History."

The projects we agreed upon initiated the third phase of my research on information exchange, which I called "The Other History." This phase was designed to follow up on the three AZICATCH initiatives that were agreed upon during the second phase: the editing of a book, a workshop on Geographic Information Systems with the Casa del Conocimiento, and an itinerant exhibition. In contributing to the facilitation of each of these actions, I intended to collect information that would allow for further research on the applications of community organizing to intercultural understanding and conflict resolution and *buen vivir*. These specific initiatives were divided into sub-sections in order to better illustrate the intricacies of the research project.

- **Part A: Book Editing. August-September 2019**

With funding from CICADA, I compiled and edited four investigations conducted by the Indigenous nations of La Chorrera. These critical investigations include first-hand accounts

detailing the legacy of the rubber boom that took place at the turn of the century in the Putumayo region. This publication is essential as a research tool and as a space for marginalized voices that have so far gone unheard regarding this violent episode in a complex history of colonialism, neocolonialism, Indigenous resilience, ecology, and extraction. This work was expected to be published in July 2020 by the Department of Anthropology at Universidad de Los Andes. I will elaborate on this in the Chapter III.

The next two parts were scheduled to take place between April and September 2020. However, once I returned to Colombia in March after working with the Embera nation in the Bayano region of Panama, the Covid-19 pandemic forced us to indefinitely postpone our work until it was safe for the community to receive me back. What follows is the work that was originally scheduled:

- Part B: Geographic Information Systems workshop. April-May 2020
  With CICADA's support, I had planned to lead a group of students from the local "Casa del Conocimiento" school to map and relate the stories of their elders, along with the distribution of sacred sites. The youth were to be guided through a process of knowledge mobilization using technology such as GPS, photography, interviews, and video recording. The publication of this map in digital media would be carried out according to further guidance from the local school board.

- Part C: Exhibition. The exhibition project received funding from the Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement/SSHRC. This part concerned a community-based traveling exhibition that was expected to take place in 2020. It would be an apolitical knowledge exhibition aimed at presenting a critical view, linking the rubber boom that occurred in the early 20th century with current extractive industries that endanger the survival of several Indigenous communities in the Amazon rainforest. Currently produced at the Resguardo Predio Putumayo, the exhibition is an attempt at reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, where first-hand voices can speak within historically exclusive (and violent) spaces. An essential component is the exhibition's scheduled stops, strategically located in the most important former rubber ports of Colombia, Peru, Brazil, and the United Kingdom, where the current reality of Amazonian

communities will be exposed to larger populations that may be complicit in and/or benefit from resource extraction in the Amazon.

In summary, the original plan for my own data collection was to support AZICATCH initiatives such as a) the compilation and editing of their book; b) to begin working with the Casa del Conocimiento to strengthen the communication of their own history among elders and younger generations; and c) an itinerant exhibition that was planned to tour the cities that had the largest stakes in the rubber industry, an effort that would expand the community's potential for conservation, education, health, and cultural empowerment.

Both AZICATCH and I had anticipated potential positive outcomes, as effective Knowledge Mobilization often leads to positive mental health outcomes and opportunities to expand support networks. This would be one of the first places where Amazonian Indigenous peoples can choose the terms and topics in which they speak, allowing diplomacy to be introduced into cross-cultural and reconciliation spaces. Therefore, this was an opportunity not only for those who are going to speak but for those who are going to listen. This group of listeners was intended to include State organizations, academic institutions, members of the public, and myself, the researcher. However, as I mentioned, parts B and C had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pandemics and other demons

The Covid-19 pandemic has transformed all human interactions on this planet. AZICATCH and OPIAC, for example, closed their territories in early April, asking all non-Indigenous people to leave these lands, which has slowed down my work and that of other researchers. I believe that this situation is far from temporary and requires the reinvention of research methods, including the present research and the whole field of anthropology. It is not feasible to go back to a past 'normal,' especially considering that what we have experienced so far cannot and should not be ignored. Even in the most optimistic scenario, if there is a vaccine for the virus soon, the time it requires to be tested responsibly and safely for the entire population would require several months, perhaps years.

These transformations have also pushed the conceptual boundaries of disciplines such as anthropology, which, as the study of human relationships within and with the world, must also be reviewed in the current pandemic situation. Consequently, it is necessary to understand the global and local context in which these studies must be developed. As in other pre-pandemic scenarios, anthropology should not focus only on one of the possible post-pandemic scenarios that have been theorized from different disciplines since all of them can occur simultaneously. With the above in mind, I believe it is necessary to review some of the hypotheses that have been put forward about the social changes that will occur in the coming times. Many scholars and intellectuals throughout the modern world have reflected on how the current pandemic has changed the known world and how they see the way forward. For example, the recent publication *Wuhan Soup* (2020) involved many notable intellectuals, including the two opposing views of South Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han and his Slovenian colleague Slavoj Žižek.

On the one hand, Han imagines a post-pandemic world in which capitalism would become more authoritarian and gain more strength. He predicts more coercive regimes in which citizens consent to State surveillance and control through digital technologies. He adds that states of emergency would become the norm, and individualism would flourish while solidarity would diminish. Han's essay coincides with statements by former papal nuncio Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò and Cardinals Gerhard Ludwig Mueller, Joseph Zen, and Janis Pujats. All of them warn the Catholic community of the "powers interested in creating panic among the world's population with the sole aim of permanently imposing unacceptable forms of restriction of freedoms, controlling people and monitoring their actions" (Veritas liberabit vos, 2020). On the other hand, Žižek conjectures that the pandemic has harmed capitalism by paving the way for social solidarity and thus controlling the world economy. The philosopher adds that this situation could annihilate populist nationalism, so that borders would be questioned and cooperation between nations would flourish. According to the author, this cooperation is the most rational decision that people can make to save themselves without threatening other forms of life.

Žižek's opinion does not differ much from that of my Indigenous colleagues in the Colombian Amazon, as I will show in Chapter III, with the statements of Kuiru and

Gualinga. For these Amazonian nations, this period of isolation is not necessarily unknown since, in their traditions, people are required to isolate themselves in order to move from one stage of life to a more "advanced" one that brings a complete understanding of the complex relationships contained in the sacred laws that ensure *buen vivir*. This can be seen in birth rituals, menarche, and shamanism, in which individuals keep themselves isolated to protect themselves from evil spirits while purifying themselves by reflecting on their past, listening to the advice of elders, and following specific diets in order to prepare their minds and bodies for what is to come. According to my fellow Indigenous colleagues, the uniqueness of this pandemic is that all of humanity has been asked to isolate itself at the same time, meaning that all humans must prepare themselves by reflecting on past actions in order to be ready to enter the next human stage, not as individuals but as part of a greater unity.

These views represent different paths the world can take. A "modern" approach supported by the status quo, which employs fear to foster individualism and social coercion while increasing State control over human rights and non-human life; and a more "progressive" and inclusive one that needs the support of civil society to foster solidarity and social cohesion to demand State responsibility in the protection of human rights and respect for others. Given this, I understand this pandemic situation as an obligatory invitation to renew and revalue our forms, procedures, actions, knowledge, values, and, above all, our time and impact on this planet. I also consider it imperative for science to abandon once and for all the position of "observer" and to support those paths that promote respect for biological and cultural diversity. In Gramsci's terms, the COVID-19 pandemic may be a unique objective condition that puts all human lives at stake and, in doing so, has also become an exceptional subjective condition that has brought most people together to find a solution.

Plan B
Flexibility and feasibility

In the event that travel restrictions had been lifted in early 2021, I would have consulted with AZICATCH and OPIAC on the next step and assessed the risk of travel to the locations where exposure was planned: Leticia, Manaus, Iquitos, Bogota, or Bristol, cities

that currently have a high number of cases. Thus, in the hypothetical event that we had determined that there was zero chance we could contract the virus, I would have immediately rescheduled with the institutions that were to host the exhibit. Despite this, the exhibition could not take place before March 2021, which is when I am due to present my dissertation at McGill University. This situation, however, did not substantially affect the core of my research. Initially, the traveling exhibition was the object of observation of my research, then it was considered the best way to gather information for my dissertation and at the same time support AZICATCH's goal, to communicate and reconcile its own history with non-Indigenous actors in order to prevent similar events in the future.

Fortunately, this goal and my research efforts were successfully maintained despite the revision of the original project. My plan evolved from a traveling exhibit to a digital web platform that could convey the messages that the communities of La Chorrera need to communicate to a wider audience. With this change, the goals of my research, as well as the methods I use, remained strong and directional despite unforeseen circumstances. In a general sense, as noted above, KMb relies on the collaborative work of different actors to bridge the gap between research and practice. On the other hand, PAR is flexibly applied to unforeseen circumstances such as the COVID-19 situation, as it adapts well to the demands of promoting anthropological research at a distance, transforming the traditional researcher-informant dynamic into collaborative work, in which both parties become co-researchers (Lomeli and Rappaport, 2018).

Furthermore, the object of analysis of this research involves scenarios that require transcultural, or rather, trans-epistemological negotiation. As it will be demonstrated in this research, and as Gualinga and Kuiru will describe in Chapter III, trans-epistemological negotiations have been historically absent from decision-making scenarios in the Amazonian province. This absence aggravates the vulnerability of the Amazon region to exogenous pathogens and diseases, such as the current pandemic situation. It is also evident in the many examples in history where "adventurers" and "saviors" from the West have brought disease, death, and degradation to the region. Thus, today it can be said that these unsolicited and unconsented interventions by the West, together with the negligence, corruption, and opportunistic mentality of colonial *eldoradoesque* logics, have plunged

Leticia, the capital of Colombian Amazon's province, into a crisis, depriving it of hospitals, sanitation, sewage, and adequate facilities, making it a perfect breeding ground for the highest rates of COVID-19 transmission and death in Colombia.

In sum, whether or not the original plan for the exhibition can ultimately be realized, I argue that the current COVID-19 situation, rather than inhibiting my research methods, my questions, and my object of analysis, further illustrates the need for anthropology to support grassroots projects aimed at building epistemological bridges and reconciling human and non-human relationships. Within this research framework, I have built these bridges through the creation of two products that I will expand on in Chapter V: a web platform – Manguare.red – that communicates the voices of my Indigenous colleagues, and an ÉMPI model. Because of the above, I am confident that this shift in the object of observation provided me with the information to "map" the sacred relationships of *buen vivir*, broadening the modern understanding of progress and well-being.

Chapter II
Plants Die

La historia es un profeta con la mirada vuelta hacia atrás: por lo que fue, y contra lo que fue, anuncia lo que será. (Galeano, Las venas abiertas de América Latina)

Modern Narratives of Extractivist Representation: The "Modern" Socioeconomic Context

In a given society, *personhood* is a category that carries rights. But also, in the words of Scott (2006, p.53), "[t]he idea of sharing relations and mutual responsiveness between the human and other-than-human aspects of the environment constitutes *personhood*." Personhood is then a concept applied to those who consider themselves equal before a higher law. But when two different societies with different epistemological systems meet, it is difficult to draw the line of who is or is not a person, and, in turn, it is not clear to whom their rights are recognized. As I have shown in the last chapter, humanity and personhood are almost interchangeable terms for moderns, whereas, for Amerindian nations, personhood includes not only humanity but also other beings.

This difference is not irreconcilable, as has been demonstrated in the Latin American cases of Ecuador and Bolivia, whose Constitutions that embrace *buen vivir*

recognize the "Rights of Nature." This was an important step in recognizing that human beings and nature are not really two separate units, but this recognition also opened a political debate which is, who speaks on behalf of nature? Who would be its legal representative? Is it the government? The people? Is it the majorities or the minorities? Could it be nature itself? These questions also apply to Colombia, where the Rights of Nature – specifically those of the Atrato River and the Amazon biome – have recently received constitutional [35] recognition. Moreover, unlike Ecuador and Bolivia, the Colombian Constitution recognizes the right of Indigenous peoples to exercise jurisdictional and legislative functions according to their own rules and procedures (art. 246). This may lead to the interpretation that, if nature is recognized as a person by an Indigenous nation, the State must recognize the Rights of Nature, at least within the territory of that nation[36].

However, Colombia has serious historical problems of violence and violation of human rights towards minority groups that must be adequately addressed together with the recognition of the Rights of Nature. I am referring to reconciliation processes between the national government and the historically forgotten and mistreated Indigenous populations; a process towards future successful inter-epistemological negotiations that should lead to guaranteeing the rights of nature in Indigenous territories. Such a reconciliation process is important because during intercultural encounters in which both groups strive to achieve mutual goals, unresolved prior disputes often arise that derail the intent of the encounter. Thus, it is clear that historical relationships must be analyzed and addressed, if not as part of the consultation process, then certainly before coming to the negotiating table.

These reconciliation processes take on greater relevance now that Juan Manuel Santos (former President of Colombia) and Luciano Marín Arango, alias "Iván Márquez" (representative of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC) officially signed a long-awaited Peace Agreement on September 26th, 2016, which would put an end to a

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[35] Constitutional Court Ruling <u>STC 4360 2018.</u>

[36] Article 246: "The authorities of the Indigenous peoples may exercise jurisdictional functions within their territorial scope, in accordance with their own rules and procedures, provided that they are not contrary to the Constitution and the laws.

fratricidal war of more than fifty years. While the impact that this conflict had on our country is immeasurable, the signing of the Peace Agreement opened for discussion a series of conflicts that had remained largely undocumented; namely, the territorial disputes now faced by the populations that lived in the war zones. It should be noted that a large majority of these populations are Indigenous groups, including those located in the Amazon rainforest.

Paradoxically, the signing of the peace agreement and the withdrawal of guerrilla troops also brought with it concern for the future of Indigenous peoples immersed in territories besieged by violence. Fany Kuiru Castro, a leader of the Uitoto Indigenous people in Colombia, who is also a friend of mine and one of my research collaborators on this thesis, outlined her people's concerns following the Peace Treaty during the 2016 Centre for Indigenous Conservation and Development Alternatives – CICADA – conference in Quebec, Canada. She argued that the fear produced by the presence of the FARC in the Colombian Amazon somehow prevented the exploitation of these territories by extractive companies. "What is going to happen now?" she asked.

In order to understand the reasons underlying the concerns of the Uitoto and other Indigenous peoples after the Peace Agreement, it is necessary to analyze the historical situations that these populations have had to endure as a result of the presence of outsiders: colonial powers, the national government or multinational corporations, who have sought to extract their resources. Through this chapter, I intend to provide different historical points of view on such events, not to answer Fany's question, but to explore and understand such relationships from a historical perspective and in turn, shed light on why peoples such as the Uitoto in Colombia associate the Peace Agreement between the national government and the FARC with the re-entry into their traditional territories of ego-logical settlers, adventurers, heroes or liberators in search of their various *Dorados*.

I will begin by providing some useful concepts on extractivism and then present a general chronological account of the extractive industry in Latin America, particularly in the central Andean and northern Amazon regions. These two regions, although

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epistemologically dissimilar, are ecologically [37]and historically intertwined: what happens in the former affects the latter, and vice versa. I examine the associations and outcomes of extractive practices before, during and after colonial and imperialist subjugations. Furthermore, to thoroughly examine the impacts of extractivism, this chapter incorporates sources such as newspapers, publications, ethnographic accounts, and official documents, as well as books and academic journals from different disciplines such as history, anthropology, biology, economics, and psychology. Within this study, the impacts and disputes that colonial logics and cyclical political-economic crises on a global scale have brought to Latin America will be revealed.

Introduction To Extractivism

In economic terms, Dietz and Engels (2017) define extractivism as "a growth-oriented path of national development based on rent-seeking activities; that is, the large-scale exploitation, production and export of raw materials" (P.2). They also extend this definition to a more geopolitical characterization when they state that extractivism, "as a development strategy throughout the global South, has not only manifested itself in quantitative or macroeconomic terms, but also qualitatively, and is socially contested" (P.3). Gavin Bridge (2004) offers a more ecological perspective and defines extractivism as "a physical concept that describes the separation and removal of a component of a larger ecosystem. As an economic concept, it denotes the accumulation and transfer of economic surplus" (Bridge, 2004, p. 236). Along these lines, Acosta (2013) states that extractive projects are "activities that remove large quantities of natural resources – not limited to minerals or oil – that are not processed, or are processed only to a limited degree, especially for export" (Acosta, 2013, in Engels and Dietz, 2017, p. 21). Similarly, political ecologist Victoria Marín Vurgos agrees with Marisela Svampa's notion of extractivism when she defines it as "a type of accumulation based on the overexploitation of natural resources, as well as on the expansion of frontiers into territories previously considered unproductive" (Svampa, 2012b, p. 45 in Engels and Dietz, 2017, p.198).

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[37] Water cycles, biodiversity and climate regulation, see (Wittmann, 2010) and (Mortati, A. F., & André, T. 2019).

Based on these definitions, this thesis will discuss extractivism as a systematic practice that transforms nature into economic capital through the overexploitation of ecological systems. Within this definition, extractivism encompasses practices such as mining, logging and oil extraction, as well as extensive agriculture and water management – as long as the extraction of these resources leads to environmental degradation –; furthermore, since people are also part of ecological systems, this includes the exploitation of workers, as long as it leads to the degradation of social/natural relations.

Pre-Colonial Extractivism

Some authors place the origins of extractivism in the unequal practices of interhemispheric exchange that began after the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas [38] (Bebbington & Bury, 2013). It would be a mistake to assert that there was no resource extraction in the Americas prior to the arrival of the Spanish. In fact, there are several archaeological and historical accounts that describe intensive agricultural practices in the Andes. On this, Bebbington and Bury (2013) explain that most of what we know about mineral extraction "before the conquest" in the Inca and Mexica empires "was limited to the first-hand accounts of Spanish chroniclers who witnessed the conquest [plunder]" such as Guaman Poma de Ayala (1980), de la Vega, Urquizo and Araníbar (1967) or de Las Casas (1971, p. 31). Likewise, Bebbington and Burry also explain that recent archaeological research has brought to light important new information about intensive mining and resource extraction activities in Central and South America, in places such as Teotihuacan, Caral and Tiwanaku, that took place as recently as 4,000-5,000 years ago (ibid, p. 32).

However, the presence of mining and intensive agricultural practices in the Americas before the arrival of the Spanish does not necessarily mean that extractivism

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[38] Columbus claimed the land for the Spanish Crown. When the numerous inhabitants of the island approached them, Columbus and his men offered them some red caps, glass beads and "many other things of little value," which apparently "gave them great pleasure and made them such friends of ours, that it was a wonder to see them" (Columbus, quoted in Markham, 1893, p.33). The local people, in return, gave them parrots, skeins of cotton thread, darts, and some of the gold jewelry which, as Columbus notes, they wore on their arms, legs, ears, around their necks, and up their noses. (Bebbington & Bury, 2013, p. 27).

dates back to pre-colonial times. This is because, while all human groups extract elements from nature to supply their own personal needs – such as food, shelter and clothing – the first condition of extractivism used in this thesis states that it must be **a systematic practice that transforms nature into economic capital**[39]. This was not the case in large pre-colonial economic systems such as those found in Latin America, specifically in the Inca Empire. In this great kingdom, wealth was not measured in terms of money, mainly because there were no standardized currencies. Rather, an individual's wealth was based on their social networks and the size of their family or *ayllu* (Murra, 1985), which may resemble Bourdieu's (1997) definition of social capital. Similarly, social status among Amazonian communities was not measured by the collection of material goods, but by the experience and knowledge a person accumulated over the years, in this case, cultural capital (Raffles, 2014; Blaser et al., 2004; Pineda, 1985). Thus, it can be argued that since social mobility did not depend on the accumulation of capital prior to Spanish colonization, **the transformation of nature into economic capital was unnecessary.**

As for ancient agricultural or mining extraction processes, there is insufficient evidence for the Amazon region prior to European colonization to help assess the nature and impact of such practices. However, there are some accounts by European explorers such as Francisco de Orellana, Pedro Teixeira and members of the Jesuit, Capuchin and Dominican religious orders, which describe slash and burn or shifting cultivation as "the main agricultural practice used by native Amazonian communities" (de Carvajal, 1894; Camacho, 1985; Davis, 2016). In essence, this agricultural system consists of clearing and burning forest vegetation before planting food, and then moving to a new clearing after two or three harvests. As described by more recent ethnographers, such as Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff (1967), Pineda (1985) and Betty J. Meggers (1996), this type of agriculture is still practiced today by most Amazonian peoples, although with the incorporation of new technologies (such as metal tools) that help meet the demands of the growing population.

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[39] According to Bourdieu, there are different forms of capital that allow social mobility, such as social networks (social capital), or knowledge and intellectual skills (cultural capital); in our definition of extractivism, nature must be transformed into "economic capital," which can be understood as monetary currency.

At first glance, slash-and-burn agriculture in the Amazon rainforest may appear to be a non-ecological practice that can lead to environmental degradation (at least that was my experience when I entered **a *chagra*[40]** for the first time and saw a hectare of freshly cut trees in the middle of the forest). However, Betty J. Meggers (1996) has demonstrated through a meticulous comparative study among five different Indigenous communities that slash-and-burn is perhaps the only known agricultural practice in Amazonia that allows soil and forest recovery after logging. As Meggers writes in her book *Amazonia* (1996), "shifting cultivation is not a primitive or incipient agricultural method, but a specialized technique that has evolved in response to the specific climate and soil conditions of the tropical lowlands" (Meggers, 1996, p. 23).

Compared to agriculture, metal mining was a secondary activity in the Andes. Although large veins of gold and silver were known during the Inca period, few people worked them, mainly because there were other more necessary activities, and these metals were only used to pay tribute to the king and to produce luxury and religious goods. It can be said that the technology used to extract these metals had a low environmental impact[41]. Little is known about State supervision and regulation of mining practices; however, there are several sources that describe the presence of an entity known as *Supay*, who lived inside the mines governing the extraction of minerals and protecting miners from accidents, in exchange for homage and loyalty (De Santo Tomas, 1951; Taylor, 1980).

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[40] The *chagra* is a hectare of land within the forest where Amazonian families grow their food and teach their children about cultural and ecological relationships. These *chagras* have productive periods of a maximum of five years. After that period, the *chagras* are returned to the forest and, after 20 years, are reclaimed and used again by the same family.

[41] For example, as described by Alberto Regal (1946), the most common method for extracting gold was to create openings in the rocks, using deer antlers and pulverizing the rocks with harder stones such as andesite and granite (Mendoza & San Miguel 2011). Subsequently, the pulverized stone was gently agitated on large, slightly concave plates filled with water to separate the metals from the earth. Common rocks such as limestone, basalt, andesite, granite or diorite were also of enormous value in the Inca Empire. Not only were they valued because they were used as the main material for building imperial structures and local infrastructures, but also because rocks were considered to have the capacity to retain a vital energy called *camay*, which allowed these rocks to move or speak (Taylor 1974; De Leon). For this reason, in imperial buildings it is common to see how structures were adapted and built according to the odd shapes of particular rocks, rather than standardized forms.

In summary, although there is evidence to suggest the existence of intensive[42] agricultural and mining activities in South America prior to Spanish colonization, such practices cannot be categorized as extractivism for two main reasons. First, agricultural and mining activities were not intended to transform nature into economic capital, since the accumulation of wealth was not the primary means of achieving social welfare or recognition. Secondly, intensive agricultural and mining activities were adapted to the natural cycles of the environment, as is the case today, where reciprocal exchanges with the environment continue to take place in the Indigenous territories of the Andes and in the Amazon basin.

Early Colonial Extractive Practices

In this section, I argue that common colonial practices in Latin America related to land exploitation and property making always involved the objectification of both people and nature. It is important to revisit the colonial history of the region because, as Dietz and Engels (2017) remind us, "social actors, relations, and institutions do not emerge from a social and political vacuum, but are historically shaped and thus reflect, for example, different (albeit entangled) [colonial] histories, but also different material conditions." In other words, current relations around extractivism are the product of a colonial history that shaped relations between the State and subaltern groups, and also between people and nature. In more ideological terms, capitalism and colonialism are complementary processes that enabled the current extractive relations in Latin America and the world. As described by authors from Marx (2013;2014) to Sonja Killoran-McKibbin and Anna Zalik (2016), the exploitation of nature goes hand in hand with the exploitation of workers.

There are a number of situations that exemplify the link between the exploitation of nature and the conscription of people for economic purposes, both during and after the colonial era. Cotton picking, sugar cane harvesting, indigo picking and timber cutting were the most common examples of intersecting labor and land exploitation in Central America and the Caribbean during the centuries of Spanish colonization (Fiehrer, 1979;

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[42] Moreover, mimicry in pre-colonial times did not need the input of chemicals such as cyanide and mercury to separate minerals from rocks. See (Guimares, Et al. 2011)

Stinchcombe, 1995; Wolf, 2010). Labor exploitation in Latin America was accompanied by the siege of racist and discriminatory practices that led Indigenous nations to abandon their territories in search of education and health, eventually associating with the colonos (mestizo settlers from other regions) and adopting their *mestizo* practices. This is the process known as *de-indigenization (*Montaña, 2016). Many Indigenous territories were progressively stripped of their original inhabitants, divided into lots or sold. In addition, at times, Indigenous peoples were forcibly displaced from their lands. This process is known as *deterritorialization* (Escobar, 1998; Liffman, 1998; Lunstrum, 2009). The few families that remained in their territories and did not migrate to the cities or other areas that today constitute Colombia were forced to pay *terraje*[43] to the new owners of their lands (Lame, 1971).

The twin processes of *de-indigenization* and *de-territorialization*, however intertwined, were not necessarily constitutive; that is, there were families who lost their territories but not their Indigenous identity, and there were also families who identified with the mestizos but continued to retain their Indigenous lands and practices. In a word, deterritorialization and de-indigenization are not necessarily correlated. This is because those who adopted "mestizo" practices often sought to avoid negative associations with a discriminated minority but did not necessarily abandon the ways in which Indigenous people knew and related to the rest of the non-human world. In other words, rejecting the designation "indio" is a process of identification, but it does not necessarily compromise Indigenous identity (Cháves & Zambrano, 2010; Koziar & Gómez, 2017; Rappaport, 1996).

In his book *Holocausto* (2000), Roberto Pineda explains that the situation of the Indigenous inhabitants of the Amazon was slightly different, but no less harmful than that

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[43] The *terraje* was a system of exploitation in which the landless Indigenous had to pay with labor to the owners of the Andean haciendas in order to have a small piece of land to live on and grow their own food.

of the Andes. This is because the systems of control such as the *Encomienda*[44] that were put in place in the Andes were not very effective in the Amazon because of the resistance of the local Indigenous people and because the Amazon was extremely remote for the *Encomenderos* and the State to impose their authority. Pineda also explains how, after failing to establish a civil economic regime, the Spanish Crown decided to sponsor religious missions (Franciscans, in the case of New Granada) that established several villages in the Amazon along the Putumayo River and the upper Caquetá (Pineda, 2000, p. 24).

This religious project faced the same challenges as the Encomienda system, in addition to the constant threat of the Portuguese, who took control of several Amazonian rivers, raiding and enslaving entire Indigenous communities (ibid, p. 25). Although the Portuguese began their expansion into the Amazon region after the Spaniards, the former eventually consolidated their dominion over the area after the annihilation of millions of Indigenous people (ibid). This violent conquest was carried out by large groups of fortune hunters, sometimes known as *bandeirantes* (infected by the *El Dorado* syndrome), who were dedicated to the extraction of everything that could be sold, such as minerals, plants, timber, humans and other animals (Morse, 1965).

The impact of these fortune hunters was enormous in the Amazon, and their legacy is still visible today[45], as the Spanish regime was unable to prevent the advance of the *bandeirantes*. The absence of government and the inability to maintain these territories was not an isolated event, but a situation that occurred throughout the Amazon, with the exception of some territories, such as present-day northern Argentina, where Jesuit missionaries provided military training to Guarani communities (Cortesao, 1951). Fortune

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[44]The system revolved around an authority figure known as the *encomendero*, who was in charge of the catechization of the Indigenous populations (*encomendados*) and used them as workers to exploit the lands assigned by the King in the viceroyalty.

[45] To begin with, they extended Portuguese dominion far beyond what was described by the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), which had moved the original demarcation of the papal bull of 1493 to "a new line 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands, omitting mention of the Azores" (Nunn 1882, p. 6), which is the present-day 46o W meridian.

hunters treated the forest as a lawless zone with an infinite source of bounty, thus framing subsequent relations between the Amazon, its people and the invading powers.

Late Colonialism: Ni Dios, ni Ley, ni Patria

In this section, I will continue to explore how violence was central to the processes of deterritorialization and property creation in the Amazon, defining the boundaries of nation-states. Systems of violence inherited from colonial powers, I argue, were not (and perhaps never have been) the monopoly of any Latin American government. However, weak governments often display an illusion of power and control over remote territories such as the Amazon by ignoring or supporting acts of violence. After this brief introduction to the geopolitics of the Amazon region after the wars of independence [46] in South America (1807-1814), I will analyze two case studies: the rubber boom in the Putumayo region and the annihilation of the Brazilian Atlantic rainforest.

In terms of political distribution, between the wars of independence and the early stages of the 20th century, two main processes took place in South America: the creation of national borders and the formation of local elites. Both processes were closely related to the exploitation of natural resources, since the economies of the newly independent nations relied (and in many countries still do) almost exclusively on the extractive sector, such as the extraction of renewable resources in the Amazon region and of non-renewable resources in Andean countries such as Peru and Bolivia (Bulmer, 2003). When speaking of diplomatic disputes in Latin America, particularly in the Amazon region, most historians agree that countries such as Brazil and Peru have historically justified their claims to these territories by applying arguments of *de facto* possession or actual occupation. In contrast, the countries that were part of the States of La Gran Colombia (1821-1831) (i.e., Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador) have claimed rights *of juris based on* the boundaries established by colonial and immediately post-colonial maps (Vidaurre, 1828; de la Vega, 1993; Gonzales, 2012; Patiño, 2013; Atehortúa, 2014).

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[46] The Peninsular War between France, Spain, Portugal and Great Britain (1807-1814) was used by Latin American leaders such as Simón Bolívar, Cornelio Saavedra and Francisco Antonio de Zela, among others, to promote Latin American independence battles.

These border disputes and the lack of governance over Amazonian territories perpetuated further damage to local populations, not only by claiming and exploiting the territories, but also by exploiting their populations. Given that neither the political regimes in conflict, nor the majority of scholars on territorial disputes in the region have contemplated an Indigenous perspective to analyze the underlying implications of these conflicting territories[47] (both for Indigenous and local populations), I have decided to address that issue in the third chapter of this thesis.

Case 1: The Devil's Paradise

When examining the disputed region of the tributaries of the Putumayo River, the impact of the aforementioned disputes is quite evident. On July 6, 1906, the inability of the Colombian and Peruvian governments to control this area led to the declaration of a *Modus Vivendi* agreement over the Amazon region, where both sides would withdraw their troops, and neither would attempt to exercise sovereignty or authority over it (Vallejo, 1908). This decision gave rise to a *Terra nullius* or "no man's land" between the Caquetá and Napo rivers, and as a result, Peruvian fortune hunters took advantage and monopolized rubber extraction, eliminating the few Colombian settlers who were in the rubber business, and through the enslavement of the Indigenous populations of the area (Hardenburg, 1912).

In 1909, the British newspaper The Truth published a series of articles describing the atrocities witnessed by American railway engineer Walter Ernest Hardenburg in the Putumayo region in 1907. In his book Devil's Paradise (1912), Hardenburg backed up these accusations by sharing his accounts, communications, and reports from other witnesses, denouncing abuses by a British-invested company known as "The Peruvian Amazon Rubber Company," which also operated in the Putumayo Valley. Based on his personal accounts, Hardenburg described[48] how employees of this company (formerly known as

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[47] If de *facto* or de *iuris* considerations were accurately enacted to decide who is the rightful owner of the land, then the territories should have been awarded to the hundreds of Indigenous communities that never conceded them to any European regime or to the aforementioned newly born States.

[48] Hardenburg writes: T]he wretches who formed it [La Casa Arana] began their infernal labors by chaining Serrano to a tree; then these exemplary employees of the 'civilizing enterprise,' as they call themselves, forcibly entering his wife's room, dragged the unhappy woman to the porch, and there, before the tortured eyes of the helpless Serrano, the head of the 'commission' outraged his unhappy victim. Not satisfied with this, they took all his merchandise, which amounted to

Casa Arana), kidnapped, raped and eventually murdered the families of Colombians who had also established rubber businesses in the area. Later, Hardenburg describes how he was kidnapped, while Serrano and the rest of the Colombians in the area were killed in a second raid.

The abuses suffered by these local families are undoubtedly horrific, although these atrocities are but a small example of the treatment of the Indigenous communities enslaved by The Peruvian Amazon Rubber Company. Hardenburg traces the origin of these abuses to the economic system employed by the company. In his book, he describes how the Indigenous workers were rewarded if they collected a minimum amount or more than the established rubber quota, receiving goods such as axes, food or trinkets. The author points out that when an Indigenous worker did not meet the quota, he was severely punished. Hardenburg gathered enough evidence to expose what he called "the results of this system"[49] (Ibid, p. 185).

From the creation of La Casa Arana in 1903 until the publication of Hardenburg's book in 1912, the author estimates that the number of Indigenous in the region, mainly from the Uitoto communities, had been reduced from fifty thousand to barely ten thousand (Hardenburg, 1912; Davis, 2016, p. 239). The international scandal produced by these revelations forced the British government to commission Sir Roger Casement, consul in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), to travel to the Putumayo region and write a report[50]. In 1912, the

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some 10,000 soles, together with his little son and the wretched woman who had just been so vilely outraged, loaded them into the boat and took them to El Encanto. Serrano had not seen them again, but had learned that his wife was used as a concubine by the criminal Loayza, while his tender son acted as a servant of the same disgusting monster (p. 148).

[49] 1. The peaceful Indigenous of Putumayo are forced to work day and night in the extraction of rubber, without the slightest remuneration, except for the food necessary to keep them alive. 2. They are kept in the most complete nudity, many of them do not even possess the biblical vine leaf. 3. They are stripped of their crops, their wives and children to satisfy the voracity, lechery and avarice of this company and its employees, who live on their food and rape their women. 4. They are sold wholesale and retail in Iquitos, at prices ranging from 20 to 40 pounds sterling each. 5. They are inhumanely whipped until their bones are exposed, and large raw sores cover them. 6. They are given no medical treatment, but are left to die, eaten by worms, when they serve as food for the dogs of the chieftains. 7. They are castrated and mutilated, and their ears, fingers, arms and legs are cut off. 8. They are tortured by fire and water, and tied up, crucified upside down. 9. Their houses and crops are burned and destroyed wantonly and for fun. 10. They are hacked to pieces and dismembered with knives, axes and machetes. Their children are grabbed by the feet and their heads are smashed against trees and walls until their brains are blown out. 12. Their elders are killed when they can no longer work for the company. 13. Men, women and children are shot to amuse the employees or to celebrate the *Sabbath of glory*. Or, instead, they are burned with kerosene so that the employees can enjoy their desperate agony.

[50] The crimes charged against many men now in the employment of the Amazon Peruvian Company are of the most heinous kind, including murder, rape, and constant flogging. The condition of things disclosed is utterly disgraceful, and

British Parliament initiated a public inquiry to establish the responsibilities of the board of directors of the Peruvian Rubber Company for the atrocities in the Amazon. Unfortunately, the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and, later, World War I (1914-1918) allowed public attention to dissipate on these matters. These other international conflicts, together with the negligence of the Peruvian and Colombian governments, allowed La Casa Arana to stay in business until a few years before the Colombo-Peruvian War (1932). No one was convicted or fined for these crimes.

This "Amazonian holocaust," as coined by Roberto Pineda (2000), raises many questions today, among them, what allowed this situation to occur? Furthermore, how could such large-scale human/nature exploitation persist for so many years? To answer these questions, many factors must be taken into account. First of all, one must consider that the principle of *de facto* occupation that the Brazilian and Peruvian governments had defended legitimized the rapacious and enslaving colonial mentality of the *bandeirantes*. Even if this part of the Amazon had been acquired by illegal means, it was still under the same authority of the *bandeirantes* because they were the ones who effectively controlled the land. Other contributing factors were the absence of legal and political authorities in the region, the negligence of the nations involved, and the role of what Hardenburg calls "world mercantilism"; that is, the overemphasis on profit imposed by the Western economic system. Hardenburg writes: "It is easy to condemn in advance the nation of Peru, under whose nominal control the foul spot of Putumayo exists, and to whose negligence and greed the blame for the events must largely be attributed, but the conscience of world commercialism should also be pricked" (ibid, p. 13).

Human and other-than- human associations

In his book *How Forests Think* (2013), Eduardo Kohn states that the rubber boom in the Amazon was a product of cultural and imperial techno-scientific conjunctures (ibid, p.160).

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fully justifies the worst charges brought against the agents of the Amazon Peruvian Company and their methods of administration in the Putumayo...the accumulated weight of the evidence we had gathered from station to station, and the condition of the Indigenous population as we had the opportunity of observing it in passing, left no doubt in our minds that the worst charges against the agents of the company were true" (p. 267).

This argument is based on the fact that, long before the boom, it was known that latex could be acquired in South America. However, as a product, latex had a very limited commercial use, mainly because of its physical properties, which made it oscillate between rigidity in cold environments and softness under warm temperatures. After Hancock discovered how to break the product's polymer chains by mastication processes in 1819, and Goodyear discovered the vulcanization method in 1835, the product became more stable under all temperatures. However, it was not until Dunlop used this product to manufacture bicycle tires in 1888, and the subsequent mass production of automobiles and other machines, that rubber extracted from Amazon trees was used industrially (Pineda, 2000, p. 28; Kohn, 2013 p. 160; Davis 2016).

There were only two main species of trees that could produce rubber in the Amazon valley: *Hevea Brasiliensis* and *Castilla Ulei* (black rubber). In the Putumayo valley, the most prominent species was black rubber, which produced a lower quality latex than Hevea, and only produced latex two or three times a year. It is important to note that there were no plantations of these trees, but rather they were scattered throughout the forest, since separation is the tree's survival mechanism against pathogens such as the *Microcyclus Ulei* fungus, which causes the South American leaf blight disease (Davis, 2016; Kohn, 2013, p.161; Dean, 1997; García-Romero, 2006).

The human response to the scattered distribution of trees in the forest, the low quality of black rubber latex and the minimal yield that each tree was capable of providing, played an important role in this holocaust, which can be seen in two specific scenarios. First, in order to collect enough rubber, rubber tappers in the Putumayo valley used an unsustainable method of latex collection: instead of cutting the tree to bleed the latex (as was done with Hevea in Brazil), the tappers decided to cut the whole tree, which meant that the trees themselves were even scarcer and harder to find. Secondly, due to the aforementioned difficulties in acquiring enough rubber, the profit margin for black rubber decreased. In response to this situation, La Casa Arana changed the system of *endeude* practiced in the Indigenous communities and rubber tappers to one of absolute slavery to increase profits and reduce labor costs.

It is worth noting that British concern over the Putumayo situation and the harrowing testimonies of both Mr. W.E Hardenburg and Sir Roger Casement, as well as the international public outrage they inspired, had little or no impact on ending the nefarious practices of La Casa Arana. On the contrary, during the years of the scandal (1908-1910), international rubber prices almost doubled, and Brazilian exports of the product also increased (Santos-Granero, 2002; Pineda 2000, p. 187). Paradoxically, the end of the Casa Arana and the rubber boom in the Amazon followed the strange association between two not-so-altruistic actors: a bio pirate and an Indigenous fungus. In 1876, Sir Henry Alexander Wickham smuggled some 70,000 Hevea seeds from Brazil to England. Once in the UK, royal botanist Joseph Dalton Hooker received the seeds in the Kew district and helped adapt them in the British colonies in Asia (Davis, 2016, p. 361-363).

Compared to the Amazon, Asian plantations flourished thanks to lower tariff rates, cheap labor, easier transportation and, above all, because Microcyclus Ulei, among other pathogens, did not exist in the Far East (Pineda, 2000, p. 185; Dean, 1997, p. 226). Perhaps Sir Henry Alexander Wickham did not know of the existence of this fungus, but by bringing the seeds to an environment free of the pathogen, the annual production of rubber in Asia increased from 3 tons in 1900 to 423,495 tons in 1919. In contrast, Brazilian exports increased slightly from 26,000 to 34,285 in the same years (Santos, 1980, p. 236 in Pineda 2000, p. 187). Although Brazil continued to export rubber, by 1925 the product extracted from the Putumayo region was so minimal that international rubber freighters stopped shipping to Peruvian ports (Pineda, 2000, p. 188; Davis, 2016, p. 360-367).

Case 2: Chronicle of a Loss Foretold

The fate of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest was no better than that of Putumayo. Unlike the northern Amazon, there was no massive slaughter of Indigenous people in this forest. However, the toll taken on the forest itself in the name of development was enormous. In his book *With Broadax and Firebrand* (1997), Warren Dean exposes the effects of intensive forestry and agriculture in this once biodiverse spot. The author points out that the Atlantic Forest is a complex system in which many biotic and abiotic agents reached an optimal balance. Precisely because of this complexity, a very small change can

seriously unbalance the entire system. Thus, according to Dean, because neither humans nor domestic animals evolved correlatively in this area, their activities seriously compromised the entire system.

The Brazilian Atlantic Forest or Mata Atlântica, formerly connected to the Amazon Valley, used to cover 15% of Brazil's territory, with 1 290 692.46 km². Today, it has only 95 000 km² of non-primary forest. This is less than 7.3% of the original area. These forests are extremely fragile environments because they are only able to store a very limited number of nutrients in their soil, due to the angle at which the sun hits the earth's surface and the region's heavy rainfall. As Dean writes, "They have little capacity to retain water and nutrients, and only reluctantly yield them to plants" (ibid, p. 9). Thus, simple clearing for agricultural purposes can destroy the few fungal species that are essential for nitrogen uptake (ibid, p. 15).

Dean mentions that deforestation of the Atlantic Forest began mainly during the 20th century, with extractive policies that encouraged logging for the export of "exotic" (and therefore more economically valuable) timber, while lower quality timber was used locally for fuel and construction. Once the wood was extracted, the remains were cleared and burned, and the soil obtained enough nutrients from the ashes to introduce industrial monocultures such as coffee. However, the soils of the Atlantic Forest "(...) inhibit root penetration, and once exposed by growers to sunlight and rain, can become more acidic, inhibiting further nutrient exchange (...)" (ibid, p. 9). Shortly after the clearing process, and often without prior cultivation, "cows took the place of people" (ibid, p. 281). In this process, foreign grass was planted for cattle grazing, while people continued to clear larger tracts of the forest. It can be said that the same dynamic was repeated over and over again, in a corrosive loop that has played out over the past two centuries.

Dean presents fundamental arguments about the rationale for this destructive behavior in the Brazilian context, although his comments can be extended to most of Latin America. He points out that, in Brazil, the forest ("la mata") is a symbol of the backward, the underdeveloped and the untamed (ibid, p.vii). This point of view is an inherited colonial logic, transferred from the time of Portuguese domination and the aforementioned

bandeirante expansion, in which individuals in search of their personal "El Dorado" devastated Indigenous land under the pretext of bringing civilization. Using this logic, validated by what Freud might have called "ego" (Freud, 1962), colonists saw themselves as adventurers, heroes or liberators, thus socially and morally justifying their actions to satisfy their personal desires. Even when colonizers engaged in the most disturbing atrocities (as in Putumayo), they saw these actions as rational because the Other, the uncivilized, the irrational, the Indigenous, was the true "savage."

The process of destruction that took place in Putumayo and the Atlantic Forest of Brazil follows a broader pattern of land exploitation as part of the colonial project. In search of fortune and opportunity, the colonizer arrives in places he considers "empty spaces"; that is, where there are no or few settlers. On these lands, he imposes "his order" by annihilating all competitive forms of organization he can identify. If he makes a profit by selling what he extracts from the land, others will follow and repeat this pattern. The settler then divides the land into lots to be sold or distributed among his descendants, who may keep them or sell them to new settlers. When the land has become so depleted that it no longer satisfies production and profit needs, the settler goes in search of more "empty spaces" to begin the cycle again. In the Latin American context, the colonist introduces a new social hierarchy by imposing the imported European logic on the old logic of place, or what I call *the eco-logic*, practiced by the Indigenous populations.

Often, the socioeconomic structure of the colonizer is emulated by the dominated subjects, leading them to despise and condemn everything that does not resemble the imposed ideal, including their own people, whom some treat as hostile *Others.* Thus, the colonizing process goes beyond the land, conquering the minds of the subjects, who in turn impose this order on their surrounding world. In the case of Brazil, the colonizer – or as Dean writes, those who shared responsibility for the fate of the Atlantic Forest – are not only the peasants, but also the loggers, the cattle ranchers, the coffee planters, the industrialists and the national State itself (Dean, 1997, p. xvii).

There were, however, influential figures who firmly rejected the colonial-capitalist logic, such as the essayist Alberto Torres, who in 1913 opened the debate on conservation

in Brazil. As Dean (1997) notes, Torres considered the process of early expansion of coffee cultivation over the rainforest as "improvident and opportunistic, ensuring immediate profits at the expense of future generations" (ibid, p. 244). Torres continues, "Our forests are so frivolously devastated in this grazing to further expand the population of adventurers and capitalist enterprises, that they spread like destructive pests over the land, with no love for the soil and no concern for the human future" (ibid, p. 244). As Dean has pointed out, conservationism is, in fact, a strategy that defies colonial-capitalist logic because it values existing Indigenous ecological systems over expansionist models brought from Europe and North America.

The loss of the Atlantic Forest throughout the early and mid-20th century should be seen as a wake-up call that portrays the dangers its neighbor, the Amazon Rainforest, will face if its protection depends only on the rational selfishness of individuals. As Dean states, "the motivation to preserve the rainforest must be selfless and must extend to all levels of society, especially rural society, not just some better educated members of the urban middle class." He goes on to note that "civil society, in almost all its individuals, as well as private acts, must refrain from further incursions, now and always." As for the role of government, Dean proposes that it should confine itself to punishing all infractions, since by doing so the State would "gain far more power by enforcing the law than by circumventing it" (ibid, p. 362).

The "Modern" States

To connect this section with the previous ones, I would like to echo the main argument put forward by Wolf (2010) in his book *Europe and the People Without History*. Exploring different contexts such as those of Latin America, North America and the "East," Wolf dates the development of capitalism to the year 1400, specifically during the formation of what he calls "People Without History," who are the "new workers" or the workers of and in colonized territories, whose own history and territory have been denied. From the examples he explores in his book, there is an undeniable interconnectedness between societies, since any change that occurs in one society will inevitably produce changes in another. Those changes, Wolf explains, are dictated by the material exchanges in which all

societies engage, whether consuming, producing or trading. However, the terms of these connections and changes are not always freely chosen or necessarily imposed by governments. In the following, I will provide an overview of the implications of unjust material exchanges such as mercantilism, extractivism and "Development" on Indigenous nations, their values, and their history in Latin America.

Development/Poverty

At present, the West understands "poverty" as a concept contrary to welfare, wealth, "Development" or progress. However, in the past, especially in Europe, the word poverty was long associated with concepts such as humility or piety, so it was considered a virtue and even a right (Azipuru, 1966). This concept gradually changed in the Old World after the colonization of America in the XV-XVIII centuries, until it acquired its current connotation (ibid). On the other hand, for Indigenous nations around the world, there has been no universal definition of poverty (Renshaw & Wray, 2004, p.1). In this regard, Manari Ushigua, spiritual leader of the Sapara Nation, has made some observations on the discourse of poverty:

> Before the government came to us, we lived well, we lacked nothing (...), but when they arrived, they told us that we were poor and that they were going to give us assistance. They turned us into assisted people, and we lost our welfare, our tranquility and even our language. Now they want to take away our territory to give it to the Chinese multinational Andes Petróleo (...), but we are not going to allow it. We are going to defend life in our territory and recover our *buen vivir*, even though the government keeps telling us that we are poor.

Although it would be interesting to collect the definitions that different Indigenous nations may use for such a concept, such an effort would exceed the scope of this thesis. However, based on the existing literature, it is possible to identify the relationships around what poverty represents for Indigenous societies. It can be affirmed that, today, these traditional societies associate this concept with insufficiency and with the excess of something that holds back their ability to achieve their wellbeing or balance with everything else (Eid, A., & Aliaga, 2013; Velázquez Toro et al., 2013).

Along the same lines, taking into account the works of classical anthropology, it can be said that for most of the world's traditional societies, the concept of well-being or wealth acquires a different meaning from how it is understood in the West. For example, in the West, well-being is related to optimal social consumption based on the acquisition of certain goals or comforts and wealth is seen as the accumulation of outstanding economic capital (money, property or luxuries). In contrast, for Indigenous societies around the world, well-being, wealth, or social recognition are not based on what a person may have, but on what s/he gives to other Beings – human and non-human – (Evans-Pritchard, 1940; Helander, 1999; Malinowski & Frazer, 1986; Murra, 1956; Piddocke, 1969; Velázquez Toro et al., 2013).

Moreover, in traditional societies, wealth or poverty are not necessarily separate concepts, nor are they completely linked to the accumulation of goods or the lack thereof. Rather, these concepts are but degrees of reciprocity, redistribution and, why not, humility. Understanding poverty – or rather, poverty-wealth – in this way recognizes that the more and better goods (or knowledge) a person or community can have, the more and better gifts one can give to more people and, as a result, the greater reputation and more lasting alliances can emerge. Thus, whoever distributes what s/he possesses among their family or community would be considered "wealthy" in terms of alliances, which would provide them with greater well-being and a better social position than someone who has an abundance of goods and gives little to their family or the rest of the community (Clastres, 1972, 1998; Lévi-Strauss, 1967; Mauss, 2002). Using the concepts proposed by Bourdieu (1986), in most of the traditional societies of the world we know, the status or social position of a person depends on the degree of distribution of one's economic capital (goods) and/or cultural capital (knowledge) among one's social capital (social networks).

These and other values that may differ from Western ones have been subverted from the beginning of colonialism (fifteenth century) to the present day. As Procacci (1991) explains, "mobility, frugality, promiscuity, and independence were associated with the lack of Western [Christian] values" and, therefore, with poverty. Thus, since colonial times, "social" intervention in health, hygiene, education, work, morals, teaching good habits of association, saving, child rearing [etc.] ¨ was justified (Procacci, 1991, p. 157;).

Arturo Escobar, in his book *The Invention of Development* (1998), states that the imposition of European values on Indigenous peoples during colonial times, as well as subsequent anti-poverty interventions during the Welfare State, consolidated what he calls "an organizing discourse" (Escobar, 1998, p. 80). Several authors agree with Escobar that this discourse, designed for better administration of colonized territories and populations, would also break community ties, undermining the values of many colonized peoples, stripping them of their land, water and other resources to incorporate them into the incipient market economy (Escobar, 1998, p.78; Harvey, 2003; Renshaw & Wray, 2004). In speaking of discourse, Escobar refers to a system of colonially based relationships between institutions, socioeconomic processes, forms of knowledge, technological factors, etc. (Escobar, 1998, p. 102). After World War II, this discourse would dictate the rules of the game of what we know today as "Development."

In other words, the Development discourse would preserve the colonial logic that associated regions such as Latin America or Africa with abundance and the opportunity to accumulate wealth, while their populations were associated with poverty, ignorance, and backwardness. This paradox, Escobar argues, would be reinforced after 1945 until the present day under the formulas of Development for "the third world," promoted by the member states of the United Nations and the United States (Escobar, 1998, p. 56, Harvey, 2003; Said, 1979). Escobar shares the following segment of the United Nations Report on the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Countries (1951), where it can be inferred that declaring war on poverty also implied fighting against non-Western values:

> There is a sense in which accelerated economic progress is impossible without painful adjustments. Ancestral philosophies must be eradicated; old social institutions must be disintegrated; the bonds of caste, creed, and race must be broken; and the expectations of a comfortable life of large masses of people unable to keep pace with progress must be frustrated. Very few communities are willing to pay the price of economic progress (United Nations, 1951, p. 15).

The United Nations, together with other multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, saw progress through economic growth as the solution to overcome poverty

in "underdeveloped" countries, i.e., those that did not have the level of wealth of the industrialized countries. That was how the discourse and practices of development and poverty eradication began to consolidate a new world order. This order also required dividing the world into a hierarchical scale where the future of the poor countries idealized and imitated the present of the industrialized countries (Escobar, 1998; Foucault, 1986).

It should be noted that this discourse established in the post-war period has undergone some changes over time, or rather adaptations. Namely, the incorporation of what I call "hesitation of new technologies," methods, concepts, or even populations such as peasants, women, or even the environment itself. However, the discourse around who says, measures, compares, or decides what, has remained intact. For example, whenever communal women's associations, peasant groups, or the environment enter the discourse, they do so as target populations, as populations to be reformed, and/or as populations dependent on top-down decisions, but never as reformers. The same could be said on a global scale about the poor countries of the so-called "third world," which in most cases only participate as recipients, dependents and replicators of the discourse organized by the industrialized countries of the northern hemisphere (Escobar, 1998).

The "Modern" Extractivist *Endeude*.

After World War II (1934-1945), the global demand for raw materials stimulated political reforms that boosted the mining sector in Latin America (Bebbington & Bury, 2013, p. 36). Despite the increase in exports within the extractive sector, the economic situation of the majority of the population remained as critical as during the colony. The same situation is observed after the Cold War (1944-1991), when widespread urbanization and industrialization in the new economic bloc known as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) increased the demand for raw materials (Bebbington & Bury 2013, p. 39), giving rise to the so-called "Supercycle," which constituted another extractive boom in the Latin American region. In addition, new political reforms were taking place in the region, although this time under neoliberal and technocratic governments, guided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other international banks to which Latin America has been indebted since the 1980s.

The IMF, however, only granted loans if Latin American governments followed its market-friendly rules. One of these rules, for example, was to open up land for resource extraction to foreign companies; that is, in exchange for loans, governments had to cede control of their territories to multinational organizations. Other reforms sought to reduce the size of the State, privatize State-owned enterprises and attract foreign investment by offering tax incentives, known as the Washington Consensus (ibid, p. 40; Sawyer, 2004, p. 90). As a result, Latin America was divided into exploration and exploitation blocks, which were auctioned off to extractivist multinationals. Many of the areas in which these activities took place were Indigenous territories or peasant smallholdings, leading to processes of de-territorialization and forced displacement, as well as civil disobedience and protest (Escobar, 2018).

The organized resistance against the usurpation of these territories by multinationals had a lasting impact on the social and political landscapes of Latin America[51]. This resistance by Indigenous populations and peasants was not an isolated phenomenon. Other examples throughout Latin America of the impact of territorial disputes, specifically on Indigenous groups, can be illuminated in a number of revealing patterns. For example, in 2008, Peruvian President Alan García approved a series of executive decrees in which he sought to "formalize property rights" by dissolving community lands and territories. Several Indigenous communities took to the streets in protest, arguing that these measures would seriously affect their way of life. Garcia responded by directing military force to control the situation. The result was bloodshed[52].

This serious situation led President Garcia to respond: "Enough is enough. Who are 400,000 natives to tell 28 million Peruvians that they have no right to come here? This is a

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[51] For example, on January 24, 1994, the president of Ecuador, Sixto Durán Vallén, granted ten new oil concessions in the Amazon, four of them located in Indigenous territories. These concessions were the product of "succulent incentives" offered by the Vallen government, such as the reform of the hydrocarbons law and a new agrarian law that sought to attract foreign capital and boost oil exports. By June 22, thousands of peasants and Indigenous people had joined the resistance movement "Mobilization for Life" to block major transportation arteries throughout Ecuador (Sawyer, p. 149). President Vallen's reaction was to suspend citizens' rights by declaring a "state of emergency" and requesting military support.

[52] Reports at the time indicated that: 'Five Awajún-Wampis Indigenous and five mestizo villagers were confirmed dead, as well as twenty-three policemen, eleven of whom were killed in retaliation by the Indigenous while guarding a Norperuvian Pipeline pumping station. One hundred and sixty-nine Indigenous and mestizo civilians and thirty-one policemen were confirmed wounded" (Bebbington 2009, p. 12).

big mistake, and whoever thinks this way wants to lead us to irrationality and retrograde primitivism" (ibid). The situation was no better in the north. In 2009, the Embera people, in the Colombian Pacific, initiated a legal and spiritual defense of the "Jai Katumá" (Hill of the Spirits) against the Muriel Mining Corporation. This defense was initiated fourteen years after the entire U'wa community of the Colombian Andes contemplated collective suicide before allowing the desecration of their land by Occidental Petroleum Corporation (OXY), which intended to start industrial oil extraction in their territory (Bridge; 2001, p. 2179; Serje, 2003).

Neo-old

Violence and abuses against entire populations have been used not only as a response to organized resistance to these neoliberal policies, but also as a tactic to control the labor force[53]. Unfortunately, as of 2020, not all of these examples of exploitation – of both people and nature – in the extractive industries in Latin America have been resolved. Even in countries where Indigenous resistance has led to constitutional reforms designed to protect human and environmental rights, as in Colombia (1991), Ecuador (2008) and Bolivia (2008), their survival remains fragile. Likewise, the strategic and formulaic methods used by extractive companies to create docile populations and hire cheap labor may not have changed much since the late 19th century. Companies first present a paternalistic self-image, offering employment opportunities and utopian futures, while distributing "gifts" such as candy or tin roofs. Generally, these actions serve to win the support of impoverished and unorganized populations, or to divide them (Sawyer, 2004, p.9).

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[53] In 2011, in an online edition of the Brazilian newspaper "El Pais," the result of the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) was published. In the report, the NGO estimated that about 25,000 people were victims of modern slavery in Brazil (Presidência, 2013). Based on the testimonies of thousands of enslaved workers who were rescued in recent years, the report concluded that many faced similar circumstances: They usually receive a job offer far from their homes [in mining, logging, coal or agricultural production], usually in other Brazilian states, which isolates them from their friends and family. Many times, these modern slaves are not informed of the exact place where they are going to work, but are transported, in overcrowded and precarious vehicles, along routes that prevent easy identification of the route. Once at the destination, the employees pay for everything: transportation, food, clothing and work materials. Once at the workplace, employers have establishments where workers buy what they need at abusive prices. The employee then ends up spending their meager salary on subsistence items until he starts borrowing money from their bosses. As the debt increases, the individual is more at the mercy of the exploiter." (Baron 2011).

Moreover, if these companies encounter strong opposition to their projects from well-organized communities, the State often intervenes with military or paramilitary force against its own citizens. In the words of the former president of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, Luis Macas, "five hundred and two years after the Spanish invasion, the forms of colonization, appropriation and elimination of Indigenous peoples have only been perfected" (Sawyer, 2004, p. 155). It becomes evident how these historical events play like different versions of the same pernicious song, which still reverberates in the collective memory of Latin American Indigenous groups: the arrival of Columbus, offering trinkets of little value in exchange for land on the beaches of the Bahamas (Bebbington & Bury, 2013, p.27); the colonial strategies that endorsed the system of *endeude* in the Amazon; the US "Big Stick" diplomacy that legitimized neo-imperial economic interventions in the global south; the Latin American debt crisis that led the region to adopt the neo-liberal strategies encouraged by the IMF and international banks. All these scenes are but metaphors of the same relationship.

Neo-Extractivism

As Eduardo Gudynas[54] has rightly said, there is a new form of extractivism in the region, which is practiced by governments that identify with leftist ideas. When Gudynas wrote his article *The New Progressive Extractivism* (2010), seven countries had governments with these progressive tendencies: Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in Argentina; Evo Morales in Bolivia; Rafael Correa in Ecuador; Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva in Brazil; Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay; Hugo Chávez in Venezuela; Michelle Bachelet in Chile; Fernando Lugo in Paraguay. Although as of 2020 none of them are still in power and there is a tendency in the countries to move towards more conservative governments (the governments of Jair Bolsonaro and Ivan Duque in Brazil and Colombia, respectively, are two examples of this trend), the so-called Neoextractivism is still a relevant concept worth reviewing.

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54 Eduardo Gudynas is a renowned researcher at the Latin American Center for Social Ecology (CLAES) in Montevideo, Uruguay.

When comparing the neoextractivist model and the old neoliberal form of extractivism, the most striking difference is the changes related to the distribution of royalties. Neo-extractivism implies a more active role of the State, which employs direct and indirect interventions in the extractive sector (ibid, p. 3). With this active role, the State captures a larger share of the surplus, which in some cases is used to maintain social programs that generate legitimacy for governments and extractive ventures, while appeasing social demands (ibid, p. 6). That said, these two models are generally comparable. This is because Latin American leftist governments remain entrenched in their usual role as subordinates of international markets, dependent on global demand for raw materials. Because of this dependence, the neo-extractivist model does not really present an alternative development model independent of economic growth (ibid, p. 8).

To close this first segment of the *Plants Die* chapter, there are a few ideas worth highlighting. First, the unjust distributions of wealth and inequalities in Latin America have been inherited and maintained by local elites from early colonial times to the present, adopting models dictated by North American and European interests. Secondly, there seems to be a pattern, a repetition that distinguishes a frivolous cycle in which raw materials are in high demand whenever there is a restructuring of the world economic system (especially through international wars), bringing large capital flows to Latin America. It can also be argued that these bonanzas have had an inverse effect on local communities, because regardless of whether their governments have been conservative, neoliberal or leftist, far from bringing economic growth to the people, workers, peasants and Indigenous populations end up deteriorating their living conditions and becoming indebted to those who took their resources.

Based on the demands of these populations (especially peasants and Indigenous peoples), I maintain that the issue of concern is not how to distribute the capital coming from extractivism, but rather how to abandon such a rapacious economic system, implementing a political-economic model that contemplates the Latin American reality in order to break the economic cycles that have plundered the region. I would like to add that in contemplating historical events, systemic realities and future considerations, it is vital to realize that there are greater values and laws beyond the human, such as those employed

and recognized by many Indigenous nations in an ecosystem within their sacred values and laws, which should not be broken, ignored or commercialized. Although various logics both spiritual and ecological can illustrate this point, scientific theory also reinforces it. For example, the law of thermodynamics states that nothing can be created or destroyed, which means that the matter we consume not only has an origin but will also have a destination.

The time has come to realize that the products that humans use on a daily basis are related to a specific place and history. These contexts can only be dissociated from an object in a deliriously *eldoradoesque* [55] reality. Since we are all part of larger interconnected systems, we must understand that regardless of the monetary amount paid when an object is acquired, the price of its absence or extraction is paid elsewhere, both by local communities and by Indigenous ecological systems. As I have demonstrated through the numerous examples in this segment, ecological communities – often inhabited by human groups – cannot fill the gap or compensate for the trivialities they can obtain in exchange for the extracted resources. Often, these communities end up paying with their ways of life, their livelihoods and their lives.

In summary, the initial part of this chapter has several objectives. First, I wanted to give an overview of the geopolitical map in Latin America, to show the antagonistic relationship between the State and the Indigenous nations in terms of control of territory and the idea of well-being. I establish that extractivism is the manifestation of a colonial mentality that has endured for the last seventy years, camouflaged under development discourses that are in direct opposition to Indigenous values and practices in Latin America; with this, I wanted to show the impact of such mentality on the modern political distribution of the region, the marginalization of Indigenous populations and the depletion of the environment. Likewise, I wanted to show how extractivism is inevitably accompanied by

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[55] Despite the continuous and impersonalized separation between a product and the consumer's origin, the origins and destination of consumption can be traced. For example, we know that most of the world's discarded plastic ends up on a floating island the size of Mexico and that CO2 emissions poison both the sea and the land, generating planetary temperature rises that threaten the earth's entire ecosystem. Both synthetic plastics and the fuel we use for multiple purposes come from oil extraction that is opposed by Indigenous communities around the world. As this paper has pointed out, attempts to transform an ecologically rooted place into a space defined by resources and governed by selfish subjects have devastating consequences.

the legitimization of violence against the local population, in order to pay off juicy loans from international banks with the natural resources that remain in the territories that have traditionally belonged to Indigenous nations and *comunidades campesinas* (peasant communities).

The specific case of Colombia is very similar to this general picture in the region. However, two main differences must be highlighted. First, the unspeakable level of violence towards its populations is unprecedented in the region; even today, after the signing of the Peace Agreement, there continues to be what appears to be an uncontrollable systematic assassination of social leaders who oppose the government's interests[56]. On the other hand, the depletion of Indigenous territories such as those in the Amazon seems less significant than in other neighboring countries[57]. The correlation during the last fifty years between the application of international neo-liberal policies suggested by multilateral agencies and the USA to the region, the internal war that just ended a few years ago in Colombia – about which Fany Kuiru expressed her concerns – and the above-mentioned differences, need further investigation.

While that study is underway, I would like to speculate that there are at least two radical paths that Colombia may take over the next few years. One possibility is that the Colombian government elites may decide to use this "post-war" period as an opportunity to incur higher international debts than those incurred during the internal war period, in order to "rebuild" the country. As the evidence in the region suggests, such a decision – without consultation or analysis of the consequences – would open its territory and that of the Indigenous nations to the global market. That possibility, I believe, is one of the reasons why Colombia's Indigenous nations are showing their discomfort by not participating in the peace dialogues or in the Peace Agreement signed between the FARC and the national government. If that first possibility were to take place, Colombia would be on the verge of experiencing an unprecedented flow of capital accompanied by an unparalleled depletion

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[56] See https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1068371

[57] See https://www.globalforestwatch.org and https://www.amazonconservation.org/tag/synthesis/

of one of the most diverse and preserved places on the planet, such as the Amazon rainforest. What happens there, in the Amazon biome, is of great relevance because of its role in regulating global warming, among other important cultural and ecological services.

There is, of course, another possibility opposite to the previous one, warned by authors with deep knowledge of environmental-cultural relations such as Wade Davis (2016, p.7). This possibility consists in the commitment of the Colombian State to work hand in hand with the Indigenous nations that, for millennia, have cared for such a delicate environment. Although there are infinite possibilities between these two, and probably both would occur simultaneously, one of them represents quicker and easier economic benefits for the elites, i.e., the same handful of families that have been ruling Colombia for the last 200 years[58], and therefore, could be the option that the national government would support. On the other hand, the other possibility would require an arduous process of reconciliation, in which the representation of their counterparts is structured towards a diplomatic space, where the different ontological worlds can build a better future for the next generations. Such a difficult process would not start from scratch, because, as I will explain in the next segment, the same negligence and complicity of the national government in the annihilation of their populations, has also resulted in a strong organization of their Indigenous nations and the achievement of remarkable progressive achievements in the legal field.

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[58] See https://www.nytimes.com/es/2018/03/19/espanol/america-latina/las-dinastias-del-poder-en-colombia-de-cara-al-2018.html

Indigenous rights, *planes de vida* and *buen vivir* in Colombia: the legal context

Throughout Colombian history, strong Indigenous organizations have achieved important recognitions in local judicial systems that have helped them confront exogenous development plans and colonialist dynamics that disrupt well-established prior orders. Beyond reviewing the rights and laws that Indigenous communities and their allies are invoking to protect their ways of life, this section will explore the role of law in processes of re-indigenization and reterritorialization. Thanks to these new processes, Indigenous identities are beginning to be reconstructed and a new official recognition of Indigenous political roles is taking place. All this while the Colombian government continues to struggle to control Indigenous identities (Rappaport, 2016).

This section explores the concepts of territory, identity, autonomy and self-determination. The main objective is to shed light on the legal achievements of Indigenous organizations and their struggle to coexist with colonialist, nationalist and extractive development policies. In doing so, I also outline the legal and anthropological parameters that apply to the terms "Indigenous" and "ethnic" in Colombia to, finally, explore the new diplomatic spaces achieved by Indigenous organizations after the 1991 Constitution and the ratification of ILO Convention 169, such as Prior Consultation. At the end of the chapter, I use this information to argue that rather than being a space where opposing socio-political systems converge, Prior Consultation can become a point of ontological re-evaluation and the emergence of cooperative work between national, international and sacred Indigenous laws.

Territory

As mentioned above, *de-territorialization* and *de-indigenization* are parallel processes that are intertwined in Colombia. But as such, there are also processes of re-territorialization and re-indigenization to confront colonial logics and restore Indigenous identities. After the wars of independence, during the early stages of the nineteenth century, there was a series of internal wars between centralist and federalist forces, in a period known as "La

Violencia Republicana" (Republican Violence). These political conflicts did not respect the Indigenous populations; in fact, the Indigenous were used as "cannon fodder" to feed the war machine (Manzoni, 1939).

An iconic example of this situation centers on an Indigenous figure known as Manuel Quintín Lame (1883-1967) of the Nasa nation in the Cauca region. After his sister was raped and his older brother mutilated and killed in the previous Republican wars, Lame was recruited by the Conservative army during another civil war[59] (1899 and 1902), known as the Guerra de los Mil Días (Thousand Days' War). Lame was sent to fight an Indigenous leader in Panama known as Victoriano Lorenzo, who was part of a guerrilla unit supporting the Liberal party. However, instead of fighting Lorenzo, Manuel was inspired by him and how Lorenzo had studied law on his own to fight against abuses against his community and other Indigenous communities in Panama (Müller-Schwarze, 2014;, 2012).

Following this encounter, Manuel Quintín Lame acquired a copy of the Colombian Civil Code. Through his research, he learned the rights his people had as Colombian citizens, as well as their specific rights as an Indigenous population (Lame, 1971). Among many documents that had been conveniently forgotten, he found a decree of May 20, 1820, signed by the founding president Simón Bolívar. In this document different norms were dictated to reestablish Indigenous rights and "promote their economic progress and education [that] would help them fight for the restitution of Indigenous lands" (Sánchez & Molina, 2010, p.395).

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[59] From the arrival of the Spaniards in the early 16th century to the year 2021, it can be stated that Colombia's history does not record a period of more than 15 years of peace. In other words, Colombia has been at war internally and externally for more than five centuries. The conflicts following the subjugation and annihilation of many Indigenous groups are known as the Spanish-American Independence Wars 1808-1829; Civil War between Centralists and Federalists 1812-1814; Grancolombo-Peruvian War 1828-1829; Cauca War 1832; War of the Supreme 1839-1842; Colombian Civil War of 1851; Colombian Civil War of 1854; Colombian Civil War of 1854; Colombian Civil War of 1854; Colombian Civil War of 1854; Colombian Civil War of 1854; Colombian Civil War 1854; Colombian Civil War 1860-1862; Colombian Civil War 1876-1877; Colombian Civil War 1884-1885; Colombian Civil War 1895; Thousand Days War 1899-1902; Colombian-Peruvian War 1932-1933; La Violencia 1948-1958; Internal armed conflict 1960 to present; Drug trafficking war in Colombia 1980s to present.

Although all sixteen articles of this document were important to the Indigenous cause, the first and fifth were crucial to ending the *terraje* system and initiating land restitution processes. The first article declares[60] "To the Indigenous, as legitimate owners. All lands that were part of their resguardos will be returned to them, according to the titling, independently of what the current possessors may claim." The fifth article establishes that "Neither the priests, nor the political judges, nor any other person employed or not, may use the natives [Indigenous] in any way, nor in any case, without paying them the salary previously stipulated in a formal contract celebrated in the presence and with the consent of the political judge (...)" (ibid, p. 395-396).

Manuel Quintín Lame would continue to study and discover the colonial *cédulas reales* where *resguardo* lands were titled to Indigenous communities. His discoveries would provide him with the legal tools to help Indigenous communities in Cauca, Tolima, Huila, Nariño and northern Ecuador organize around reclaiming their territories (ONIC, 2007, p.21). Despite the nearly one hundred occasions on which Lame was imprisoned by the Colombian government for his activism, he never abandoned the Indigenous cause. On the contrary, he used his time in prison – like Victoriano Lorenzo – to study law in order to help his people. Lame summarized his objectives in seven maxims or principles that would inspire future Indigenous movements in Colombia:

1) Recovery of the *resguardo's* lands (reservation lands).

2) Expansion of the *resguardo's* lands.

3) Strengthening of the cabildos.

4) The non-payment of the *terraje* (land tax).

5) To make known the Indigenous laws and demand their application.

6) The defense of Indigenous history, language and customs.

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[60] The translation of all decrees and Court rulings in this text are mine.

7) The training of Indigenous teachers.

Despite Lame's fight for Indigenous rights and his goal of making the laws known among his communities, many Colombians who considered themselves white and civilized viewed the Indigenous as "less than human." An example of this insensitivity is a practice known in the regions of Meta and Casanare as *guajibadas*[61], which essentially consisted of hunting Indigenous people (*guajibos*). These nefarious episodes not only caused outrage among the Indigenous but also acted to unite them in solidarity. Four years later, in 1971, the country witnessed the birth of an important Indigenous movement: the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca – CRIC (Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca). Inspired by Quintín Lame's maxims[62] (Especially the fifth point) and the 1961 agrarian reform (Law 135) proclaimed a few years before Lame's death, the CRIC would join the National Association of Peasants – ANUC to organize, educate and politically represent its populations.

Unfortunately, despite their shared causes, the partnership between CRIC and ANUC would only last two years. The Indigenous separation from this relationship was mainly due to the politicization of ANUC and the clash of different leftist ideologies. After the separation, ANUC would never be as strong and politically influential as before, while regional Indigenous organizations multiplied in regions such as Chocó, Antioquia, Caldas, Risaralda, and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (Sánchez & Molina, 2010, p. 20). By 1982, the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia – ONIC was born to represent all

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[61] One of the most infamous episodes took place at the Rubiera hacienda in 1967, where some 18 Cuivas Indigenous were massacred. Gómez's accounts of this episode state that "when the perpetrators were apprehended, they claimed that they did not know that it was illegal to kill Indigenous. The llaneros invited the Indigenous to eat and when they went, they attacked them with sticks and knives; when they fled, they shot them with shotguns and revolvers; and their corpses, the next day, were dragged with mules several hundred meters and then incinerated. The remains were scavenged with the bones of cattle and pigs. Two Indigenous survived and spoke of the murders of their relatives. When the Colombian and Venezuelan authorities began the investigation, all the accused, spontaneously and naturally, confessed their participation in great detail, but with the categorical statement that 'they did not know that killing Indigenous was bad'." (Gómez López 2012 p. 90,91; Diario El Tiempo, May 1972).

[62] Article 29 [...] no vacant lots may be awarded if they are occupied by Indigenous communities or constitute their habitat, with the exception of those destined for the constitution of Indigenous reserves. Article 94. The Institute [of Agrarian Reform] shall establish, after consultation with the Ministry of Government, the titling of lands for the benefit of Indigenous groups or communities that do not own them. (Law 135, 1961).

regional associations in the country. Territory, autonomy and culture would be the ideals on which most of the Indigenous associations would unite under ONIC[63].

The Problem of Indigenous Identity

Unlike in the North American context, in Colombia a population or a person is not necessarily defined as Indigenous by resorting to the concept of race[64] or genetic affiliation. Rather, self-recognition is an important criterion (Rappaport, 2016). From an anthropological perspective, this difference is due to the fact that groups are not usually fixed sets of individuals but are dynamic aggregations of entities that share something in common (Latour, 2007). Thus, what determines which individuals belong or do not belong to a given group can sometimes be totally arbitrary, since it depends on the criteria and interests of the person making the divisions (Bateson, 1979).

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[63] 1) Strengthen and support Indigenous self-governments so that they can assume with unity, autonomy and dignity, the control of their territories and the realization and defense of their human and collective rights. 2) To achieve social and institutional recognition of the ethnic and cultural identity of Indigenous peoples, supporting their own organizational processes (at local, regional, national and international levels). 3) To facilitate the participation of Indigenous peoples and their representatives in the decision making and execution of public policies, in conditions of equity and from their diversity towards the economic and social development of Colombia. 4) To lead the institutional and social recognition of the political mandates of Indigenous peoples and their traditional and organizational authorities. 5) To position ONIC as representative and interlocutor of the Indigenous Peoples and their organizations. 6) To participate with other Indigenous and national or international social movements in the construction of an alternative social and economic model. 7) To build common strategies and dialogue with other social movements, NGOs, the Colombian State and cooperation agencies, national and international solidarity among others, to promote and establish peace, justice and reparation processes to end the war in Colombia, and to acquire post-conflict guarantees for a self-determined future for Indigenous Peoples."

[64] It is necessary to clarify the difference between the classification of humans according to their physical and morphological characteristics and the idea of different "human races." The classification of humans according to morphological characteristics is a matter for forensic specialists such as physical anthropologists, who determine the origins of an individual for whom very little information is available. Their studies focus especially on skeletal remains, and they have a standardized database of morphological measurements that make it possible to identify sex, geographic origin, age, dietary habits, diseases, and even socioeconomic status and causes of death. Although these types of studies were originally developed in archaeology, they have recently gained new momentum by judicial bodies and NGOs seeking to identify, clarify and reclaim victims of violence: genocide, mass graves, etc. (Burns, 2015). "Race" on the other hand, is a concept that has been problematized for many years in anthropology, especially during the 1940s with the work of Franz Boas who argued strongly against the idea of race as a biological concept (Boas, 1940). It is clear that the classification of individuals according to their physical characteristics is an intricate subject that requires specialized knowledge and the proper use of scientific tools, since classification by non-specialists tends to invoke problematic racial concepts, which only increases segregation and discrimination among people. In fact, to think of different human races today is an academic, historical, anthropological, biological and moral mistake. Race as a legal concept continues to exist in much of the Western legal tradition that derives its fundamental rights from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). This is the case of the Colombian Constitution of 1991 with Article 13, which seeks to avoid discrimination on this problematic categorization.

From the legal point of view, the criterion of self-recognition is defined in the first article of Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization – ILO, ratified by Colombia in 1991: "Self-identification as Indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as a fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which the provisions of this Convention apply" (ILO 196, Art. 1). (ILO 196, Art. 1). Furthermore, because international conventions such as ILO 169 are considered part of the constitution or "block of constitutionality," Indigenous people do not need the approval of the State, scientists, anthropologists or other non-Indigenous people to be recognized as such. In other words, racist or scientific criteria cannot determine indigeneity.

Indigenous peoples in Colombia are part of a broader category of communities known as "ethnic groups," defined by the Colombian Constitutional Court as "peoples whose ways of life and conceptions of the world do not **fully coincide** with the majority of the population in terms of race, religion, language, economy and political organization. Human groups whose cultural characteristics do not **fit** into the economic, political and social order established for the majority, [ethnic groups] have the right to recognition of their differences, [all this] based on the principles of human dignity, pluralism and protection of minorities" (Decision T-605 of the Constitutional Court of Colombia, 1992).

The category of ethnic groups in Colombia includes the Indigenous populations, Raizales (people from the islands of San Andres and Providencia), Palenqueros (Afro-descendant community of San Basilio de Palenque), the rural black populations of the Pacific coast and the Romani. These ethnic groups have a special set of constitutional rights known in Colombian law as "Derechos Colectivos" (Collective Rights). The first article of ILO Convention 169 sheds light on who should be considered part of the tribal or Indigenous populations:

> This Convention applies to: (a) tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions **distinguish them** from other sections of the national community, and whose situation is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations; (b) peoples in independent countries who are regarded as Indigenous on account of their descent

from the populations which inhabited the country or a geographical region to which the country belongs at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present State boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions (ILO 169).

This definition, however, does not attempt to delimit who is or who is not Indigenous, or part of a "tribal group." Rather, it focuses on groups that have been neglected by the action or inaction of States. For example, other minorities such as Jews, Arabs[65] or LGBTQ+ groups are not recognized as ethnic groups in Colombia. One of the reasons is that although the rights of these minorities should be recognized and protected as citizens, ILO 169 is not entirely a convention designed to protect minorities who have often been discriminated against. On the contrary, it provides a tool to protect the collective rights of endangered ethnic groups. However, ethnicity should not be understood simply as the sum of ancestry, language, society, religion, etc., since these are not constitutive but manifestations of different ways of knowing and apprehending the world, of different epistemologies (Bateson, 1972; 1979).

In other words, it is important to emphasize that collective rights are granted to specific populations for reasons that are not just chronological, geographical or even racial. This is because collective rights are matters of restitution of *deudas historicas* (historical debts) and protection of other ways of knowing the world in the face of past, present and future threats[66] (Padilla, 1996, p.95). For example, in the case of *comunidades negras* (black communities), collective rights are not granted to all populations of African origin, or even to a distinctive skin color, but to populations descended from those who escaped slavery and constituted *palenques*, or communities that today reflect a unique amalgam comprising Afro-Spanish and Indigenous epistemologies.

Jews, Arabs or others who may be considered ethnic groups, and whose traditions and practices are part of Colombia as a multi-ethnic nation, are 65not eligible for collective rights. The main reason is that the individual members of these groups adopted the national laws and the rights and obligations of the rest of Colombian citizens when they freely moved to the country. This is not the case for the gypsy and black populations that were brought to America and Colombia against their will, nor is it the case for the Indigenous groups that were already living in those territories.

[66] Populations that today continue to be displaced by violent means to dispossess them of their territories.

In accordance with the principle of self-identification and the collective nature of ethnic or collective rights in Colombia, there are two basic conditions that must be met to determine who is part of an ethnic group. First, the individual must identify himself as part of the group. This condition usually serves only as a proxy for demographic and statistical efforts. Second, the individual must be ascribed to or recognized by the group as one of its members. This second condition should serve to determine which individuals are protected by collective rights.

In theory, the first criterion (self-recognition) allows people to be recognized as Indigenous even if in the past they did not consider themselves part of this ethnic category. This is because ILO 169 applies to social and cultural conditions. These cultural or social conditions may be inherited through kinship such as families, clans, castes, etc., but as explained, such conditions are not necessarily linked to lineage. Therefore, it is here in the epistemological field where the application of the principle of self-recognition for social and cultural conditions could be adopted and adapted by individuals to make sense of their realities (Sahlin, 2013; Latour, 2007).

However, despite the fact that self-recognition is a legal criterion for determining Indigenous status, in practice, the State has applied this criterion in a problematic manner. The history and colonial logic imposed on the territory now known as Colombia sheds light on this dilemma. Likewise, the systems of control imposed on Indigenous populations explain, at least in part, why the State considers that it must have a major say in determining Indigenous identities, even if this goes against ILO 169. Therefore, it is imperative to have a historical overview of the common but illegal practices through which governments problematized Indigenous identities; more precisely, the processes of de-indigenization and deterritorialization.

After Lame, the 1980s became a decade in which Indigenous organizations continued to struggle for the recognition of *resguardo* lands. Simultaneously, there was the recognition and re-emergence of "new" Indigenous groups during this period. Margarita Cháves and Marta Zambrano (2008) analyze two such cases in their article *From blanqueamiento to reindigenización: Paradoxes of mestizaje and multiculturalism in*

contemporary Colombia. In this article, they examine two cases of re-indigenization in which entire communities undertook actions to be recognized as Indigenous. These cases took place in different contexts, one in the Putumayo region and the other in Bogotá, the capital of Colombia. In the first case, several mestizo families joined recognized Putumayo Indigenous groups such as the *Inga* and the *Kamsá*. Chaves and Zambrano point out that in the 1980s it was better to be Indigenous than mestizo:

> The instrumental motivation for such a stance was quite obvious. Many of those who claimed to be Indigenous publicly declared that it was better to be Indigenous than to be a settler. To formalize their becoming Indigenous, they replaced the previously non-ethnic Junta de Acción Comunal (Community Action Board) with an ethnic cabildo. Once legally recognized, membership in a cabildo would allow access to free health and education services, exemption from military service for males, resources and financial transfers, and perhaps even restitution of *resguardo* lands (Chaves, 2003[a]), all of which were not available to *colonos* (Chaves & Zambrano, 2006, p.12).

Initially, the Colombian government recognized "new" groups, or rather groups that were not on the official list of Indigenous communities, such as the *Awá* in Nariño, and the *Paez* and *Yanaconas* in Cauca. However, after 1991, when collective rights were included in the new Colombian Constitution, the number of people claiming Indigenous status in Putumayo had tripled in ten years. The government's response to this situation was to reject the requests for re-indigenization, based on the opinions of the "experts" of the Dirección General de Asuntos Indigenas of the Ministry of the Interior – DGAI (Institute of Indigenous Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior). One of the arguments given by government officials in Putumayo was that some of these families had migrated from elsewhere during the economic boom of quinoa, oil and coca production; therefore, they were not originally from Putumayo. Some groups decided to end their claims of re-indigenization; others returned to their "original" territories to reconnect with their Indigenous roots.

However, having origins in a different part of the country was not the only "item" on the list of reasons experts used to deny Indigenous status (Jackson, 2002). For example, the *Pastos* people received a negative response based not on their geographic origins but on the lack of an original language. After attempts to explain that the loss of their language was a product of homogenizing public policies, catechization, and racial discrimination, the Pastos were finally recognized by the Colombian government not because of these arguments, but because of the color of their skin. As Chaves and Zambrano write, "Paradoxically then, the same physical appearance that had previously acted as a barrier to full inclusion in 'the mestizo nation' now operated to certify the Pastos' affiliation with ethnic or racial Indigenous, thus allowing for a tense but dubious inclusion in the multicultural nation." (Chaves & Zambrano, 2008, p. 13).

The other case of re-indigenization studied by Chaves and Zambrano focuses on the Muisca population of Bogotá. The authors narrate how in the early 1990s, a group of people living in Suba (today part of Bogotá, but which was a *Pueblo de Indios* in colonial times) managed to be recognized as the first urban Cabildo in Colombia (ibid, p.14). However, when the article was written in 2008, this recognition had been withdrawn by the DGAI for two main reasons. First, Suba's population placed an unexpected fiscal burden on the district, as the number of people suddenly entitled to free medical care registered in the cabildo went from 1,836 to 7,456 in a six-month period (ibid, p.15). Second, the cabildo claimed an important part of the territory of Suba, which had already been populated by non-Indigenous. The solution to this problem was a statement from the DGAI stating that "the cabildo had originated from the voluntary association of individuals who 'lacked connection with present or past ethnic peoples' and did not possess the particular features of the Muisca culture such as their cosmovision, the roots that linked them to an ancestral territory, the distinctive kinship system, etc (...)"[67] (Ibid, p.16).

In response, the cabildo women asserted that "connection to present or past ethnic groups" was debatable, but in general, it was not a fair criterion for deciding whether they were Indigenous or not. What mattered, they argued, were their current practices, their

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[67] Own translation

relationship to the land, their elders, the foods they grew and consumed, and the textiles they produced. However, the male representatives of the cabildo, instead of supporting the women's claims, decided to recreate the ancient traditions and practices described in the 16th century Spanish chronicles about the Muisca, such as learning the extinct Muisca language known as *muysccubun* and adopting the practices of other Indigenous groups. In other words, the Cabildo decided to adjust to the DGAI's re-Indigenization criteria, which according to Rappaport (2016), was a widespread practice for organizations that were a part of ONIC; in her words, "By commoditizing rights and ethnicity, leaders create an essentialized Indigenous presence, thus equating community conformity with a trait list defining Indigenous identity, with the demonstration of ethnic commitments." (Rappaport, 2016, p.27). Finally, in its decision to withdraw cabildo recognition from Suba, the Concejo de Estado (Colombian Council of State) affirmed that to be recognized as Indigenous, the Muisca had to demonstrate "A common history, as well as group cohesion, a deep-rooted affiliation to the ancestral territory, a cosmovision, a traditional medicine, kinship ties and a characteristic normative system that differentiates them from the rest of the Colombian population" (Chaves & Zambrano, 2008, p. 16).[68]

After comparing the criteria established in ILO Convention 169 and those used by the Colombian government to deny collective rights to the Indigenous community of Suba, it is worth asking: What is the use of a common history? How can an Indigenous group show cohesion if it does not form a cabildo? How can it demonstrate a deep-rooted affiliation to the ancestral territory if the policies of the State have de-territorialized its people? If a group claims access to the public health system, does this mean that the group rejects traditional medicine? What are, after all, different kinship ties or a common worldview? Or rather, what are "normal" kinship ties and the common worldview of the entire Colombian population?

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[68] Ministry of the Interior and Justice, Directorate of Ethnic Groups, A-Z Suba, 2001-2003, 27. Sept. 13, 2001. "Response of the Council of State to the challenge of the Mayor's Office to the tutela ruling in favor of the Cabildo de Suba," ff. 29-47.

Autonomy, Free, Prior and Informed Consent – FPIC

As demonstrated, the imposition of State interests over Indigenous territories, identities and ways of life is a long-standing history in Colombia (and around the world, for that matter). Today, the situation is no different, further exacerbated by global demand for natural resources and technological advances, and the recent Peace Agreement between the FARC and the national government (2016). All of this has directed governmental and global attention to territories where Indigenous groups have lived for years, previously considered unproductive or idle, now representing enormous mining or hydrocarbon profitability.

In this regard, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples establishes in Article 19 that "States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them"; however, this free, prior and informed consent – FPIC – is rarely achieved. Mainly because international declarations, recommendations and resolutions are not legally binding instruments, and therefore do not create legal obligations for the States that adopt them[69]. Treaties and conventions, on the other hand, are legally binding international instruments, which means that the signatory states are obliged to respect them. This is why ILO Convention 169 has become such an important convention for Indigenous organizations in Colombia and other signatory countries. However, the ILO only requires free, prior and informed consent – FPIC – in cases of resettlement. In cases of resource extraction, the ILO states:

> In cases in which the State retains the ownership of mineral or subsoil resources [as in Colombia] or rights to other resources pertaining to lands, governments shall establish or maintain procedures through which they shall consult with these peoples, in order to determine whether and to what extent their interests would be prejudiced, before undertaking or authorizing any programs for the exploration or

[69] http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/advancement/networks/larno/legal-instruments/nature-and-status/ consultado el 2018-03-03

exploitation of such resources pertaining to their lands. The peoples concerned shall, wherever possible, participate in the benefits of such activities, and shall receive fair compensation for any damage they may sustain as a result thereof. (Article 15, ILO 169).

Although ILO Convention 169 does not mention FPIC in cases of resource extraction, it does require Prior Consultation – PC – by the State. Additionally, the Colombian Constitution establishes in Article 330 that "The exploitation of natural resources in Indigenous territories shall be carried out without detriment to the cultural, social and economic integrity of the Indigenous communities. In the decisions adopted on such exploitation, the national government shall encourage the participation of the representatives of the respective communities." (Colombian Constitution, 1991). In summary, the Prior Consultation – PC –, in Colombia, is not an Indigenous right, but it is a mandatory procedure for the State to protect fundamental and collective Indigenous rights recognized in the Constitution (and/or in international treaties and conventions) from arbitrary decisions.

On the other hand, the Colombian Constitutional Court has incorporated FPIC in its jurisprudence – despite the fact that ILO 169 only requires FPIC in cases of resettlement – requiring this approval whenever a large-scale project may threaten the lives of Indigenous communities. The Colombian Constitutional Court states:

This corporation clarifies that in the case of large-scale development or investment plans that may have a major impact within Afro-descendant and Indigenous territories, it is the duty of the State *not only to consult these communities, but also to obtain their free, informed and prior consent, in accordance with their customs* and traditions, because by implementing exploration and exploitation plans and investments in their habitat, these populations may suffer profound social and economic changes, such as the loss of traditional lands, eviction, migration, depletion of resources necessary for physical and cultural subsistence, destruction and contamination of the traditional environment, among other consequences; Therefore, in these cases, the decisions of the communities can be considered

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binding, due to the serious level of impact that these projects can bring. (Constitutional Court, Decision T-769 of 2009).

In another judgment, the Court specifies some of the cases in which FPIC is mandatory:

(...) [special Constitutional protection is granted] to ethnic minorities in those projects whose magnitude has the potential to disfigure or lead to the disappearance of their ways of life, for which reason the Court finds it necessary that the Prior Consultation and the informed consent of the ethnic communities in general may determine the least harmful alternative in events such as those that: (i) involve the relocation or displacement of the communities due to the project; (ii) are related to the storage or dumping of toxic waste on ethnic lands; and/or (iii) represent a high social impact: (i) involve the relocation or displacement of the communities due to the exercise of the project; (ii) are related to the storage or dumping of toxic waste on ethnic lands; and/or (iii) represent a high social, cultural and environmental impact for an ethnic community, which may lead to any risk to its existence, among other reasons. (Constitutional Court, Decision T-129 of 2011).

In addition, there are mandatory principles dictated by the Constitutional Court to regulate State procedures: i) PC must be carried out before making any decision that may affect ethnic groups; ii) PC must be carried out in good faith; iii) PC must be carried out with respect for the uses and customs of each Indigenous people; iv) PC must be carried out with their representative authorities and v) PC must be enforceable when Indigenous territories are affected, even when these have not been titled (Constitutional Court, Decision C-139 of 1996. Presiding Judge: Carlos Gaviria Díaz, in Orduz, 2014, p. 10). Despite these principles, PC processes rarely lead to agreements in which both parties are satisfied (and it is even more unusual for this to happen in FPIC). First, agreements cannot be mutually beneficial when the above principles are not respected. Examples include situations where information about the project is insubstantial or misleading, agendas are imposed on communities, and especially when consultations are not conducted in good faith, without genuine communities or Indigenous representative authorities.

These scenarios were seen in multi-million-dollar mining projects that were suspended by the Constitutional Court such as the project in Cerro Careperro, where the Muriel mining company opposed the Embera people in Chocó (Constitutional Court, Auto 053 of 2013) and the most recent, where Cosigo opposed the Indigenous representatives of the Apaporis National Park in the Taraira belt in the Amazon (Constitutional Court, Decision T-769 of 2009). There are also other cases where mutual agreements cannot be reached, even if there is willingness on the part of the national government representatives to respect the principles of Prior Consultation stipulated by the court. For example, I witnessed many such cases in 2010 while teaching and studying Indigenous law in Colombia, as well as in the PC processes I have read about since then.

In these cases, Indigenous communities were concerned about how such extractivist projects threatened the spiritual and sacred values and relationships vested in their territories. However, by government standards, these relationships fall into the category of "cultural beliefs," leading extractive companies and the national government to ignore these concerns, especially when issues of "sacred values" are raised. Typically, the main fiduciary concern of technocrats is one that can be accounted for in monetary terms, namely the estimation of the price of land to compensate for material damage and environmental losses. Thus, the impacts of these extractive projects on the relationships between Indigenous peoples and the sacred (as well as other often invisible values that constitute their world, including relationships that are difficult to quantify) are rarely taken into account.

But extractive projects are not the only scenario in which FPIC must be obtained, and the issue of "sacredness" goes beyond that. National laws, national development plans and other legislative or executive initiatives, for example, can jeopardize or seriously affect Indigenous peoples. These concerns became the subject of PC following a lawsuit made by the most important Indigenous associations in Colombia, as Orduz (2014) explains. "In 1996, after a process of political mobilization that included the seizure of the Episcopate headquarters for 43 days, the Indigenous representatives managed to agree with the government on direct dialogue between the Indigenous peoples and the ministries of the

national government in what was called *La Mesa Permanente de Concertación* – MPC –."[70]

However, these achievements did not come without setbacks, as during the eight years of the right-wing government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010), the CPM sessions were suspended. As a consequence, the Constitutional Court declared unconstitutional some of the laws promoted by that government. Negotiations changed again when Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2018), his successor, resumed talks with the Mesa. Some of the laws and policies that were constructed in the concertation were the consultation routes of: Plan Nacional de Desarrollo – PND (National Development Plan), Ley de Víctimas (the Restitution Law), Ley de Tierras y Desarrollo Rural (the Land and Rural Development Law), Código de Minas (the Mining Law) and the Corporaciones Autónomas Regionales (Regional Autonomous Corporations) (ibid).

Cultural Fallacy

So far, this essay has been written assuming an implicit fallacy – or rather ignoring an error – which is to assume that only those laws recognized by non-Indigenous bodies such as the ILO, the UN or the State are Indigenous laws. To assume that Indigenous law is the same for both Indigenous organizations and the State is what Viveiros de Castro calls an "equivocation." (Viveiros de Castro, 2004b; Blaser, 2009). In exploring what Indigenous laws are for Indigenous peoples, this section seeks to review that implicit equivocation. In addition, by inquiring into Indigenous perspectives on law, this review will provide further questions that address the complexity of the issue and help to better understand what is at stake. To address the issue of identity, for example, beyond simply asking why settlers would want to be recognized as Indigenous, another appropriate question is, why would cabildos include settlers, once self-recognized, as part of their communities?

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[70] The Indigenous representatives in the MPC are: the Indigenous who participated in the 1991 Constituent Assembly; those who are congressmen for the special Indigenous constituency; and the representatives of four organizations that bring together the majority of the country's Indigenous (the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), to which 48 Indigenous organizations are affiliated, the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon (OPIAC), Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (AICO) and the Tayrona Indigenous Confederation (CIT)). (Orduz 2014 p. 4).

There may be at least as many answers to that question as there are 118 Indigenous groups in Colombia, because each could apply its own criteria to decide who can join their communities. Although it is important to review the internal laws of each of the 118 Indigenous nations in Colombia, that would be a project beyond the scope of this thesis. However, despite the differences between the internal laws of each of these communities, there is one overriding law known as the *ley de origen, derecho mayor* or "greater right" that guides them all (Rappaport, 2016, p.32-34). For the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia – ONIC, the *ley de origen* establishes the identity of the Indigenous peoples. The identity given by the *ley de origen* is reflected in their own laws, governments and justice systems. The *ley de origen* is interpreted differently according to the individual philosophy of each Indigenous nation (del Ecuador, 2007). However, all these nations agree that it is the same law, which Indigenous peoples have inherited and which allows them to recognize themselves and continue to exist as "Peoples with histories and laws that allow us to be united in distinct cultures." (ONIC, 2007, p.3).

Therefore, by recognizing only the existence of such a law, the unresolved question of Indigenous identity finds a resolution that is not based on negational statements. An Indigenous person is not one who meets the requirements of the DGAI checklist (such as skin color, language, place of birth, etc.); nor a person recognized by ILO 169; nor are they simply persons who recognize themselves as Indigenous. Rather, being Indigenous refers to a person who recognizes the *ley de origen* and lives by it. It is not possible to give a succinct, standard definition of what the *ley de origen* is or what it establishes, primarily because there is no standard definition. As mentioned, there are many definitions that change according to the philosophy of each Indigenous nation. For example, the Mamas (shamans) of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta define the *ley de origen* as follows[71]:

> Our advisors see that the main thing is *Sé*. The laws of origin are in Sé. Sé has no origin, it has always existed; it is a spiritual existence, it is the spiritual principle of existence. It is not a person, it is not a thing, and it is everything as a whole. Sé is complex. It materialized the world, but there are many more in the spiritual

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[71] The law in the consultation zhátukwa

existence in Sé. It is organized in such a way that it is harmony.... The law of Sé is the law of knowledge and the fulfillment in spirit of the laws that keep the universe in order. The law was given to the Indigenous of the Sierra with the mission to pay tribute for everything that exists, the trees, the water, the stones, the rain, the atmosphere, the lagoon and all the Mama received this commitment. This law is the beginning and the creation of the law of spiritual origin, is the thought of our *ley de origen*, is the protection and permanent construction for our strength, is ultimately the cycle of life (Declaration of the four Indigenous Organizations of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta addressed to the Colombian Government and the national society, 1999, in ONIC, 2007, p.7).

Thus, the *ley de origen* for the Mamas is not based on negational statements, nor is it identified as that which "is not the law of the State." On the contrary, the *ley de origen* has its own characteristics. The Mamas also explain the differences between these two laws by showing equivalence relationships:

For us it is strange that the laws change, as is the case of the law of the *bunachis* or civilized; it is strange for us, but we respect it. For them it must be so because they also change their clothing, the forms and materials of their houses, they change their authorities and governments, they also change their feelings and their way of seeing the world; changes and more changes, as if they had nothing good to make it last. Rather, their law seems to be the law of change. Yes, it is strange to us, not because we do not understand it, but because for us the law is perpetuity, to remain as Indigenous according to our law, according to our origin and tradition. Our law tells us that *Umunukunu* (or Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta), is the sacred place given to the *Iku, Kággaba, Sanka* and *Kankuama* peoples; that the order of the first fathers is that from the Sierra, we are the caretakers of the world. So by the permanence of the forms of life, given in our *ley de origen*, there would be a balance between nature and man, being man also nature. Our tradition is the story of origin and from the beginning, it embodies and maintains our law. It is the living part of the law: it revives our origin and keeps us in it. This means that this tradition can only be lived in the territories traditionally occupied and lived according to our law, in

correspondence with time and space, assigned from the origin to our way of living (*ley de origen*, Confederación Indígena Tairona – CIT, 1991. In: ONIC, 2007, p.7).

In short, the *ley de origen* contains the rules of the "cycle of life." It is a law that goes beyond the control of people, of their temporality, of institutions, of human justice, of law, of economics, of politics, of religion, of ecology, but at the same time, it includes all these things. Using Bateson's (1979) concepts – in cybernetic terms –, the *ley de origen* constitutes the rules of the *context of contexts*, which is the main self-regulating system. Simply put, the *ley de origen* contains the constraints that must regulate its internal systems.

In exploring the Indigenous perspective of law, it can be observed that "Indigenous law" is associated with at least two different meanings. First, the legal recognitions that Indigenous people have obtained from the State after years of struggle, and even a conflictive Indigenous-State relationship. And second, Indigenous knowledge about how to be with and in the world, the guiding principles that exemplify a human-other-than-human relationship. These two different perspectives also embody two different ways of knowing the world; that is, two different epistemologies, which are based on different ontological systems. One from the State in which hierarchies and identities are formed by differentiation and distancing from the "Others"; and the other, more organic, where identities are formed by the awareness of the relationships that enable our existence with the Others.

The epistemologies of peoples are reflected in their laws, governments and justice systems, as ONIC points out. This applies both to Indigenous populations and to the State, which explains, in part, why the Colombian State, its law, its justice and its current socio-political system privilege the current paradigms of Development based on economic growth over those that are epistemologically different (Escobar, 1998). In order to study these paradigms, this second chapter has described the historical structure that has shaped the relationship between the National Government and the Indigenous, in the region and in Colombia. I have shown what today is the discourse of "Development" constructed, launched and executed from a colonialist mentality that ignores and eliminates difference when it cannot be co-opted.

The logic that I have shown in the cases of Putumayo and La Mata Atlántica is typical of systems that lack an adequate regulator. This lack of control ends up transforming optimal exchanges within the system into self-destructive loops that lead the system to impossible survival scenarios. *Endeude* (peonage) relations – which, as their name suggests, are based on debt – can be one of those self-destructive systems not regulated by impartial rules, not dictated by an unregulated creditor. Extractivist systems are also part of that self-destructive club because they are built on colonialist mentalities that maximize the *endeude* system. A debt for those who have not received the money but have to pay with their territories and often with their own lives the interest charged by those behind the capital; and, a debt to the land, which loses its eco-logical balance when there is interference in fragile environments.

To protect the land and territory from these destructive [usurious] cycles, some countries with a significant percentage of Indigenous population (such as Ecuador and Bolivia) have incorporated the Rights of Nature into their national constitutions. Although Colombia has begun to follow these steps, the more than fifty years of internal war have focused the struggle of its reduced Indigenous population on protecting their right to live and exist as Indigenous people; a right that, by extension, should protect the rights of all Beings that inhabit their territories. In the context of the Colombian internal war, such a strategy proved effective, not so much in protecting the lives of individual members and leaders of these nations, but in terms of territory, which in comparison with those of neighboring countries shows a remarkable degree of conservation. How would these legal restrictions be maintained in a post-war period to protect Indigenous territories and their inhabitants?

The second part of this chapter aimed to review the legal restrictions that could be used to protect these territories and their webs of life. To do so, I reviewed fundamental concepts such as territory, identity, autonomy and self-determination, which, have historically been at the core of Indigenous Organizations in Colombia, while being continuously questioned by the Colombian State. I focused on the "Problem of Indigenous Identification," in which the State claims jurisdiction to recognize who is entitled to be protected by Collective Rights. This behavior is observed when the State bases its

interpretation of national and international laws according to the interests of the governmental agenda, resulting in an incongruent list, which very few Indigenous nations could comply with, especially those that need more protection after having been deeply affected by processes of de-territorialization and de-indigenization. At the end of the chapter, I argue that such incongruity can be resolved by listening to what Indigenous organizations themselves have to say about it. In the particular case of the "problem of identity," all 118 Indigenous nations of Colombia seem to agree that the only criterion that dictates who is Indigenous and who is not, is given by the adherence to the sacred *ley de origen*.

My point is that, in order to resolve the historical inconsistencies of the State and to resolve issues that directly affect the fundamental concepts defended by Indigenous organizations, the State must – as dictated by national, international and Indigenous sacred law – consult and work hand in hand with Indigenous organizations. That has to be the procedure to follow when talking about forest conservation in traditional Indigenous territories, and it has to be the procedure to address the "*sacredness* issue." Therefore, as far as the protection of the Amazon rainforest is concerned, I propose that a good step to start with is to listen to what the Amazon nations have to say about the relationship between Indigenous and national governments. That first step would help situate the interests of those nations, the dimensions that need to be addressed, and the terms set by their sacred laws in which discussions regarding natural resource extraction and rainforest conservation might take place. I will address such matters in the next chapter, *People Die*, after the information provided so far is discussed in relation to the analytical methods chosen for this dissertation.

Analytical methods

Cybernetics

A cybernetic reading – or an analysis of controls and communication – will provide a context in which legal achievements can be analyzed through the lens of multidisciplinary theories such as Game Theory, Actor-Network Theory, Systems Theory, and Political Ontology. The historical, legal, and socio-political context sheds light on some of the conflicts and contradictions that affect the recognition and factual implementation of Indigenous rights in Colombia; furthermore, it also elucidates the changes that have opened new possibilities of existence for Indigenous people. This section seeks to identify missing information regarding Amazonian representation, as well as common mistakes, problems, and challenges between intercultural negotiations and diplomatic spaces.

From a cybernetic point of view, it could be argued that the conflicts between the Colombian State and the Indigenous nations are the result of previous situations as the manifestation of constant contradictory information and communication errors between the parties; errors that have not been duly corrected, as has been shown in the preceding segments of this chapter. To this end, and by using cybernetics as a method of analysis, there are key problems or errors to be highlighted. For instance, the delimitations of indigeneity given by the ILO and the Colombian State are based on denials or comparisons with incomplete information. According to them, "Indigenous" is what "the rest of society is not." One of the problems with this negative delimitation is that neither the ILO nor the Colombian State offers a definition of "what the rest of society is," mainly because it is unfeasible in a multiethnic society. Moreover, even within a definition of what the "rest of society" is, the Indigenous could not be what the "rest of society is not." For example, if a person were to define what a table is, that person cannot assemble a group of chairs and then assume that everything else in the room is a table.

Another clear problem when considering the historical context of indigeneity (Rappaport, 1996) in Colombia is that Indigenous families were forced to choose between abandoning their territories or denying their Indigenous identity and adopting a mestizo

identification[72]. It can be said that these Indigenous families were subject to what Gregory Bateson calls a double bind situation, which is a control technique in which the subject must decide between one of two different harmful or negative options without discussion (Bateson 1979; Bandler & Grinder, 1981).

In addition, by exploring the work of the Indigenous leader of the Paez nation, Manuel Quintin Lame (1971), who inspired Indigenous organizations in Colombia, I want to highlight the role of law in revealing a solution to this double bind scenario that created a platform on which re-indigenization and re-territorialization could flourish (Rappaport 2016). In this case, Lame went beyond the mere defense of his people and was able to uncover and understand the constraints that guided the government's decisions. In short, by examining a broader context, Lame found a solution to the problem of the double bind in which the Indigenous communities were trapped. He understood the impossible no-win scenario and decided to find ways around it by learning the rules of the system or what Bateson would call "learning II or deutero-learning[73]" (Bateson, 1979).

Lame summarized his struggle in six maxims or principles that would inspire future Indigenous movements to successfully demand and change the Law in Colombia. On a Batesonian "learning scale," this change of rules within the system would be "Learning III": when the subject changes the rules of the system to open up new possibilities for action through a profound redefinition beyond *deutero-learning* (Ibid). Its achievement, I argue, is that those "human" rules were changed to include immutable rules, immutable laws, such as those contained in the *ley de origen*. I theorize that this changes not only the legal system but all other interconnected economic and cultural systems of Colombian society.

Some of these new possibilities for action were seen, for example, in the processes of re-indigenization and re-territorialization that took place during the 1980s, thanks to the consolidation of strong Indigenous organizations such as the National Indigenous

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[72] This is problematic because the concept of mestizo is also based on negations, that is, on what is "neither European nor Indigenous," but somehow both.

[73] Deutero or learning II consists of recognizing the rules of the system; finding a way around them and changing them is known as learning III.

Organization of Colombia – ONIC and the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca – CRIC. Although Chaves (2003) states that *colonos* could seek to be recognized as Indigenous because this "would allow access to free health and education services, exemption from compulsory military service for males, resources and financial transfers, and perhaps even restitution of *resguardo* lands," I argue that there is more to it. The vindication of Indigenous identity gives the option to mestizo populations to claim membership in a group that is labeled as different, demanding retribution from the State, rather than pretending to be part of a country that only takes the resources away from them and offers no more than an undefined idea of nationhood.

Finally, this segment proposes that the redefinition of Lame's proposals by the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia is part of a plan that involves a complex learning process. This process may allow for a solution to the conflicts and contradictions inherited from the Colombian State that have been reviewed thus far. I will explore the possibilities of this plan to remedy the epistemological problems in communications that arise when different ontologies collide in the following section.

Games of Development and Poverty

This segment suggests that the development model supported by the Colombian State applies the rules of what is known in mathematics and Game Theory as zero-sum competitive games, which are dynamics that necessarily divide populations into winners and losers, in this case, the poor and the rich. On the other hand, Indigenous organizations have a cosmo-political alternative to Western "Development": *buen vivir*.

The problem (or perhaps the success) of the Development discourse is that, in essence, it is homogenizing. In other words, the development discourse ignores the different histories, experiences, and ways of being in the world of those who are considered poor and, therefore, also ignores the futures that these populations may have or propose, given that they are not aligned with Western values and do not represent economic growth. For example, according to the discourse, anyone who earns less than two dollars a day, or who does not have or does not meet a minimum urban ideal of Development and

consumption decided by industrialized countries, is classified as poor and must be assisted until they meet the unilaterally established welfare minimums.

What the homogenizing discourse does not contemplate is that, for example, a peasant in the Mongolian steppes is quite different from a textile worker in Delhi, or a young Inuit from Nunavut in Canada, or a hunter or fisherman from the Amazonian Apaporis in Colombia. All of them may earn less than two dollars a day, but their social organization, the materials of their homes; what they eat, how and when they eat; their knowledge of the world and the way it is transmitted, among many other variables, are and must remain totally different from those of a white man in Mississippi, a black woman in Detroit, or a street dweller in Bogota who might also be earning less than two dollars a day. All these people who, from the point of view of development discourse, can be considered poor, have different needs, and are exposed to different risks. But above all, their expectations of a comfortable life and what they need for their well-being and a dignified life are totally different.

At this point, it is pertinent to question the relevance of the remedy suggested by the World Bank more than 70 years ago: Are economic growth, capital accumulation, and the imposition of Western values really effective in solving the problems arising from poverty, especially with regard to traditional societies or ethnic groups? Or, on the contrary, as academic evidence suggests, is poverty the price that traditional societies have to pay when they are dispossessed of their traditions and territories in order to advance Development?

In this sense, Renshaw & Wray 2004 argue that "there are Indigenous leaders and intellectuals who claim that the concept of poverty is a way of discriminating against or devaluing Indigenous culture. Comparing Indigenous society with the rest of national society in terms of income, schooling, or basic sanitation is unfair, as these are typical indicators of national society that do not have the same relevance to Indigenous people. If one were to compare the two in terms of solidarity, quality of social interactions or coexistence with nature, it would be the national society that would be considered poor." (Renshaw & Wray, 2004, p.1)

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If Renshaw & Wray (as well as the other authors cited in this thesis) are right, and the valuation – or the very concept of poverty used by the Development discourse – is unjust because it gives privileges to those who compare over those who are compared, then, consequently, the measures and effects derived from this concept will also be unjust. But if neither economic growth, nor the incorporation of traditional societies and their territories into the global market, nor the imposition of Western values can lift them out of poverty, what other remedy can there be? Can an alternative grassroots model to Development be conceived? Can the poor take the floor and decide their future based on their own past and not in comparison with the present of the rich? Can Latin America stop considering itself inferior and speak on equal terms with the nations of the northern hemisphere to decide the welfare of its own inhabitants? Can a proposal be generated from knowledge and recognition of diversity? And (more specifically in the Colombian case), instead of reforming the "poor" Indigenous, Afro-Colombian, Raizal, or Rrom populations and molding them to follow a Western model, can they be allowed and differ from the values of white minorities or mestizo majorities? Furthermore, is it conceivable to allow "poor" Indigenous, Afro-Colombian, Raizal, or Rrom populations to retain their own values and models of alternative Development, or alternatives to Development, and perhaps incorporate them into national decision-making models and processes?

The answer to these questions is *yes*, although getting there is a great challenge since we should not limit ourselves to talking about reconciling economic alternatives from the local to the global. Such projects must consist of generating spaces for a dialogue that brings together different ways of being and learning about the world, a dialogue between different epistemologies. Such an effort requires that the poor, including the so-called *third world nations*, appropriate and exercise their role as reformers of their own realities. Moreover, the periphery must appropriate their right to speak and be heard as equals by those who are accustomed to making all the decisions and setting the rules of the game from their privileged position. Likewise, instead of emulating, repeating, and adjusting to imported homogenizing models, Latin America must begin to innovate, propose and contrast those "modern" models with its diverse local realities and needs. This would materialize in Colombia if – as Orlando Fals Borda rightly points out – impoverished

populations (be they Indigenous, Afro-Colombian, Raizal, or Rrom) were not seen as static forces but as transformative forces that can guide the State to evaluate economic needs and opportunities in terms other than strictly those of profit and the market. "From there, an alternative discourse can emerge that is understandable on our own terms." (Escobar, 1998, p. 47).

But, again, for this to be possible, it is essential to develop the necessary tools and expand the capacities of the agencies in charge of capturing, processing, and communicating the information that is unknown or has been ignored about difference and diversity. It is here that the foundations of this thesis are laid: in using Indigenous narratives and history, as well as the *planes de vida* and the *buen vivir* of Indigenous peoples to orient and transform the body of the State. As explained above, *buen vivir* can be understood as a way of living in harmony with and in the world, even if not all possible relationships are understood or known, comprising worlds, realities, logics, dynamics, or actors (human and other-than-human beings). Based on mutual respect, people take just the necessary to have a dignified life, making sure to always give back to others in the same way. Furthermore, *buen vivir* is also the Indigenous alternative to development among Indigenous nations in Latin America, which contrasts greatly with economic models and extractive economies such as Colombia's, which are based on capital accumulation, consumerism, and overexploitation of people and natural resources (Acosta, 2013; Escobar, 1998; Gudynas, 2011; Kuiru, 2014).

Thus, it can be observed that *buen vivir* is based on the rules of non-zero-sum cooperative games. In these dynamics, it is understood that either everyone wins, or everyone loses, so players would always choose the most appropriate option to benefit others, even if this means having fewer personal benefits in the short term. Although knowledge and communication are desirable, non-zero-sum games allow working with unfamiliar players and with little or unintelligible communication. From a strategic point of view, playing cooperative games benefits not only the decision-maker but the entire group by reinforcing known and unknown relationships in the system (Axelrod & Hamilton, 1981; Bateson 1979).

It is important to note that these two different sets of rules, competitive and cooperative, do not really represent different games, as usually described in basic prisoner's dilemma scenarios (Rapoport, & Chammah, 1965). Rather, each set of rules guides the decision-making processes. In other words, the players are not and have not been playing different games. The division lies only in how players understand and set the rules of the game and, therefore, in how they relate to each other. Thus, whenever competitive rules apply, one or both players lose. Therefore, in the case of Indigenous and State organizations, it would be desirable to reconcile the ontological differences, to make decisions following the only set of rules that would benefit both. I mean, cooperativeness.

Isabel Stengers, in her work "The Cosmopolitical Proposal" (2005b), proposes a way to achieve this reconciliation. According to Stengers, both parties must first be aware of their own epistemological limitations in order to recognize "the unknown, constituted by these [other] multiple divergent worlds and the articulations of which they might eventually be capable" (Stengers 2005b, 995). However, as Latour mentions in his book *Reassembling the Social* (2007), this option would require the "modern" State to accept metaphysics with "other" real agencies beyond human intentionality, or worse, with metaphysics that oppose human action (ibid, p.61).

On the one hand, this scenario would involve the Indigenous acquiring a deep understanding of the workings of the State (as in the case of Lame), in conjunction *with the* State's recognition and understanding of the *ley de origen* and the premises of *buen vivir*. The act of doing so, I theorize, would problematize the current economic model of State projects, as well as contemporary ontological divisions of the "modern civilized" world, where nature and humans exist in different realities. Controversially, this would also imply the revision of central Western epistemological paradigms (at least in Colombia) that have ruled as scientific facts since Darwin, especially, the foundational modern myth of the individual as the pertinent unit of survival.

If this double education is achieved, possibly a greater understanding on the part of the State with respect to the Amerindian ontological claims expressed, for example, in the statement of the *Mamas* that I presented in this chapter, the Indigenous spiritual leaders of

the Sierra Nevada offer their explanation that humanity and nature are one and the same thing. Using Bateson's terms, it would mean living from the premise that the unit of survival is formed by the individual *plus* his/her environment since the survival of the former always depends on the survival of the latter (Bateson, 1979). Thus, this thesis proposes that the systems and communication theories underpinning Bateson's work and the claims of the Mamas – which are based on thousands of years of careful observation and deliberation – contain the same ideas because the arguments behind them are not really different.

If governments and people, in general, were to assume this epistemological turn to avoid and correct environmental disasters, Indigenous organizations would not be facing these life-threatening situations on their own. In fact, Indigenous organizations could confront the legacy of previous ethnocentric "modern" governments from the perspective of the *ley de origen* and *buen vivir*. This option, however, requires that the parties' scenarios be on equal footing, which implies the recognition and rejection of any position of privilege or disadvantage. Thus, in addition to the full commitment of both parties, it is imperative that all actors undergo a deep retrospective work to reevaluate the actions and decisions that led to those positions. This is a process similar to that which can be experienced during religious revelations, psychotherapy, or life-threatening situations (Bateson, 1979). But why would the Colombian government abandon its privileged position? Can this epistemological change take place if one of the actors decides not to cooperate or learn the premises of the other?

As has been discussed before in the legal context, decision-making arenas in which both the Colombian government and Indigenous organizations were to be on equal footing began after the ratification of ILO 169 and the Colombian Constitution of 1991. Some of these spaces were built on other existing ones; for example, the Colombian Congress began to guarantee a minimum of three seats for Indigenous representatives (two in the Senate and one in the Chamber of Representatives). However, these spaces were already dominated by opportunistic and dangerous actors (López & Sevillano, 2008; Padilla, 1996), which led some Indigenous leaders to "abandon their own essence, wisdom, and power." (del Ecuador, 2007 p. 19-20). On the contrary, some new spaces emerged, such as

the meetings of Prior Consultation – PC and the Mesa Permanente de Concertación – MPC, which I argue can be true "diplomatic spaces" in which different ontologies can meet and work for the achievement of common objectives.

I suggest that the Mesa arose from the need for a space in which the State and Indigenous organizations could learn from each other, adjust the rules of the system, and make common agreements that would open up possibilities for new actions. If one analyzes these processes at the Mesa from the point of view of applied mathematics, one can affirm that both the Indigenous organizations and the government are playing a cooperative non-zero-sum game, even though the government sometimes plays only by its own rules, or better yet, those of individualistic zero-sum games. This discrepancy may explain why processes like PC are slow but effective in reaching important agreements. Even when government technocrats do not understand the *ley de origen* or vice versa, both parties can reach agreements because intelligible communication is not indispensable in cooperative games. On the other hand, trust is desirable, which raises the difficult question of how you can trust someone who cannot understand your perspective or, moreover, someone who has taken advantage of you in the past.

In Amerindian relational ontologies, all people are equal, human and other-than-human. Therefore, assuming past or preconceived identities is risky, as identities must be observed in the moment of interaction with others (Escobar, 2016). For example, a hunter may go into the forest with all the tools and knowledge of past kills, but s/he cannot be sure that s/he is the hunter because if s/he is, a quite possible outcome is that s/he becomes the prey, which would happen if the ontology is changed by the animal's actions and his/her own responses (Kohn, 2013). However, if s/he succeeds in changing the animal's ontology, s/he will give her/himself up as prey, as a gift (Scott in Harvey, 2014). Thus, Indigenous leaders do not go to prior consultations thinking that they are victims, nor victimizers, nor allies of the State; rather, they assume that they go as equals and that a range of identities may emerge according to their abilities to control their own dynamics in the encounter.

Hence, if the national government and Indigenous organizations are to reach mutual agreements, the representatives of the State must first recognize this equality, not with

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words but with actions. It is therefore important for Indigenous communities to rewrite the past, not only as an internal cultural affirmation but for the national government to acknowledge its own actions or omissions that led Indigenous people into critical situations. Although a public apology would be the first step, it would be more important if the national government offered guarantees of non-repetition in these situations.

Such guarantees are important because unlike zero-sum games, cooperative games are played over more than one round, sometimes for an indeterminate number of encounters. This means that what happens in one game can carry over to future encounters. Of course, the best strategy is to cooperate, but if there is no communication with the other party – and by this, I mean ontological intelligibility –, there is no way of knowing whether the other party will also cooperate. If so, the best strategy is to cooperate in the first encounter. In subsequent rounds, the player who knows the rules will respond by mimicking the other player's last response, which means that if the other player did not cooperate, the rule-abiding player would wait for cooperation to resume before continuing. In summary, to play non-zero-sum cooperative games, such as the PC meetings held at MPC, each round of the game can only begin when all parties are on equal footing. Trust, or lack thereof, will be the end result of cooperation; thus, if all parties cooperate, more agreements and stronger long-term relationships can be built. Conversely, if one party makes individualistic decisions, the relationships of the entire system will suffer, slowing down the process.

Chapter III – People die

Indigenous Narratives of Extractivist Representation (The Amazonian Context)

During my visit to La Chorrera in June 2019, I had agreed with the Asociación Zonal de Cabildos y Autoridades Tradicionales de La Chorrera – AZICATCH that I would support their traveling exhibition. This exhibition was a Knowledge Mobilization exercise aimed at repairing its relationships with non-Indigenous actors, especially those related to the early 20th century rubber boom. In doing so, I hoped to gather enough information to identify the core values contained in their *buen vivir* practices to create the Ethnic Multidimensional Poverty Index (ÉMPI) model.

In March 2020, I arrived in Bogota, Colombia, in order to begin preparations for the exhibition; however, at that precise moment, travel restrictions were imposed in the territory because of COVID-19. Despite this, I decided that while I was there, I would continue my research due to the flexibility of Participatory Action Research (PAR), adjusting my primary sources and the products of this research to the current circumstances. PAR, as stated by Rappaport and Lomeli (2018) also aims at "unearthing the forgotten history of popular struggles in order to re-signify them through activism" (p.597). Given the alarming spread and mortality rate of COVID-19 in the Amazon region, the new approach I adopted proved to be ethical, as it respects the social distancing and travel restrictions imposed by Indigenous organizations, while attending to existing and emerging commitments with my local partners.

During my stay in Colombia, I used as a primary source the information contained in an unpublished book, in which I participated as compiler and editor, which collects the voices of La Chorrera on the rubber boom. This book was the result of an agreement between AZICATCH and the National Center of Historical Memory – CNMH, a State institution whose main objective is the reception, recovery, conservation, compilation, and analysis of documentary material related to human rights violations in Colombia. This agreement was one of many that the national government and other State institutions reached with the four nations of La Chorrera in 2012, during the commemoration of the centenary of *The Putumayo Blue Book*, the report that Sir Roger Casement presented to both houses of the British Parliament in 1912.

The CNMH was the only State institution that followed up on the agreements with AZICATCH, sponsoring four investigations, one for each of the Indigenous nations of La Chorrera: the Murui-Muina (Uitoto), Okaina, Bora and Muinane. These studies took about two years to complete, but their results were never edited or published by the CNMH and remained on the only USB memory stick that AZICATCH had in La Chorrera. Unlike the CNMH, neither AZICATCH nor the caciques forgot this information because for them it is crucial to communicate these results to the rest of the world, which was the main objective of the postponed traveling exhibition. During my June 2019 stay in La Chorrera – in the midst of my quest to record the denied history of the rubber tappers of the Putumayo Valley – Juan Carlos Gittoma, secretary of culture for AZICATCH, asked me to compile and begin the process of publishing his research and history on extractivism in a book (Gómez & AZICATCH, under review). To this end, my mentor and *amiga* Margarita Serje, associate professor at the Faculty of Anthropology, Universidad de los Andes, offered me her unconditional support.

I also drew on an award-winning graduate thesis that I helped edit, written by the important Amazonian leader Fany Kuiru. In it, Kuiru discusses the role of women in the resistance to ethnocide that took place during the time of Casa Arana, the main rubber company established in their territories. Additionally, I have attended several public virtual meetings and presentations by important Amazonian leaders such as Fany Kuiru and Patricia Gualinga (of the Sarayaku Nation), in order to understand the current situation in

their territories. In addition, the NGO FUCAI allowed me access to their archive and data collection in Bogotá, which I have used as the main source for the stories and myths that I translated in this chapter. That archive is the product of more than 20 years of collaborative work between AZICATCH, FUCAI and the Colombian national government.

This unpublished material includes photographs, maps, videos, documents, memoirs and audio recordings of elders (some are now deceased) and statements from researchers and other community members. Most of this information exists only in old formats, such as typed or handwritten documents, video 8, VHS, audio tapes, etc. I am committed to make this valuable information public on a bilingual (Spanish/English) web platform called *Manguare.red*, so that it will be accessible to these organizations, Indigenous nations and other researchers who want to work with and support the Putumayo Indigenous *planes de vida*.

As I will explain in the next chapter, the change I made in my research by collecting these documents allowed me to process the necessary information to create the Manguare.red web platform and build an ÉMPI model to show how ethnic groups, researchers and the Colombian national government can value the sacred meanings in Indigenous territories, beyond the processes of commodification, which is the central theme of this research. This current chapter, however, intends to present part of that information, extending to the reader an invitation to *Amazoniar* which was a concept coined by Patricia Gualinga in 2020, during an interview with Beatriz Garcia of the Amazonian Center for Anthropology and Practical Application – CAAAP[74]. *Amazoniar* or "to Amazonify" means, in her words, that "those who think they know everything, relearn from the ones who have been forgotten."

The method

I have chosen to present the following narratives by accepting the invitation/challenge to understand the relationship between the sacred and the forgotten stories of Amazonian

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[74] 1] Gualinga was personally invited by Pope Francis to participate in the 2019 Amazon Synod to highlight the vital role of the region in the health of planet Earth. During the Synod and also later in a January 2020 interview with Beatriz Garcia of the Amazon Center for Anthropology and Practical Application-CAAAP-, Patricia sent such a message to people around the world "to Amazonify"

elders, especially those involving the children of tobacco, coca and sweet yucca. In doing so, I want to question research methodologies that situate anthropologists as "neutral observers" who seek to disengage from the community, while wishing to be invited into its most intimate spaces, in order to then "uncover" the structures that sustain the world of the "informants." By adopting research techniques such as those used by the nations of La Chorrera to gather the information that would be presented here (e.g., **the use of ritual elements**, **the request for permission, and the uninterrupted listening to the narrative and stories of the connoisseurs)**, it is clear that **respect** is at the core of their methodology. Respect for sacred plants and spirits, respect for elders and respect for their role as guardians.

In my opinion, anthropological research should not be about following an informant to observe and take notes of their practices, only to explain them according to Western world academic frameworks. No. Anthropology should be about recognizing the authority of peoples, engaging with their research methodologies, supporting their causes, creating true horizontal relationships between individuals as co-researchers and, at the same time, leaving behind colonial subject/object dynamics. This position requires our most serious commitment to re-evaluate our ideological leanings; a commitment to be with the communities we work with and to co-research the issues that most concern their people, starting from their own history. It also implies our willingness to support praxis that seeks change; to encourage the production of knowledge by the communities themselves. And, above all, to support their self-determination.

The anthropologist can no longer be a passive observer, an academic visitor who comes and goes as s/he pleases without disturbing the *status quo*. This position must be revised, especially when working with populations still immersed in contexts with colonial legacies and dominant homogenizing discourses. If we do not question this role, we will continue to passively support the oppressor. One might think that the above methodology is not new, since it coincides to a large extent with Participatory Action Research – PAR, which has been used since the late 1940s and had an important contribution in Colombia after the work of Orlando Fals Borda in the 70s (Lomeli and Rappaport 2018). However, an innovative proposal for Anthropology is the use of PAR, **in light of the ontological**

turn, to support the design of a *Pluriverse*, using what authors such as Kohn, Descola and Escobar would call a "post-human and post-development anthropological approach." The challenge posed by such a methodology is how to work hand in hand with other people who are not only human, incorporating the rules that guide animals, plants, physical processes, artifacts, images and other forms of Beings.

The rules

The answer to these questions depends on the relationships our co-researchers recognize with these non-human entities. They will inform us about the connections we must observe as anthropologists and the other entities we must learn to deal with. Authors such as Kohn and Bateson have guided anthropological research in trying to discover a universal language used by nature. Following in their footsteps, I ventured on a journey to learn from those whose lives are based on understanding other people, other species, listening to plants, corresponding with spirits and seeing the world through the eyes of others. Rather than revealing a universal language, these conversations helped me to learn about different ways and methods of communicating, learning, and living with difference. I think anthropologists should embark on voyages into uncharted waters, but we cannot pretend to be the commanders of other people's ships. I see our job rather as charting: learning to read the crew, their songs, stories, and interaction with themselves, the ship (as a human creation), the ocean, the moon, the wind, and the stars.

I believe our job is to create maps on which the journeys of many crews and vessels intersect. To develop guides that connect the harbors of human knowledge so that we, as humans, can communicate with other human and non-human beings (living or dead), the artifacts and structures we have created, and the very world of which we are a part. In other words, our role as anthropologists is not just to create "new" knowledge, but to promote other forms of existing knowledge in order to advance epistemological or "cultural" diversity. From his experience with the Runa people in the Ecuadorian Amazon, Kohn proposes a great form of study based on both Peirce and Bateson, in terms of semiotic and metaphoric associations because, after all, all living beings are interpretants that navigate

the world by transforming it into iconic and indexical signs, and that is precisely what Kohn does: he reinterprets the signs of others.

Those maps we draw that connect one world to another must include the similarities and differences in how we understand realities, and how those known relationships between different ideas bring them into existence. However, we must also act *in* and *with* the world beyond these maps to discern the codes, the rules of living, dying and living together that give meaning to meaning, the constraints that were not represented by earlier cartographers who could not see beyond their reflection in the sea of representations. If we pay attention to the origin story of the peoples we work with (in this case, the nations of La Chorrera), we can learn why some of us recognize ourselves as units apart from others. In contrast, Amazonian peoples identify themselves as part of a larger integrated complexity, similar to Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis, but also different because it incorporates non-human information and variables that make noise in traditional scientific theories.

In Chapter IV, I will unweave the threads of the stories of this chapter, pointing out some patterns, characteristics and common concepts that will help me draw an ontological map. For example, we will see that at the beginning of this chapter the cacique Benito states that "everything was nothing in this world until Ijchúpa arrived on Earth. But since there was nothing, he did not arrive as a human but as a plant, and when he had roots, day and night were separated." This can say that, unlike Abrahamic religions, in this Amazonian story day and night were not created but were distinguished by someone: a vegetable "Self" that took root in the earth, and by interacting with everything around it, other plants and animals were distinguished. Tobacco was the first plant that this person/plant used, which allowed it to dance/study/create seven new worlds. What I mean is, what the following Amazonian narratives are telling us, is *how* their concepts were created because that is what that primordial someone is accomplishing. Basic concepts like day and night, good or bad, and so on. Concepts that are created after a Being – or rather a differentiated "Self" – experiences the repetition of similar events in which it adjusts its actions until it reaches an optimal state, concepts that create the word and allow the Being to see beyond darkness and light.

My role in the following sections of this chapter is not that of recorder of the stories, since the communities themselves captured most of these chronicles. My work is mainly that of compiler, translator and editor of texts, occasionally adding connective text between brackets to facilitate a smoother reading, and of "digitizer" of all this information in the Manguare.red platform (explained in more detail in Chapter V). These small changes do not affect AZICATCH's objective which, following the mandate of its *plan de vida*, is to present to the modern world and to the generations to come the voice and memories of the victorious survivors of perhaps one of the darkest chapters in the history of extractivism. Thus, this chapter presents the history of the people of the Resguardo Predio Putumayo, narrated by the original inhabitants of what Richard Evans Schultes called "God's first workshop" (Davis, 1997, p. 318).

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They cut our branches, they cut our trunks, but they were not able to remove our roots, and today we are the sprouts of the Uitoto people.

(Commemoration phrase of April 23, 2013)

Prologue to the research *(by the Uitoto Nation)*

Remaining quiet and hiding what has not been erased and what remains latent in the collective memory of our nations, not responding with vengeance, hatred or resentment to the rubber genocide (1900-1932) was a form of cultural resistance by the Amazonian cultures of the tobacco for the last 100 years. Nevertheless, today, the spirits of tobacco, coca and sweet yucca have shared with our elders the need to call for the reconstruction and reaffirmation of the identities, cultures, territories, societies, ideologies, and spiritualities of Amazonian peoples, after the events perpetrated in La Chorrera, Amazonas by the Casa Arana and their allies a century ago. This text plans to face that past, although not with a vengeful spirit. On the contrary, it must be understood as part of a process to recover the memory of Indigenous ancestral knowledge by reflecting on the past from a present standpoint, while projecting the future to harmonize modern problems.

The principle "Iziruya komek+do[75]—which is acquired through tobacco and is oriented towards thinking and acting quietly through the senses for a collective benefit – makes it possible to ease or put an end on the suffering caused by the acts of barbarism to which the ancestors were exposed. However, within our culture, the rape and death of our people is unpardonable. At this point I must pause for a moment and express the healthy intention of remembering these people. This memory process has the main objective of calling for the protection of Indigenous communities at risk of extinction and demanding safeguards to territorial and cultural constitutional rights to ensure the survival of the "orphans" of the Amazonian genocide.

It is also our goal that this history can be made known in other regions of the country and the world, to shed light on the events that took place here and repair the lives of our

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[75] The symbol "+" is an additional vowel in the Uitoto language and is pronounced similar to a closed / æ /

peoples. Above all, we want to ensure that this history is not repeated in this or a similar way with other Indigenous peoples or with our brothers and sisters around the world. This initiative aims to value the memory of the people who survived and who managed to perpetuate their legacy through oral tradition for approximately three generations. It is worth mentioning that in this work, we can hardly report the events [as they happened] because the feelings of anguish, pain and uncertainty that burden the memory, not only exceed the capacity of human verbal languages (such as English and Spanish) but also because many of the experts who could communicate them better are no longer among us today to personally share their knowledge.

For this investigation, we located the clans that existed before the *cauchería* and the three camps with which said industry began; however, our work focuses more on giving the accounts and the facts that are not in the existing literature. That is to say, we are presenting the voices of those who were directly affected when the rubber boom began to decline; the voices that witnessed the return from Peru to Colombia after 1932; the voices of the deaths caused by diseases and epidemics introduced for over thirty years of horror; the voices of those who starved when nobody could work the *chagras* anymore.

Methodology

Following the cultural guidelines of the Uitoto territory and using academic experiences and knowledge, a mixed methodology for the reconstruction of memory was developed. In the development of fieldwork, the research methodology of the Uitoto people consists of:

Ritual elements: this action is carried out by both the technical team and the expert who tells the stories. These elements are: jibie, yera, ja + gab +, juiñoi. (coca, *ambil*, caguana and manicuela juice[76]).

Permission dialogues: these are the meetings between the technical team and the elder in charge of the narratives. Through the ritual of preparation of the *ambil*[77], we "seat"

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[76] Traditional juice made of cassava by Amazonian women.

[77] A paste made from the slow cooking of tobacco leaves with vegetable salts in water.

the word[78] looking for guidance and spiritual strength. During these meetings, the members of the technical team introduce themselves asking for permission to access the places with audio-visual and recording elements, while at the same time, the technical team receives protection.

The narration and the stories of knowers: this takes place by asking an initial question from which the narrator develops their story without interruption. Only at the end, supplementary questions can be asked.

This research is qualitative and has a differential approach. Researchers adopt the *mambeo*[79] as a means of weaving knowledge and recovering memory. It should be noted that the ethnographic method is interpretive-descriptive since it is based on the researchers' prolonged observation during information gathering. The primary goal of this work is, therefore, to give an account of the local knowledge of the knowers and chiefs of clans through the interpretative reconstruction of social relations.

Where do we come from and what did we do in the past?

Narrations of The Bora Nation *(By Benedicto)*

We must start from the beginning of the creation of the Universe until today to be able to talk about this knowledge. The creator God Niimúhé told us: "Everything was nothing in this world. The land that [exists] now was a swamp, like a pond. That swamp had a god called Mepiivyeju alluwa boa, which was the God of evils, for in this world diseases such as diarrhea and malaria affected children. There was no land, [there were] no trees. In that place, our grandfather Mepiivyeju Niimúhé (the Creator Father) sent his son Ijchúpa (White Heron). He did not go as a human, but he went to the swamp as a piece of cotton. The place where he arrived was getting harder; the roots were growing like a seedling of umari, in the form of people, that is why it was called Niimúhé, because it came out of a sprout. So, the first thing he did was to separate the darkness from the day. Then, with his

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[78] To calm the spirit in *the Círculo de la Palabra* or *mambeadero*

[79] Chewing pulverized coca leaves mixed with *yarumo* leaves' ashes (*Cecropia peltata*).

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heat, the Earth began to solidify, and the different species of plants and animals emerged. That is to say, everything that exists in the world.

His first deed was to sow the tobacco bush to extract *ambil* out. Consuming *ambil* and continuing to work is the task that the father sent him to carry out. When the tobacco plant was growing more prominent, the evil god who was on Earth destroyed it, so Niimúhé asked the evil god "why did you hurt me?" Then the evil one answered: "because this world is not yours, your world is the one above." "Well," Niimúhé replied, "then I will have to make another world." Thus, he made another world and buried that first world that was made of nothing but diseases. This world we live in has seven layers because it was destroyed seven times. Then, every time Niimúhé wanted to dance, the evil God Melliwa boa arrived to mix it all up. The first dance in the Bora dialect is called Llujawa. The second, Dorame Me boa. The third Teeke. The fourth Tuuri. The fifth was Eemuja, (the sound of rain). At the time of the dance, pure witchcraft was studied. The last dance that Niimúhé performed was on this Earth, and the evil one could not destroy it. Then Niimúhé scolded him and – out of the sheer desire to annoy him – said: "I have already given six worlds to you, evil one, and you keep on bothering me. However, this time I will not pay attention to you."

This was the seventh Earth and seventh dance, the dance called Apújco. Through this dance, Niimúhé stepped on the evil one and kicked him into the first world, the swamp. That is the reason why, in the Bora culture, the *pisada de la maloca* (maloca inaugural dance) begins with the Apujco dance. Niimúhé said "I will not move from here," and many things started to happen afterwards. Niimúhé engaged in all the other dances, and the evil God continued to annoy humanity from time to time with plagues like the flu. [Grandfather Benito ends the traditional knowledge-sharing by blowing strongly into the atmosphere so that nothing terrible affects the workgroup; then he concluded by consuming a piece of *ambil*].

People *(By Florencio Gómez and Benito)*

Humans are made of water. We, our generation, are not from Adam; we come in another way. From the fertilized Earth and from the water we were born. We came out from under the ground: when we went out, we came in queues, from six in the afternoon until dawn. Those who did not go out at night and were caught by dawn were left as animals with tails. Our mother cut the navel and tail and threw it into a lagoon where a pinnate painted boa was formed. Later, people found her, but since they understood nothing because they were unconscious, they did not speak, and they walked around like sleepwalkers. (Florencio)

God, the creator father Mepivyeju Niimúhé, created nature and gave birth to the Bora Nation, also called the "people of the center" (P+nemuna), who are guided by the word of life. They [provided Niimúhé] with tranquility and harmony to continue with humanization. After people increased abundantly, evil began to overtake them; the evil fights erupted among the clan chiefs. The evil one walked around everywhere in the shape of a boa. Unanimously, all the people and the knowers began to fight against the boa. After a lot of tracking and trapping – which we commonly call *tapaje*—, and after constantly shooting poisoned arrows at the evil one, they eventually managed to catch him. (Benedicto)

Riama was the most knowledgeable and valiant; the one with a spear, who one day saw the boa and speared it. And then with a cutter blade – U+g+be, he cut it into pieces and cooked it. When it was cooked, he distributed it. He served it on leaves, and the people received their name according to the piece and the color that corresponded to them; but once they had eaten they could not understand each other because each group, according to their role, spoke differently, in a different way, and that is why they separated. Those who got black were people of blackness; the ones who got white were people of whiteness; the ones who got red were people of redness, and so on. (Florencio Gómez, Los Monos, 1981)

That boa existed no more. People gathered to eat it. Those were the origins of the villages, according to which parts they ate, so the clans were classified based on how they named the boa. This happened and everything went back to normal. Everything flowed with tranquility in every town until the first agitations of the rubber age. (Benedicto)

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Blanca: God did things by deed, not by grace. First, the white race came out with white *yarumo* leaves on their heads. Then, came the black race with black *yarumo* leaves on their heads. Later, the red race came out with red *yarumo* leaves on their heads. Finally, the green people came out with green *yarumo* leaves on their heads.

Aurelio Suarez: The green people – *activano*, in Muinane language – is where tobacco and coca appear, they are analyzed through illusions. Nonetheless, when they were birthed, they did not look like we know them today because they were undefined or not discovered. Because they were all born innocent, they did not feel hunger or pain, neither pain nor joy; they did not think. They were able to see but did not recognize anything; they did not know good or bad. They were innocent.

Kon+ Raga, To+ Rabuinaima and JuIg+ Tofe: The word of tobacco is not very tasty, so [better] ask for salt [from] the mountain. With that, the heart of the *abuelo* tobacco rejoices. Then, the heart of the grandfather tobacco is healed; it is not necessary to [let] his mouth [get] dry. That is why his heart is not happy. The grandfather prayed the coca plant. The prayer of the coca plant reached his heart. With that, the grandfather was healed. "Where will I see her in the future?" asked *abuelo* [grandfather] tobacco. Well, it was the coca plant that had reached his heart in pure words. Notwithstanding, in the end, *abuelo* tobacco fixed his eyes on the coca plant. Tobacco had a companion; the coca plant was created. What tobacco grandfather was looking for was already created, the coca plant. With that, the tobacco plant and the coca plant came speaking to us with words of encouragement. Then tobacco grandfather brought from his word of encouragement the word that the young man teaches the young woman. That is the word that tobacco grandfather speaks.

After that, the young man weaves a basket, a sieve which is the word that grandfather tobacco brings. Next to him, the young woman plucks the weeds, lights a bonfire, and in its place, she sows chili, the *mafafa*. That is the word of the grandfather tobacco: To seek everything our heart wants today. He brings the prayer of abundance, the prayer of the origin, of abundance, to speak purely in our hearts. However, the day has not

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dawned. Later, when the creation of abundance resounds in our hearts, our tobacco grandfather makes the sweet yucca of our origin dawn, the same edible yucca. Then our word has a beginning. The peanut is created; the sweet yucca is created. On our father's side, coca is created, the sought-after tobacco.

Aurelio Suarez: I do not know how they were able to exist or how they were before the sun first appeared from the East. Then the sky turned blue, and then there was already a chief, the most astute among them. And then there was already the first sign of the discovery of coca. This first chieftain already had intelligence in him, because the spirit of coca and tobacco was delivered to him. God – Justsiñamuy in Muinane language – had already offered the plant to provide the knowledge, but he only gave it to the first chieftain, the one he had chosen as such. That is why only the chiefs and the oldest have the wisdom, and they must be respected for that. This first chief lived and ruled as if he knew everything, like a fortune-teller. However, it was not him who spoke but the spirit of coca who spoke the words and directed them.

Chieftain Florencio Gomez: I am going to tell you what I know about coca, what I [will] tell [you] happened before this creation, and when it was about to appear. [This is the story of a] man who lived alone because there was no humanity, as we know it [today]. He spent his time thinking about how to do things and how to do them well. He talked and talked and consumed *ambil* and *mambe*, trying to make things the best he could. One day a woman approached him, she was tobacco herself and stood behind him – because spirits approach from behind – and told him that she wanted to be his wife, that she was a woman. He told her that he did not need a woman to know how to do things, he dispatched her and said: "go away. I do not need you at all." And she replied to him "I know better," she took a chili pepper, and when he was not paying attention, she squeezed it in the *ambil*[80], but it was because she was [the] tobacco [spirit]. The man consumed the *ambil* and everything burned inside of him, his stomach [got] burned, and he got sick because everything had been burned. This happened because the woman was brilliant, and the man's intelligence had

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[80] Tobbaco

not been expanded yet. His word was not yet the word of truth, of wisdom, due to the lack of real knowledge.

Then the woman had a dream in which she was told to go to the *chagra*; there, she would find a beautiful bush with light green leaves. [She was told] that it was the coca plant and that it was as if it were the spirit of coca itself. The dream told her to pick it up, to pluck it up and to look for a small yucca at the root, like a relatively thick finger. It told her to take it, peel it, scratch it, squeeze it well, and to make a cassava cake out of the dough. It asked her to take the green pepper and to mix it with the yucca's water to feed the man later. And so she did. The next day, she went to the *chagra* and found the coca plant with its green leaves. She looked for the yucca, and when she found it, she prepared it as the spirit had indicated in the dream. When the man ate it, his understanding, [his] knowledge was expanded. Because knowledge had already penetrated him, he said: "That is a woman, a real woman." Nevertheless, it was the tobacco woman, the one who gives knowledge; that is, tobacco itself. It is the *ambil* that is prepared with water or mountain salt, but it is preferable with water salt, which is strong and tastes strong. Then he took her for a woman. Since then, the man who consumes and consumes *ambil* and knows the stories, and keeps them, and can tell them, is wise.

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Aurelio Suarez: When God came to give power to the old chief, the whole world fell asleep meaninglessly. God gave this first chief a treasure, a fortune, a sacred stone – Mamaiu –, which he hung around his neck. It was through that stone that he discovered all things, for example coca and tobacco. And then it was when he saw a green plant, which was coca, that the chief took the plant of life and knowledge. He sowed her and cared for her. He did this just as the sacred stone told him to do because this chieftain did everything that this sacred stone told him to do. The sacred stone recommended that he should take care of the coca plant in order to give him the knowledge and the truth so that people could progress and defend themselves. However, no tribe had a name yet, only races and no person had a name. In this sacred stone resided God with the chief.

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Likewise, this stone explained how to make the pestle for the coca and the pot to toast it, a hard stick like cement to be able to grind it. The bark of that stick is called kagijao. Once the pot was made, he explained how to prepare it, and once the coca was ready, he explained how to conjure it and how he should tell the stories with it in his mouth, on each side of the cheeks. Once he taught him these things, God withdrew from him but left him the knowledge and the word, and this word is what is transmitted. Nevertheless, God was begotten in the sacred stone, and he explained how to dominate nature, humanity and animals. When the cacique woke up (because he learned everything through dreaming), he was inside a Maloca with all the humans, but neither he nor anyone else knew how the Maloca was formed (it was only known in dreams). So, based on that [Maloca], he built the first one, but then this Maloca became invisible because the cacique made it that way after he learned how to make it. When they *mambed*[81] the coca, many feared her, because the coca rejected them. But the chief did not fear her because the coca did not reject him. So, it was through her [that] he received knowledge. That was how this chief was the first to have the knowledge to teach others. A few chosen ones, and always in the *mambeadero*.

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Ángel Kuyoteka: The first man who chewed coca is known in our Uitoto language (Jíibina) as Nuyómara+. Outside of it, nobody knew what coca was or how it was used because God never addresses his mandates in public. [Thus], only Nuyomara+ was instructed. Far from that land, there was a firstborn or son, Egoruema, eager to seize the coca. Egoruema told his father, Jado Mára+ (Jadomara+): "I will go claim the coca and then I will have a wife. Why should I practice it secretly? I am capable and courageous [enough] to keep the secret." The father replied: "Do not think that way. I see you are not trained. You have no understanding, knowledge, wisdom, or theology. You will be a failure. You will bring shame to me." The son told him: "Even if you say that I do not have wisdom, nothing binds me, I will go [after it]" – Nowadays, children are [constantly] told: "you will fail." These phrases come from human mouths. It should not be like this.

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[81] To mamb or *mambear* is to put pulverized cocoa leaves or *mambe* inside the cheek and let it dissolve with saliva.

Father Jaorama+ prepared the coca for his son Egoruema and told him: "You shall not carry it hidden or shall not take it for yourself. Hear me well." Egoruema went to Nuyomara+'s house. When Egoruema, the oldest son, arrived at the house of Nuyómara+ with what his father had prepared, he hid the coca and the *ambil* to make the pact. Egoruema told him: "I came to ask for your daughter, because there is no one [else] in this land more prepared [than me that could] have her or [who could] *mambear*." Nuyomara+ replied: "It is okay for you to ask. I have decided to give her to you. Others have asked for her, but no one has come with good will and determination to have her. You are well intentioned, so take her. I do not like malicious, immoral, nor capricious men. If you are not well-intentioned and lose your life for it, then no one will be to blame. I cannot hide my daughter. A father should hand over his daughter to whoever asks [for her] with decency."

The real coca was still in the hand of Nuyómara+; she had not yet been transformed into a plant; she was a woman. Nuyomara+, made a prayer given by God [and] turned the woman into a coca plant. Once it was converted into a bush, he took out leaves mentioning all the tribes; he took these names from the coca leaf. Upon her return, the bush was a maiden again as beautiful as there had ever been. The foolish firstborn Egoruema did not know the strength of coca. The son arrived, ate and drank only the coca and *ambil*. The coca was good. It gave him courage; it did not fool him or make him lose his mind. Then, Nuyomara+ said to him: "do not accept the violent, do not be a partisan of evil, do not join with evil." 'Egoruema remained inside the house. This was the bond that in the past, men made with their sons-in-law. Let's see: Nuyómara+ said to Egoruema: "I know that you have come to take my daughter because you have experience and know how to have a woman. Nevertheless, you will have to work on the matters related to having a wife and behave with your father-in-law in the same way. It would be best if you were not sabotaging my daughter at my house. Now, bring me the coca," and Nuyómara+ handed him the basket.

Egoruema went to the *chagra*. He looked around, but he did not find the coca anywhere. Therefore, he told himself, "he said the coca would be in the middle of the *chagra*." As he couldn't find her in the old *chagra*, he went to the new *chagra*. He looked

towards the center of the *chagra*. There stood a girl similar to the daughter of Nuyómara+. The man, puzzled, thought that she was the daughter of Nuyomara+. Moreover, like all passionate men, he did not think of anything other than taking her virginity. Then, the young Egoruema made with the sister of coca what is done with those who are not family because doing it with relatives [or in-laws] is a heinous crime. It was imperfect. He became impure. Within him grew what is called 'cancer.' We call it "z+era." The evil of coca rebelled against animal beings. They were the first to suffer.

God, through Nuyomara+, had to whip and destroy Egoruema for having abused the child. This is the mythical story of incest. Once the girl was found, Egoruema returned [home] but without bringing the coca. Nuyomara+, who was a person of many omens – because God had linked him to the good and the wisdom of coca—, found out about what had happened and regretted [having sent him]. He got angry against the abusive man and said: "Kue Jir+ ina ba kakade rama ye ab+na yote ye urue +dai f+ode," which means: "the coca wants to re-originate in a bad way. It will destroy your body. It will cause harm to your race." Nuyomara+ went the other way, while the young man returned [home] the same way he had gone. [When] Nuyomara+ saw that the bush had been raped and contaminated by a carnal of a worldly desire, he began to separate the leaves. He arrived at his house while the young man was distracted along the way. When the two met in the house, Egoruema told Nuyómara+: "Father-in-law, I did not see the coca, that is why I did not bring it." "How were you going to see it? You will never be able to see it. Do you not know that what belongs to others is not yours? Sorry, you could not bring it. You did wrong; you screwed everything up."

Nuyomara+ also told him: "I have already brought the coca. Now it is your turn to toast it. Take a good look at what I am going to tell you: The pot has been misused. You have to stir the pot well. Once the flame is very hot, the leaf should be toasted." Egoruema [felt] confident [enough and] began to toast it, following the instructions verbatim, [just as he] received them. He poked it, ignited it and made a fierce fire. When the flame was burning, Nuyomara+ told him: "Blow under the pot." The flame was unbearable. Nuyomara wanted to burn his victim. When Egoruema blew under the pot, Nuyómara+ secretly went behind the one who was toasting and blowing, and violently pushed him to

the flames. There, [he] was burned under the flames; his body and soul were reduced to dust and ashes. Having in his hands the ashes of Egoruema, Nuyomara+ mixed them with those of the abused coca. Now, the organic part (that is, the matter that formed the human body) came to form both a man and a woman.

The neighbours around him did not know what had happened. Nuyomara+ began to mamb and to taste the powder. The worker, meaning, the one who ate, was Ta+ta+ nigo and the one who grinded was kuja+ru. Nuyomara+ hid the good coca. He left it just for himself – meanwhile, he served this bad coca to those who came to mamb. The first to arrive was the tiger. Nuyomara+ said to himself: "Perhaps he has come to ask for a woman; thus, I will not distribute the coca, I prefer to mix the sifted one with Egoruema's powder." Without a word, he gave him a spoonful. The tiger took it, and as soon as he put it in his mouth and swallowed it, he felt a tremendous heat in his mouth and stomach, like it was burning. He blazed into a rage for having felt betrayed by the evil. Then he walked away and left, looking for a way to heal his pain. Full of anger, he began to kill the beasts that were around him by eating them raw, to see if that meat would mitigate the pain. He also felt like eating grass.

Then came the puma and the tigrillos. All of these eat raw [food] and eat weeds. After this remarkable group, diurnal and nocturnal birds came to mamb. The owl, the fakuua and others arrived. These characters *mambed* in the dark. From that moment on, if the *mambe*o is done at dark, it is said: "it is the style of owls." That group went first. Then, the fish came to mamb. The sloth fooled around, and the mojarra, because of the color, swished the coca in the cheeks, supposedly to wash her mouth. The worm spent the whole time spitting out the coca. Archer ants, like the conga, *mambed* very well, although *mambe*o was harmful to them. When all the animals had been contaminated and harmed, a wise man arrived, but it was too late to destroy this bad coca. The man who arrived was called Juma. Juma has power in his hand because he has not touched anything impure with his hands. He has not lost his hands, nor allowed his hands to make him get lost.

Juma said to Nuyomara+: "Give me *mambe*, I want to mamb." However, [then] Juma intelligently said: "why is this coca hot?" Nuyomara+, making a sign of silence, said

to him: "Do not say it so loudly. It turns out, Egoruema harmed my daughter and to avenge her, I did this. It is ok, let him suffer." Juma replied: "You do not think ahead. What you have done disserves those to come. This evil will not go away. [It] will haunt us. You have acted without reason, foolishly. It is too late. There is nothing that can be done. Those are the words spoken to those who harm others. Juma asked him to give him some of the coca he had hidden. He said to Nuyomara+: "This is how I want to mamb, is that why you are mambing secretly? No one should be stingy with Juma. Show [me] your coca. A leader does not act like that. A leader is not there to harm his fellow-men; a leader must serve his people."

Nuyomara+ gave Juma the good coca. He held it in his hand like the previous one. He saw and verified that it was not the cursed one. Then he put it in his mouth. Juma was the only one who did not fall for the trap. He went and destroyed evil. He rejected this bad coca for the sake of the animals. Nevertheless, the animals had already eaten the coca rejected by Juma, and to this day they continue to eat the bad plant that has been given to them, without even caring for the plant that man uses.

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Ángel Kuyoteka: At a far distance, there was a chief who was the father of good, [who was also] named Juma. It is not about the historical character of the same name, but about another Juma. His life was good, and he educated his son correctly. The son, who was also called Juma, had his mindset on following a correct life, and he intended to clean up the misuse of coca, which had been abused a lot, and thus avoid the deserved punishment to possible future offenders. The idea of this young man was not to stain humanity with this coca abuse. He decided to come to Earth to repair the damage caused to the coca, and at the same time, to cleanse the coca because he felt that it was not right to continue preparing bad coca, for it damages and harms the bodies of all races.

He said to his father: "I will go to Earth to repair [the damage] and cleanse the evil [that has been done to] coca, which has been abused, and I will clean the coca itself. The good coca, I will tame it and give it to the man, so it will not be problematic. The father replied: "Look, son, I am going to tell you something. If the son of a great chief has been

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imprisoned in that cave, it is because he does not know how to think and act. That is [well] known. They will make fun of him. No one can rape, even less the sons of chiefs. Who can do it? No one. That is why I can only say this much: if you act egotistically, you will always go from bad to worse until the world fails, and I will [face the same fate] for not having taught my son. Son Juma, I will tell you the secret of the coca and the hill Nuyómara+." He continued explaining to his son: "coca is coca, and it is not Nuyomara+'s daughter. Even if coca is transforming [herself] into a woman, be careful; I am telling you so that you do not fail or lose your life, as has happened [in the past]. That is how Egoruema failed and lost his life. Coca is very enticing, very tender, beautiful, elegant, good-looking, and virgin, it is a girl whose breasts are just forming.

On the other hand, they have already broken her, and you too may be tempted to rape her. She will not marry [anyone]. Even if you find her alone [and try] to seduce her, do not do it, for she is not a woman; she is coca. If one day you find her standing upright, with a feminine appearance, take out a small branched tree, tear off the leaves and recite this: "God sent you to be coca, not to turn yourself into a woman." She will immediately realize that, and she will once again become a coca plant, and thus the temptation is gone, and no evil shall be committed. Since no one has ever transformed that plant, she thinks that no one will discover her, and she turns into a woman. However, if you admonish her with the prayer that I just gave you, she will go back to be a coca plant.

As for Nuyomara+, the chief, he is very angry with Egoruema. Full of anger. For this reason, he has hidden his working tools, such as the pot, the *totuma*, and the rest of his utensils. No one will be able to discover them because they are distributed throughout the body. Hiding the instruments across the body serves to test those who pretend to be wise (afedi bakak +yena). It is possible [to find them]; rest assured that [it is possible to] guess. In any case, the thing goes like this: The pot is hidden on the chest, the grinding pole between the legs, the crusher on the arm, and the totuma on the head. Besides this test, Chief Nuyómara+ will make Egoruema go through many other complex and challenging tests for having abused his daughter. Juma continued by exhorting his son in these terms: "you should not be distracted by anything until you succeed. If not, it would leave humans harmed (f+en+ imak+ bakaiza). Then walk and get there, change the bad things, and make

sure that coca achieves perfection. I will be waiting to receive news from you, I do not want bad news." The son, who had been well instructed by his father Juma, took one more step towards the Earth and walked on route to the house of Nuyomara+.

Juma's son came to Nuyomara+ and found him in the house. He was very serene, attractive, kind, honest, honourable, with a very bright appearance, sober as a humble saviour. It was pure hypocrisy and pretense (those who know how to transform things or people, those who know how to turn stones into persons or to transform them into spirits, never appear to be altered because on the inside, inside their bodies, there are things that they cannot defend. While the empty man who has nothing inside, nor powers, alters himself as a firearm). Juma greets upon arriving and has a very compelling goal. This boy is competent. He tells Nuyómara+: "I have come to mamb the coca that you cooked. Here, have my coca and my *ambil*." The *ambil* is the companion of coca and man, he passes the coca and the *ambil*. Nuyomara+ found it very strange that Juma's coca tasted the same way as his. He received the coca and *mambed*. He reacted from his lethargy and bad temper, showing eagerness to speak well and leave [aside] any feelings of hatred or anger, even for a little while. It was as if a dart [had] dominated him. If one were to break an enduring friendship and never regrets, whether it is with a brother or father or son, they would always look at us with distrust. That is the way it is.

Nuyomara+ did not want to receive anyone who came on his own, because he had already done so before. He was observing Juma in detail. [His presence] gave him an awful impression. He said, "You, who came to chew coca, you have to go to my farm to look for coca." "Good, Nuyomara+. Which *chagra* should I go to? The old one or the new one?" Juma asked. "To the new one" replied Nuyomara+. He went to the new *chagra*, reflecting on what his father had already warned him about. He looked around the *chagra* and [as expected], saw a girl standing [right] in the middle of the *chagra*. She was tempting. He immediately reasoned in what he had been instructed. As he plucked a small branch, he removed the leaf and recited the prayer: "Daughter of God: you [have been created] to [bring] good and be a coca plant..." he went with the hidden stick, touched the girl and shook her with his hand. She gradually started losing the female body, until she grew some

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roots and became the coca tree. She grounded herself across the soil to avoid turning herself into a woman, [even to] this day.

Juma collected the coca leaves in his basket and brought them to Nuyómara+. Upon arriving at the house, Nuyomara+ asked, "Did you bring the coca?" "Yes, here it is," Juma said. "I grade you well," replied Nuyómara+. Nuyomara+ was still not satisfied, in any case. He wanted to test Juma's son even further, to see if it was true that he [had the] knowledge. Nuyomara+ was a very skilled man [with vast] knowledge. So, he acted cautiously. Juma's son was about to start roasting the leaves, but the pot was not visible. However, he knew where it was because he had the knowledge. He went and took it out, put it on the coals, and started toasting the coca leaves. Nuyomara+ looked at him with admiration. He saw that he was doing everything well and that he had discovered what had been hidden.

Nuyomara + said: "He really knows this hidden information." When he toasted, he kept stirring the leaves. It was like putting them in water. He turned and stirred [them] in the pot, but the leaves would not dry out. But as Nuyomara+ had said, "they cannot dry in a clay pot." Juma had a tremendous knowledge. He also had a bird close to his ear. The bird told him: "Nuyómara+ will take it. Tell him 'When summer arrives, the leaves or dragonflies will dry up… dry like sweet yucca leaf, sweet whatever it is like (makuiyi), sweet yucca and its juice'." just as the bird had stated, the coca would have a bitter taste, like a burning taste. To have this taste, it should be roasted with a clean conscience; otherwise, it will have a dull taste as if one had cursed through coca.

When the coca had already dried, [and was] ready to [be] ground, Juma did not find the pestle. But he knew it was hidden on his leg. He took the pestle where it was hidden and pulverized the coca. Now [he had] to sift it [and] he did not find the sieve either. But the boy knew where it was, he went and pulled it out of his stomach, and from his head, he took out the *totuma*. Everything was clear to Juma; there was nothing hidden from him; there was nothing impossible for him. That boy knew the ways to heal. It was something like: "if it is outside the body, it should be healed like this... now, to heal the inside, it goes like that." Before it is mixed [with ash], coca does not have any flavor of its own because

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without it, the anesthesia is always strong (even if the coca has been roasted), and the starch of the coca still has the flavour of the bush.

After pulverizing the cocoa, it was ready to be sifted as powder. Nuyómara+ asked Juma to mix the *yarumo* [leaves]: "Juma, bring me the *yarumo* that I always use which is located further down the road. "The plant of this *yarumo* that Nuyomara+ had ordered to bring was not yet seen or did not exist. Juma had to risk his wisdom by casting a spell to find it. He saw an owl sitting in a tree hut. He cast a spell, shook it, and immediately the owl turned into a *yarumo* because Nuyomara+ had turned the *yarumo* into an owl. He did this and saw that Juma was a skillful man who could find out that he had hidden the *yarumo*. "Let us see if he knows." Juma achieved this last test. He always knew how.

Juma was not defeated. He continued clarifying and doing everything for the good of others. Once, twice and three times he did the *yarumo* spell. Lastly, he brought the best, which is *yarumo* itself, to mix it with the coca leaf (mezák+e). It was no longer just an ordinary *yarumo*. Lastly Juma carried out animals such as *borugo*, *guara*, *carillo* and parakeet, which are used for hunting. These animals were all fierce with him. We shall not think about the animals in the forest; the animals that Juma took out are impure and we do not see them, but they have the same name as the animals in the forest. Juma removed the hatred, resentment, anger, bad moral and evil from their inner organs, and destroyed those feelings. It was an internal cleansing. The plant was ready in its entirety for good.

The Age of Rubber.

Projection *(By Noé and Don Isaac, Okaina language)*.

Isaac Siake: Before the arrival of the rubber industry, our people were united and well organized. There was a good government, we were three clans branched in 23 totems, and each totem and each clan had their own chiefs. The chiefs were chosen according to their abilities, merits, and the services they provided to the community. All the people enjoyed their freedom, and they worked in the territory. They did not lack anything; they had what

they needed to live [for] thousands of years as a culture [...] when the Peruvians arrived to colonize us with the cauchería, our order began to fall. The rubber tappers changed our form of government and forced us to choose those who served them best as chiefs of the clans, killing our traditional chiefs, those who could govern their people.

Noah Siake: A chief of the Ivuuhza clan, called Futsuvema, went to Peru with his science and spirit in search of new things and to meet other people. He walked in [the] darkness and arrived where the white people of Peru resided. There he got five glass bottles and a mirror. He returned to his home territory and showed his people those objects, which he had found during his first trip. Then he made a second spiritual journey, he could not enter where the people were because of the light, his spirit only moved in the dark, and then he heard the voice of the white man saying, "one day we will go to where the natives live, we will go there so they can help us work." That is what I heard.

He returned to his territory, bringing two more mirrors and two machetes. Then Futsuvema gathered all his clans and said: "White people are planning a trip into our territory, they are not small in numbers, they have thousands of people, they are like ants; therefore, we must not maltreat them or kill them. We must not harm them; we have to respect them because they could be the end of us." That is what Futsuvema said. Then he went to the Maloca of Dyazoxo Xaritya, head of the pineapple peel clan, belonging to the Boras group, with whom Futsuvema was related, to show them what he had brought and to share with them what he saw and heard during the two spiritual journeys. He also shared the same recommendations concerning the arrival of the white man. Many years passed after these spiritual journeys. Futsuvema named Gatsi, Tomañofɨ, and Piyachi as his successors to lead the clan, for he had physical limitations.

Appearance of the white man. *(By Liborio Fajardo, Tooma Xuvilla (Noah Siake), Rufino Koguao, Victoria Moquema and Hermenegildo Atama)*

Liborio Fajardo: He was a Colombian who came from Pasto; he came through the Caquetá river, arriving at the Monkey road, which he took to reach the headwaters of the Igaraparaná River. He was the one who opened that path; he came with his assistants. Upon reaching the riverside, they made a raft to get off, [he] brought many objects. So, they

arrived at La Chorrera and settled on the beach. There he made his ranch. The Indigenous people who lived in that area were scared of this white person; they wanted to kill him. However, this man convinced them with the objects he brought, such as perfumes, earrings, matches, salt, and other useful items. So, he convinced and tamed them [...] he stayed there and saw that there was a way to work rubber. After several days he continued his journey on his raft down the Igaraparaná with all his workers – muyai –[82].

Then he arrived in Arica. It was a virgin place; there was nothing more than Indigenous people. He settled there, and then continued his journey to Tarapacá on the same raft. There he made his camp. The white man's name was Benjamin Larañaga. While in Tarapacá, he got a Peruvian boat, which he used to reach Leticia, where he set up another camp. He continued his journey up the Amazon to Iquitos by boat. There, he did business to bring merchandise, seeing that there was an opportunity to work with rubber. Afterwards, he returned from Iquitos, bringing all the merchandise that was needed in the forest (shotguns, pottery, machetes, axes). On his Peruvian boat, he reached the beach at La Chorrera once more.

There he began to distribute the merchandise to indebt the Indigenous people. The payment would be in rubber, which he sent from that location. The Indigenous workers who were with him already knew Spanish, and they were the ones that ordered the other Indigenous people to extract the rubber. The Indigenous people understood the work; there was much rubber, so they were encouraged to work. Rubber trees were cut with machetes. Once dried, the rubber was removed from the bark [...] they learned to wash it because the Indigenous people did not know about washing. This is what they learned and how they worked. This product was sent to Iquitos again to show that there was rubber to work there. The white man contacted the Colombian government of President Mariano Ospina Pérez. The government said that he could work.

My dad says that the first products were sent to the United States. Then the government ordered Benjamín Larrañaga to work more and extract more. So, Benjamin

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[82] Indigenous "boys" that worked for the Peruvians.

got a boat to bring more generous amounts of merchandise to distribute it among the people so they would have to work extracting the rubber. That is how it was, everyone worked in that period, there were no fights, and all the natives worked syringa. When he had accumulated much rubber, he left again. The product had the same destination [to] where car tires were manufactured. Then Benjamin returned to La Chorrera again with lots of merchandise. He no longer settled on the beach. Benjamin's camp was then on the other side, where the school is located now. According to my father, he distributed all the merchandise, and everyone worked, they already knew how to process the rubber. A lot more rubber was collected; Benjamin again took it and brought more merchandise. After this trip, he would come back to La Chorrera to die.

This was the trip where the Peruvian Julio Cesar Arana partnered with the Colombian rubber baron Benjamín Larrañaga. It was the year 1901 when together they founded the Arana Larrañaga and company. On his next trip, Larrañaga brought the first Peruvians at the Igaraparaná riverbank, where the native peoples of the different ethnic groups and their clans were settled. He had come with his Peruvian crew. The captain of the boat was Peruvian. As the boat was rented, on this trip, I think Julio Arana also came, and he got in charge of all the rubber work after Benjamin's death. Then, the Peruvians continued working, so this river was entirely Peruvian, the syringa was exploited everywhere. Thus, the rubber industry was in the hands of Peruvians. That is what I heard. My dad says that is how the Casa Arana was built; we could already see that it was a house made of cement. It is still there now. There was a lot of rubber exploitation on this river.

When the successors of Futsuvema returned to Santa Julia to Dyazoxo Xarɨtya's, they were surprised. They were surprised by the arrival of the first rubber traders; the spiritual prophecy of Futsuvema had been fulfilled. In the Maloca, they found Peruvian merchandise that had not been distributed. Later, the Peruvians distributed it to continue with the extraction of rubber. When the successors of Futsuvema returned to their community, they brought a small axe to grate the bark of the syringa and a machete that had been handed in the Maloca. Then the Peruvians asked: "Where do the people that speak differently come from?" This is what the Peruvian asked about the ɨvuuhza, asking Dyazoxo Xarɨtya where the Bora people were and showed an axe to Tomañofɨ and his

colleagues saying, "do you want this?" Tomañofɨ replied: "Yes, we are too poor to work with a stick," so the Peruvian said: "I'll give you an axe." Tomañofɨ returns with the axe and gives it to Futsuvema. This one ordered to clear the *chagra*s.

People fought for the only axe. Therefore, Tomañofɨ went back to see the Peruvian, who showed him three boxes with axes. Nevertheless, this time the Peruvian asked for five children in exchange for a single axe. Tomañofɨ took the boxes to Futsuvema, saying: "The axe owner asks for five children in exchange for a single axe." Then Futsuvema gathered all the people in his Maloca; there he shows the boxes with the axes and the people accept the exchange, for axes were so necessary at the time. So, they made the exchange with the Peruvian and gave him the children. Then, the community realized they were running out of young people or children due to the exchange for axes, and so parents felt remorse and decided not to do this type of business anymore. That was how the discontent against Futsuvema – who was the chief of the Ɨvuuhza clan – began to grow. Given the situation, they did not return to where the Peruvian was. The parents of the exchanged children wanted to kill Futsuvema, but they did not do so, and things stayed that way. They returned didn't go back to Santa Julia to see the Peruvian.

Elder Tooma Xuvilla (Noé Siake): The exchange of axes for children or young Okainas was one of the first strategic steps taken by the rubber traders to enter the Indigenous territory and settle more quickly. This is because the young people taken to Peru knew the territory, the mother tongue; plus, they had learned to speak Spanish, to use firearms, all this to return to their territory together with the rubber traders and to work in favor of the rubber company. That becomes evident later in the story when Tyaɨ, one of the exchanged children, returns. [The] occupation of the territory of the Okaina people by the rubber tappers [took place] when the Peruvians came down the Igaraparaná river by boat. [They] came very well prepared, with the personnel ready to assume the rubber work. They were like forepersons or section chiefs who were left in strategic places on the Igaraparaná riverbank to control the production of rubber and the native population.

Rufino Koguao: They arrived very humbly with small things such as machetes and mirrors to trade them for a minimum amount of rubber. Then they began to trade a more significant

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amount of merchandise, including cartridges, fabrics, and many other things in exchange for people to work for extended periods collecting rubber. The white man reached the Indigenous territories down the Igaraparaná River [on] a boat called "Eagle." They settled in the place that we now call Santa Julia and Providencia Vieja. These people who came by boat associated with the clans that remained in the territory. They took the rubber easily without launching an assault. They took the young to work for them and the old ones to teach them the language.

Elder Tooma Xuvilla (Noé Siake): After several years, a Peruvian named Excontador came by boat. He first reached the place known today as Providencia, leaving a white man there. He went up and left another one at the mouth of the Partridge creek, then went further up and left another man at the mouth of the Menaje creek; he then penetrated the Jadsaɨ gorge and left another white man there. He kept going up and left another white man at the mouth of the Mue gorge and did the same at the mouth of the Johtai gorge. In this place, there was a man named Dɨrɨllono. He was the chief of the devils. He finally reached the port of Uxuxaño, the place where Epifanio Siake lives today. There is where Excontador built his first camp.

Excontador came with a young Okaina named Tyaɨ who had been traded for an axe when the first Peruvian arrived. He already knew how to speak Spanish and [knew how] to take notes, add, subtract, etc. Aside from this, he knew the entire Okaina territory and always worked in favor of his Peruvian boss. When Excontador arrive[d] at this last site, Futsuvema had already died, leaving Tomañofɨ as successor. He establish[ed] a dialogue with Excontador in his Maloca, in order to arrange his merchandise. Then Excontador ask[ed], "how are you organized?" Tomañofɨ replie[d], "we are the Ɨvuuhza jafulla" and Excontador told him "I want to be in the center where all the people are," so Tomañofɨ showed him the way. It took them several days to move to the site for they had to open a path from where they had arrived at where the Okaina were located, in the center of the forest. Excontador had four hectares of land and forest clear-felled, 20 km away from the banks of the Xuva stream, which is a tributary of the Xuuya creek. They logged, clear-cut and burned the land. They arranged the area to build the house and ordered the timber for

the construction, shingles for the walls, the floor and the rooms, and puy leaves for the roof.

They built a 50-meter long by 20-meter-wide house. Since they were many people, everything was done quickly. Once the house was finished, Excontador commanded Tomañofɨ to tell his people to transport the merchandise from the port where he had arrived, to the new camp. As soon as everything was settled, he started living in that house. Then, he distributed axes and machetes and had more forest clear-felled and burned to grow, banana, rice, corn and cassava. After [doing] that, he distributed more merchandise, [although] this time to extract rubber. He gave axes and machetes to tap the rubber and commanded them to obey him and pay for the tools he delivered. One group did not want to receive the tools. The ones that did receive them and started the rubber work were the Ɨvuuhza, Dsujuñotsa, Mɨruñocha, Dyazotyaraxu, Ɨnolla, Tyojañocha and Najityaraxu.

Excontador had nine head of cattle on his farm [along with] horses, chicken coops, [a] house to raise pigs, pools, [which were] all taken care of by our people. Up until that moment, the rubber-tapping work was not very demanding. They simply worked because they were asked to. Excontador had a laborer, [a kid who happened to be the] son of Faruxuafi, the chief of the Jafulla clan. Excontador ordered him to serve his food. When [the kid] was serving the food, the glass where [Excontador] drank his wine was missing. Excontador blamed Faruxuafi's son and put him in a dungeon for several days without giving him any food. He was pale and about to die, but one of the villagers saw him and went to tell his father and said, "Listen, what do you think? Your son is going to die in the dungeon," and Faruxuafi went to look [for his son] and saw him thin as a pencil, he was skinny and crazy.

Hermenegildo Atama: As children are mischievous, Faruxuafi's son poked a horse's eye or broke a glass. What he did is unknown, but he infuriate[d] the white man. That is why the white man locked that child in a dungeon. He was dying; he was locked up for many days without food or water.

Victoria Moquema: They hid the cup themselves and said it was the boy, and that is why they killed him. Then people gathered and said, "What are we going to do? This boy was

ours, and it hurts us. If [the kid] were theirs, it would hurt them too," and that is why they decided to kill Excontador.

Hermenegildo Atama: Faruxuafi, the chief of the Okaina clans, was [so] furious about the mistreatment of his son [and his people] [that] he gathered all the clans in his Maloca and propose[d] to kill Excontador, and Tomañofɨ replied "We, the Ɨvuuhza clan, are not going to be part of [your plan] because my grandfather Futsuvema said that there are many of them. If we kill him, his people will come, and they will kill all of us, so we are not going down that road. "Well," Faruxuafi said, "we will." "Okay." Tomañofɨ said. In this dialogue, the so-called Tyaɨ was present, and he heard Faruxuafi and his clans' plans to kill Excontador>> (Interview with Noah Siake, 2014). Faruxuafi told his people "we have a situation and we are [going to] avenge my son." [With that being said], they got ready, consumed *mambe* and gathered the strongest warriors. They arrived, killed the white people and took all their belongings.

Elder Tooma Xuvilla (Noé Siake): Everything was ready at eight in the evening. They went with their warriors to the Peruvian's house to kill him. They opened the door and entered the room where he slept. They grabbed him and chopped his head off along with the heads of his wife and two children. That is how his whole family died. Tyaɨ, who saw this massacre, was there too but they did not kill him because he was an Okaina. They grabbed Excontador's goods, such as chickens, pigs, tools, carbines, axes, machetes and then returned early in the morning. They told Tyaɨ "come with us," [but] he replie[d], "no, you killed my employer. I will stay here, and I will die here," he said, as he tied his hammock, laid down and began to write the names of the killers. Faruxuafi and his warriors took the corpses and threw them in the Xuva stream. Once this was done, they headed to their Malocas and Tyaɨ returned to his uncle Tomañofɨ, and told him, "They already killed my employer. I am going back. You have to build me a canoe to go down the river." [and so] Tomañofɨ did. Once [the canoe] was finished, Tyaɨ embarked with his cargo and went to Peru.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Hermenegildo Atama: The Peruvians went back to Iquitos in Peru, and they did not come back for a long time. [It took them] around five to six years [to come back]. A boat named Liberal appear[ed] again, full of Peruvian soldiers and in the middle was Tyaɨ, (the young Okaina who was traded for an axe). He greeted all the people and told them that they had to go to La Chorrera because that is where things [the tools] would be distributed, so they went down there. He told his people that they had to be very careful because [the situation] was delicate. "These whites did not come with good intentions," Tyaɨ said, "they are going to avenge the death of the white [man] they killed, but they are not going to kill everyone, just the clan that killed Excontador. They are going to get rid of them. They are all on the [kill] list," he said, then boarded the boat.

Tyaɨ addressed his uncle Tomañofɨ again and said, "Tomañofɨ, I am back," and he replie[d]," "How are things going?" Tyaɨ replied, "Well, my friend, things are dire. You must not be afraid. Nothing will happen to you, but those who killed Excontador will not survive." He said, "they are going to ask those who killed Excontador to extract 50 kilos of rubber, but your people must also bring 50 kilos. We have a lot of merchandise for you, so [make sure] all your people know [about that]." Tomañofɨ gathered all his people in the Maloca, gave them that message and headed to La Chorrera with his soldiers on a boat.

Tyaɨ and Tomañofɨ arrived at the beach to build a house with the help of the locals. When they finished, the boat's captain asked the villagers, "Who is your chief?" They answered, "He is over there, in front of the well. His name is Uxutuñi." [The captain] approached Uxutuñi and ordered him to relocate his Maloca on the hillside. "We are going to take these lands," and he ordered to clear-cut the forest, from the estuary of Cocamache to the headwaters. As they were in a hurry, they burned all [the land] and built two-story houses, installing a *chonta* fence around them. When they had finished, the Peruvian rubber barons told Tomañofɨ, "We are coming back for the rubber." They arrived and asked, "Is the rubber ready?" "Is it ready?" Tomañofɨ said. The chiefs responded. "Well, you have to take the rubber to La Chorrera."

Everyone went east towards La Chorrera; those who killed Excontador and those who did not. After walking for several hours, they arrived at the port, which today is known

as the Santa Teresita del Niño Jesús School. Then they crossed to the other side, to the Arana house. The Liberal boat made two trips carrying the people who killed Excontador and another one with those who were not part of the killing. My dad and his sister, who were children, saw that they placed the Dyuxalla [people] and the +Ivuuhza [separated from each other]. They took their time outside the fence while the soldiers were on guard. It was eight o'clock at night when Mario, [a rubber baron], opened the door and said "You must pay for Excontador's death today. Those who killed him [will go] first" and as Faruxuafi heard this, he got furious and said, "I am not going to pay," and Mario asked him "Do you want to fight?" They grabbed him by the hair and chopped off his head.

Victoria Moquema-Fíuxu: The Peruvians fooled my people; they told them [that] they were going to give them machetes, pots, everything, that is why they went to La Chorrera. [But] when they arrived, they took them to the dungeon. They gave them breakfast in the morning and after that [they were supposed to] give them the tools. They finished eating, washed the dishes and upon returning, they were asked to collect firewood. They brought a lot of wood and were told to line up to be then put in a *cepo*[83] where they were killed one by one. The [Peruvians] decapitated them and threw [them away] one by one, including the children. They sprayed [their corpses] with gasoline, threw them to the firewood and burned them. The only one who survived was my dad, who did not go to La Chorrera because he went to visit his uncles. I would be very happy if I had my people! I would learn my language.

Hermenegildo Atama: They took them all, one by one, including the children, young people and women, until [they made sure to] wipe out the whole Dyuxalla clan. Some hid in the group of the Uvuuhza, but they found them and executed them in the same way. They checked again and found two more people that were also killed. They checked one last time and did not find any more people. Then Mario closed the door. They [spent the night there and] woke up at nine in the morning. Mario opened the door again, and those who were left alive were given breakfast, then given axes and machetes. They were sent to

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[83] Cepos or stocks are restraining devices used as public punishment.

cut [more forest in the] banks of the Cocamache [up to the] hill. But once they were on the hill, our people fled. They did not return [and] the number of people declined. When they were called to have lunch, only 300 people showed up and [there was] food leftover. They kept on clear-felling the forest, and more people fled. Only 100 [Indigenous] returned [they] were sent to plant chestnut. After that, they fed everyone and [were allowed to return] to their territory. [That is how] it was, my grandfather said.

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Rufino: There were no crimes for a while until they [started] running out [of] Syringa trees and [could not] deliver enough rubber. Nevertheless, after that, the Boras were sent to tap a large amount of rubber. It is said that they had to fill up to five baskets. Those who did not collect the required amount of rubber were crucified and thrown into the fire. The agreement [with them] was to tap enough rubber to be entitled to survive. After that, whoever did not deliver more than 30 kilos would be mistreated, put in the *cepos*, or flogged to death. They asked the grandfather of the Zogui-zogui clan to distribute the merchandise. [They] did not want to pay [the grandfather of the Zogui-zogui clan] for his work, so they took him to the forest where the different clans were punished. They sent him to the *cepo* to punish him and then tied him up for more than fifteen days with no food so that he would die.

However, the grandfather did not die because the spirit kept him alive for a long time. When [they] saw that the grandfather had no signs of dying, he was released from the *cepo* to collect firewood [and] afterwards, the person in charge brought a gallon of gasoline. They poured [it] on the firewood and threw the elder on the fire. That was the end of the grandfather of the Zogui-zogui clan. After this tragedy, the chief gathered his people to discuss this saddening tragedy that had happened in the clan. He scolded everyone saying, "that is why I did not want to take this job, but as you insisted, we came to this misfortune. I wanted us to take out only white merchandise based on [our needs] and our strength, but because you were greedy, you took out more of the merchandise [and] now [our] people are dying."

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Lorenzo Yuabore: That was our situation. It was unfortunate at that time because girls, boys and women were hungry. Late at night, the Peruvians would send [them] with some *Kugauneryi* to tap rubber from the Syringa trees. Some would die of hunger; some survived and arrived at their houses, [whereas some others] were chased and decapitated along with their children. That happened with those who resisted. Then they sent heads or other body parts as evidence that they had been punished. If the Muyai did [comply], they would also be killed. That was how [our] people gradually ended up close to becoming extinct. Peruvians would send our people to work for ten days in the forest. After [those] ten days [had passed] they picked them up so that they could pay with rubber for the elevated cost of the clothes, objects and things they took from the Peruvians. Whoever brought little rubber was burned alive, whereas the ones that collected a generous amount would be set free without being harmed.

Those who extracted little rubber were told: "How [come] the other one[s] brought plenty [of rubber], and you didn't?" then they would be whipped. People would bring the right amount of rubber out of fear of being punished again. Those who collected little rubber would be whipped again, [and] sent to look for firewood [which would be later used] to burn them [alive]. When they had enough wood, they would set up a bonfire, then tie our people up, pour gasoline on their bodies [and] throw [them] into the fire. When the people were burning, they screamed and shouted desperately, and the fire would consume them entirely as if they were animals. Whenever they did not burn them, they cut off their heads and threw them away to rot, like animals.

Lino: Many Muinane and other people died. They suffered day in, day out. When they did not work on the rubber plantations, they worked in the *chagras*, planting and weeding. Some women [had to] leave their children [unattended] sitting on trees [due to] the pressure [placed upon them]. The children would often die of thirst, hunger or heat. The pressure of forced labor [imposed] by the Peruvians and the terrible hunger they suffered meant that the women had to harvest the yucca in the moonlight while the men [were in charge of processing] the coca. They would stay up all night working, having no time to rest or sleep.

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The children [were also] forced to work and beaten with sticks. It was very tough because the Peruvians did not forgive them. They killed them, so they [ended up] working out of fear.

The white men started messing with our people, sending them to peel *Platanillo* seeds, [although] not for them to eat them but for the whites. Then, they were sent to collect *mojojoy*[84] to mix their butter with the peeled seeds so the white people could enjoy the dishes themselves. Meanwhile, our people were still hungry because there was no food for them. As a result, the people no longer worked [because] they were starving. The situation became so tense that they finally killed a white rubber baron. From then on, the killings between our people and [the] whites got worse [and extended] simultaneously [across] different camps.

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Cacique Manuel's Chant *(By Manuel Zafiama)*

 October 22, 2014

I will tell [you] what happened with our tribe (the Uiyobefo): They killed a Peruvian [and asked themselves], "What are we going to do? What can we do [about it]?" Then they said, "let us eat him." They sliced [a portion] of his heel to taste it and said "we cannot eat it [because] they ate garlic. It cannot be eaten. Their flesh smells badly." So they asked "what are we going to do? Should we throw it in the river or should [we] [burn] it?" Likewise, [in retaliation for the murder of a Peruvian rubber baron] they burned my people, all [of the] Uiyobefo tribe. They took out three people to collect firewood every day and then [they] burned them and [kept on doing so] until there was no one left [alive]. [Some managed to] escape, but [they] found them again in Juraña [and] killed them all. There, they made a one-and-a-half-meter fence with a four-centimeter barbed-wire woven on top [so that] no one could run away. That was the end for them.

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[84] Ancognatha scarabaeoides larva.

The Peruvians burned the Jurafo clan. There, two people witnessed that tragedy and escaped to [what is now] Kuere – at that time Kuere did not even exist, they (Uiyobeni, head of the Platanillo clan and Kuet+ k+ [of the] Uiyua+ clan) went to the center of the mountain and got ready to avenge the extermination of their people. While being there, they created a base of operation called Kuere. [But] instead of fighting the Peruvians, they ended up killing their own people. They stayed in that place and did not return to their homes because they were afraid of being killed by the Peruvians. With them, the Jurafo clan was born again. [Both] Jurayira+ and Koreg+ Amena, the first R+rira+ma, [which is translated as *the trunk of the Jurafo* and refers to the person from which their descendants came from] were killed there putting an end to their lineage.

<div align="center">*</div>

They [Uiyobeni and Kuet+k+] saw that and were so sad [that they decided to] go [and isolate themselves] in the forest. There, the Jurafo clan gradually emerged again. They did dances, and when they performed them, they came back again. They came singing because they were celebrating the dances. In the song they said:

Jaiz + riñ + biyaz + (2) jaiz + riñ +, jaiz + riñ +.	*jaiz + riñ + biyaz + (2) jaiz + riñ +, jaiz + riñ +.*
Jiiiiiiii.	*Jokuba, jokub + j ++ j + (2)*
Afaiba muido jazik +	People come, very fast, (2) very fast, *hihihi.*
Dorokoire ana namak + d + ka + biyaz +.	The *pava* [bird] comes from above in the middle of a thick, dirty forest. Below, people come (2) very fast.

(Fakariya singing of drinking Caguana by kuet + k + and his son Ja + inoi to +)

Faith + ka + (2) damani ar + faith juju ruia +	*Jokuba, jokub + j ++ j + (2)*
iiuru Jia + di uigoruerii ij ++ j +	*Jokojokodii girl bathed + keri*
okub + (3)	*Jokub + j ++ j +.*

A lot of joy (2), they want to wash
themselves *hohoho*
We are all going up the river singing
until the next day

Drinking, drinking (3), washing (2),
bathing and washing themselves.

(Outing song performed by Kuet+k+ and his son Ja+inoi to+)[85]

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It was all true! *(By Leonor, Mariana, Estelio, Noe and Lino)*

Leonor: We are not coming back because the Peruvians may kill us, [so] stay calm." That was the last thing Uiyobeni and Kuet+k+ said. Then, they isolated themselves in Kuere and were transformed by Uiyobeni [to later appear] in the shape of a tiger, no longer as a person.

Lino: While all that tragedy was happening, other white men came to see what was going on. [To] verify whether it was true or false what they were doing to the Indigenous people over here, whether they were being mistreated or killed. When the commission arrived, they became aware of the shocking truth about these people because they were effectively being mistreated and killed. They saw the scars on people's buttocks and some were [even] rotting alive. They also saw the *cepos*. –It was all true! [They now had enough] evidence and arguments to expose these atrocities to the white people out there>>

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Estelio: At that time, the Indigenous people who still existed were being picked up and transferred to Peru. My grandfather and his father Ga+riraña also travelled to Uiyokue, in a place called Pisagua. From there, those two elders were taken to Iquitos. At that time, there was no one left in the area where we were. Everyone was displaced to the Peruvian territory. Due to the many difficulties [they went through] in Peru, my grandfather returned to his territory tracing the same route they had taken from here to Pisagua. First, they

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[85] Translation made from Uitoto to Spanish by Guber García and Ana García, of the Jitomagaro clan.

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travelled from Pisagua to Iquitos by river and then arrived here. However, when he arrived, his lands were all empty. He formed his home with my grandmother, Rufina Tabares. My grandfather was called Arturo Ga+ Riraña Matías.

When he saw that there was no one [there], he had to go down to La Chorrera again. It is unknown how he [managed to] travel to see Attama (an elder of the Okaina tribe). He (Attama) had a daughter whom my grandfather brought as a companion. They returned to the Ultimo Retiro and went to hide again in the woods. There was no one [at that place], [although later on] people started arriving very gradually, just like my grandfather did. Victor Falla's dad was also found there, near Maziye. I do not know how [he ended up there]! if he [probably] had come back from somewhere or if he had hidden there. [Whatever the case may be], he already had a *chagra* and a *Maloca*, and the people who arrived there collected seeds [for themselves].

The Kuetgage escaped to Tagua, and from there, they returned and stayed hidden near the headwaters of the river (Igaraparaná). They came down from that place. [Since] there was no one at the headwaters, they continued descending until they reached the mouth of the Jiy+kue stream, where they settled their *chagra*. They brought the seed from Maziye, where Tiburcio was. They descended because at that time, Anibal, the famous Guaguaru was near Jid+ma, the father of the late Luisito was in Jid+ma. The Gimaido were near Jid+ma. They hid over there, and no one captured them. Then, when they found out that Tiburcio already had a Maloca, they came to see if it was true that there were no Peruvians.

Elder Tooma Xuvilla (Noé Siake): Tomañofɨ (the ɨvuuhza chief) and my dad stayed in Algodon, Putumayo. There they worked, [took care of] the *chagra*, made dances and eventually Tomañofɨ, my great grandfather, said, "What am I going to do here? I have to return to my territory." Around that time, when my father was planning his return, I came to this world. My father made an 8-10-meter-long canoe. Once he finished the canoe, he was ready to return with ten people; five Okainas and five other people from other groups [whose names] I do not remember [anymore]. My dad said that we departed when I [could already] sit down. We went down all the way from Algodon and ran aground near a stream

below Arica [where we] went ashore. While in that place, Tomañofɨ, my grandfather told my dad "I think I am going to stay here, and if I live a long time, I [will] go back."

My father departed and crossed streams and *cananguchales*. They [got] lost, their food got wet, and they were running out of food rations. There is a waterhole in Guanana, [which is part of] the Igaraparaná River, where they got lost for three days. [When] they [finally managed to] find a way out of that place, they crossed a stream, and all their food rations got wet, [which made them feel like] they were not going to succeed. [They stopped] right in the middle of the road [because] they were running out of food. They arrived on a [place that once belonged to their] ancestors, [which] today is known as Santa Julia. My father already knew this territory way before he was taken to Peru. They followed their ancestors' track and arrived in Providencia with the last grain of *farina*. There was a big *chagra in Providencia* [although] there was no one there, [just dead] silence.

They had food again after harvesting yucca [to make] and knead *fariña* [dough]. [While being] there, my dad already knew the way through the East to Providence, they took that path to arrive here. If my father had not come, none of us (the Ɨvuuhza) would exist here. We arrived, and our people reproduced. We settled and arranged [the land for] our *chagra* and looked for cassava seeds. We found the last sprouts of tubers. [The land] was [full of] stubble and we were able to recover the pineapple and banana seeds. Don Ignacio Atama's father was the only one who stayed taking care of the rubber barons' goods. My dad asked him for more seeds to grow. That was the return to our territory.

Mariana Neikase: My mother says that when we first sowed the *chontaduro* seed, we were taken to Peru, and when we returned, the *chontaduros* we had sown had borne their first fruits. That means that it took them about five or six years to return from Peru, which is the time it takes for a *chontaduro* to bear fruit, and also, that they returned in February, [during] the *chontaduro* season.

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Conclusion *(By the Ɨvuuhza Nation)*

Talking about the rubber industry is a critical subject within the community, clans, families and people [across the Putumayo Region]. [This is because] throughout the stories of our elders, it is inevitable to face great pain [as well as] fear of talking about what has been prohibited. [There is also] uncertainty for not being able to make the narratives more accurate, because much of the memory has been forgotten. One century after the unfortunate events, our elders sadly manifest themselves as orphans and as the offspring of the great people that existed in the past. Despite all the events to which they were exposed to the detriment of their culture, [they] maintain an assertive and peaceful posture, which is only obtained through the spiritual strength given by the tobacco, coca and sweet yucca.

As has been documented throughout history in different sources, the situation of the Indigenous peoples of the Colombian Amazon in the early 20th century [has been] marked by the most serious conflicts in our territory (in particular, on the Igaraparaná river, where we, the children of the tobacco, coca and sweet yucca are located). [Conflicts] linked to the "progress" and trade, based on other extractive booms [that would result] in the genocide of the Caucherías and degradation of our culture.

The political and economic centers of both countries [Colombia and Peru], far from acting to defend our society and culture, remained aloof from the facts and, therefore, [due to] negligence and omission, contributed to this period's [events]. Moreover, while it is true that the serious pressures that threatened our physical and cultural integrity have now ceded, the risk of our extinction has not dissipated. As people who have the right to live as human beings, [we are threatened] by new economic interests in our territory, related to mining, logging, deforestation caused by monoculture plantations, among other national policies that affect our territory and culture. As people of coca, tobacco and sweet yucca, we have not yet been recognized as victims of genocide [and crimes] against humanity. Justice has not been served. There has been no place for investigations or effective reparations and, even more so, the **S**tate has not designed any intervention intending to guarantee or restore our right to exist as a differentiated nation, to decide our destiny autonomously and to avoid repeating the aberrant history that we have suffered.

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The most evident impacts that this conflict had, which we feel to this day are: 1) the total disintegration or disappearance of about 19 clans; 2) the killings of at least 2,000 human beings [just among the Okaina – Ɨvuuhza people]; 3) the detriment of traditional knowledge and the spaces to transmit it; 4) the fragmentation and displacement of the few survivors [who fled] to Peru; 5) the deprivation and reduction of our resources and livelihoods; 6) the dissolution of [our] social structure and [the forced cultural] homogenization; 7) [the] loss of [Okaina – Ɨvuuhza] mother tongue; 8) the death and decline of the elderly who bore millenary knowledge about life and how to take the care of it; and 10) the interruption of control over the spiritual [realm], nature and society. In that sense, the actions that we consider necessary to consolidate a strengthening process must begin from the exercise of our autonomy and the use of our own forms of resistance. Furthermore, as subjects of collective rights; [such strengthening must] always be based on the organizational process that we have [managed to] consolidate [for] over 25 years in our Life Plans as [the] Children of Tobacco, Coca and Sweet Yuca.

The Resistance of Women *(By Fany Kuiru)*[86]

After the departure of the rubber tappers due to the Colombian-Peruvian conflict, the Uitoto, along with the Okaina, Muinane and Bora began to rebuild the social and organizational order following the word of tobacco, coca and sweet yucca. Those who were returning from Peru joined the process of rebuilding our social and cultural fabric. As teacher Uitoto Odilia Mayaritoma relates:

> When the conflict occurred, there were no older people or grandparents or grandmothers, those who remained were the orphans. When the older ones returned [from Peru], they learned to make *casabe*. They were left with the memory of what they saw about how things worked, and thus they learned again with the help of the returning adults. (Interview: 09/15/2015)

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[86] This are translated segments of Fany Kuiru's tesis '*La fuerza de la manicuera : acciones de resistencia de las mujeres Uitoto de la Chorrera-Amazonas durante la explotación del caucho – Casa Arana*', which can be found in its original Spanish version at https://repository.urosario.edu.co/handle/10336/19447?show=full

The new generation of Uitotos are thus the descendants of the children and grandchildren of the orphans left by Casa Arana, and of the displaced populations that returned from Peru to their territory of origin, La Chorrera. Before the massive displacement of Indigenous people to Peru, the rubber barons ordered the natives to pluck all the crops. It is common to hear in La Chorrera that people were told: "burn everything so that you do not wish to return." However, the women were strategic in saving seeds in the stubble fields, which later served to restore the agro-biodiversity that today enriches their territories and sustains the nutrition of all their beings.

In 1932, when the rubber barons of La Chorrera left, the Spanish Capuchin missionaries arrived with the approval of the Colombian government, creating the La Chorrera orphanage in the Casa Arana facilities, by Decree No. 10 November 22/1933, to educate and evangelize the Indigenous population (Farekatde, 2004, pg.65). At the same time, the Capuchin missionary sisters arrived with the intention of evangelizing women. This involved preparing the girls to be good wives who could cook, wash, iron, sew, embroider, clean and do the garden. The culture shock was strong because the Spanish Capuchin missionaries began to implement Western discipline and education based on fear, sin and intimidation, as reported by Difelina Gabba:

With the Bible in hand, they punished us by imposing European culture, to the point that they forced us to refer to them as "your reverence." Education was taught with fear; they punished us if we spoke our language, I saw them put a stick in Muinane Virginia Humire's and Adelina Rodriguez's mouths for speaking in their mother tongue. ¨ (Dialogue: 02/18/2018). The imposition of the monotheistic and patriarchal Catholic religion that instilled the belief in a single Catholic God of the "whites," deteriorated the ancestral image of women, incorporating the manipulative idea of a woman called Eve, the sinful and treacherous transgressor of the universal order imposed by them. The Uitoto women [also felt] guilty about the fact that Adam [had] betrayed God's trust by eating the forbidden fruit. [On this account], Rosaura Kuiru relates:

[We] prayed all day. In the morning, we went to mass. For breakfast, we prayed again. Before starting class, we prayed. At noon, before lunch, there was mass and

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at night, [there was also] another mass. And before going to sleep, I prayed the rosary. People prayed and prayed all the time. I just kept on doing it out of fear of the man from the painting with big muscles and horns (the devil). [I feared that he] would take us to hell if we did not pray (interview: 02/14/2018).

These feelings of fear of hell and the devil were accompanied by the prohibition to speak our mother tongue at the beginning of evangelization. Everything was considered diabolic. Similarly, as has happened in every civilizing process imposed by Western culture, the native was synonymous of witchcraft. This practice of the Spanish Catholic Church reflects the highest degree of ignorance towards the "other," which is a profound disdain for Amazonian cultures. As such, it can be seen that the violence experienced in the rubber camps was perpetuated by the practices and policies of the Church, which reflect the cruel side of the European colonization of the time. The faith, which was reserved for those who did not surrender to the established Western power, combined with the events of the Casa Arana, intensified the vulnerability of the new generations of Uitoto women. It is worth contextualizing and pointing out that, at this time, in the middle of the 20th century, the Republic of Colombia was ruled by a concordat. On the other hand, the disobedience to the rules that the nuns had established was sanctioned with punishments such as whips with cow leather strips, with a stick or with a belt.

Until 1970, young orphans were kept in schools until the nuns themselves found them a husband, whether they were Indigenous or not. Thus, many were discharged from the boarding school through a forced marriage where there was no love or will. This was another expression of violence. Some of them found a way to evade the rules established in boarding schools, by fleeing to other remote communities, which can be understood as a form of resistance. The orphanage later moved to the other side of the river, where Santa Teresita del Niño Jesús still operates today as a boarding school. At that time, it used to house around 600 students including boys and girls. Today, it only reports 20. The Uitoto is currently a nation under reconstruction, where [factors such as] violence, the rubber industry and religion ended up weakening its culture, resulting in a disruption of [their traditions, including] the way women [are] treated, [given that] a male hegemony [has been imposed], which is contrary to the myths and stories typical of the Uitoto culture.

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Eventually, the sisters of Mother Laura Congregation arrived. The relationship grew closer and friendlier; to this day, these missionaries continue to accompany the communities of La Chorrera in their processes of self-determination and cultural vindication, by supporting territorial political processes as well as Indigenous education. This religious congregation even served as human shields during the presence of armed groups in La Chorrera, when the Pastrana government (2003) abandoned the town to its own fate by declaring this territory as part of a demilitarized zone, or red zone. By that time, the **S**tate presence in La Chorrera was [displayed through] the army and a group of medical practitioners who [eventually were] dismissed, so the only ones who stayed with the Indigenous population were the Lauritas and the priest. Meanwhile, in communities with dominant lineages, sexist practices were adopted within their cultural patterns of traditional training, where the role of women speaking in public was limited. That and other types of prohibitions between men and women were forced, especially towards women who belonged to the families called *jiba komini,* that is, people who were traditionally considered common; those who did not belong to lineages of authorities, and therefore had less possibilities of standing out.

Half a century after the tragedy, the Indigenous nation recovered their territory as a collective property called ¨Resguardo Indígena Predio Putumayo." New forms of representative government were formed to defend Indigenous rights and to improve the relationship with the government and other State institutions. However, there was [still] little participation of women in the new forms of Indigenous government, since the collective action-oriented political [proposals] to protect their rights had been implemented exclusively by male individuals. Thus, the participation of Indigenous women at that time was reduced to a limited space within organizations, especially those related to women, gender, children and family.

During the process of organizational consolidation in La Chorrera, the *plan de vida* [life plan] of the children of tobacco, coca and sweet yucca (Uitoto, Okaina, Muinane and Bora) was built. The participation of women took place through the Secretary of Women affairs within the organization and thus, the male-oriented cultural patterns inherited from both the *caucherías* and the Spanish religious orders were transformed, opening up the

door for the women of the palabra dulce (sweet word) to come out to the public stage as teachers, professionals and leaders. The admission of the women of the *manicuera*[87] or sweet cassava to the scenarios of State-Indigenous relations constituted a significant step for them, which allowed them to access spaces like the *mambeadero*, [spaces that had been] reserved exclusively for men, even before the *cauchería*.

In this way, the dialogues are no longer just between the so-called wise, but the male and female leaders are listened to as well. In 2004, the first Indigenous woman in history to be heard in a *mambeadero* was the author [of this text]. This intervention was possible, in part, because she belongs to a line of authorities within her nation, and also because she is the first Uitoto to have graduated as a lawyer, which allowed her to become an advisor within the organization. However, despite these small advances in participation and decision-making scenarios during the 1980s, women continued to experience physical violence within the family unit. In addition, small-scale drug trafficking appeared in the region and with it, alcoholism and prostitution, creating new forms of violence against the women of Uitoto.

In the 1990s, with the presence of different legal and illegal armed groups, the Uitoto people were again subjected to violence; young women were severely affected because they were recruited by force or seduced and then taken to the mountains. Another form of violence against women today is sexual violence and the increase in single motherhood. Together, all these violations of women's rights can be categorized as different forms of violence: economic, psychological and moral. As such, violence has become a constant for marginalized peoples. Today, there are new collective challenges in which women participate, albeit in an incipient manner. The role of women in the organization is a reference of strength and resistance; [one example of this is]

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[87] *The manicuera – juiñoi: is a Uitoto sacred beverage obtained from the sweet yucca (fareka), which was given by the creator ¨moo¨ to women as strength and power in the performance of their integral roles: as source of wisdom and as protective mother of the territory, the community and the chagra.* See (Kuiru, 2019)

demonstrating how, through the strength and spiritual power of the *manicuera,* they can overcome the different external conflicts that come to the region.

As long as the *manicuera* is present, which is the sacred element, there is hope to keep on making presence in the local, regional and national scenarios to continue to build our families, communities, region and country. With the power of *manicuera's* sweet word, women, as the guiding force of the process, have carried out the reconstruction of the memory of the Uitoto, Okaina, Muinane and Bora peoples. [In particular, they have been in charge of reconstructing] the events that occurred during the Casa Arana. Odilia Mayaritoma recounts:

> Women are the backbone of everything, but they are still a complement [to men]. If a woman is in her place, she keeps morality; her family works in harmony, because men are weak. So, if both were weak, who would help the family to emerge? If there is no moral authority, who is going to correct it? Thus, children would develop problems; a woman is a foundation with her role of woman. (Group discussion: 02/122018)

Elders do not want to talk about the rubber camps because it makes them sad, and it hurts. And the new generations argue that those are old stories; they do not want to know about their past, and they do not want to share [those stories] with their children [either]. However, the women of the *manicuera* think that this memory must be preserved and made public so that we can learn from it and prevent this from happening again. Women are optimistic about their future and feel that they are being taken into account, especially in the environmental and climate change projects and programs that are coming to the territories. For example, now with the issue of REDD, we have gained space in decision-making [processes]. In the past, only men decided, but now there are women who have opinions (group dialogue: Elizabeth Fajardo, 12/14/2016)

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

The House of Knowledge *(By Fany Kuiru)*[88]

This land, for example, was "owned" by the Caja Agraria (national agrarian bank), and the Caja leased it to the governor to create the Indigenous school called "Casa del Conocimiento" (House of Knowledge). When the lease ended, it had to be returned to the Caja Agraria, and the national government planned to build a hotel in this house with the investment of a wealthy French businessman, the owner of Aviatur. The [person who also] owns the Decameron hotels in Leticia, those expensive hotels. So, he came to see if he could build a resort in Casa Arana.

Sometimes you say, "There will be work, there will be money," but when you [know you have to] bear that pain, you say, "It cannot be [like that]." Why? Well, sure, [having] money is okay, but if I have 100,000 pesos today, that is how much a pair of shoes would cost me. 100,000 dollars for a pair of shoes that in a month would already be damaged. So, what would I be left with? Nothing! So, Ruth Consuelo (or Professor Ruth) – who worked with our teachers, and thanks to her support, today they have their degrees – in a conversation with a now deceased professor, Orlando Perez, found out that the governor wanted to give our house to that company. So, this was going to be turned into a hotel.

And [what about you] (the students)? What use would that be [to you]? What would you do in that hotel? Nothing. Working as employees, doormen, right? The one who carries the suitcase, the one who brings people from the airport, the one who collects the garbage. In other words, once again, a reflection of the Casa Arana. [All] the power [given] to a rich man. And the Indigenous people? Enslaved, perhaps poorly paid. So we said, "No sir! That cannot be turned into a hotel. That house [has] a painful historical meaning to us. In a community council with the Indigenous people, we had a conversation with Alvaro Uribe Velez, when he was president. –As usual, I am involved [in everything], (even if some people do not like it). I have always been there, because a leader feels the pain of their

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[88] This segment is a translated transcription of a dialogue with the students from Casa del Conocimiento from our meeting in La Chorrera in 2019.

people and their land. With or without money, one is always in the spaces where one needs to be.

So, I went with all the Indigenous authorities to Bogotá, to that meeting with Alvaro Uribe, on September 25, 2005. There, Octavio Benjumea [also] arrived. [Gloria] Orobio was the governor at that time. What was her plan? [To] transform the Amazon [into a] tourist attraction. Tourism! The only source of income for the Amazon. Then, Octavio Benjumea, our representative, said, "Mr. President, tourism has been planned for La Chorrera in the Casa Arana. Some of the attendees were teacher Edwin, Roban Teteye, the cacique Victor, the cacique Marcelo, several elders. And then, when Octavio told the president that there was going to be tourism, the president was happy... "Finally! Tourism in La Chorrera!" However, I told the leaders, "NO!" I told Professor Raul, who was with me: "Professor, you have to say that there can be no tourism! This is the space to make the president publicly commit to that.

Then, since no one would say a word, I decided to speak. There were our authorities, there was the president of AZICATCH, there was the school principal, but no one would say a word. The community council was about to close, so I raised my hand. I said, "no, sir, the Casa Arana cannot be a resort; it represents a painful story to us, so we want it back. And of course, President Alvaro Uribe did not like that. "Go talk to the Deputy Minister," he said. And so we did. Ruth Consuelo, the teacher Raul, Alberto Barecade, representative Reinaldo and I were there the next day. We were at the Deputy Minister's office. Then Benjumea said, "but Reinaldo had told me that you wanted tourism," I said, "no, that has not been consulted with the community. That is why we came to the community council."

Anyway, from then on, since 2005, we managed to get this house back. With a group of colleagues who are lawyers, this house was declared in 2008 "Cultural Heritage of the Nation" so that no one would seize it again, so that no one would do tourism here, because National Heritage Cultural Sites cannot be sold, and cannot be touched. That is why we are still here today, that is the story of why this is *our* house today. With the support of FUCAI, of Professor Ruth, we have continued to achieve other things. Here, we

celebrated the 100th anniversary of the rubber boom events, and here we also had a CEDES [graduate studies center].

All these photos you see are from a photographer that Ruth hired. That is, from FUCAI. Many of those elders are no longer with us. That is memory! This is the result of our work [she speaks in Uitoto language]; so all these photos remind us of our recovery process. They did not give this to us for free. If today we have a collective territory, it was not for free. We are here because our elders and our leaders fought so that today, this great Putumayo Reservation would be the collective property of our people. This is not ours because they said: "poor people, your ancestors were massacred, we are going to give you back your land!" No, it was not like that!

ONIC intervened here, when ONIC was, let's say, the only Indigenous organization. A group of lawyers from Funcol intervened, which was an organization of lawyers. We were able to become friends even with the president of La Caja, Carlos Villamil Chaux. The first one, Mariano Ospina Perez, did not want to give this back to the Indigenous people. We know that having allies [helps to] accomplish things. So, we allied ourselves with Carlos Villamil Chaux and some people from the Cauca region who were already on our side. If Mariano Ospina Pérez had continued as president, I do not know for how long the struggle would have lasted. But many people intervened, a lot; I think Edwin had not been born yet. Yes, seriously (laughs).

Well, I was already 20 years old at that time. I was in all that process; in the recovery of the Putumayo territory and in the recovery of this house because the community told me that I was the one who had to be there, so I was there in the process. And from there, I think that from that moment on I have continued to work for all this. It has been a while... 33 years? 30 years? We are still standing; this will be a process, a long-term project. We have done small things, and we will continue to do things. So, very clearly, Professor Ruth had karma with La Chorrera, and her family continue to have it because here we have a nephew of hers today, who is going to start working with you. It is no coincidence that he is here. Also, in the past, when Walter Winaje was president of AZICATCH, Ruth introduced me to Camilo so we could talk and see what could be done with AZICATCH. And it was then

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that I was invited to Canada, and I presented Casa Arana to them, I always presented Casa Arana, Casa Arana, Casa Arana. Because for me, memory has to be preserved, has to be guarded. And after all that has been said, we have partnered with CICADA at McGill University, so that I can work with you.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

We are one *(By Fany Kuiru and Patricia Gualinga)* [89]

The COVID −19 Pandemic and Beyond

Patricia Gualinga (P.G.): Greetings to Fany from the Ecuadorian Amazon. It is a pleasure to be here with all of you in these difficult times for all of us. However, I think it is more difficult for the Indigenous peoples because this pandemic has made visible, to a greater extent, the abandonment that our nations have always suffered. The authorities have been slow to respond. In our case, they proclaimed a declaration of emergency, but it was only a declaration on their part. What we have done is to organize ourselves internally to try to resolve the situation. Through solidarity groups, we have organized ourselves to provide our people with at least the minimum [to meet their basic needs]. In case they run out of food, we will provide them with some food that could alleviate the whole [shortage] situation.

We encourage each other by saying, "We have resisted for more than 500 years. We have been here. We are natives. We have had viruses and pandemics, like measles, like smallpox." Many of our people have fled into the forest to try to protect themselves from this, as some are doing today. Even so, the virus has managed to reach certain areas; we are going to continue. They are not going to kill us. What the communities have done after seeing that the State neglects them is to go back to the roots: back to the medicinal plants,

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[89] Facebook live Luchadoras**:** COVID and the Amazon War, June 3, 2020 at https://www.facebook.com/LuchadorasMX/videos/664432654106867/

back to the bark, back to the lianas, back to the leaves, back to the origins, to be able to cope. And [so] they resist.

We have resorted to our ancestral knowledge because the State does not pay attention to us. At this moment, we cannot say that our villages are not infected. We suspected that the virus had already reached our nations, even before it was only in the outskirts of the city, where the Indigenous peoples also live. However, now we have verified that it has reached the "Aorani" territory, that it has reached the "Sicopay" territory, that it has reached the "Shibia" territory, that it has reached the "fronts," and that it has reached the "Quichuas." So, the virus is already in our communities.

But, as I say, this allowed us to rescue knowledge that was possibly not valued as such at that time. Many of us also had to learn about plants. We have the knowledge of our family, but other nations know other plants, another nation recommends others, and so we manage. Many say they are being cured by the plants, others say they are helping them, but in general, there are no clear numbers of how our Indigenous nations are infected, because the governments are not [keeping track of the number of infections], because the ministry of health is not doing it.

So, right now, every time we hear that a family is infected, that a person is sick, or has a fever; we do everything we can to help, we do not abandon them. Also, here in the outskirts of the city, we also try to support our people; if someone is alone or the whole family is sick, or if they cannot have some medical attention, that at least they have some food; we try to send them at least some herbs. That is the situation at the moment. Every day we see with deep sadness that our elders are dying in the Amazon, in all the provinces. In my nation, three just died a few days ago. The consequence, what we fear, is that we are left without memory, without elders, without ancestral knowledge.

Fany Kuiru (F.K.): We have always shared many spaces with Patty. Our situation is the same because the Amazon is one. The situation of the Indigenous population throughout the Amazon is the same, I believe, in the nine countries that occupy the Amazon basin. In Colombia, for example, the Amazon covers almost 50% of the national territory; it is the habitat of 64 Indigenous nations, which are the most at risk of physical extinction

due to historical neglect; two words common to the entire Amazon are "State negligence." State negligence, but with a continuous and growing presence of extractive industries. We are talking about deforestation, land grabbing, etc. The Colombian Amazon in which the National Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon – OPIAC operates is actually a very large area. In it there are areas that are called non-municipal, that is, they are Indigenous sectors or territories that are outside the political structure of government of the country, in which the authority should be the Indigenous authorities themselves; however, today it does not work that way.

Regarding the pandemic, in Leticia, which is the capital of the province, several colleagues have died denouncing the precarious situation of the health services. They have died without having taken the COVID test. They have died waiting for treatment. In fact, Leticia is today the city that is suffering the worst part of this humanitarian crisis. There are no adequate medical services to attend to this COVID 19 crisis, so it is a chaotic situation. Today, all this governmental negligence is reflected in the lack of supplies and services throughout the Amazon. The service is horrible, there is no infrastructure. Our elderly have died without getting to the health center or the hospital. They said, "What are we going there for if there is nothing? There are no medicines, no. There are no beds, no ventilators, no intensive care unit, absolutely nothing," so many decided to stay in their communities to die.

As Patricia said, we use our traditional medicine because there is no other alternative. There are brave Indigenous women who are helping the communities with their traditional medicine because there are no other alternatives. That is a form of resistance; our traditional knowledge is what will save us. As Patricia has said, there have been many epidemics that have come to these Indigenous nations. However, we also have to be very careful because we have Indigenous nations that have not yet had contact, that is, they have chosen not to have initial contact with this larger society. What is called "Indigenous nations in isolation." We have to avoid that. We have to accompany them so that this virus does not reach them. It would be unfortunate that in the midst of this abandonment by the State, they would have to perish; these populations would be condemned because they are not immunologically prepared for these diseases.

The situation in the Amazon is serious. It is quite serious, I would say. However, I have to acknowledge the solidarity of the civilian population, and how civil society has been present. For example, they organized a campaign called "Colombia takes care of Colombia," and they are the ones who are reaching these areas of the country. They are the ones who are arriving with food, with medicines, with medical supplies that are not in the area. Incredibly, civil society has taken over the role of the State.

State interests

P.G.: There is really an interest of the State and the companies to access the resources that are in the territories of the Indigenous peoples, but for them we have become the "pebble in the shoe." I use this term "pebble in the shoe" because a minister once said that we are a pebble in the shoe; we are an obstacle to achieve the so-called "Development." "Development" that they have used as an excuse to plunder the Amazon in all countries.

The Amazon that exists now is thanks to the struggle and the blood of our Indigenous nations. If it were for governments and corporations, the entire Amazon would have been annihilated by now. If there is still something left in the Amazon it is thanks to our efforts; for us, this pandemic is the result of all that depredation. If we go to our deepest traditional knowledge, to the knowledge of our *iatchas* or shamans, the destruction of nature is the destruction of the connections of life on Earth, and that is related [to what is happening today] because the imbalance can come in the form of disease; the imbalance can come in the form of climate change. Imbalance can come in various forms.

For now, we are suffering from these forms of imbalance, although we have not caused it. It has been caused by large multinational corporations. The unconscious citizen who is not interested in [understanding] where the resources come from and has no conscience to address what has caused [this imbalance]. It has been caused by permissive governments that, under the premise of a false "national benefit," have unleashed devastation in the Amazon. We have seen in Brazil that under a president like Bolsonaro, the destruction is all over the Amazon. Unfortunately, the Amazonian peoples depend on what may happen in Brazil, Colombia and Peru because everything is connected, the Amazon is one. The countries are the ones that are divided, but we all depend on what

happens in each one. If they destroy the Brazilian Amazon they also destroy us, but that goes much further: if they destroy the Amazon they also destroy humanity. If they destroy the Brazilian Amazon, they break the balance.

The Amazon ecosystem maintains the balance of the Arctic, maintains the balance of the Sahara and maintains the balance of the Congo. No one can or should dare to break this connection, because if that external mind dissociates, everything will break. Everything, because the Earth is one and we are all connected. In this context, there is an absolute ignorance of the governments and companies that are trying to destroy the Amazon; they do not recognize the visible signs of all the devastation we have been suffering. I am not referring only to the suffering of Indigenous peoples; I am referring to the entire world population. In big cosmopolitan cities like New York, or maybe in Paris, or maybe in India, they may not even know about the Amazon, but they can also suffer the consequences of the devastation in the Amazon.

The pandemic has shown us that there are no boundaries; climate change is showing us that there are no boundaries. We have to think from that point of view, and we have to remember what our elders [have always] said: "Please do not destroy ecosystems. Do not destroy them. Respect nature, it is part of our home, it is part of our life. If you do not respect nature, the Earth can turn to foam. Unusual diseases will appear; that destruction will produce an absolute dark energy that does not promote balance." However, we have been ignored, [they have said] "those Indigenous are stupid, romantic, etc." Now some scientists say the same thing, only a few years later [than us]; [they say it], when there is no time to lose, when we are almost at a point of no return. Let's hope that there is still time to face this situation, because although [Indigenous have always resisted], we need the responsibility of the other part of society.

F. K.: I am a descendant of the victims of rubber tapping. That is why, at all times and everywhere I go, I always talk about this subject. I believe that we cannot forget the past; we cannot forget our history, because those who do not know history are destined to repeat it. I talk all the time about rubber tapping. Even though more than a century has passed, we are still suffering the consequences of that devastation. It was not only an

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ecocide; it was also an ethnocide; our nation was almost exterminated. That is a constant in the Amazon. As Patricia has said, our territory is a unity. I do not know why nation-states fragment our territory. That makes it impossible for the public policies of one country to fit into those of another. There should be a unified public policy for the entire Amazon basin, regardless of countries, regardless of borders. The Indigenous peoples themselves, who belong to the Amazon, would be the ones who could best design this unified public policy.

History has shown, in Colombia for example, that the Indigenous reserves are the ones that preserve the nature [and vegetation, for example] of the forest the most. On the other hand, in the territories where there is a significant presence of colonos (settlers), there is more deforestation, more depredation, more illegal crops and a much greater presence of armed actors. That is the Colombian Amazon: it is a contrast of things difficult to manage because the Amazon is too big for the Colombian State. It has not even been able to defend its own territory, let alone the lungs of the Earth.

[The State] has dedicated itself to declaring protected areas, although these protected areas, such as Chiribiquete (which is an immense natural park of almost four million hectares), are not respected. All the predators come there and do what they want: they come to deforest, to set fires. Of the 26,317,310 hectares of natural reserves in Colombia, 24,850,762 hectares are Indigenous reserves. That is where all the natural forests are; that is where conservation really exists. It makes no sense to keep declaring more protected areas. What we have to do is to leave the Amazonian territories in the hands of their Indigenous nations. People often say: "they are lazy, they do not exploit the land," but that is precisely our policy: "not to exploit." The latter is true because our policy is to be twinned with the territory, with nature, because that is the mandate given to us by the creator, which is written in our uses, customs and laws of origin. We live according to those mandates.

P.G.: We have been able to see the "negotiations" on climate change and, to our disappointment, no progress has been made. Market issues prevail. For example, they are thinking about] finding ways to commodify the forests that are still standing; that is sad.

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However, we have also seen the other side of the coin: a broader civil society that is beginning to question itself. Young people, even children, have started to talk about it. There are these two contradictions: there is a civil society that questions [everything], that questions itself; and there are governments that do not want to know anything [about the environment] and companies that want to continue in the same mode of depredation that turns everything into "the philosophy of extractivism," looking for a way to profit from what we are trying to do.

I hope to show this new generation that we are capable, as long as we move forward, as long as we are physically capable. Because there is a new generation of young people who are going to be affected by the situation, unfortunately in a very strong way. However, these kids today will make the change tomorrow. That is what I hope. But we have to hold on while they replace us. I hope that this pandemic experience can sensitize many actors to join this cause. I hope that this terrible experience that has left so much human loss can bring about some change. I hope that governments can start to question themselves as well. Although sometimes I see with disappointment that things are moving too slowly. When I say there is a point of no return, it is because we cannot go on depredating anymore. I mean, we have to do something right now; we have to do something in this context because if we continue with the style that has been imposed, this planet will not resist anymore.

We have fought for our rights, we have tried to make them understand, but they do not seem to get it. Again, I am not just talking about Indigenous peoples' rights; we are talking about something bigger [than that]. They may see that we are the people on the front lines, but what they do not see is that we are also fighting for the rights of others. Fany said a while ago that we do not need more national parks, or more biosphere reserves, or protective forests. It is true, because when the so-called national interest prevails, these governments do not respect national parks, protective forests or biosphere reserves. On the contrary, they exploit and destroy them. That is because they do not feel the territory as the Indigenous peoples do. After all, they do not live there. They have not had the opportunity to become aware [of this].

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We need them to accept our proposals, like those of the Sarayaku people in the living forest of *causacsacha*. We are asking the world to realize that nature is a conscious living being, a subject of rights. Thus, not only humanity is a subject of rights; nature is the being that lives in it, so the lake and the ecosystems are also subjects of rights. We know that, for example, not even the Indigenous people have the right to enter the primary forests. That is vital because that is where life flows to balance the planet, to balance the ecosystems. That is where this world regenerates. So we have to start listening; the Western world has to start relearning its connection to nature. We have to work to be more humble, to accept that Indigenous knowledge can be the starting point. That is what we say, but many people do not understand it because you have to be open-minded to do it. We have to be more sensitive. To do that, we must not think only with a rational mind.

Buen vivir

F.K.: Definitely. I think climate change policies and everything that has to do with climate change mitigation are made by and for the powerful. What do they do with Indigenous peoples or Indigenous representatives? They take them there to show them off, but that is all; sometimes they do not even take them into account. They bring them there to show that they are "inclusive," that Indigenous people participate in decision-making scenarios, and it turns out that what these Indigenous representatives have to say is not really considered.

So, as long as Indigenous peoples are not effective participants in these global climate change policies, all these "good" intentions of governments will fail. As Patricia said, we have to learn to be humble. Here, nature itself is showing us that when nature rebels, it does not look at your bank account, it does not look at races, religions, absolutely nothing; it ravages everyone equally. Those with resources may have the best doctors and the best equipment, so they may think they are going to be saved (which may be true for a while). For example, now with COVID 19, many may be saved because they have everything at their disposal, but for how long? This illusion, however, is deceptive for Indigenous peoples.

In order to have *buen vivir* in the Amazon, we have to keep our territories free of all types of extractivism, because nature is not a simple commodity. In Colombia, for

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example, the government has programmed to fumigate the Amazon to wipe out coca plantations. My God! Do they really believe that only by fumigating coca crops with glyphosate they can solve the problem of drug trafficking? The problems of the Amazon must be solved with policies with a differential approach to protect and preserve the Amazon, and that means protecting not only what they understand by biodiversity but also the Indigenous nations, the custodians, the guardians of the Amazon. The day the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon cease to exist, the world will lose [everything]; it is humanity that loses, we all lose. As Indigenous people, we can die tomorrow, and it will be over for us. However, the rest of humanity will suffer because the Amazon will also die without its guardians.

We have to think about all that. We have to learn to be humbler, to recognize ourselves, to listen, to think about the Indigenous people. *Buen vivir* is in the *planes de vida* of the Indigenous nations. Each one comes from its *ley de origen*. Those are our commandments. Therefore, to have *buen vivir*, we have to adapt and follow the *ley de origen*. For my people, the *Yetarafue* is the place where all the codes of conduct are found. It is the creator's mandate, which is kept by the traditional authorities and all the wise men. Through it, they take care and protect their people and the territory. Therefore, if it is not fulfilled, we all pay the price during our lifetime. We must keep in mind that the natural and the human are not separate. For us, everything is an integral whole; that is what it means to have an integral vision of the territory, and that is what others have not been able to understand. That is what the other culture, the majority culture, has not understood. Sometimes, only some ecologists who have joined us to defend the Amazon understand it, but that is not enough. There is so much insensitivity, so much unconsciousness in humanity. It seems that we are against everything that is different from the rest. Everything that is different from the dominant culture, from the dominant customs.

It is as if nothing has value today. That is why it is time to think of an economy of *buen vivir*. It is time to think about the economy of sharing, the economy of reciprocity and the economy of *trueque* (bartering or exchange of goods). That is to say, we must value good management and good practices that we have from the origins of everything. Today, we are facing a lot of inequality because people just want to have more than the other, and

in doing so we are destroying the world, we are destroying the Amazon. I think it is a time for reflection. Although a lot of damage has already been done, we must start to become aware, to regain consciousness. If this pandemic does not lead us to a collective consciousness, to a global consciousness, we may have failed as humanity.

Mal Vivir

F.K.: It is no secret to anyone in Colombia that the government cannot control all the armed actors throughout the country. Every day leaders are killed, and nobody says anything, nobody does anything, there are no protests like there are in the United States. Here we remain silent. I do not know if there is something wrong with our society because nothing happens [here]. Besides, it is precisely because there is no strong reaction from the whole society that they keep killing us. There is no protection for leaders in Colombia, even today with this pandemic, there is no respect for the lives of other human beings. Two days ago they killed an Indigenous leader who worked in communications and public policies in our country.

There is no respect for life. Here in Colombia life is not worth anything, it is as simple as that. There is a culture that does not respect human rights, and it has become a habit to murder; there are no mourners. So, it is hard. We all know the history of paramilitarism, which has always been working hand in hand with the government grabbing land, confiscating territories, opening the door to hydrocarbons, or any other type of extractivism. That is why Indigenous leaders who defend our territory are military targets in Colombia.

P.G.: Fany has a deep knowledge on this subject. It is unfortunate that in Colombia every day we hear that an Indigenous leader has been killed and, as Fany said, we do not have the possibility to respond with outrage and do something because later they kill someone else. They kill them because they are obstacles to someone's interests, whether it is the paramilitaries, or the drug traffickers, or the government. It could be one or all three, we do not know. It is true that in this time of pandemic in which we have all been in quarantine, the industries have not complied with the quarantine, the industries have continued working, and behind that, the paramilitaries or the drug traffickers may also be killing

leaders. For them there has been no quarantine. We have been quarantined by the virus, but they have not. They have continued "working," killing leaders who are seen as obstacles, because they want to dominate that space. They want to instill fear, they want to demonstrate power in a very brutal and cruel way.

We feel powerless about how to act when this happens in the territory. How can we effectively stand in solidarity with Colombia? The rapporteurs for Indigenous peoples, the human rights defenders have already done so, and it continues to happen. The government still does not guarantee the lives of these people. In Colombia I have seen that there is not the slightest guarantee of the right to life; every day we hear that people are being killed.

F.K.: Women have a crucial role to play. In these crises, we must take care of our families, our children, we must return to the tradition of self-care. Indigenous women have our own *jetar*, as they say in my culture. That is, codes of conduct for the care of the children, of the family. Self-care. We have to go back to that, because there is no other option. This pandemic is teaching us that we have to stop exploiting nature. We have to live with more respect and less consumption. If we didn't consume more than we really need, there would be less exploitation. We have to think about that.

Change

P.G.: A pandemic forced us to be locked up. It hasn't gone away yet. It is going around everywhere, but everyone wants to get back to "normal." However, nothing is normal, nobody knows when it will end. So now is the time to think about why this kind of thing is happening, now is the time to start talking to our children. Hopefully they will see a different normality than we do. Hopefully they will learn to love nature, to be more respectful. Our role right now is to try to give the new ones the opportunity to have that change; it is our responsibility. We are very irresponsible because we only think about the so-called normality, No! I think it is time to question ourselves. We will not go back to normality even if the pandemic ends at some point; we must learn from this hard lesson because we do not know what is coming.

If we do not change, nothing will be right. Either we change, or we succumb, not only to the pandemic but also to this reality. That is the mentality we must have. Either we change, or we fall off the cliff. So how do we change? We have to start rethinking, start feeling the Earth, she gives that energy, and nature gives that energy, we must learn from her because she is a teacher. Start observing, allow yourself to feel it, the teacher is going to teach you. I do not know what else I could say from this place, remotely. In our case, we have had some support from non-governmental organizations, but especially for the flooding issue. The young people of Sarayaku organized a "Gofundme" and from there we have been able to hold on until now. There is also a worldwide campaign in support of the Amazon, which is channeled by non-governmental organizations, either environmental or human rights, which somehow support us, and I must say that most of them come from outside our country. There are others at the national level, be it a little or a lot, it is the support we have, because we have not received anything from the government.

F.K.: There is internal confinement in the country. But because people are locked up in their homes, in the city or in communities, and they do not have food, they must break the isolation. So, in order to make this confinement national and mandatory, first they have to provide food. We are trying to do that for the Amazon. However, there are areas where you do not have to bring food, but essential medicines and tools to work the land. From the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon, we have made a whole platform to raise funds for this vast region, which is also demographically complex and geographically remote.

Unfortunately, we have not found much solidarity, and that is what sometimes terrifies me. The Amazon is not selfish, it is an Amazon that offers oxygen to everyone. We, the guardians, take care of the Amazon so that it is maintained, however, it does not receive [an equivalent reciprocity] from society; that hurts sometimes. I want to ask for worldwide support for the entire Amazon basin. It needs us, and we need it. If states cannot do it, civil society must do it. We need the solidarity of the world [because] the Amazon belongs to everyone and serves everyone selflessly, and as such we must be [generous] with it as well, this must be reciprocal.

Our resistance comes from our ancestors; the strength is in our ancestors, in our roots. That is how we have managed to recover those strengths. That is how we have managed] to move and maintain all those values that we have as human beings. The strength we have as leaders is the strength of duty; it is in the strength of the word. The strength is in our values; it is in helping others. In this crisis, we work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; we work day and night for our people because that is why we are their leaders. It is in helping others, our communities, our nations that we find strength, and as leaders and as women who are at the head of organizations, we work to support our people, and to dialogue with the other society so that we can all build a harmonious path together. We must return to harmony, we must return to harmony, but we can only do it if we have that gift of helping others.

P. G.: Our strength comes from the spirit; it can be from the ancestors; it can be from the energy of nature; that is why nature is so important because the human being is nature. Most cultures identify with animals like the eagle, the wolf and the puma. That is because we are connected in some way. The energy of our ancestors comes from the nature of the big trees; that is the energy that also nurtures us to resist, to share and to learn. The knowledge of our elders, the energy of the spirit cannot fail. If we have spiritual energy and strength, we can move forward. Often, if we do not have the spirit we do not move forward, because we are flesh and blood and we are weak. We need great spiritual strength too, and that energy must not break, that energy must continue to feed us.

Many people get sick, and we are full of diseases because we have cut those vital energies; those connections that made us who we were. We say we are descended from the jaguar, and our energy comes from the jaguar. Some will say we come from the river; others will say we come from the big trees. That is where we return to when we die. We return to what gave us our life force, to the earth; to nourish the earth, we all become compost. We are earth, but we are also spirit, and that spiritual energy is our strength, and it is the strength of every person, of every woman, of every individual. That strength is what we must not lose, what we must not distort and what we must not deny.

F. K.: The change is not in each of us as individuals, but in humanity as a whole. I invite you to be in solidarity, to share, to return to those values of sharing: the values of reciprocity and solidarity. The world must be united. It is time to return to solidarity, to equality, to reciprocity, and then things can be better.

P.G.: We are talking about moments of change, significant change, but do not expect the other to make the change. We will do it together; we will weave these webs of power to feed that energetic force. First, realize that you can, then make the change you can; do whatever you can when you can. We need to make this change from different corners of the world, whether it is from Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Europe, the United States, [Canada]. Let us be part of that change that humanity desperately needs, and in the meantime let us not lose hope. Let us remember that when you fight, you can do it.

Tobacco is not only the plant; we are tobacco. When the Uzuma (older man) dies [the family] no longer mourns. It no longer hurts, because the spirit remains in the son for other people. It is a great pride. It is the shell that dies. (Fucai, final report, P.52)

Chapter IV
People are Plants and Plants are People

The sacred

Martin Heidegger wrote in 1947: "Language is the house of the truth of Being." In this chapter, I propose that the "Being" of his statement can be interpreted as something similar to what Gregory Bateson calls the Mind, or what St. Augustine or Peirce called God, or what many other authors such as Bruno Latour and Lovelock might have called Gaia. In essence, these concepts refer to the idea of human dependence on a larger integrated complexity. In his *Letter from Humanism* (1993), Heidegger suggests that through language we might correspond with Being. I propose that he might have been speaking of the metaphorical language used in the arts and narratives, such as the myths of poetry and parables, which allow us to run free and create metaphorical links that lead us to discover new ideas and connections; a language that was apparently forbidden in modern narratives by traditional Science. But just as this language has endured within art and religion in the West, it has also survived in the language of those who have resisted Western cultural homogenization, allowing them to connect ideas beyond the formal constraints of exclusive linguistic models.

I remember the first time I interviewed elders, caciques and shamans in Colombia in 2010. They told me long stories to answer what I thought were simple questions. At the time I became impatient because I wanted them to get straight to the point; sometimes I even thought they had not understood my questions. Now I know that it was me who had not understood their answers. Today I know that in order to see the relationships and patterns they were showing me, I needed to think beyond my own epistemological bias and connect the dots of their narratives through abductive reasoning, to explore other logical

systems (in my defense, back then I lacked the experience to understand that). That is what this chapter sets out to explore. It is an invitation to think with logical systems excluded by Science, reading the often ignored, washed, silenced, denied and not yet purged history told by the colonized who became workers of an abusive and exploitative extractive system.

I. The Limits

In the last chapter I have summarized several stories of Putumayo told by the children of tobacco, coca and sweet yucca[90]. These narratives begin where there was no time or contact with the western world. In all these stories, history, ecology, social relations and human subjectivity blend in sometimes indistinguishable patterns. I have attempted to relearn from what Patricia Gualinga calls "the forgotten ones" to understand the relationship between the sacred and ignored stories of Amazonian elders, and to honor my commitment to AZICATCH and the 150 caciques and representatives of La Chorrera[91]. This chapter presents what I learned from the experience of compiling such a divergent history. What follows are my own metaphorical connections inspired by the Amazonian narratives and stories – especially those told in the *People Die* chapter – which I often relate to some Western concepts that have helped me connect and understand such ancient knowledge (new to me). In order to make such connections I will present in the very next part of this Chapter important threads of information from such Amazonian narratives that would be woven in the next sections to draw an ontological map of Predio Putumayo.

Magical Mimesis and Praxis

The Bora nation differentiated itself from other animals by cutting off their tails and receiving tranquility and harmony in return. Those tails that represented "wildness" and "unconsciousness" – what Peirce might have called "instinct" – became a boa: a spirit that could corrupt or overcome humanity. However, this wildness is not rejected. On the

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[91] The complete set of narratives and stories used in this thesis (in Spanish and Indigenous language only) can be found in the Amazon Virtual Library at Manguare.red.

contrary, by mastering it, dealing with it and consuming it as a group, humans develop their own language, which allows them to name the evil/boa that was made of their own tails/wildness/unconsciousness, and so people began to speak and work as different nations.

This differentiation evokes what Walter Benjamin (2004) called *Magical Mimesis*, which in a nutshell is **the power given by the creator to humans to "name" everything that exists**. By naming something, Benjamin asserts, humans incorporate or "mimic" the creation into their own world. Moreover, if something has had different names in the same culture over time or in different cultures, it is because the relationships between that "thing" and the rest of creation recognized by people have also changed. This means that the same entity can exist and act differently in different words or realities at the same time, which is the cause of those *equivocations* pointed out by De Castro and Blaser. These different names or "different known relations to the thing," as Florencio states, do not really create different entities but representations of it, which also create differences among people.

But magical mimesis may not be the only reason why different beings have different relationships with the world, for those relationships are also mediated by sacred values. In the previous chapter, in the story entitled *Knowledge*, Blanca explains these differences by stating "God made things by work, not by grace." With these words she intends to establish a difference between the values of Amazonian peoples and those of Christians, since the latter affirm that, according to God's words, we are **saved** by **grace** through faith in Jesus Christ and not by our own efforts or works (Ephesians 2:8-9). This differentiation is consistent with the statement of Florencio when he says, "we are made of water. We, our generation, are not from Adam. We come from another way, from the fertilized earth and from water we were born."

After having clarified this, Aurelio says that in reality there were different people, and that they created groups according to what they called the "evil spirit," which they defeated and then consumed. But he also clarifies that these first Beings were "innocent"; they did not feel hunger or pain or joy, they did not think. They had no knowledge, no emotions, no needs. Not until the tobacco plant prayed or imagined a companion for itself,

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which was the moment it could see the coca plant. From that moment on, both "the tobacco plant and the coca plant came to speak to us with **words** of encouragement." Two important ideas emerge from this paragraph. The first is that no one, not even the spirits, can see anything they do not know, so they have to pray or imagine "something" before that "thing" is revealed to them.

In other words, any form of knowledge depends on previous forms of knowledge. In turn, those previous forms of knowledge need the use of imagination to differentiate *ideas* from the *spirits' manifestation*. This implies that spirits and animals, like humans, do not see the world with their eyes but with their minds (Salk, 2006). But unlike human animals who learn to give meaning to what they experience in the world during infancy and early childhood, spirits have no such stages. They are disembodied entities, floating, timeless possibilities that can form ideas, so they must *pray for* or *imagine* what they need to see in the world. A semiotic interpretation could be that *spirits*, as signs of the world, **need to be re-signified by someone's imagination and experience in order for them to exist**.

The second idea is that many Beings can communicate oral messages or "Urite" (in Uitoto) through "rote" (chants) or "kaiy+de" (shouts). However, for the Uitoto, words or *Uai* are more than just a symbol used by humans to represent things, feelings or concepts. Uai is a higher category that, rather than symbolizing what is in the world, contains the essence and spirit of the Being. For the Uitoto, the Uai is a powerful transforming force that communicates ideas, but also teaches, causes reflection or triggers events capable of changing the person and the future. The Uai, as a transforming force, is key in the life of these nations because through the Uai, the people can transmute "evil" into something else. But to do so, the spirit of the speaker, as in these stories, must be tamed and disciplined before it can be used. So, it was not until the spirit of tobacco and coca met that the people could learn to use the Uai as well.

Aurelio Suarez later explains that although the first cacique had intelligence, it did not belong to him, since the words he used were not his own but came from the spirit of the coca. In other words, the first cacique was a medium; an oracle used by the coca to

transmit its words. Florencio Gómez later describes that the tobacco revealed itself in the form of a woman who asked to be the cacique's companion. This movement between spirits and women is a very recurrent situation in Amazonian stories to demonstrate the integrity of men. In this particular myth, the proud cacique was convinced that he did not need a female companion because he believed he already had knowledge, and so the spirit punished his arrogance. However, how could the chieftain know that he did not know, if he had no knowledge? The answer is found in the last part of the story, when the tobacco spirit had to dream to find a way to transmit his knowledge to the chief. In this dream, the spirit of coca manifested itself by instructing tobacco on how to find her (coca) in the physical world. Thus, it was not until tobacco found her partner [coca] that men also accepted tobacco as his partner in the shape of a woman. In a sense they both men and tobacco needed a third party, a spiritual translator that enable them to be together.

Like most Amazonian myths, the myths of the Predio Putumayo have changing versions in their narratives, in their duration, in their ending, as well as in the personality traits or motivations of the actions and reactions of the main characters. These changes depend on the audience and who is telling the story, on the notion or message that the narrator wants to convey. An example is Aurelio Suarez's version of the discovery of coca, in which a sacred stone that guides the first cacique to discover and learn how to process coca replaces the woman/spirit of tobacco[92]. However, both stories, although different in form, carry the same essence, the same idea, the same lesson, which is that coca and tobacco brought true knowledge and the Uai – the word of teaching – to the people.

In addition, there is a common structure in the stories told in the Predio Putumayo; an example of this is the last myth of Angel Kuyoteka, which is an archetypal case. A first part which I will call "The Limits" generally shows characters such as elders, parents or spirits, giving advice or warnings to other characters who have some personality flaw, such as selfishness, pride, laziness, etc. The second part, which I will refer to as "The Crisis," is when these characters are punished for ignoring the advice or warnings given in the first

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[92] There are common features that are considered true in both myths and real life, such as the importance of dreams in communicating with the spirit world.

part. And finally, in the "Learning" part, the main character processes the information given by the elders along with the misfortune taught in "The Limits" in order to succeed in a certain deed. Another recurring element in these myths is the ability to be different things or Beings at the same time[93]. This structure will also be adopted throughout the first part of this chapter.

The reading I have of the conjuring that Juma learns from his father to reprimand the coca is that these words do not actually serve to transform the maiden into a plant, but to change Juma's own perception of this new Being that has been revealed. This is important because in Amazonian cosmologies, appearances can be deceiving. Therefore, what something really *is*, depends on many other attributes such as temperature, behavior, context or smell (which is actually what the Uitoto people use to classify and identify plants, vegetables and fruits); put simply on the relationship of something with something else. Thus, in this case, the coca was "very appetizing, very tender, beautiful, elegant, pretty and virgin"; just the traits that a maiden should have. Therefore, it is understandable that young men might mistake her for a young woman.

There are two other cases in which a character can "embody" more than one Being. Nuyomara+, for example, is known to be a highly respected and wise chief. But Juma also describes Nuyomara+ as a hill, and as a deceitful and angry character. Moreover, Juma himself has the same name as his father, who has the same name as another powerful primordial Being or God. However, the narrator makes it clear that the one we follow is neither. This is interesting because, unlike Benjamin's concept of Magical Mimesis, in which a being can have different names over time, and each of those names symbolizes different relationships between the holder of the name and the rest of the world, in this case, different Beings share the same name.

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[93] The clearest example is the one mentioned about the transformation of a spirit into a woman; in that case, the coca spirit becomes a maiden. Although this case is slightly different from the myth told by Florencio Gómez about tobacco, since in the Kuyoteca example, the girl does not know that she is not a plant, so she needs to be reprimanded by Juma to be just a thing.

This is not a homonymous situation, as the context itself suggests that some attributes of a Being are embodied in the name, such as a spirit that can transcend the physical boundaries of a body. We can see such transcendence of spirit in a common practice in these nations known as "the second baptism," which takes place when a person in adulthood displays certain characteristics of an animal, plant or ancestor (mythical or real) and is then rebaptized with the *nombre de clan* (clan name). This practice is also observed when Uzuma (the elder) passes the Uai to his son/apprentice, who, by accepting the word of his father/master, also receives a "new" ancient name to be recognized among the people.

This ability of the spirit to transcend time and physical dimensions is not exclusive to these Amazonian ancestral events, as they still exist today in everyday life. It is very common to hear that people have been deceived by some Beings who are more than what they appear to be, such as spirit/human/animals or in the case of this myth, spirit/women/plants. Such a phenomenon contradicts in a way the three basic laws of Aristotelian logic, and yet in the Amazonian world an entity can be different things/beings at the same time. For example, humans are people, but they are also tobacco. A girl can be a girl but also a plant, a spirit. A man can be a mountain, a star, a moon or a jaguar. Also, a person can be simultaneously good and not good; s/he can act with humility without being humble, just as a person can be wise without knowing that his/her knowledge is false, or just as a shaman can be in his Maloca but at the same time be visiting another country.

Juma, for example, can be both a new and an old character. In the story, Juma's father (who is also called Juma, not only because of his name but also because of his actions) by passing on his word to his son, makes him an extension of himself, as his son's actions can bring pride but also shame to his ancestors, to his name, to his family, to his clan. All these situations may be confusing to some people; however, they make sense on Amazon because they still have logic. Not an Aristotelian, Western or human logic, based on rigid mathematical rules of exclusion, but a broader and perhaps more organic one, based on metaphors and ecological relationships between humans, plants, animals and spirits.

Finally, the story about knowledge/awareness/coca narrated by Kuyoteka ultimately reveals the reason Juma risked his life, his family and his reputation on that journey. His goal, as the narrator tells us, was to eradicate "hatred, resentment, anger and moral evil from his [the animals'] internal organs, and [destroy] those feelings." It was an inner healing. The [coca] plant was now fully prepared for good (Kuyoteka, 1997, p. 200).

Ontology

Concepts

There may be different teachings and interpretations within each of the knowledge/consciousness/coca stories portrayed in the last chapter. In fact, there is something crucial throughout them as a whole, and that is that what these Amazonian forest myths are communicating in the stories is a vast map of ontological relationships that guide the actions of these nations. As such, these stories are narratives about the Being and how it came to be. These narratives describe the essence of what it means to be Amazonian, thus describing not only the events of the past, but the situations that any inhabitant of the community may face at any given time.

According to these Amazonian myths, in the beginning, "everything was nothing in this world." After the appearance of the first person in the world, we can deduce that everything began to be something. This revelation occurred when everything began to be experienced by someone, initially as a spirit, an essence, and then as an appearance, so that some aspects of the world could be recognized by that first person, that "Self." Although there are no dualisms in nature, to situate oneself in the cosmos, people seem to apprehend such an immeasurable system creating divisions, classifying and naming what is revealed to them.

So, yes, there is real water, real wind and real celestial bodies, but these do not exist as isolated things; they are all part of a continuous and infinite system that transcends time-space and Beings. The perception of their separateness comes from the interpretative consciousness of the Self that creates and recreates concepts of that system as a set of different signifiers, according to the learned experiences that help it navigate that cosmos.

However, these nomenclatures and classifications are not written in stone. It is a process of constant experimentation with traces, failures, errors and adjustments. To paraphrase Scott (2006), it is a process of simultaneous discovery, perception and imagination. A process of differentiating and relating that includes both mind and body. It is, in a way, a dance of knowledge.

Any living Being can only see the difference, so at first, we see things in opposition to something or someone else, and the greater the difference, the clearer things seem to us. The repetitions of those experiences/oppositions help us to create basic concepts such as day and night, good or bad, true or false. Such concepts allow us to classify everything that has been revealed to us, and through human language, we can communicate what is still unknown to some, so that our kin can "know" how to react or act in the face of what they do not know. This characteristic of human language has also been noted by Scott (2006), when he explains that "the Cree child knows that the black bear is a spirit and a powerful entity, well before he actually encounters one as a hunter [because the child] is pre-equipped by stories and instruction to know that the bear is more significant, before ever meeting one" (Scott, 2006, p.55).

Similarly, in the Amazonian context, a child does not need to know each of the giant, long, slippery, wild, legless creatures of the world to know that they are dangerous, to know that they are stronger, to know that they are carnivorous, that they can be deceitful, that they can lead to certain death or a bad experience. Therefore, the Amazonians seek to differentiate themselves from these beings by giving a name to such a Being, such as "boa" that encapsulates these differences. Such a distinction creates a shared awareness of these other Beings and, in a way, gives humans an advantage over the animal, as they do not need to see the reptiles or know any individual boa-like creature to avoid them or to know how to deal or not to deal with their kind.

Judgments

Boa is not only a name to classify a group of creatures that share a specific physical appearance, since these beings are usually camouflaged inside the forest or in the waters, so they are often "invisible", and we cannot see them until it is too late. Therefore, through metonymic process, a "boa" is also that which has a close relationship with it, such as the river, or a specific type of song or smell perceived in the forest. I refer then to both the immanent and transcendent properties characteristics that resonate around the environment of the Being.

The river, a sound or a smell can be perceived as boas, but since boas are also perceived as evil and deceptive, humans or spirits that have boa-like characteristics – such as a strange independence, tranquility or unpredictability – can be discriminated against as carriers of the evil or deceptive boa spirit. This implies, on the one hand, a very close relationship between the concepts that shape the world and the prejudices embedded in the cultures that are used to judge the Others, and on the other hand, the metaphorical character of relationships in the Amazon. However, we must keep in mind that it was the people who created the boas. That is, they did not create the Being that we call as such, but all those concepts associated with it as an idea, so knowing it, in a certain sense, has to do with how and why we organize or structure experiences and information around it, rather than with the Being itself.

This means that our concepts are not of the "Being" itself, but of the most common situations that have developed when our relatives have encountered their species. In other words, our knowledge is not of the world nor of the Self, but of affirmations of the past that, in a way, become the negation of the possible relations we may have with that Self in the future. This makes us see Being as a thing, something that is imprisoned by the physical and immanent characteristics that we grant it. It can be said then that knowledge, up to this point, is based on a reflective awareness of situations in which we encounter a set of concepts called boa; a causal chain of past events that led us to decide our present and our future relationships with the world. When (and if) we are aware of this knowledge about knowledge, we acquire an awareness of the world that can change our relationship with

these other Beings, simply by pushing our concepts, taking a position to act differently from how we have normally acted or are expected to act.

The inhabitants of the Amazon in La Chorrera know that there is nothing that can be only the sum of its physical parts; therefore, the path to true knowledge cannot be achieved by segmenting a Being into concepts far from its environment and putting it all together in isolation as modern analytical techniques tend to do. It would be like dissecting a giant boa and then expecting to know it by analyzing each of its parts separately or by the sum of them. That impossibility lies in the fact that, even if we managed to assemble all the pieces that constitute something, or if we talked with other people that may have had similar experiences, the knowledge we may gain would remain "innocent" or "naïve," for we would be able to describe its physical form, perhaps even its function or how it works. Even so, we would not know what it is in its totality, especially if we ignore that which we cannot label. That is, the fluctuating essence or spirit, which, in the end, is the only thing that makes a Being a differentiated being in a vast environment. Because of this dilemma, these Amazonian peoples point out that the truest way to know the Being is to accept *being* The Being.

The first step in becoming The Being is to change our relationship with it. To do this, we need the knowledge gained from our reflective awareness of typical situations in which we, along with our relatives, have faced such Beings to recognize certain patterns of behavior. This would enable us to anticipate the actions of such Being, which in turn would enable us to gain some degree of control, not over the Being itself, but over our responses. This would be possible not by reacting on the basis of our fear of the unknown, but by acting on the basis of our knowledge, of what we have already known. It would be like tracing on a map what is revealed to us, as we travel through unknown territory. In doing so, we can renew our knowledge and transform ourselves, by incorporating new actions to previous knowledge; in the case of the Boa myth, transforming prey into hunters. This effort is risky, since while we try to change our role as prey, the boa may be interested in preserving its own position as top predator, which would result in a failed attempt on our part.

However, if we succeed in that process of self-transformation, our perception and concepts about the boa, as well as those of our kin who enjoy eating with us listening to our story would also change. The boa will cease to be "bad" or "evil," or a predator, and become food or a gift, or something else. That transformation, however, will not occur only because we have managed to hunt and eat that Being, but because, as in the myth, we will have challenged the concepts that were embodied in that Being (in this case, what we call boa), to then bring them to light as a new idea. Thus, we will have expanded our perception of the boa and of ourselves, transforming it into something different, after having accepted and challenged those concepts that we considered negative and **judged** in the Other.

Body

Such a transformation would allow us to see beyond the outer skin of the boa, beyond the superficial concepts we had attributed to it. Furthermore, such a transformation would allow us to realize that the physical reality of the boa no longer limits our relationship with it. Consequently, our relationship with it could be whatever we decide it to be: as hunters, prey, relatives or as part of it. If we synchronize our body and our movements with that Being in the boa dance (the Amazonian dance to study, create and recreate knowledge), we can feel what it is like to be a boa. Our spirit can become one with its body, with that other consciousness that knows us, even if we do not see it in the forest. That particular new perspective of the first "Amazonian Self" would allow us to be aware of those other Amazonian Selves (human and other-than-human). This new approach would allow us to realize that the boa is not really so different from us, since we can both feel through our bodies in a similar way.

In other words, since the dances are based on the repetition of movements following a certain rhythm, in a certain sense, the continuous collective movement imitating those of the boa allows us to embody what it is to be such Being; metaphorically and sacramentally, we are the Other. In turn, this leads us to examine the relationship between such Being and our representation of it. It is there, in the dance of creation, that we can numb our consciousness as a human Being by representing the one we have condemned as evil, the one we have perceived as the Other. When our movements, our smell, our heat, our sweat,

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our voice merge with that of the Others, we can become aware of these other consciousnesses: those of our dance partners, those of the boas. Thus, we can begin to overcome the dualism between them and us, good and evil, animals and humans, prey and hunters.

It can be said that embodying that other Being is a distinctively Amazonian way of being aware of the consciousness of others. Although it does not allow us to know what that other Being knows, it does allow us to expand our awareness because, as we dance, our relationship with those other Beings is not entirely guided by the rational mind, but by the perceptions of the body. Rather, we can say that our relationship with those Other Beings is more practical, for it is more about feeling in our body what other beings in the world can feel. We can affirm then that the Amazonian dances are *empathic mechanisms* that transcend our rational consciousness and open the doors to know the surrounding world. The mere fact of understanding that we have a relationship with another person in the game of hunting – another *Self* that can act both expectedly and unexpectedly – not only gives us advantages but also allows us to continue learning the rules of the game.

Yetarafue and The Spirit

If the above statement is true, we can deduce that, apparently, there is a kind of dualism in Amazonian ontology between the body and the mind. However, our body is what initially allows our mind to think of ourselves as separate from other Beings; this is how the Self, the "I," the ego is born. It is what allows us to perceive ourselves as distinct from Others. Such a distinction can result in a kind of false consciousness, stemming from what Benedicto called *false knowledge*. This is an awareness of ourselves as units separate from the rest of the world, just as the modern error feeds an egocentric spirit that places the "I" before everything else; falsely, if perhaps inherent to self-existent consciousness.

In the same way, if we let our bodies free themselves from our primal false consciousness that feeds that deceptive spirit, other minds and their consciousness will reveal themselves to us. By letting ourselves be inhabited by these other minds, the first conscious "Amazonian Self" can awaken because it can see itself through the consciousness of others. Therefore, the Amazonian self understands that those other

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entities, beings, bodies and minds that inhabit their territories can think and feel as much as they do[94]. Dealing with other people demands constant negotiation with familiar situations, affirmations and concepts of the past, such as those that had imprisoned that other Being within a thing, realizing that what we believed immanent in it, was in reality our relationship with it.

As such, Amazonian Beings understand that the existence of all beings, including themselves, is correlated with their territories, and that to gain real knowledge we must understand the world through these other consciousnesses, so that we can see ourselves and reflect on how our actions affect us all. Thus, in these myths, the "shame" that can be brought to parents and clans is central, as shame is what we may feel when we do bad things and then see ourselves through the eyes of others. In their stories, people can only attain proper knowledge and Uai, the word of teaching, through the presence of a companion, a wife. This third person makes us see ourselves through her eyes and helps us to become aware of our consciousness. Thus, this is achieved through the consciousness of other people; in other words, through an interpreter of our relationship with another Being.

Amazonian peoples also know that there are beings and entities other than humans and animals, such as plants, for example, that have radically different bodies from ours and, therefore, different relationships with the world. These Beings cannot be ignored because Amazonian peoples need to live and work with them every day. Therefore, they need a different language that is not exclusively human to communicate and act with them. Moreover, if we limit ourselves to the sensations we can get by embodying only those who are like us, our knowledge of the world would remain largely biased and partial. How can we know the world from the perspective of radically different beings such as plants or spirits? Plants have different bodies than animals and humans; moreover, spirits do not have a defined body. Therefore, we cannot feel what plants or spirits feel by imitating their bodies or movements.

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[94] It can be said that thoughts and feelings exist simultaneously in the mind and body of the Amazonian being. The being that is conscious of the consciousness of others. Of those with whom he shares the land, the territory.

The Amazonian response to obtain that knowledge is to allow The Spirit, which is the manifestation of a collective consciousness that is not exclusively human, to imitate them or take over their bodies to connect with an external wisdom. In a sense, Amazonian peoples become oracles or channels for The Spirit of the Forest. This imitation is a different kind of mimesis than the one we humans create with our words when we name things. It is some type of "oneiric mimesis" which, as the name suggests, usually takes place in dreams, but also in wakefulness, when we numb our consciousness which deceives us into a false perception of a divided world. During this dreamlike mimesis, the things and concepts we have named can wander frantically, blending together beyond our awareness, purpose or intentions.

Therefore, the Spirit is not and cannot be united to a solely physical form. The Spirit that carries the word of the teaching is like a shape-shifter that can pass from one body to other bodies, forming ideas. Such a spirit reveals parts of an immutable, transcendent, timeless and infinite reality that can show us glimpses of the *be-all/end-all in the* form of knowledge**.** The Spirit manifests itself differently through each of the sacred species of the territory, such as humans, animals and also through plants such as tobacco, coca and yucca.

For example, when the coca plant is consumed in the form of *mambe*, it transforms the host's perception and sensitivity, allowing him/her to see, hear, feel, taste, smell, have sensations, and be aware of the presences and messages of other Beings that the body's egocentric senses usually ignore. After repeatedly consuming coca every night for several decades, the medium/body of the elder learns to listen, focus and recognize the variations, messages, alerts and communications of those other Beings that inhabit the territory of life, allowing it to respond accordingly, warning its own of what is outside, what the other Beings sense is coming.

The Spirit manifests itself differently through tobacco. This manifestation is less subtle. The sensation is stronger, bitter and hotter, and unlike coca, which acts on the body in a sweet and cooler fashion, tobacco acts directly on the mind of the host by altering his perception of the world. Thus, it can be said that the word of tobacco contains wisdom, but its words must be assimilated and registered in the body to prevent that knowledge from

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fading away like a dream. In a way, by altering our perception of the world, tobacco allows us to see concepts we took for granted in another dimension where they are not as absolute, connected, well-defined or logical as we thought. That sense of anxiety and insecurity alerts our senses to be attentive to sensations and information that is further sharpened by coca, allowing us to pick up new information that our minds would normally have ignored.

Therefore, tobacco and coca are companions and should be consumed together, for coca allows us to be conscious of these teachings and of everything that surrounds the Self. In other words, the Self that has been created by the negation of what we do not consider part of us needs to be anesthetized, even almost erased in order to perceive the world without negations, as a whole. In a way, this is the word of tobacco, which is brought through an altered consciousness of the world, and taught by coca, which is like a tutor that transmits and teaches knowledge to the host, through enhanced sensations of the world. To attain such knowledge, to receive the word of coca, people need to go after it, they must listen to the elders, they must work and live observing the right balance between Body, Mind and Spirit. Once such knowledge is received, the True Amazonian Self needs to transmit it through the Uai, always for the benefit of others. That is the first principle of **Yetarafue**. As such, it can be said that tobacco is the mind and coca is the body of The Spirit that merges with the Amazonian Self.

As such, the act of lending their bodies to The Spirit gives Amazonian peoples the ability to hear, see, feel and think the world beyond the primitive conscious Self, and as such, they can gain and renew some of the essential knowledge of their world. Therefore, to gain true knowledge in the Amazon, we must know that our knowledge produced by our reflective consciousness is false, because we must know that we do not really know the world as it is. To do this, we must stop knowing the world exclusively through our own mind, or through our own experiences, or through our own consciousness. Amazonian beings can understand that the lives of each of the Beings, animals and plants with which they share the territory, are a fundamental part of themselves; in the same way, the lives of those Beings, including their own, are a fundamental part of the territory. We can affirm

that, in essence, a triad[95] formed by body, mind and Spirit, constituted by the other Beings that inhabit the territory and the environment is what constitutes the "Amazonian Self."

Such a Body-Mind-Spirit triad must always exist in any living being. The vertices of the body represent the physical world that can be seen. The vertices of the mind represent what cannot be seen, i.e., our thoughts and ideas, our knowledge of the world. And the vertices of the Spirit represent the stage on which we build the affective relationship with other Beings, the luminous and fluctuating space between us and others, the product of being aware of our consciousness. These three vertices, which constitute and affect each other, are constructed through the daily actions and interactions of people with other Beings. This is how Amazonian peoples can acquire knowledge of themselves in the world. That is, by connecting their minds with other minds, their bodies with other bodies and their spirits with other spirits. Being aware of this and knowing the right way to master it, as well as the right time and the right Beings with whom to make those connections, gives Amazonian peoples the word of teaching, the Uai. This sacred knowledge is slowly transmitted to the Amazonian peoples in La Chorrera from the mother's womb, during the mandatory early daily bath in the river or *Noi*, which invigorates, strengthens and cleanses the mind, body and spirit, until the moment when the elder passes the word to his successor before releasing his spirit at death.

In that arpeggio, it is key to maintain a harmonious balance between those three segments, as that is the sacred mandate of these Indigenous nations. This central mandate in the *ley de origen* of these nations shows that, if we only connect with other Beings through one or two of these segments, the neglected segments could disappear from our sight, to the point of damaging our perception of reality and the balance of the world. That is why, in the Amazon, nothing is what it seems; a spirit can be an idea or a girl; a shaman can be a jaguar; a good man can be a deceiver; an animal can be a plant; the body can even be an instrument. Ergo, in the Amazon, our physical characteristics, our political ideas, our

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[95] To put it another way, it seems that coca, tobacco and men conform a semiotic triad were they all are acting/passive Beings/objects, representamens/interpreters to each other in a never-ending cycle that allows human knowledge to flourish by accepting and processing Others' different information.

ancestors, our knowledge, our place of birth, even our species are only instruments that can give an idea of what we can be. However, they do not define who we are or how we act in the world.

How and why we use these tools to act in the world defines us as people. These actions, also known as *Inori*, are what build our own spirit. The Uai is important, but the Inori is even more so. Then, above them, is the quiet silence of The Spirit. In all of us there is a conscious Self and an unconscious Self; our body allows us to know what is going on inside but also outside; likewise, our spirit can be associated with the spirit of Egoruema, the Spirit of the Ego, which is guided to seek its own benefit, or it can be associated with the spirit of Juma, which is the spirit of Others that seeks the benefit of the rest.

Fɨmaide/Freedom

Someone may receive the Uai, but if s/he is guided by the Spirit of the Ego s/he will use it for his/her own benefit, showing that s/he has not understood the sacred meaning of those words. Like Egoruema, the vigorous son of a wise elder who received the words of his father, but his selfish spirit made him abuse the sacred coca, corrupting the plant and causing his own undoing. Juma, on the other hand, was guided by The Spirit to be at the service of other Beings, which allowed him to become a Being for the Community by using his father's words wisely and for the benefit of the animals that had been affected by Egoruema's selfish actions. It can be said that Egoruema acted as a free person who made his own decisions, disregarding the advice and warnings of his ancestors. The opposite can be said of Juma, as it can be concluded that he did what was expected of him as the son of a wise elder, and therefore, his actions were not really based on his own decisions. However, these statements are rather superficial, as they do not reveal their deeper meaning. To illustrate this, it should be noted that Egoruema and Juma are two archetypal characters that symbolize two extremes of The Spirit: a more nebulous one that makes it difficult to see beyond the Self, and a clearer one that broadens the vision.

At one extreme, Egoruema could not control his selfish desires, which led him to rape someone in his own family; while at the other extreme, Juma controlled his selfish desires, which in turn changed his perception of coca, allowing him to see it as a sacred

plant. My point is that there is no choice when it comes to satisfying personal desires for our own benefit, because it is an instinctive default response. In turn, when we choose not to act on our own behalf, we are actually exercising our freedom. This is why diet and restraint contained in the **Fimaide** principle are so important in Amazonian life.

Freedom in the Amazonian context is not doing what someone wants for himself, but the opposite. Freedom is guided by the **Fimaide** principle, which prescribes diet and self-restraint, which translates into choosing **not to** act for individual benefit, if such actions, instead of benefiting others would have a negative impact on their lives. The efforts of Amazonian peoples should not be the product of mindless reactions in the world but should be conscious actions that seek to achieve selfless goals. With this freedom, unlike most Beings who are trapped in their own mentalities and bodies, from where they act in the world, Authentic Amazonian Beings have the knowledge to transit within worlds, changing themselves, their own body, mind and spirit.

That is an important message that these myths are communicating, the knowledge to control and to transform reality, or at least our perception of it. These two archetypical characters Egoruema and Juma, had arguably the same degree of knowledge of the world, for they both received wisdom from their parents. However, when they had to face reality Juma was aware of something Egoruema was not: regardless of what we think we know about ourselves or the world, our feelings and emotions end up shaping and deciding how we experience and how we respond to reality. Knowing that gives us the freedom to control our feelings, which is vital when our responses may endanger others or ourselves. Such transformation is not based on logical or conscious reason because the body and our emotions do not understand those; instead, feelings are transformed through metaphors' power enacted by reciting short stories, or prayers, if you will, on other possible relations with the world. As such, our actions could change our feelings and then reality itself.

II. The crisis

Considering the limits and ontological concepts just discussed in the first part of this chapter, this second segment reviews The Rubber Era described by AZICATCH in the previous chapter. First of all, it is important to mention that the target audience of this

research work is both non-Indigenous people – those outside the community of La Chorrera, i.e., the "moderns" – and the younger Indigenous generations who are unaware of the events. The lack of knowledge of these events may be due to the fact that the younger generations seem to be disconnected from their own world, as if they were trapped in the virtual world brought by technology. But it is also because, for more than a century, the elders chose to remain silent and not speak publicly about their memories, because remembering the abuses and losses during that dark chapter of the community's history was painful. That silence was advised by the spirits, considering the impoverishment and devastation they suffered and the consequences that resulted from that situation. Among those consequences are the loss of: their territories, their knowledge, their independence, their *buen vivir*, their human and non-human connections, in addition to the lost trust in their own people, in the national government and in other non-Indigenous representatives.

The work of AZICATCH presented in the previous chapter seeks to heal the connections of the damage caused, presenting their own version of the known history of Predio Putumayo. This version recognizes their own participation in such events not as mere passive victims but as actors, which in turn leaves important lessons for new generations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. The structure of this story is written in the format of three stages: The Limits, The Crisis, and The Learning/Resurgence that is characteristic of the Amazonian myths presented here. First, Isaac relates how things were before the contact of the "white man" with the "moderns." In that passage, he mentions that his people had freedom in their territory, a freedom that should be understood as "acting and working on behalf of the community." Furthermore, the people in the Putumayo had a traditional government that followed the rules of their own system, which, after the arrival of the moderns, changed drastically. The arrival of the moderns was no surprise. They were not altogether strangers, for the Indigenous nations of La Chorrera knew that they were coming in search of labor. This was revealed in the spiritual journey of the cacique Futsuvema, who after visiting Peru, brought glass bottles, a mirror and a warning to respect and not harm or kill the moderns who were coming.

Futsuvema's account suggests that the initial relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous was based on the exchange between modern and Indigenous objects of

labor. Interestingly, rubber itself, which grew in Indigenous territories, was not considered an object to be traded but to be worked, as it did not belong to anyone, indicating that Indigenous people never thought of themselves as owners of rubber. Such relationship is also remarked in the work of Michael Taussig (1987), who analyzes secondary sources for the stories of Western officials, explorers, adventurers and Barbadian workers who lived during those days in the Putumayo, and stories they were told. According to those sources and the ones presented here by the Indigenous nations, it seems that rubber was both a currency for Indigenous people and a commodity for the moderns. However, it is noteworthy that during the time of greatest rubber scarcity (due to increased commercialization), its value did not increase, at least not in commercial value within Putumayo. On the contrary, the reduction in its availability and demand was reflected in the value of the life of the Indigenous workers, which means that both variables were closely related. In other words, the value of the forest in a global market appears to be inversely related to the value of Indigenous livelihoods, for in Taussig's words "the rights to Indians were similar to the rights to farm the forest. The Indians were there for the taking" (Taussig 1987, p.23)

The second element worth discussing is the warning not to harm or kill the "whites" because there were too many of them, as if they were colonies of ants. It is estimated that the population of the Uitoto nation before the rubber boom was ten times larger than the present one, which is now about 7,000 people[96]. We can estimate then that the Uitoto population was about seventy thousand Indigenous people before the rubber boom, which allowed them to dominate the territory and other nearby nations. We should also highlight that the story told in this work comes from an Okaina leader, one of the minority nations in the area whose word for "ant" comes from the Carijona word "uitoto." Uitoto is thus a derogatory word that was also used to name the largest and fiercest nation in the area, a word that stuck and was later used by non-Indigenous to refer to that nation. The words that the people of that nation [Uitoto] used to call themselves were "Murui" or "Muinane," meaning "people of the west" and "people of the east," respectively (Castellvi, 1953).

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[96] Colombian National Census 2018.

Interestingly, the Muinane and Murui nation kept that pejorative word to call themselves, in honor of the Peruvians (who in the eyes of the dominated nations were like Uitoto), suggesting a relationship beyond mere semiology with the Peruvian rubber traders.

As Kuiru and Kohn describe, at least in the early stages, the Uitoto began to relate closely to the Peruvian rubber traders by imitating their appearance, the way they dressed, the language they used, and their way of life. According to Kohn, "by adopting the bodily habitus of predatory jaguar and dominant white, he [the Indigenous boy] can come to see the Indians he hunts as both preys and underlings" (p.164). My reading, however, is somehow different from Kohn's. According to the stories I heard in La Chorrera and as observed by Capitan Whiffen in 1908 (Taussig 1987, p.45), the Indigenous nations in the region did not need to look like whites to hunt other groups or even eat them, for this was a long-established practice in the war codes of the Amazon. Nonetheless, they might have been interested in seeing the world through the eyes of those foreigners or acquiring aspects of their power.

The "underling" theory is something that can also be debated. On the one hand, and although before the rubber boom these groups used to capture people from other groups, these captives were far from being "slaves", as Captain Whiffen could interpret, since those captured had to work like any other person in the community and were also treated with respect. With this I do not pretend to imagine these nations as egalitarian societies, since to this day there is a clear hierarchy and rules that dictate the way in which the clans and nations of Putumayo relate to each other. Cannibalism, on the other hand, I was told, was only practiced in special circumstances and only the most respected and brave warriors were eaten, which makes me doubt the dominant position Kohn gives to the whites, since in the stories translated in the last chapter, these nations refused to eat the whites they killed.

Furthermore, according to the information I gathered in La Chorrera, and the testimonies of westerners who lived at the time, the tortures, killings and acts of humiliation that these populations suffered during the rubber boom were mostly perpetrated by non-Indigenous people, such as Barbadian workers and Peruvian foremen (Taussig, 1987).

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There may be some cases in which young Uitoto men, also known as mullaɨ (boys), mistreated their own people. But as they explain in their accounts, it was because they had no other choice, since in case of refusal, they themselves or their own family would have been harshly punished or killed.

At this point it is important to note that according to the stories, Chief Ɨvuuhza never asked his people not to kill the whites because it was "wrong" to kill other people, but because it was a bad strategy against the larger nations, considering that warfare was very common among and within the Amazonian Indigenous nations. Cacique Calixto, of the Jitomagaro clan, told me that before the arrival of the "white men," relations between nations and clans were very tense, to the point that the dances were not a way to celebrate, but to fix or challenge alliances and dominance. He explained that the dances were obligatory celebrations that required a lot of preparation work because the most powerful caciques had to invite all the other caciques and offer them the best coca, *ambil*, caguana and food, treating them all with the utmost respect, especially if there was suspicion of a coup d'état. If the main chief failed to do so, the dance could become his last dance, as he could be assassinated, and another chief was appointed to replace him. This permanent state of war was the norm in the Amazon.

This is the way societies coexist even today, since in the Amazon rainforest, humans and other-than-humans exist in a permanent fluctuation between three states: as prey, as hunter or as kin. These states are under constant negotiation, and, in the human realm, the kinship state is reinforced in dances in which the chief and guests make a public display of knowledge, endurance and control. Those same virtues must be displayed in the forest if one is confronted by a predator such as a jaguar or boa, to increase the chances of convincing the predator that one is not prey but a kin or top predator, just as Uitoto tried to convince the Peruvians that they were both equals.

Broken regulator

This state of Amazonian warfare had its rules, since its objective was never to exterminate the other, but to gain control or independence. Therefore, if two clans fought, they would stop when the chief or a warrior of the other band was seriously wounded or killed. After

such an episode, there was usually a period of negotiation in which two possible situations could occur: the first, that one group would accept its subordination and receive compensation from the dominant group, such as the adoption of the orphans of the deceased. The second option would be to continue the war until another warrior died or was wounded and then another negotiation would take place. One of the reasons behind these rules is that numbers, in an environment as harsh as the forest, make a difference in the status or prestige of a clan. Consequently, the lives of individual warriors were of enormous value, since the greater the number of lives lost, the weaker the clan and, therefore, the fewer alliances they could make. Conversely, if they had a large group, they would have fewer threats, could make more alliances and would be more likely to become kin to stronger clans by marrying their women.

However, these values changed drastically with the arrival of the moderns. The Indigenous began to place more value on modern artifacts, such as machetes and axes, and less on forming large groups. This can be seen in the exchange between children and axes. It is not that children were not exchanged before the arrival of the moderns; as already mentioned, these exchanges had the function of reinforcing alliances with rival clans and ensuring the survival of their orphans. What changed here was that not only orphans were exchanged, but also those who still had parents, resulting in an unequal exchange, since after such "transactions," the Indigenous clans ended up with fewer members and more objects, but no alliance was forged.

Unlike exchanges of war orphans, children's axe transactions constituted a transgression among Amazonian peoples, resulting in the resentment of parents and children toward their clans, families, and chiefs. Moreover, the children's loyalty was tilted in favor of the modern settlers, as shown in Tyaɨ's story, mainly because their own relatives diminished their existence to that of an object. Thus, their parents transformed their children from being a subject to being a thing, and in response, these children acted against their former group to reclaim their subjectivity.

To be precise, this transgression was not so much that the exchange of children was applied in a different context, nor that they did it with people who were outside the code

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of the internal war; neither did the Muyai mimicry with the Peruvians constitute a transgression. The transgression came from the resonances of the exchange of children, a motive that clouded the Indigenous spirit and impelled the community to act directly for their individual ambitions and interests, without contemplating the consequences that this would have on the Other. Because of this transgression, the son of Faruxuafi (chief of the Okaina clans) worked for Excontador, the Peruvian foreman in charge of the first rubber field. When Faruxuafi, the chief of the Okaina clans, learned that his son had been mistreated, he not only ignored Futsuvema's advice not to kill or harm the "whites," but went further by murdering the Peruvians' entire family, thus overstepping the boundaries of the Amazonian war code.

It is debatable whether breaking the Amazonian war code in a conflict with non-Amazonian people constituted a transgression. But my point is that the first transgression committed was a breach of Yetarafue, the first sacred principle, for not only was the advice of the elders disregarded but the selfish actions of the leaders distorted the Inori, polluting their spirit and thus the "Being for the Community." The transgression was such that it moved the boundaries of what people should and should not do, opening the possibility for a series of unexpected actions and reactions from both Indigenous and Peruvian people and ultimately altering the entire existing ecological/epistemological system.

Obviously, my intention is not to justify the slaughter and abuse that these nations suffered a century ago by rubber traders. Still less do I intend to justify the negligence of the Peruvian and Colombian governments, nor the financial support of the British "businessmen" who encouraged the massacre and exploitation of these peoples. My intention is to explain how these wise and proud nations make sense of such a dark chapter of their history by rebuilding their destroyed sovereignty and becoming participants in the recovery of their own memory, instead of resigning themselves to being mere observers or inactive victims of other peoples' narratives. However painful it may be, this exercise of memory is essential in any learning process, such as the one initiated by AZICATCH.

It is important to understand why these boundaries were crossed. So why did Peruvians and some Indigenous clans violate traditional, ethical and moral restrictions?

Psychologically and biologically speaking, for the same reason that any living being would move from point "a" to point "b": simply because it can. When constraints are transgressed in a given context (such as environmental or biological constraints in the case of any living Being, or legal, psychological, ethical or moral constraints in the case of humans), it is to be expected that their behaviors and patterns will gradually change to the point of being constrained or held accountable by the transgressed constraints or by new ones.

Thus, I also theorize that the incursion of a new set of actors such as the Peruvian rubber tappers completely altered the ecology of Putumayo, as they did not recognize the logic of the place, the *eco-logic* of the Amazon. Moreover, since this area was under non-State jurisdiction, these rubber tappers had no legal responsibility to hold them accountable or make them respect those boundaries. In other words, the limits of their actions were only moral and economic; that is, after the murder of Excontador and his family, the moral limits were conveniently justified and accommodated in service of the economic limits.

Lebenswelt and *territorios de vida*

When I say that the ecology was altered, I am referring to the system of bio-ontological associations in the *territorios de vida* (territories of life)[97]known as Predio Putumayo. That is, the environmental or biological associations/relationships between humans and other-than-humans and the different intertwined human dimensions[98], based on legal, moral and ethical values and norms. From an ecological point of view, the incursion of an exogenous population such as the Peruvian into a niche different from their own, such as the Predio Putumayo, draws a distinctive path, according to the narratives[99], which in a few words begins when the newcomer or "invading group" learning and adopting the behavior in the

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[97] *territorios de vida* (territories of life) are areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities that maintain an important part of the planet's remaining biodiversity. Visit https://www.iccaconsortium.org/

[98] Social, economic, technological, legal, epistemological or cultural, and psychological.

[99] It would be interesting, for future research, to compare this "invasion" process with others in the Amazon or elsewhere, to see to what extent the diversity of native groups favors the incursion and establishment of settlers or new groups in a given area.

new environment of the Indigenous populations, placing itself in the midst of different native groups that already had a stable relationship with the environment.

However, this period of assimilation is only temporary, as it could lead to the destruction of the new group, when a competing Indigenous group feels threatened by the newcomers, as was the case of Larrañaga and Excontador. If this annihilation were to fail (for example, because the new group develops new relationships with other Indigenous groups and is not totally dependent on the populations that initially helped it to establish itself), the second stage would be domination by a larger population. This process would transgress the ecological system to favor the interests of the newcomer. This method of subordination continues until the invading group has eradicated the competing native population and/or has completely changed the ecological relationships of the site and landscape by growing in numbers and introducing new invasive species. This is currently the case in most of the Amazon River basins in Brazil (as attested by the author).

Thus, I propose that what the people of La Chorrera experienced a century ago was a clash, or rather the imposition of an unhinged and already in crisis *Lebenswelt* or Lifeworld of the moderns – to use Husserl's famous concept – on the delicate biosocial balance of the Indigenous *territorios de vida*[100] (territories of life). A process that ended up conveniently ignoring the context of a world experienced and lived by both humans and other-than-humans, in order to favor the interests of the colonial enterprise. The modern Lebenswelt imposed in the Putumayo Valley was governed by a supposedly closed system, controlled only by the constraints of the global market, since, as mentioned, both the Colombian and Peruvian governments had withdrawn from these territories. Therefore, due to the lack of a superior regulator, the settlers – who ended up imposing their own authority over the already reified Indigenous peoples – transgressed any modern legal or moral constraints.

It can be said that an important variable in the colonization of the modern Lebenswelt in the Indigenous *territorios de vida* is that the relationship between most

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[100] Concept to designate the territories and areas that have been conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities around the world. See https://www.iccaconsortium.org/index.php/es/

Amazonian clans and Peruvian rubber tappers was not endopathic. That is, such a relationship lacked what Lipps (1909) called *einfühlung*, which is the connection with feelings that allow an empathic connection with the Other. Therefore, the relationship between the moderns and the Indigenous was merely instrumental. That is, each party saw the other as a thing, or as a provider of things, neglecting the mind spirit and the sensitivity of the bodies of their counterparts, who in turn neglected their own and unbalanced the Indigenous world, endangering the survival of the Amazon Being. Moreover, when the Indigenous clans ignored their sacred norms and their own restrictions (such as the Yetarafue), instead of freeing themselves from such limits, they began to be ruled by the global market without any moral or legal regulation. To put it in Habermasian terms, we can say that the Indigenous nations of La Chorrera changed a local and autonomous ecological system by means of force and coercion, into an alien colonial Lebenswelt over which they have no control, since it was governed by values drawn from another logic: that of the instrumental rationality of the global market. What Hardenburg called *world-wide commercialism*.

The broken rules of an alien Lebenswelt were then imposed on the Putumayo Valley. This imposition was achieved by limiting the agency that allowed its native inhabitants to balance their world, making them work tirelessly, banning their dances, appropriating their women and erasing the history that gave meaning to the sacred rules that guaranteed *buen vivir* in that *territorio de vida*. The bloody process of overthrowing the sacred rules in Putumayo, however, did not eradicate the ancestral values but rather inverted them and transfigured them as irrational, abnormal or uncivilized. This inversion also reinforced the primitive dichotomous logic of the moderns by enhancing their own values as rational, normal or civilized. Such is the pattern used in instrumental rationality, which justifies means as necessary to achieve personal ends. But the sacred principles could not be eradicated because they are beyond the human aspect and only follow the logic of the place. So with the help of coca and tobacco these nations were able to stay awake at night, resisting, maintaining their communication with The Spirit, who gave them the strength to survive.

Restrictions

From a sociological point of view, the four sacred principles of the Predio Putumayo are the institutions that unite the four Indigenous nations of La Chorrera included in Yetarafue: (i) the coca word that advises listening to the elders, as well as working and living seeking a balance between Body, Mind and Spirit, (ii) the Inori, which consists of actions for the benefit of others, (iii) the principle of self-restriction or Fɨmaide and (iv) the early daily bath in the river or *Noi*, in which people invigorate the mind, body and spirit, remembering the above principles and keeping in mind that their connection to the ancestors and to the community has to be rebuilt every day[101]. From the perspective of these four nations, these are the four sacred arms that support the basket of life. These sacred arms embrace the most important community values for sustaining life in this part of the Amazon, values that encourage cooperative work over self-interest. Although individuals may have their own set of values, these are always subjective and constantly changing, making it difficult for any group to articulate them into a functional human society.

Moreover, when a society as such incorporates other-than-human actors into an already diverse group, such articulation is even more difficult. Therefore, the nations of La Chorrera need those non-negotiable institutions based on cooperative rules, to promote collaborative actions (human and other-than-human) in favor of the group and not the individual. In a functional and reliable society as such – without police – social values and norms need to be internalized by the individual to govern himself, avoiding excesses that may damage social cohesion, and for such internalization, sacred institutions are key. However, these community values cannot be universal, as they are exclusive to the history of a particular context. Thus, values and the practices that reproduce them make sense in one place and time or group but may be inconceivable in others. This is the case of child exchange, murder and also cannibalism.

In the Western Lebenswelt, such practices lack all logic, as modern humans seem to deny their factual physicality, which is their existence as a thing, as a sign, as the food

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[101] – Similar to Sisyphus in Camus' version, who would happily push the gift of the gods to the top of a hill every day.

of another. However, a human becoming prey is a truly common occurrence in the Amazon rainforest, since the human being is one more species that inhabits the territory. Moreover, under Amazonian logic, people can be many things at once until they become one thing, and in doing so, the other possibilities of being other things are denied. Recognizing that living Beings are a unity of Spirit, Mind and Body does not contradict the fact that our body is made of flesh and blood, which will be consumed by other sentient Beings, nor does it deny that our bodies can also be tools for other people's purposes. That consciousness makes the Amazonian Being – the authentic Being – someone who does not pretend to be reduced to a factual Being or to a merely spiritual or rational Being. The Amazonian peoples are these three vectors, and their life consists of learning to achieve this balance.

Others, usually the moderns, constantly try to reduce these authentic Beings to only one of those three vectors, in order to satisfy their personal interests and compensate for what they (the moderns) cannot deliver when their authenticity is denied. That is what the rubber tappers tried to do, reducing those Indigenous to mere bodies to do the work they could not do for themselves when they (the rubber tappers) were also treated as disposable beings by those who sought capital. Likewise, the Capuchin missionaries engaged in similar practices by attempting to control the bodies of the Indigenous and their non-human connections to "save" their spirits, when it is well known that Catholic priests have difficulty controlling their own. Modern scholars and "Amazonian experts" should avoid any such reduction at all costs, lest they idealize the Amazonian Self as a wise and impeccable individual who has all the answers to the problems we have created in the world.

What we moderns can learn, however, are the sacred principles of Yetarafue, a unique and unchangeable non-human principle that obeys a supra-human/ecological order: that of cooperation. Another lesson is that all humans, in our individuality and associations, can transform our rules and constraints, so we can change our behavior in the hope of replicating Yetarafue principles. In a personal context, instead of relying on someone else's authority to govern us and fix our problems, we can learn from the resilience and authenticity of the Putumayo Beings, because despite our epistemological differences, both

the Amazonian peoples and we have bodies that will one day die and become someone else's food. While this is happening, we can all educate our bodies to be functional and to feel and experience the world. We must remember that we are not just bodies.

Similarly, Amazonian and modern beings also have spirits that need to be educated to recognize the infinite possibilities that are revealed to them to exist in the world, although we must remember that we are not just spirits. Furthermore, both Amazonian and modern beings have minds that need to be educated to think the world together with other minds and logics, to solve the problems we have set for ourselves. However, we must remember that we are not just minds. If we recognize this and integrate into our lives that the way to educate and cultivate each of these vectors of the Being is by caring for others, we can become true Beings at the service of the world.

III. The Learning/Resurgence

AZICATCH's *plan de vida* contains the sacred principles of Putumayo. Thus it is essential for this organization to reconcile it with the modern forms of cultural, societal and individual reproduction that is integrated through the norms accepted in the modern world, or what Husserl called the Lebenswelt. This plan to repair the crisis inherited by the clash of Western Lebenswelt in their *territorios de vida,* includes understanding the institutional structures of both the Indigenous and the modern to find the similarities, and above all, the differences between the ontological and epistemological systems that make sense in each world. The set of concepts, assumptions, values and interactive norms existing in the social imaginary that give meaning to the collective reality of each part are the components of the ontological system, while the epistemological system is composed of the possibilities of knowledge that allow such ontological constraints.

This section analyzes the third part of the last chapter. That is, the resurgence of the Indigenous nations of the Putumayo Valley after an arduous learning process, which is leading the community to a great transformation plan. This process of resurgence begins with the return of the people to the forest and then to the territory, which allowed these nations to return to celebrate forbidden dances and songs, which as explained above, are acts of creation and revival of deep-rooted values. This act of resurgence was possible

thanks to the knowledge of the ancestors and the strength given to them by the tobacco, coca and sweet yucca mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The process that is still underway involves returning to the essentials, to the ancient sacred values. However, this does not mean that these nations are willing to live in the past. On the contrary, the map drawn in their *plan de vida* implies claiming an active part in rescuing their history, in solving current problems and in opening up the possibilities of imagining different futures. To this end, they are working to transform the instrumental relationship they maintain with non-Indigenous people and with the national government, which continues to be mediated by the exchange value of the land and natural resources of these territories.

The women who were entrusted with the spirit of sweet yucca, to *endulzar la palabra* (sweeten the word), play a crucial role in this transformation process. It was through the strength that the spirit of yucca gave them that these displaced populations were able to endure the long return to their territory from Peru to Putumayo. It was through the sweet spirit of coca that these nations were able to contain their anger and resentment towards the Lebenswelt that almost extinguished their culture. Through the sweet spirit of coca, women are speaking on behalf of their communities and their elders to transform the relationship with the State. It should be noted that this transformation implies incorporating into the conversation other concepts and dimensions that do not revolve around the exploitation of natural resources and the development of the capitalist economic system. I am referring to other systems such as the cultural, normative and political systems, which include issues related to education, family, food sovereignty, autonomy, cultural empowerment, among others.

The need to involve the State in these historically neglected issues has brought new modern allies of the Lebenswelt, such as those from academia or NGOs, and is pushing the Colombian State to understand that a healthy social organization, at least in the Amazon, needs a legitimate government in which the functions of the political, cultural, normative and economic systems are mutually regulated. The system I am referring to is not like the traditional hierarchical scheme, but resembles the roots of the sweet yucca, what Deleuze and Guattari would call rhizomes. These systems, although connected like the roots of the same plant, should not be dominated, guided or substituted by a single system, as happens

in most societies of late capitalism – as in Colombia and South America – where all systems seem to be branches of the same economic stem. This type of subordination translates into the imposition of policies in favor of elite interests and the redistribution of assets, privileging politically dominant actors; while, as has been observed since the rubber boom at the beginning of the 20th century to the present day, those without political representation are discriminated against, as is the case with cultural minorities or non-human actors (Habermas, 1999).

Consequently, a single or unregulated economic system applied in the region would unweave the basket of social life every time there was an economic crisis[102] or a strong market fluctuation. This happens because the economic pathologies in Colombia have become normalized, and therefore their eco-crisis is transferred to the weak political, cultural or normative systems. This can be seen in Putumayo, where the economic value of natural resources in the global market seems to be inversely proportional to the value of life and the *buen vivir* of its inhabitants. To achieve the goal of diversifying the social basket in Putumayo through the rooting of the different social systems with the State, the relationship between the *territorios de vida* and the modern Lebenswelt must go beyond the exchange of goods. As Kuiru (2020) explains "It is time to think about the economy of sharing, the economy of reciprocity (...) we have to stop exploiting nature; we have to live with more respect and less consumption. If we didn't consume more than we really need, there would be less exploitation; we have to think about that."

The economy of sharing, of reciprocity to which Kuiru refers, is embedded in the sacred principles of Putumayo and is central to *buen vivir*. And it is reciprocity and solidarity that hold these societies together, not because the exchange of goods is not important, but because that exchange is only one way to create alliances, relationships, and solidarity. Kuiru speaks of an economy of care, of relationship, of feeling what the other can feel, an economy that is not based on the exploitation or administration of finite resources, but on the cultivation of a responsible Being with Others. In a way, it can be

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[102] Which, according to Offe, are inevitable in capitalist societies because they are manifestations of the contradictions inherent in that economic model that normalizes its own pathologies, i.e., private accumulation, overproduction and wage pauperization (in López 36).

argued that Amazonian organizations such as those represented by Kuiru and Gualinga are pushing their national governments to initiate a connection with the dimension of *Seinfühlung* present in *buen vivir,* which contains the greatest multiplicity of feelings that connect us with the immensity of the world, beyond the limits that the rules of logic and instrumental rationality can allow. The incorporation of *Seinfühlung* allows these two different worlds, that of the *territorios de vida* and that of the modern Lebenswelt to correspond in empathic terms, to recognize each other as relatives, as people with enormous connections and in constant change.

At this point, it is important to understand that the accepted truths, premises or general assumptions that support deductive reasoning in the West are not universal at all. For example, the logic used in the Amazon needs lived experiences, feelings, as well as the *Seinfühlung* dimension, which totally changes the possible outcomes of what can be observed and expected in the world. In other words, unlike what happens in the West – which is embedded in tautological chains of consecutive causes and truths that force future behavior to gravitate around "the normal," "the expected," or "the logical" – the Amazonian world is populated by the most probable explanations of a given phenomenon, by possibilities that vary according to history, by the actions and disposition of the observers, among others. This suggests that Putumayo is a world governed by a type of abductive reasoning as described by Bateson.

Practices such as the boa dance need not be understood under any exclusive human logic to be aware that we are facing other selves, other Beings who are also part of us, even though they may think differently due to ontological constraints beyond the control of most people, other Beings who feel and experience the world in the same way we do, through our bodies. That recognition, as in the dance of the boa, would help the national government connect with the peoples of the Amazon. A connection that is necessary to transcend the limitations that its modern organs (the institutions) have historically placed on the body of the State.

The central issue on the agenda of Amazonian organizations (which goes hand in hand with the reestablishment of a more inclusive abductive reason in the area) continues

to be the denunciation of the exploitation of natural resources in their territories. An important aspect to address these issues is to change the relationship built under the failed but eroded instrumental rationality and the rules imposed by the moderns in Putumayo. To this end, AZICATCH has taken on the task of focusing its *plan de vida* on education, both of the new generations and of the national government. An education without fear, so that the new Amazonian generations can learn the sacred values of their ancestors transmitted by the spirit of coca, tobacco and sweet yucca; an education that sensitizes the State and non-Indigenous people, because as Gualinga states, "[they] do not feel the territory as the Indigenous people do." For us moderns, it is crucial to learn to connect in a balanced relationship of mind, body and spirit with all the Beings that inhabit the *territorios de vida*, those that have been traditionally neglected in the modern Lebenswelt, so that we can realize, as Gualinga says, "that nature is a conscious living being that is subject to law." These are, above all, components of an educational project that seeks to balance the disturbed relations between men and women, between humans and other-than-humans on the planet.

A process of internalization of this principle through education is perhaps the only way to control legal and illegal natural exploitation in the area, since as Kuiru repeatedly mentions, "the Amazon is too big for the Colombian State, which has not been able to defend its own territory, let alone the lungs of the Earth." The modern model of Lebenswelt focuses on controlling its subjects from the outside, through external repressive forces that should never have been applied in the Amazon, since this area and its inhabitants respond to broader and non-exclusionary logics, external to man and the higher laws of the place. For this reason, Kuiru affirms that "it makes no sense to continue declaring more protected areas. What must be done, instead, is to leave the Amazonian territories in the hands of their Indigenous nations" since only the free spiritual action of self-government, self-correction and self-control can maintain the ecological balance in the *territorios de vida*; that is, all the principles of Homeostasis. Such principles of Homeostasis are vital in the forest because, as Patricia explains, "there life flows to balance the planet, to balance the ecosystems, there is where this world is regenerated."

Lastly, the cultivation of independent social systems and educational processes, together with the recognition of the importance of *seinfühlung* (feelings, empathy, sensitivity, art, etc.), have as their main objective to vindicate dethroned Indigenous values and reinstall sacred norms in tune with the history and ecology of Putumayo, norms contained in the Yetarafue, such as, for example, Amazonian freedom, inner self-regulation, or the **Fimaide.**

Finally, the land that is yours, is yours

Guided by the spirits of tobacco, coca and sweet yucca, AZICATCH designed its *plan de vida* to work on restoring its own networks and transforming its relationship with the Colombian State. To this end, AZICATCH, together with the other Indigenous associations of OPIAC and its allies, are challenging the internal nature of the Colombian State, which relies heavily on extractivism, by questioning its drive for overproduction and overconsumption. At the same time, AZICATCH and its allies are transforming the norms and laws that constrain the State, reterritorializing its own sacred laws: those that respond to the logic of place, the eco-logic of Indigenous nations in Colombia. This slow process of "sweetening the word of the State" has improved relations with non-Indigenous, that is, with those who are part of the Lebenswelt interested in promoting *buen vivir*. Thus, as described by Kuiru in the last chapter, AZICATCH partnered with representatives of the Catholic Church, such as priest Daniel Restrepo, and with government representatives who could help them navigate the bureaucratic waters of the Colombian government and recover their land. That territory, which today constitutes the Predio Putumayo (6 million hectares, roughly the size of Panama), remained under the jurisdiction of the Arana family until 1980. Eighty years after the usurpation of these lands by that family, President Virgilio Barco (1986-1990) returned the lands to the four nations of the Predio Putumayo in 1988.

The third step in this transformation was the creation of La Casa del Conocimiento, a local school run by Indigenous teachers. As Kuiru describes it, this was a long process that required, once again, the support of allies from the modern world such as the NGO FUCAI, coupled with the active role of women and leaders like herself, to transform the

place where thousands of its inhabitants were tortured and killed into a place of knowledge and cultural revitalization. Once the physical buildings were secured, they continued their work of training local teachers so that the subjects taught at the school and its instructors would reflect the reality and history of the Predio Putumayo.

That transformation of the Casa Arana is fundamental to understanding the logic of Putumayo and the sacred fibers that have been shown in this chapter. The Casa Arana was transformed by the sacred gift of sweet yucca given to the Indigenous women to sweeten the "hot" evil spirit. It was a process similar to that which takes place when jaguar tooth necklaces are prepared. Cacique Calixto explained that jaguar teeth are powerful and alive, but must be handled with caution, for they are "hot"; they make the bearer become enraged against others, to alleviate the thirst and burning feeling of the jaguar spirit. The great caciques wear these jaguar teeth ornaments only after having boiled the animal's teeth in sweet yucca and pineapple juice (*caguama*) for several days, neutralizing the jaguar's immanent hot spirit and transforming its teeth into representations of power, knowledge, wisdom and control. He told me that, in ancient times, *brujos* (warlocks) who had not cooked the jaguar's teeth before turning them into necklaces also wore necklaces made with children's teeth.

Both unsweetened and sweetened necklaces would look the same, but their effect on the spirit would be different. The Casa Arana is a jaguar tooth necklace that represented suffering, pain, misery and death when Peruvians wore it. It was a "white" building with a modern meaning; a denial of life's affirmative laws; it was a structure alien to the territory and its people. However, under its foundations lie the blood and bones of ancestors who suffered the consequences of the disruption of the Yetarafue principles after children were traded for axes. That building – as a representation of the clash of two different words that almost annihilated the Indigenous knowledge possessed by the four nations of Predio Putumayo – had to be sweetened so that the result of that clash could be reversed.

To do so, its representation could not be "modern" but Amazonian, meaning that its history had to be completed; that history, like all the myths in the Putumayo region, would have to turn that deadly episode into one of resurgence. That was the work that Fany

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and her people did by following the words of tobacco, coca and sweet yucca. By learning to use the "master's tools", they did not dismantle the old master's house. Quite the contrary; they appropriated it, secured it, and offered compensation for the unconscionable past actions against the children.

Today, from the outside, the house looks the same as it did a century ago, but it is different on the inside. Instead of merchandise, dungeons, weapons, stocks and enslaved people, it has classrooms, dormitories, books, pencils, colors, cheerful children and committed Indigenous teachers working to give the best of their knowledge to the new generations. It is still the Casa Arana, but it is also the Casa del Conocimiento. Therefore, it signifies death/life, past/future, a more complete and appropriate form of Amazonian representation. The Casa Arana became a special place in the territory that transmits knowledge, because it has powerful stories and emotions embedded in it. The Casa is one of those particular places that transforms information into narratives that link the past and the future, the metaphorical and the sacramental, the memory of the elders and the imagination of the young.

A transformation like that of the Casa can be applied to other forms of modern representation. In the next chapter, I propose two practical products (Manguare.red and ÉMPI) that serve as examples of how the core concepts of political, economic, and cultural systems could be sweetened, appropriated, and secured by Amazonian Indigenous nations. Thus, Manguare.red and ÉMPI aim to incorporate the teachings of Yetarafue into a practical process of reconciliation that protects the integrity of the territory and its people.

Chapter V
Reconciliation, action and politics

There are arguably two main challenges AZICATCH is working on to overcome the legacies of colonialism. Firstly, transforming its relationship with the State through the mobilization of knowledge, in order to find new allies in the modern world; secondly, improving the transmission of knowledge to close the generation gap between older and younger generations. With this in mind, I decided to focus my work on contributing to overcoming these challenges, and so I received authorization to hold meetings and make alliances with potential partners from the academic and cultural sector interested in supporting the *planes de vida* of these Amazonian nations (see Appendix E). Also, in a meeting with students and the community in a general assembly, the younger generations expressed their interest in incorporating new technologies in their education to learn about their history. They also expressed the idea of being an active part of this process and not just recipients of knowledge.

With those ideas in mind and considering the COVID 19 constraints that I detailed in the methodology section, I designed two main products that could support the Amazonian *planes de vida*, while providing me with enough information to write my thesis on the Value of the Sacred. As mentioned in the previous sections, these two products are the Manguare.red platform and the Ethnic Multidimensional Poverty Index (ÉMPI). This short final chapter will describe these two products, which seek to incorporate the sacred values of Yetarafue, keeping in mind the construction of new referents to improve the joint work between Amazonian Indigenous organizations, younger generations and the national government.

Manguare.red

To honor my commitments to AZICATCH, the Casa del Conocimiento school, the community of La Chorrera in general, and those who entrusted me with the information gathered during years of hard work, I created a bilingual web platform (in English and Spanish) during the months of October and November 2020, under the domain "Manguare.red" (the Manguare are two huge horizontal drums used throughout the

Amazon to transmit information over long distances). That web platform has two main sections: first, a virtual library containing all the books, pamphlets, videos, research, interviews, etc., that existed in the archives of Fundación Caminos de Identidad – FUCAI (which will have a copy on a local server in La Chorrera so that the community can access it without having to rely on Internet connectivity). Through the use of technology, this library aims to help repair intergenerational gaps, as well as the loss of knowledge aggravated by the extreme humidity in the Amazon area, which has destroyed most of La Chorrera's books and archives. It also contains a Legal Documents Section where people can find all the *planes de vida* drafted by the Amazonian peoples and the most important resolutions, decrees, norms and provisions of the Constitutional Court that may affect their lives.

The second main section of the platform is an interactive map of stories of the Resguardo, using programs and platforms such as ArcGIS and Google Earth – taking into account the contributions of Caquard et al. (2009) in *Cybercartography, Indigenous Perspectives and Knowledge –*. This map seeks to link the stories, images and narratives from the selected FUCAI archives, and the book created by AZICATCH, as well as other stories donated to the project. The importance of this section of cybercartography lies in its difference from the official maps of Colombia that show this region as a vast unpopulated "ghost acreage" or green area: an asocial void without socioecological complexity where only a few community zones and very few rivers have been identified.

For example, according to the geographic database of the Official Cartographic Institution of Colombia – IGAC, there are 15938 watercourses in the Putumayo area, and only 65 of them have names. This means that approximately 99.52% of the watercourses of the Indigenous reserves of the Putumayo Valley are officially unknown. This representation ignores and denies the history, presence, meaning and knowledge of the Indigenous groups of the region that have given names to all the rivers, streams and geographical features, representing the region as a supposed *terra nullius* with an abundance of raw material that can be extracted without social or ecological consequences. To change this perspective, I transferred information from a community map I found in the FUCAI archive which, although made with a single *resguardo* community in the 1980s,

identifies the names and history of more than 200 watercourses, 30 lakes, several sacred sites and the names of Indigenous communities. This work helped us to almost duplicate the official information on Colombian Amazonian rivers with the information from the Predio Putumayo.

This mapping project is essential because it re-establishes knowledge and relationships between local populations and rivers. It is crucial in providing vital information to the national government, describing Amazonian rivers as "living streams" that communicate people with other species and entities. In vast areas such as the Amazon rainforest, these living streams – which have no zip codes or street names – can be used by the national government to locate and target specific activities, such as environmental risk mitigation, deforestation and illegal mining control, in order to address human rights violations and crises such as the current pandemic, as well as to locate funds for specific communities. Additionally, the stories linked to that territory will contain information describing the values, social structures, history and ecological characteristics of specific areas, which can serve as a basis for future projects and interventions, designed with a differential approach.

Finally, inspired by Durrani's (2015) question on "how to make podcasting a viable medium for anthropological activities," I will summarize some of the stories from AZICATCH's book in a 30-minute podcast (English and Spanish). This podcast is intended to convey part of the message that AZICATCH wanted to convey as an "anteroom" during the planned exhibition, which was directed to the hosting institutions and to other institutions and researchers around the world who might be interested in the topic. This podcast will start in April 2021 and will be uploaded to the web platform in July 2021, after approval by AZICATCH.

This platform also seeks to support the AZICATCH plan, designing a non-hierarchical tool, or in Deleuze and Guattari's (2015) terms, a *punto de fuga* or *ligne de fuite*, through which the modern educational model transitions to the virtual Amazonian model. The idea of the Manguare project is that students, community members, NGOs, leaders, Indigenous organizations, experts and amateurs, academics and researchers,

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among others, can upload their research, their history and their stories, to share them with a *virtual Red*: a network of Amazon defenders around the world. This platform is expected to be constantly changing, without imposing any order or structure, thus escaping or de-territorializing arbitrary educational models in which information travels in only one direction, limiting the development of didactic play in the participants. Consequently, the platform welcomes written material, but above all non-standardized modern information (which may be contained in oral narratives, video, sounds, images, artistic expressions, etc.) to foster new forms of understanding, to reclaim or reterritorialize traditional codes of interpretation that do not need a fixed Western direction.

Policy

OPIAC, the group of national Amazonian organizations, brings together AZICATCH and the other Indigenous organizations of the Colombian Amazon. In turn, OPIAC, ONIC and other national Indigenous organizations such as AICO and the Confederación Tairona – CIT (Tairona Confederation) are part of the Mesa Permanente de Concertación. These organizations have gained essential allies that have supported the documentation of their *planes de vida*, such as the NGO FUCAI, the Gaia Foundation, Tropembos, and the Center for the Study of Law, Justice and Society at Universidad de Los Andes – DEJUSTICIA. With the support of these and other allies, Colombia's national Indigenous organizations have achieved important advances in Colombian legislation. In addition to the requirement of FPIC in prior consultations, there are other equally important and complementary achievements, such as the implementation of the non-municipal areas of the Amazon, Guainía and Vaupés, [103] and the recognition of the Colombian Amazon as a subject of rights[104].

The Commissioning of the non-municipal areas of Amazonas, Guainía and Vaupés – all part of the Amazon biome in Colombia – is a recognition of the de *jure* and de *facto* rights of these nations, which have been ignored for a long time. Thanks to this, the ancestral territories that the Amazonian nations have protected for millennia become part of the political-administrative organization of the State, which means that these territories are in the same category as other provinces or departments that manage their share of the Nation's Current Revenues, so that they do not depend on corrupt provincial governments when it comes to carrying out educational, health, environmental or cultural policies in their territories. This decree is vital because, after 30 years, the traditional governments,

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[103] Decree 632 of 2018, Ministry of the Interior: http://es.presidencia.gov.co/normativa/normativa/DECRETO%20632%20DEL%2010%20DE%20ABRIL%20DE%202018.pdf

[104] Ruling 4360 of 2018, Supreme Court of Justice of Colombia: https://cortesuprema.gov.co/corte/index.php/2018/04/05/corte-suprema-ordena-proteccion-inmediata-de-la-amazonia-colombiana/

educational systems and collective rights achieved by these nations in the Colombian Constitution of 1991 can finally be implemented.

The recognition of the Colombian Amazon as a subject of rights by the Constitutional Court was another important legal achievement in recent years. This decision is, together with that of the Atrato River in Chocó, the first recognition of the Rights of Nature in Colombia. The Supreme Court's decision means that the Amazon should be seen as a person and should have the same rights and protection as any other Colombian citizen. In the words of César Rodríguez, president of DEJUSTICIA, after this ruling, "any Colombian can demand the protection of the Amazon biome, even in court, regardless of whether or not they live in the region"[105]. However, to date, none of these important achievements have been implemented. One important reason is that rights and the law in Colombia are rarely enforced, a function that seems to be beyond the capacity of the Colombian government, as Kuiru and Gualinga pointed out.

However, the early implementation of such normative achievements is something that deserves serious attention and support from all sectors of society, especially now that these changes in the Colombian legal system are taking place after the 2016 Peace Agreement. As mentioned above, the progressive legislation achieved over the years by Indigenous organizations such as OPIAC and ONIC can make the difference between an unwanted boom in extractivism by the Colombian government (especially in territories once under FARC military control) and the dedicated work to protect territories such as the Colombian Amazon basin – which escaped the Latin American extractivist agenda of the last fifty years, due to Colombia's internal conflict – that has been key to climate regulation, water production and bio/cultural diversity.

If we were to support the second option, I suggest that we listen to the voices of those who have known how to take care of the Amazon forest for millennia, that is, its Indigenous nations. According to my perspective offered in the last chapter, what these Indigenous nations are telling us is that, in order to take care of the forest, their populations

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[105] https://www.dejusticia.org/column/amazonia-sujeto-de-derechos/

must be protected because, in addition to understanding the logic of the place, they are a constituent part of it. This protection they are asking for is not of a paternalistic nature, but rather they are demanding from the State the protection and effective enjoyment of their Individual and Collective Rights, such as self-determination, territory and the right to cultural identity. It is there where the reconciliation process between the national government and the Indigenous nations must take place. Such reconciliation requires coordination between the Colombian government and traditional Indigenous governments to create and implement public policies that respect Indigenous values. In other words, these normative advances, in light of the transitional context, require a diplomatic space for reconciliation between Indigenous *planes de vida* and National Development Plans.

To plan, focus and execute concrete actions, such reconciliation requires information that exists within the communities themselves, such as the current status of these Individual and Collective rights. Information is also needed to answer other important questions such as: What are the needs of the Amazonian people? What are the Indigenous plans and policies for education, environmental protection, health, etc.? Where will they be implemented? Where to start? What needs, areas, populations or projects should be prioritized? How much would it cost to implement these plans and policies? Above all, how to reconcile the Indigenous *planes de vida* and the *buen vivir* model with the National Development Plan? Efforts to resolve the "how" should have begun thirty years ago, after the Colombian Constitution of 1991. However, after the legal achievements just mentioned, it is only now that both the Indigenous and national governments are addressing them.

Where to find this information?

As shown throughout this thesis and in the section of the Manguare.red Atlas, the collective territory is an essential and central right, since it is more than a plot of land for the Indigenous nations. It is their home, their local food source, their school, their spiritual center, the library where they keep their knowledge, their history and their stories, it also contains their laws, and it is from it that they build their identity. In other words, the

territory contains all the dimensions that affect the well-being of the Indigenous people, the *buen vivir*. Therefore, it is there that the missing information can be found.

How to collect this information?

The "how" must be decided in an open dialogue between the national government and the Mesa Permanente de Concertación, given that it requires Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). In this thesis, I propose to both corporations a specific socioeconomic survey model for the Indigenous population, oriented to the construction of an indicator that provides both parties with the missing information for the design, planning and execution of public policies with a differential approach. I propose an Ethnical Multidimensional Poverty Index model – ÉMPI, which in combination with the qualitative information transmitted by the Indigenous communities could be transformed into a versatile quantitative spectrum. The creation of such a model, however, would be only the first step, since such information would also imply an anthropological translation of both worlds, where the ontological differences of both sides could be addressed and thus avoid misunderstandings.

Why an Ethnic Multidirectional Poverty Index?

Out of the 118 Indigenous nations in Colombia, approximately 64 live in the Amazon biome. According to DNP data[106], 45.8% of the Indigenous population, which makes Colombia a nation rich in ethnic and cultural diversity, live in multidimensional poverty. In addition to the historical circumstances of exclusion to which these populations have been subjected, plans, programs and public policies designed and implemented around these communities rarely have a differential approach[107]. This lack of a differential approach is due, in part, to the fact that the experts and creators of plans, programs and public policies of the State do not have the information or data necessary to account for the particular relationships, priorities and needs of ethnic groups. Moreover, the challenge for

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[106] Colombian Department of National Development

[107] UNIFIED PROPOSAL OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND ORGANIZATIONS REGARDING THE PND 2018 – 2022. (p.76).

the State – and more specifically, for the DANE – goes beyond extending the census exercise to the areas where these ethnic populations live and asking the same questions that are asked of the rest of the Colombian population, since the **State must develop adequate tools to track information on the particular relationships that make ethnic groups vulnerable to poverty.**

A first step in collecting this missing data is to have a unified definition, valid for both the State and ethnic groups, of what "multidimensional poverty" means. As stated by the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative – OPHI (2019), this definition must go beyond economic deprivation and therefore consider the experiences and values of these people. Nonetheless, since there can be as many experiences and values as there are people, it is impossible to develop a concept that contains the particularities of each member of a population as diverse as the Colombian. Yet, there are common elements that unite the entire population with the State, and these are fundamental rights.

Taking into account the work carried out by and within the ethnic communities themselves together with DANE and other institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean – ECLAC and the United Nations Development Program – UNDP, among others, as well as other definitions of poverty, such as those provided by the United Nations [108], it is necessary to understand "poverty" as a condition of vulnerability that occurs when people are unable to access or exercise their fundamental rights (Eid & Aliaga, 2013, 2014; Renshaw & Wray, 2004; Velázquez Toro et al., 2013).

The Colombian Multidimensional Poverty Index (C-MPI) and the Alkire-Foster method

Since 2011, the Colombian government has been designing its public investment and anti-poverty strategies based on a method created by the Oxford Poverty and Human

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[108]Poverty is not only an economic issue. Therefore, we must stop seeing it exclusively as a lack of income. It is a multidimensional phenomenon that also includes the lack of the essential elements to live with dignity. Poverty is, in itself, an urgent human rights problem and is both a cause and a consequence of human rights violations, as it is characterized by multiple and interrelated violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and people living in poverty are regularly exposed to the denial of their dignity and equality. Source. Retrieved April 2, 2019: https://www.un.org/es/events/povertyday/

Development Initiative – OPHI, by Alkire and Foster – AF. This method, currently used in 104 other countries, focuses on measuring poverty beyond economic deprivation, or in other words, multidimensional poverty. According to OPHI (2019), one of the main objectives of the multidimensional poverty index is to create a multidimensional economic framework, based on people's experiences and values [109].

OPHI's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) has three key dimensions: Health, Education and Quality of Life (standard of living). These dimensions contain a total of 10 indicators, such as nutrition, years of schooling, goods, services, etc. (see Table 1). According to this system, those who lack at least one third of these indicators are considered multidimensional poor. Colombia's MPI (C-MPI) uses five dimensions: Education, Youth and Childhood Conditions, Work, Health and Housing, and Public Services. All of these dimensions are measured annually through the Quality-of-Life Survey (ECV). Each of them has 15 indicators: illiteracy, learning lag, informal work, health insurance, inadequate housing, etc. (See Table 2).

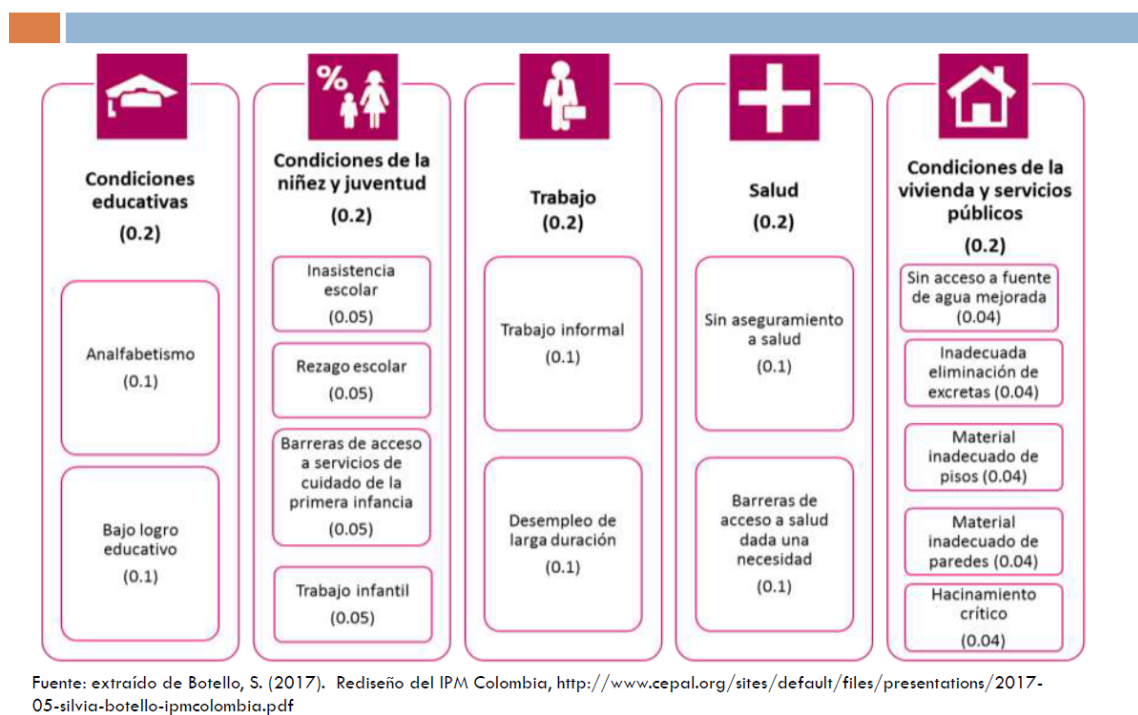[109] HTTPS://OPHI.ORG.UK/ABOUT/ ACCESSED 15/1/2019

MPI OPHI

Table 1

Dimension	Indicator	Deprived if...	Related to...	Relative Weight
Education	Years of Schooling Child School Attendance	No household member aged 10 years or older has completed five years of schooling. Any school-aged child is not attending school up to the age they'd finish class 8.•	MDG2 MDG2	1/6 1/6
Health	Child Mortality Nutrition	Any child has died in the household.	MDG4	1/6
		Any adult under 70 years of age or any child for whom there is nutritional information is malnourished.*	MDG1	1/6
Living Standard	Electricity Improved Sanitation	The household has no electricity.		1/18
		The household's sanitation facility is not improved (according to MDG guidelines), or it is improved but shared with other households.**	MDG7	1/18
	Safe Drinking Water	The household does not have access to safe drinking water (according to MDG guidelines) or safe drinking water is at least a 30-minute walk from home roundtrip.***	MDG7	1/18
	Flooring	The household has a dirt, sand, dung or other (unspecified) type of floor.		1/18
	Cooking Fuel	The household cooks with dung, wood, charcoal or other solid fuels	MDG7	1/18
	Assets ownership	The household does not own more than one radio, TV, telephone, bike, motorbike or refrigerator and does not own a car or truck.	MDG7	1/18

Note: MDG1 is Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger; MDG2 is Achieve Universal Primary Education; MDG4 is Reduce Child Mortality; MDG7 is Ensure Environmental Sustainability. * The range of eligible 'school-aged' children is determined using the age at which children start primary school, until the year in which they would complete class 8; households having children in this age range who are not attending school are considered deprived. *Adults are considered malnourished if their BMI is below 18.5 m/kg². Children are considered malnourished if their z-score of weight-for-age is below minus two standard deviations from the median of the reference population. **A household is considered to have access to improved sanitation if it has some type of flush toilet or latrine, or ventilated improved pit or composting toilet, provided that they are not shared. ***A household has access to clean drinking water if the water source is any of the following types: piped water, public tap, borehole or pump, protected well, protected spring or rainwater, and it is within a distance of 30 minutes' walk (roundtrip). Source: Alkire and Santos (2010, 2014)

Fuente: Alkire, S., A. Conconi, G. Robles, ME Santos, S. Seth y A. Vaz (2016). The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI): 5-year methodological note, http://www.ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/MPI_Methodology_2010-2015_Jan2016.pdf

Table 2

IPM COLOMBIA, 2011

Condiciones educativas (0.2)	Condiciones de la niñez y juventud (0.2)	Trabajo (0.2)	Salud (0.2)	Condiciones de la vivienda y servicios públicos (0.2)
Analfabetismo (0.1)	Inasistencia escolar (0.05)	Trabajo informal (0.1)	Sin aseguramiento a salud (0.1)	Sin acceso a fuente de agua mejorada (0.04)
	Rezago escolar (0.05)			Inadecuada eliminación de excretas (0.04)
Bajo logro educativo (0.1)	Barreras de acceso a servicios de cuidado de la primera infancia (0.05)	Desempleo de larga duración (0.1)	Barreras de acceso a salud dada una necesidad (0.1)	Material inadecuado de pisos (0.04)
				Material inadecuado de paredes (0.04)
	Trabajo infantil (0.05)			Hacinamiento crítico (0.04)

Fuente: extraído de Botello, S. (2017). Rediseño del IPM Colombia, http://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/2017-05-silvia-botello-ipmcolombia.pdf

Source: Botello, S. (2017). Redesign of the IPM Colombia, http://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/2017-05-silvia-botello-ipmcolombia.pdf

Technical Specifications

The MPI in Colombia was designed to monitor the poverty reduction goals established in the Plan Nacional de Desarrollo – PND (National Development Plan), as well as to create alerts on its variables, allowing the design of targeted actions by State agencies such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, Social Action, etc. The unit of analysis in the Colombian MPI (C-MPI) is per household[110]. This unit means that if any member of the household lacks any of the indicators, the entire household is deprived of that indicator. For example, if someone over the age of five in a given household cannot read or write,

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[110] Household: person or group of people, related or not, who occupy all or part of a dwelling; attend to basic needs with a common budget and generally share meals (UN, 2008; DANE, 2018, general methodology national survey of quality of life -ECV.)

the entire household is deprived of the literacy indicator. According to OPHI[111], Colombia mainly used three criteria to determine this unit of analysis. The first is a normative criterion, based mainly on Colombia's 1991 Political Constitution, which establishes that the State must guarantee the rights and living conditions of its citizens. The second criterion uses academic evidence showing how Colombian households historically respond to adversity as a family group (ibid). The last criterion is based on Colombian policies and programs such as Red Unidos, SISBEN and Familias en Acción, which use the household as the unit of collection and analysis.

Problems

Although the MPI provides essential information for the creation and implementation of public policies aimed at poverty reduction, the data provided by this model have several shortcomings, since (i) it does not allow measuring the quality of public services; (ii) it is not representative of all departmental provinces or large cities; (iii) it has indicators that are considered exhausted, so their incidence is close to zero (as may happen with housing conditions, affiliation to the health system or illiteracy); (iv) it does not allow for accurate monitoring of the indicators established in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which goes against the guidelines of document 3918 of 2018 of the National Council for Economic and Social Policy of Colombia – CONPES; (v) it does not have a differential approach (i.e., does not allow establishing gender specificity, disability or ethnic needs related to poverty); (vi) is not representative of ethnic groups (Indigenous, Black, Raizal, Rrom), nor does it recognize the modes of existence of their cultures, traditions and ancestral practices, which makes it difficult to address the needs of these communities with appropriate policies and, therefore, effective planning with a differential approach (PND, 2018-2022, ECLAC).

Since November 2019, a committee of experts led by DANE has been working intensively on the redesign of the C-MPI, and it is expected that it will address the first five items mentioned above. However, the sixth item, relating to ethnic groups, requires special

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[111] HTTPS://OPHI.ORG.UK/POLICY/NATIONAL-POLICY/COLOMBIA-MPI/ ACCESSED 15/1/2019

attention. The National Development Plan 2018-2022 mentions that "In 2016, while for the national total, 17.8% of the population was multidimensionally poor (8,586,482 people), the percentage in poverty of ethnic groups was even higher. That is, 45.8% of the Indigenous population and 26.9% of the Palenquero, Black and Raizal communities (PNRA) were considered poor. This information means that 2,055,444 people from ethnic groups were in the multidimensional poverty group for those years, which represents 23.94% of the total multidimensional poor population of the country" (ibid, p 662). These data indicate that the ethnic population is the poorest in Colombia and suggest that the policies implemented at the national level to overcome poverty do not have the same effect on ethnic groups, compared to the rest of the country.

I suggest that it is essential to rethink the strategies that the State has been using to target specific actions for each of these groups. To that end, an open and appropriate Multidimensional Poverty Index for Colombia's ethnic groups should be developed and presented for discussion and restructuring both to the National Administrative Department of Statistics – DANE and the Mesa Permanente de Concertación, through OPIAC.

Usual dimensions

The main fundamental rights of all Colombians can be seen in the five dimensions usually measured by the C-MPI. As mentioned above, these dimensions are Education, Youth and Childhood Conditions, Work, Health, and Housing and Public Service Conditions. For example, the Education, Youth and Childhood Conditions dimensions measure access to the right to education. The Health dimension is included because of the connection with the right to life and integrity. The Work dimension, as its name indicates, measures access to the right to work. And the Housing Conditions dimension represents the right to decent housing[112]. However, the concepts of life, work, education or "decent housing" for the State and ethnic groups have very different meanings and values. These differences can lead to uncontrolled equivocations when planning or implementing public policies, which

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[112] Excluding the variables of Access to Drinking Water and Waste Treatment, which are more related to health issues.

poses a challenge when designing ethnically inclusive instruments to control multidimensional poverty or barriers to the rights of these nations.

While it would be desirable for the State and its officials to know the particularities of each of Colombia's 118 Indigenous nations before designing, planning and implementing plans, programs and public policies that may affect their livelihoods, the little official information available to the State is dispersed among the various State entities[113]. This lack of information and bureaucratic disconnection detracts from the capacity, efficiency and coherence of the plans, programs and public policies that have been implemented so far[114]. One solution to this problem is to design and implement plans, programs and public policies that impact ethnic groups with the full participation of the legitimate representatives and authorities of the affected communities, as required by Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization – ILO.

Wherefore, this proposal suggests adjusting the relevance of the variables of the usual dimensions of the C-MPI that have been applied in Colombia, according to the results of the questions agreed upon with the legitimate members of ethnic organizations at the regional and national levels for the 2018 National Population Census – CNPV (See Appendix H). The result of this Index (prior to the ÉMPI) would be an ethnic-focused MPI (EfMPI) created with the information from the 2018 CNPV. This first objective should be achieved in no more than six months. At this point it is necessary to clarify that said EfMPI will be the result of a long process in which DANE has worked hand in hand with regional and national ethnic organizations during the last years in the elaboration of different surveys and censuses. The EfMPI should provide a baseline of the individual rights of ethnic groups and should allow a level of disaggregation by *resguardo*, household, age, caste or clan.

Additionally, I suggest that DANE go beyond mere compliance with legal requirements and commitments made to ethnic groups and begin to collect information on

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[113] An atlas that gathers this information and allows a complete characterization of these groups would contribute significantly.

[114] Unified proposal of Indigenous peoples and organizations regarding the pnd 2018 – 2022. (pg. 76)

the status of individual rights, since it is essential to know the particular relationships and restrictions that prevail in these rights. For example, in order to have the necessary information on "Educational Conditions," DANE should not only evaluate or consult the relevance of the illiteracy or school dropout rate in a given ethnic group but should also investigate the structural barriers that exist in the territories and contexts around the right to education in those nations.

(É) The new Ethnic MPI Dimension (ÉMPI)

The ÉMPI model that I present is a proposal, a framework product of my own work, field experience and bibliographic research for which I do not seek any personal compensation. This work will be presented to both OPIAC and La Mesa Permanente de Concertación so that these Indigenous organizations can reform it, complete it, reject it, propose it to the national government or use it as a basis for internal studies. It is then at the discretion of La Mesa and/or DANE to use this information if they feel it can help advance their work.

As seen throughout this thesis, the barriers or restrictions that ethnic groups continue to face today respond to historical patterns of discrimination and deprivation of their rights (Escobar, 1998; Hopenhayn, 2003, Renshaw & Wray, 2004 and Velázquez Toro et al., 2013). Therefore, in addition to individual fundamental rights, there is a special set of complementary rights that must also be granted to Colombia's ethnic groups: **Collective** Fundamental Rights. These rights, fully recognized by the Colombian State, do not constitute the sum of the rights of several individuals, but rather recognize the community itself as a subject of rights before the law (for the legal framework, see Appendix G).[115] Basically, these rights revolve around the territory which, as explained above, houses sacred values, possibilities for self-determination, channels for the transmission of knowledge and other essential cultural practices. Therefore, in order to understand the restrictions or barriers that ethnic groups have in the exercise of their rights, territory must be taken into account, since it is a constitutive element of the identity and well-being of Indigenous nations.

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[115] http://sige.dane.gov.co:81/gruposEtnicos/doc/NormatividadResguardosIndigenas.pdf

A first technical challenge to note in this regard is that the unit used by the State to analyze the dimensions designed to monitor the rights of individuals is the "household." Therefore, the implementation of a dimension to monitor collective rights must consider a new unit of analysis, which I propose to be the community. "Community," as a unit of analysis of the collective rights of ethnic groups, should be taken as a proxy concept for "household," but its variables, unlike those contained in the standard C-MPI dimensions, should be conceived following the ontology and *planes de vida* of Indigenous nations. Consequently, as a new unit of analysis, the community should have its own dimension: the **Ethnic dimension (É)**, which should represent the variables contained in the Indigenous territories.

The choice of "Community" as the unit of analysis of collective rights does not necessarily imply that it should also be the unit of information collection. For example, if the information is still collected by households, in the event that the relative majority of the households that make up the community state that they lack the same indicator **X**, then the entire community would lack that same indicator. However, if "Community" were chosen as the collection unit, only one survey per community would be needed. In that case, analogous to the C-MPI, where the respondent is the head of household representing all persons living in the household, the questionnaire for dimension (É) would have to be answered by the community leader (cacique, chief, council president, captain, etc.) who should have the information of all the people living in the community. [116][117]

The data collection unit, axes, indicators and variables that make up the Ethnic Dimension (É) must be agreed with the legitimate authorities of each ethnic group. However, guided by the contributions of Hopenhayn (2003), Renshaw & Wray (2004), Velázquez Toro et al. (2013), the agreements and recommendations of the NDP 2018-2022,

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[116] If this were the case, it would be worth exploring the possibility of linking the socioeconomic characterization of the ÉMPI with census lists or authority or representation registers administered by the ministry of the interior.

[117] The community could be defined as a group of families living in a given common territory sharing customs, values, spaces and practices of solidarity, who also elect and recognize one of their members as a representative for political and administrative decision-making (Captain, President of the Council, Curaca, etc.).

and [118]the questions and recommendations agreed upon for the 2018 CNPV, I propose that the Ethnic Dimension (É) be transversal, representing an intersection (∩) that complements the five usual dimensions of the C-MPI. This means that, while the questions of this new dimension should be designed according to the ontology and *planes de vida* of the Indigenous nations, these should also follow up on the agreements and plans that respond to the collective rights that these communities have developed with the national government and/or the PND. In other words, the variables that make up the Ethnic Dimension (É) must be related to fundamental individual rights (life, education, work and decent housing) and must intersect with collective rights around the territory.

Axes

I propose five vertical axes in the Ethnic Dimension (É), which would correspond to the intersections between individual and collective rights. Thus, the first axis would correspond to the right to education and would have to measure the barriers around the transmission of knowledge, education and/or bilingual education (Indigenous-Spanish language). The second axis would measure barriers to the right to life, which would be expressed in early childhood care and the protection of women. The third axis, which measures the right to work, would measure barriers to social cohesion, political representation and participation in decision-making (Prior Consultation processes), access to the labor market, etc. The fourth axis, which corresponds to health, should measure barriers to food sovereignty, and access to traditional and western medicine. The last axis addresses the right to decent housing and will measure threats that may lead to loss of territory and/or deterioration of nature, public order conditions, exposure to violent events, mining, resource grabbing, etc.

Taking into account the PND 2018-2022 and the authors mentioned above, three cross-cutting axes are proposed in the Ethnic Dimension (É): Access/Restrictions, Quality, and Safety/Vulnerability. The cross-correlations between the vertical and cross-cutting

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[118] Cod 17. ¨The DNP, the DANE and Social Prosperity will create the Multidimensional Poverty Index for Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero communities¨ (PND Annex D, p.A-253); F-24 ¨.... To guarantee statistical visibility and the construction of differentiated policies for INDIGENOUS PEOPLES; DANE, the members of the National Statistical System (SEN) and the Indigenous organizations of the MPC will work together in the ethnic adaptation of the SEN¨ (PND 2018-2022, p. A-60). The DNP, DANE and Social Prosperity will create the Multidimensional Poverty Index for Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero communities (PND Annex D, p. A-253).

axes should provide information on services, equity, autonomy, health, and environment (see Table 3). Thus, "Access/restrictions" would determine the existence of an indicator (X) in a given community. For example, the cross-correlation between "Access/Constraints" and "Education" could measure the use or loss of Indigenous languages, the existence of community and family knowledge transmission practices such as *mingas*, celebrations, rituals, Indigenous dances, etc. This axis can also monitor the implementation of programs already agreed with the government, such as the Indigenous Education System – SEIP, or the number of schools that have adopted bilingual education models.

As its name indicates, the quality axis would measure the quality of the variables corresponding to the transversal axes. This axis would have quantitative indicators in terms of percentages, which would incorporate perception indicators. Thus, following the same example detailed above, in the intersection between "Quality" and "Education," one could ask about the frequency and duration of community and family practices such as the aforementioned *mingas*, celebrations, rituals, dances, etc. Along the same lines, one could ask about the distance children would have to travel to get to their school, the percentage of ethnic teachers working in the local school, the quality of the relationship between teachers and students, and also the perception that people in the community have about the quality and relevance of the school program, infrastructure, school meals, the relationship between parents and teachers, etc.

Finally, the vulnerability axis should measure the capacity of communities to adapt to change or shocks. For example, in the set between "Security/Vulnerability" and "Education," indirect costs in school attendance such as the purchase of school supplies, uniforms, shoes, transportation, etc. would be assessed. This axis can also measure discrimination in schools, if the school schedule conflicts with important community activities, the impact of natural phenomena (such as landslides and weather conditions) on school attendance.

Table 3 – EfMPI (example)

Axes	Educational conditions (0.2)	Conditions of youth and children (0.2)	Job (0.2)	Health (0.2)	Housing and utility conditions (0.2)
	Illiteracy (Analyze the relevance of the variable) (0.05)	Truancy (0.04)	Informal work (0.5)	No health insurance (Analyze the relevance of the variable) (0.5)	No access to an improved water source (0, 025)
		Delay in school (0.04)			Inadequate disposal of excreta (0, 025)
	Low educational achievement (analyze the relevance of the variable) (0.05)	Barriers to accessing early childhood care services (0.04)	Long-term unemployment (analyze the relevance of the variable) (0.05)	Barriers to access to health care in the face of need (0.5)	Unsuitable soil material (analyze the relevance of the variable) (0, 025)
					Inadequate wall material (Analyze the relevance of the variable) (0, 025)
		Child labor (analyze the relevance of the variable [28]) (0.04)			Critical overcrowding (analyze the relevance of the variable) (0, 025)

Table 4: (É) Ethnic dimension (example)

Axes	Culture and education	Equity (women and early childhood)	Autonomy	Health	Environment/ mobility

Access / Restrictions					
Quality					
Security / Vulnerability					

ÉMPI – Comparability

The Ethnic Multidimensional Poverty Index – ÉMPI will be the result of the union between the EfMPI and the Ethnic Dimension (É). Therefore, it is a socioeconomic survey applied to ethnic groups in Colombia, which will contribute to the lack of information used in public policies. As noted above, once the EfMPI is created, it is expected that with the result of the questions agreed upon for the 2018 CNPV, the information will be followed up through a census exercise or a specific survey for these ethnic territories every one or two years. This census or survey exercise need not be linked to the entire Quality of Life Survey – ECV, since its main function is to monitor multidimensional poverty data comparable with the results of the historical total of the national C-MPI. However, it is necessary to discuss with the national Indigenous organizations the Ethnic Dimension (É) that should be added to this exercise in order to have information on the collective rights of the communities. Although the data that (É) provides will hardly be comparable with the C-MPI, the information collected in (É) will establish a baseline to compare over time the impact on collective rights of public plans and policies to overcome poverty.

Other recommendations:

a) The results of the ÉMPI should have the option of being disaggregated by *resguardos* and departments (provinces).

b) Given that the Quality-of-Life Survey – ECV has questions that are not necessarily used to measure multidimensional poverty, the possibility of conducting an ethnic survey focused exclusively on measuring this (ÉMPI), or a general revision of all the questions and phrases of the ECV should be evaluated. This recommendation is due to the fact that Spanish is not the mother tongue of many of these nations (67), so a simpler language than the current one may be necessary to better understand the questions.

c) An analysis and follow-up of the agreements between DANE and the representatives of the ethnic groups of the previous census should be carried out. In this way, it will be possible to follow up on the commitments already made and to ensure that the ÉMPI can use the routes and some of the questions already agreed upon for the 2014 National Agricultural Census and the 2018 National Housing Census.

Chapter VI
What Is the Value of The Sacred?

My overarching goal with this dissertation has been to explore those processes that allow for active communication, to solve common problems between groups operating under different epistemological systems. In doing so, I have explored contrasting logics of nature and society, to explain that, when Indigenous communities in the Colombian Amazon raise issues of "sacred values" to defend their territories, these are deep epistemological concerns that may be "merely" religious to the modern eye of the Colombian State, but these sacred values also have enormous political and eco-logical importance that scholars and policy makers must take into consideration.

To overcome these inter-epistemic problems in Colombia, this thesis argues that patterns hindering communication between parties in most cross-cultural "negotiations" between Indigenous nations and national governments must be broken. That is, patterns that prevent the parties from reaching legally mandated consensual agreements in Colombia and in other Latin American countries, whenever governments or non-Indigenous parties propose a policy or project that may affect Indigenous livelihoods. The first stumbling rock that appears for those agreements is the lack of memory because, on the one hand, the Colombian State seems to suffer from a very convenient "amnesia" about following through on planned changes to its National Development Plan, its policies and

its commitments to Indigenous communities every time a new president is elected. On the other hand, the Amazonian Indigenous nations have an essential institution not controlled by their political representatives that nurtures collective memory. In this institution called *mambeaderos* or "word circles," every night, people and other spirits gather to talk as a community about past and future actions. The second problem that has not changed in almost 500 years – and that seems to imprison the Indigenous nations and the Colombian government in a loop of eroded relationships – is the abandonment of the Indigenous nations by the State, together with the interests of the governments of the day and other external actors in exploiting the natural resources of Indigenous territories to sell them on the global market.

This recurrent historical behavior has created obstacles to communication between the parties, with deficits of trust, honesty and equality being the most common. Another major problem with these cross-cultural conversations is that learning limitations in each epistemological system lead to a lack of ontological intelligibility and thus to serious uncontrolled equivocations. Uncontrolled equivocations lead to assumptions such as, "sacred" Indigenous issues correspond to mere "Religious beliefs" and that "Development" is a common goal for all populations. This thesis suggests that to overcome the problems of communication between the parties, they must reconcile the historical issues that weigh on their relationships. To move forward, the conditioning factors that allow the erratic behavior of the State must be reviewed and, secondly, the fundamental ontological differences between the parties, their premises, messages, tautologies or redundancies must be identified, for only by adding new or discarded information to this already existing Amazonian-Colombian system, can homonymous actions be designed that benefit both parties.

In Chapter I, in the "Theoretical toolbox," I have used different authors such as Latour, Bateson, Scott, Blaser, Kohn, among others, to define concepts and find congruencies and incongruencies or differences along the modern and Indigenous epistemological systems. In the second chapter, "Plants Die," I show a general geopolitical and historical context that has created structures that marked the current relations between my Indigenous interlocutors and the modern world as reflected in the Colombian State. In

describing these contexts, I argue that a crucial difference between the "modern" and the Amazonian world is that the human/nature divide in the Western epistemological system is based primarily on deductive and inductive reasoning. However, this type of reasoning is not the most adequate for understanding a broader non-binary system, such as the ecosystems of the Amazon rainforest. This incongruity is partly explained by the fact that, unlike the modern world, the *territorios de vida* are not governed by a logic exclusive to humans. It also encompasses the logic of spirits, plants and animals that need not be distinguished from nature.

On the other hand, knowledge must be understood both in the modern world and in the Indigenous world as a set of hypotheses marked by the interests of social imaginaries, in the relationships that exist within their system. Such hypotheses can be transmitted to other minds through symbolic and non-symbolic language in both Western and Indigenous systems. Thus, for both parties, knowledge is a metaphor for different and complex realities, indicating that no epistemological system is more valid or rational than the other in explaining the world. Similarly, I argue that any society is both a set of individuals and institutions and a *Red*, a web of known and unknown associations between similar but always different minds or mental processes, some but not all human. Another congruence is that in most societies, religion provides a logic that is not only deductive or inductive, for it also uses metaphors, that resemble natural language, to convey the idea of the connection between the Mind or living Beings and a more complex living system or a larger Mind.

Despite such congruencies, the modern world is divided into abstract categories after the Enlightenment, which contributed to the creation of a scientific model that provided a better understanding of the universe, while optimizing the administration of territories and populations and thus increasing the profits of colonial powers. By scientific model, I mean a model meant to be reformed and reconstructed, challenging old premises and truths once held by coercive powers such as the Church. This modern model built on mathematical logic excluded what could not be measured and commercialized, while the early colonialist powers imposed it on the territories and populations of modern colonies. In this way, the modern model became the only valid way of knowing nature in Western

epistemological systems, self-legitimizing its privileged position over non-Western populations.

This model became a discourse that, after World War II, was reinforced in Latin America and other "third world" nations by international institutions along with the United States, to promote "Development" and combat poverty." A "Development" plan that was financed through external "loans" that Latin American governments supported with the raw material of the *territorios de vida* of rural and Indigenous nations. In this way, the discourse of "Development" became a comfortable place for modern colonizers to generate their wealth.

If Appadurai, Horkheimer, Latour, Marx and the other authors cited throughout this thesis are not mistaken, and if we trust the ample data on global warming, it can be assumed that Western epistemology only responds to the interests of the hegemonic powers, while nature remains on the margins of those interests. This exclusion may fundamentally explain why this mistake opened the door to a dangerous path of environmental and social degradation. That is why the voices of those outside this logic must be heard, especially considering that both the privileged position that modern Western rationality has given itself and the abuse of nature have led us to an unprecedented environmental crisis. I am talking about listening to the voices of my friends Andres, Kuiru, Gualinga, and the other Indigenous leaders of the Amazon cited in this paper. These leaders can communicate to us a better non-instrumental way of corresponding with the planet, and therefore, with ourselves. This thesis asserts that, if we listen to these voices, we can learn that the world is not an empty, incoherent space waiting to be colonized and molded to our liking. By listening to these voices, we can understand that neither Europe, nor the United States, nor humanity is the center of the universe, because in the universe there is no such thing as "a center."

Why the Indigenous nations in Colombia, what do they know?

I have used the historical context of the struggle of Indigenous communities in Latin America and Colombia to explain the factors that led them to achieve legal recognition in a context where the actions and omissions of the State legitimize illegal practices. By

reviewing this history, one can compare the disjuncture between theory and practice in a political-economic system that rewards individualistic actors over the welfare of entire populations, as is the case of Colombia's ethnic groups. I suggest that such actions are the result of a series of individualistic behaviors normalized and endorsed by governments from the beginning of the colony to the present. In this context, Colombia became a breeding ground for partnerships between State representatives and illegal agents that victimized, marginalized and displaced those populations that challenged the colonialist logic.

Notwithstanding the fact that Colombian Indigenous people represent less than 3% of the total population, and that they struggle with internal problems and differences, Colombia's Indigenous nations have managed to resist the logic of the State. While they have at times been forced to engage in violent disputes, their most notable achievements have been in the legal arena, thanks to strong Indigenous leaders and organizations such as CRIC, ONIC, AICO, OPIAC and the Confederación Indígena Tairona – CIT. These legal achievements have been a model for Indigenous groups in other countries in the region, such as Ecuador, Peru, Chile and Bolivia, which have higher percentages of Indigenous population. But in a country like Colombia, where legality and illegality intermingle on a daily basis, these achievements do not guarantee the survival of Indigenous peoples. That macabre dissonance can be seen in the regrettable systematic murders of Indigenous peoples, which intensified after the arrival of Iván Duque to the presidency in 2018. Since that representative of the far-right Democratic Center took office, in two years alone, 167 Indigenous leaders have been murdered in Colombia. [119] Despite this, Colombia's Indigenous nations continue to resist stoically because they know that the existence of their peoples is more important than their individual lives.

Each achievement of these organizations has opened the door to new spaces for participation, especially after the 1991 Constitution; however, it is worth noting that these new spaces have unveiled unknown challenges. Namely, in trying to achieve equality,

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[119] According to the report delivered by the Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz – INDEPAZ, on June 9, 2020. Retrieved from: http://www.indepaz.org.co/lideres-sociales-y-defensores-de-derechos-humanos-asesinados-en-2021/

some of the Indigenous representatives imitated the behaviors and practices they encountered in the political sphere, which tied them to the old chains of corruption and bribery. In response, new diplomatic spaces such as Prior Consultation have emerged, representing new opportunities for both the State and Indigenous organizations to overcome unresolved problems and achieve common goals. These spaces nevertheless have their own complications, most of them related to uncontrolled equivocations that arise in conversations wherein major epistemological differences lead the parties to talk about something different, or the "same" things differently, without realizing it. For example, although ideally all parties should understand their adherence to the *ley de origen*, as I have explained above, sometimes Western privilege prevents State representatives from realizing their subordination to natural laws.

The interest of academics or the State in this issue is relatively new, although this problem of epistemological intelligibility is not novel at all. In Colombia, Indigenous organizations have been working on a plan that has been in place for centuries, a plan that involves the execution of a complex learning strategy. To dissect it better, this strategy consists of learning the rules already established and recognized by the State, as happened with the cases of Lorenzo and Lame mentioned in this thesis. By learning the rules, Lame inspired important Indigenous organizations such as ONIC and CRIC, which were able to demand that the State act according to its own national rules. These demands made the State recognize its mistakes and offer guarantees of non-repetition, which led to the modification and creation of new rules or laws.

This is precisely what happened with the amendment of the 1991 Constitution. The last step, perhaps the most difficult, is to transform the State to accept and apply these laws. I argue that the tactic used to achieve this is to link the actors involved – in this case, the Indigenous organizations – into a single unit, to create new strategies, laws and policies. This is what is happening with the Mesa Permanente de Concertación. In other words, the Indigenous organizations are putting pressure on the State, while at the same time teaching it to learn from them. This strategy to regain control is what Bateson (1972;1979) calls *triple-circuit learning*, or simply learning about learning, which is the way in which a

person or a system can learn about the world, beyond previously learned functional knowledge schemes.

Since extractivism arose from the instrumentalization of people and nature, part of the fundamental anthropocentric and Western epistemological error that must be fixed in this learning process, is the modern understanding of the individual as an entity separate from its environment. This revision would allow us to see that extractivism surpasses the borders of the places where raw materials are exploited for; extractivism is a global scheme that emerges at the intersection between the *territorios de vida* and Western political, cultural and economic systems. Comprehending such interconnection is an issue that should concern us all. In theory, reviewing the logic in which modern systems were built in relation to the Amazonian *territorios de vida*, would let us recognize our humanity and that of the Other, which in turn would also improve our relationship with the natural world.

The chapter *People Die* explores the images I collected and received from my Indigenous companions in the Amazon rainforest. It explores the sacred fibers that shape the *basket of buen vivir* in La Chorrera, through the history and stories of the Amazonian nations, for it is through them that human worlds are produced and reproduced. Thinking through stories is something that all minds do, from human to other-than-human. To show this, I make an effort to translate and transmit the voices of Putumayo, as I received them from the descendants of the triumphant survivors of the Amazonian holocaust. The idea behind that choice of stories is that those who read them can use those voices to make their own connections about what the Amazonian peoples are communicating to the world. Therefore, the goal of this chapter is that my voice does not bias or limit the reader, but on the contrary, that everyone can make their own interpretations after having read the modern Western logic discussed in the previous chapter – echoed by the Colombian government – vis-à-vis that of the Indigenous nations of the Predio Putumayo.

In the Chapter *People are Plants and Plants are People*, I offer my story, my reading, the associations I was able to make in connecting the Putumayo voices with some concepts of Western thinkers who may have perceived similar glimmers of light in trying to understand our place in the world. By using two different sources of information, two

different representations of the same relationship, my first goal is to create a convergent story that provides different information than each source originally had. In doing so, I intend to demonstrate my first hypothesis, which is that to fix the "modern error," to move the boundaries of how and what we moderns learn about the world, we must be aware of our own limitations and gaps, and then include external data, because any change in any living system requires the input of information different from its own. To address this hypothesis, I analyze the wisdom of sacred plants communicated by Amazonian nations. Such data, I argue, is the result of an ancient and endless cooperative game, a process of permanent consultation between the human and the other-than-human realm, whose rules were provided by the Yetarafue.

Amazonian accounts of the consultation process tell us that there was no-*thing* before the first individual arrived. Not because there was empty space, but because everything was an integrated system without divisions. The consciousness of the first individual creates those divisions between the Being and the rest of the things, subject and object, master and subordinate, humans and nature. The Being creates the Other, but Amazonian people remind us that the consciousness of the Other can also transform the Being and its creations. Despite what false "ethno/anthropo/euro/centric" knowledge may teach the moderns, the Being and the Other are constitutive entities that are not separate from each other, since they are part of an immense integrated complexity that cannot be known only through representations, but through living experience. That means that real knowledge has to transcend the *Self*, but that cannot be achieved only by memorizing or sacramentalizing metaphors from second-hand sources, regardless of their authority, especially if that information comes from some restrictive logic. To seek real knowledge, people need to process as much information as they can, including that which bodies register in their lived experiences, such as sensations and empathy, since in Putumayo, to *know* is to *feel*.

In other words, in the Amazon, *true* knowledge implies that people have to continuously learn what the world represents for them and for the other Beings who share their territory. To learn, people must transform information into action, through their body, spirit and mind. To navigate the forest, one cannot focus only on an object, but on the

relationships between the Being, the object, and its environment. That is why, in part, knowledge in the Amazon is not transmitted through texts, but through examples in the circle of the word, or by walking through a territory populated by spirits and beings different from the human, listening to the voice of the elders, and reviewing the experiences of the younger ones. Knowledge is a dance to tame our fears and change our relationship with the unknown; a dance between theory and practice in which we can repeat the steps already known, to have some control over ourselves. In doing so, we also acquire knowledge of the Other by feeling it, listening to it, observing it, and connecting with it. In the dance of knowledge, as in any other dance, the experience is always different for those who dance with us, just as the world and everything is constantly changing. The steps in that dance of knowledge do not come from a human logic but are given by complexity itself; those steps in Putumayo are the sacred rules of Yetarafue, which I claim, intersect with most known homeostatic principles and the rules of cooperation in non-zero-sum games. Those rules, at least in Putumayo, form a crucial (congruent but neglected) checkpoint for the human and the other-than-human, both in the physical world and in the mind, in the social and in the natural, in the mundane and in the sacred.

The central hypothesis of this thesis states that most intercultural communication problems are strongly related to the limitations of the epistemological learning system and that the possibilities of overcoming such problems depend on moving our own ontological limitations. Although this is yet to be demonstrated, that is what the two products of this research, the Manguare.red platform and the ÉMPI model, are for. These two products were never the goal of this research but are intended to be my first steps towards *pisar la maloca* (the Maloca inaugural dance). I refer to the practical elements to enter the dance of creation, transformation and reconciliation between Indigenous organizations and external actors in the modern world, using the lessons learned in the chapter *People Die*.

Manguare.red is a virtual tool for those who want to share and learn from those who have often been ignored; that is, the real experts on the Amazon, its people. As mentioned above, this virtual platform was created following the instructions and concerns of the students of the Casa del Conocimiento of La Chorrera and their parents. It is a project that aims to challenge the hierarchical and dichotomous Western educational models in which

it seems that it is not taught to learn but to obey. In response, Manguare.red seeks to incorporate those models used in the Amazon to learn in a more organic or rhizomatic way, through examples, images, stories, sharing, conversations; models where all parties can become experts and learners, where ideas can be both metaphorical and sacramental. Both the Amazon Virtual Library and the ÉMPI project are small roots that aim to enhance the growth possibilities of other roots. It is through action that changes are made and that the Amazonian Beings came to be. As Gualinga and Kuiru point out, we overcome modern problems through individual actions on behalf of others.

These two products, Manguare.red and ÉMPI are therefore the result of my relationship with these nations. They are the manifestation of the seeds sown in me that germinated and took root through the teachings, trust, security and affection offered to me by these communities. I want these products to flourish in the process of reconciliation between Western and Indigenous epistemologies so that new terms, new concepts, new languages, new relationships and associations can emerge to solve the modern problems of the past that still weigh on the different futures that these nations are envisioning. Modern problems such as the impoverishment of these nations due to colonial processes such as de-territorialization and de-indigenization, which have long denied the political representation of the cosmos and the Beings that inhabit these *territorios de vida*. Modern problems brought about by the extractive agenda of governments and businessmen suffering from the El Dorado syndrome who, blinded by the brilliant exchange value of natural resources in the global market, overshadowed the value and invaluable ancestral connections of the Amazonian nations with their territories.

Meanwhile, the organizations of these nations and their modern allies have shown a tireless campaign to re-establish the sacred norms that once governed Putumayo before Western instrumental rationality made its way into the world. That is why new diplomatic spaces such as Manguare.red or the ÉMPI model have emerged, and others as necessary as the Mesa Permanente. Diplomatic spaces that need to be controlled by cooperative rules, since, in the long run, the issues discussed here are part of a non-zero-sum game; thus, if the Indigenous nations guardians of the Amazon end up losing, as Kuiru refers, we all lose. That is why a combined effort between academia, NGOs, national governments and

international organizations is needed to help restore damaged relations with the Amazon. Let us suppose that this combined effort is implemented in public policies; in that case, we can expect a progressive change in the economic structure of the world and in the social organization as a broader community of life.

However, governments alone cannot (will not?) make these changes. But civil society and we academics are also part of our States. Therefore, as Gualinga says, our task is to resist and pave the way for the younger generations to be part and witness that change; for that, they are the ones who must learn *to learn* and make that change. It is essential to reevaluate the suppressive and homogenizing educational models in order to apply the reformed ones to both the Indigenous and the modern ones. I am referring to different educational models that sensitize people to embody the vision of others, to create different "symbiotic" educational models created with and for the Other with inclusion, flexibility, empathy, sensitivity, education, and responsiveness, as suggested by Kohn.

Today, our species is witnessing an unprecedented techno-scientific-cultural and counter-imperialist juncture, in which new generations are clamoring for a responsible "Environmental Turn." Thanks to the current virtual era of hyper-connectivity, we can share unimaginable amounts of information at incredible speed around the world and we have the tools to reform obsolete educational models, turning them into responsive educational models in which people can relate to each other as an aggregated part of the same eco-logical system. It is then an education for our mind, body and soul, in which people can learn to listen, feel and understand information beyond the human that is demanding our self-regulation, our **Fimaide**.

The education I am referring to is essential to know other Beings beyond objectification, since it will allow us to properly exchange information that has not been filtered by our privilege and instrumental mentality. For this, we need to learn that a binary understanding of the world is adequate for a computational model, but people have sentient bodies and we are sentient beings. We need to understand that people's feelings, emotions and values – our own and those of others – provide important information when making decisions and bringing about change. This education is vital to understand that our energy

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source comes from the planet, so the healthier the planet, the better our lives will be. It is also important in that it helps us to transform the extractive paradigm that is devastating the Amazon, a place that, as Gualinga mentioned, is crucial to regulating climate change in the world. In short, this education is essential to understand that our lives as a species, those of our sons and daughters, depend on the lives of others, of the Amazon, of the planet, and that is why we must recognize that the forest is not only trees, rivers and animals, because there are also human beings who have been taking care of it and of us for millennia.

This education is indispensable to transform the current policies, which have led to the devastation of many tropical forests in the world, as is the case of the Mata Atlántica in Brazil. This threat of devastation continues to exist in the Colombian and Brazilian Amazon, especially under far-right governments such as those of Duque and Bolsonaro, whose extractivist models continue to be the main source of income. This myopia is not because there are no alternatives to Development, but because it is easier to sell what does not belong to them, what did not need their work or investment to exist, and what can be quickly sold to satisfy the demands of an insatiable consumerist population. Hence the need for a change like the one proposed by Kuiru and her people. A model in which wealth comes from working with the land, investing in people, educating and caring for the younger generations, as Haraway details in her story of S.F. In such a model, people use what they need, give back as much as they can to the environment and the Other, and learn that others are their kin. It is a model without debt but reciprocity in which governments value the knowledge of their populations more than the natural resources they can exploit: a model based on *buen vivir*.

After all, this thesis is a plea to all levels of society, the rural sector, the government, and especially, those who consider themselves the best educated members of the urban middle class. It is a plea to value the differences that cannot be commodified, to value what is on the land, not for its price in countries abroad, but to preserve it for the infinite connections and relationships that emerge there and for the infinite learning we can acquire. It is then a statement that echoes the voices of the descendants of tobacco, coca and sweet cassava to "de-territorialize" – as Deleuze and Guattari would say – the selfish colonial

logic that clouded the spirit of Egoruema and invaded the eco-logic that balances the forests.

This is a call to learn from Juma (white heron in English), a bird/person/spirit who, by looking into the river, learned that his own reflection is but an illusion that must be ignored in order to be aware of other Beings at deeper levels, in other worlds; other Beings who would help him survive, for every being and every world is always connected to each other. In our relationships, we need to learn to adapt to the changing rules and recognize those of the larger context that contains them all, as does the Juma that lives in the water, travels the sky and rests on the ground; as tobacco, coca and sweet yucca have taught us. This is a proclamation to value and protect human and other-than-human diversity, not for what they have, but for what they do, even if we do not see ourselves in those relationships. It is an invitation to shift our ontological boundaries to make room for new concepts through old and new practices based on non-exclusive human rules, such as those of Yetarafue.

It is also a call to reconcile ancestral wisdom with new generations; to learn from those who have been ignored for so long and yet resist and defend the forest that keeps us all alive. This thesis and its products are practical efforts to correct the "modern error" that is sinking all the worlds that exist on this planet in a cyclical loop of consumption, destruction, impoverishment and extinction. In that sense, ÉMPI aims to help change the concept of "Development" that for so long has been imposed on Indigenous nations and has sought to eradicate their modes of existence through a schizophrenic idea of homogenizing the population into a Western urban ideal. The ÉMPI seeks to highlight and protect the differences that, to quote Bateson, make the difference.

As such, this work is an invitation to reverse the policies implemented by the West in these territories, promoting the restoration of community ties to strengthen the values of many colonized peoples and support the recovery of their lands, waters and other resources that have been appropriated in the market economy. In short, the main argument of this dissertation is that the historical interaction of predatory relations between the West and the Amazon has shaped not only the human parts of the system but is changing and putting

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at risk the entire Amazonian ecology. In the Colombian Amazon, this threat has increased following the 2016 peace process, as it paved the way for extractive industries to occupy territories formerly dominated by FARC rebel forces, as anticipated by Indigenous Amazonian inhabitants. I propose that one way to reverse such change is to foster the efforts of Indigenous nations to restore a socio-ecological regime anchored in their sacred laws.

To do this, it is necessary to respect the autonomy of these nations by working with them according to their *Planes de Vida* and the model of *Buen Vivir* shared by most of the Indigenous nations of the region.   The reconciliation process between Indigenous alternatives to "Development" and national government policies needs a methodology such as the one used in this thesis that seek to protect differences and control equivocations, a methodology such as Participatory Action Research that supports the work and initiatives of the grassroots organizations. This process of reconciliation can take place in the different "diplomatic spaces" that have emerged after the growing Indigenous participation brought about by the reform of the Colombian Constitution of 1991, and the recognition of Free, Prior and Informed Consent by the Colombian constitutional court after the ratification of ILO 169. However, for these spaces to be truly diplomatic, they must be governed by their own rules of cooperation and non-zero-sum games that ensure that all parties are on equal footing.

By exploring the untold stories of the nations of La Chorrera and based on Amazonian myths that describe an endless consultation process between different Beings and non-exclusive human logics, this thesis is a contribution to anthropological knowledge, explaining that intercultural or inter-epistemological conversations – such as the Prior Consultations, or other diplomatic spaces –, should be understood as social actions of communication and not as economic negotiations. This means that such spaces were not created to approve projects but to foster communication and understanding between the parties, regardless of the success, approval or rejection of a plan. Thus, I draw on the long philosophical tradition of these nations (which is passed on through generations in stories such as those analyzed in this dissertation) to propose three essential steps that must be

considered in any cross-epistemological conversation: differentiation, integration of difference, and self-transformation or creation.

The first step, which is the most basic, is shared among most modern philosophical traditions. In it, the thinking-self differentiates itself from its environment and the Other by first recognizing the limits of its body and then affirming its values and ideas as a result of its relationship with the rest of the world. The second step is to recognize the value of difference, integrating the different information, ideas and relationships valued by other beings. The third step, which is perhaps characteristic of Amazonian societies, is the expansion beyond the limits of the body and the thoughts of the Self by feeling-thinking the world of the Other.

These ideas – applied to spaces that were created to protect difference, such as those of Prior Consultation and FPIC – suggest that intercultural conversations must always be subjective, meaning that the parties must be aware of the non-objective nature of what they hold to be true. Moreover, these spaces require the effort of each party to be aware of their own assumptions, as these, along with their values, create the way we see the world by deciding what we pay attention to or what we ignore. In other words, the parties must be aware that their history, beliefs and values shape their perception of the world, their reality. This awareness would allow participants in the diplomatic space to shift the framework when necessary, appreciating previously ignored information and the concerns of the Other. This type of cooperative work would build trust between the parties, while steering away from harmful historical colonialist relationships, which lead the parties to confrontations, making it difficult to reach consensual agreements.

Finally, this thesis suggests that the modern relationship of the Colombian government with the Amazonian world has been built on exclusionary models, which have historically ignored Indigenous knowledge, endangering the integrity of the forest and its people. This thesis suggests that modern researchers and government representatives interested in correcting this error and creating a different relationship with the Amazonian world must act outside their usual patterns of thinking. One such act may be to incorporate non-linear structures into government projects, adopting a fractal structure such as that of

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Amazonian narratives, which in a sense mimic the language of nature, allowing information to be told differently by different people and linking different types of actors to their present, their past and their future.

Such is the value of the sacred knowledge in the Putumayo that, I argue, can teach us moderns to: (i) know how to renew our knowledge, creating symbiotic relationships beyond our kinship, language and epistemological bias, (ii) form connections beyond instrumental rationality, (iii) fix modern error, and (iv) feel, think, care and respect other Beings according to the immutable laws that govern all laws, whose origin is not human. With that knowledge in mind, I wove this thesis, this basket of *buen vivir*, hoping to assist my Indigenous partners in their efforts to reinstate their deep-rooted social institutions, strengthen their caste and creedal ties, and stand with the large masses of people who are neither able nor willing to "keep up" with "progress." I did so by assisting them in restoring their expectations of *buen vivir* and by being alongside the communities who are paying the price of economic "progress" and Development. I now offer you the pages and sheets that make up this basket so that you may value the sacred and ancestral philosophies and knowledge of the Amazon.

Bonus story

On my way back to Bogotá in 2019, I traveled from La Chorrera to Leticia (the capital of the Colombian province of Amazonas) in a small cargo boat, crossing the Igaraná Paraná, Putumayo and Amazon rivers with a small crew, all members of the Jitomagaro clan. Although we sailed very slowly, at the speed of a "Peque-peque"[120] (Approximately 7.5 knots), our trip was shortened to half of what it would normally take to travel at that speed, since we sailed day and night. What we did is therefore not a usual venture. When I tried to map this unusual trip during the day, I realized how difficult it can be for the inexperienced navigator to locate himself in the forest. That difficulty is due to the techniques learned by modern travelers like me, which we use when triangulating our position.

Let me give a quick explanation of what this triangulation technique is. You take two fixed or reference points on the far visible horizon, which I will call A and B (or 0 and 1, if you like). It does not mean that there are no other visible points, but these are supposed to stand out and be more visible than the rest, so we draw them on the map. The interpreter traversing the territory, however, would notice an infinite number of points, perhaps more interesting, between A and B, or 0 and 1. Think of one or both of these points as hills; these two features, both in the territory and on the map, may represent landmarks for the traveler. Conversely, they may have a different meaning to those who live on those hills; to them it could represent home, a distant relative who became a mountain, the source of fresh water, etc. In addition, such a point may not be visible to those who live there, so they would use a different reference point when traveling through the territory. This triangulation technique, which in semiotic terms needs (i) an object, (iii) a representamen, and (iii) an interpreter, is very useful when traveling by sea, even in lands like the Andes where I was born. However, I learned that in Amazonian thinking, this technique does not make much sense.

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[120] A Peque-peque is a wooden river boat with a small engine, generally unstable in flotation, very common for transporting passengers and goods on the rivers of the Amazon region.

This is because if you were traveling down the river, you would not be traveling in a straight line, due to its irregular shape. Therefore, one may have a reference point on the horizon on the right side, but one minute later, it would be on the left, and then ten minutes later, it would be in front, and then back to the right side one minute later. The cardinal points or compass, if you have one, do not help much either, since to travel East, one will have to travel West, then North, then South, then East again, and so on. You, as a navigator, as an interpreter, would have to accommodate your knowledge to the changing shape of the river, which would change according to the time and place one is in. That means that not only is the shape of the river constantly changing due to traceable phenomena such as the rainy or dry season, but also to non-periodic or predictable events, such as a tree or an accumulation of trees that has fallen during a storm, or deforestations on the riverbank. Thus, the behavior of the river, its currents, its strength and direction at and below the surface can change at any time.

Also, if you have ever been to the Amazon, you will know that everything looks the same to the untrained eye. You could get lost just by walking five minutes into the forest to relieve yourself. Inside the forest, you might not even see the sun for several days; the inexperienced traveler would see only insects and trees, and maybe, if they were lucky, the occasional animal almost as inexperienced, because if you get to see an experienced one, it might be the last one you see. That means one has no reference points on the far horizon to triangulate one's position. However, there are unusual features in the territory, such as hills, giant old trees, torrents, streams, waterfalls, caves, holes and, recently, a colonial house. Some of these landscape anomalies have helped local communities locate themselves in the territory for generations. These unique features are steeped in history and mythical stories that connect new generations to the territory, knowledge, and history of their ancestors. These are sacred places that demand greater respect to enter them, talk about them, and even learn about them because they are generally hidden, as they cannot be easily seen.

How can people travel inside the forest, like the elders of La Chorrera who managed to walk for five years from Peru to return to their territory? How could Beto, the Captain of our ship, sail at night?

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After years of running a river, experience tells you that you do not know it, that what it means, what it is, what it does, does not depend on you alone. That same experience allows you to feel the forest and the river, to be attentive to any difference in the usual pattern that the moon and the stars draw on its surface in a given place. It also allows you to be attentive to any variation in the sound of the engine that indicates an effort or a sudden change in the speed of the boat, to perceive changes in the smell in the air that indicate whether you are traveling next to a forest, a farm, a community or stagnant water. When traveling at night, everyone except the captain must be asleep, because a conversation, radio or flashlight would divert the captain's attention, or his ability to see at night, and thus the ship's course. These simple distractions in that context could be fatal, for our lives, the lives of the Captain's family and his crew, depend on that synchrony with the river and the ship, for Captain, ship and river become one at night. During the day, the Captain had time to answer my silly questions and tell me about his life; he let the children run around the ship, he let the younger sailors pretend to steer the ship to get a feel for what it is like. In the end, however, we all know that he has the last word, just as Cacique Manuel or Calixto has the last word in their Malocas, in their territories. At night, time passes in complexity. Beto was the cacique of the boat in a metaphorical and sacramental way, and we were his community.

This is how Beto took us from La Chorrera to Leticia in a little over a week. This is how I assume that the elders of La Chorrera managed to travel from Peru to their territory in the time it takes for a *chontaduro* tree to blossom. It is not that the Amazonians are not interpreters of objects; it is that those objects are also alive, in constant change and from time to time interpret us in return. Those living objects are not on the distant horizon, but closer to the point where the interpreter can feel them, not only to interpret what they represent, but to feel what may be their relationship with other interpreters/objects that are not only human. In this reciprocal world, the Amazon, the territory and all the Beings that inhabit it are also the interpreters of the Amazonian Indigenous nations, since it is this complex network of relationships that gives meaning to their existence. This is how the territory is mapped in the Amazon: with the stories, not only of human beings, but also with those told by the forest.

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Appendices

Appendix A available at:

https://mcgill-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/camilo_gomez_mail_mcgill_ca/EdulKc8qqV5Oi9Mckl9xTHcBEYGuS9EVQix2e1g4GhMJGQ?e=4%3amyN0ec&at=9

Agreement Script for Indigenous Organizations and community leaders

The Value of the Sacred: Extraction of Natural Resources in Indigenous Territories in the Colombian Amazon

Agreement Script for AZICATCH and community leaders

My name is Camilo Gomez. I am Ph.D. student in anthropology at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, under the supervision of professor Colin Scott. I am engaged in a research project called *The Value of the Sacred: Extraction of Natural Resources in Indigenous Territories in the Colombian Amazon*. This research is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada—SSHRC- and by the Social Sciences and Humanities Development internal grant (Info Ed: 74881) from McGill University. By exploring the differences between the Colombian development model and the Indigenous alternatives to development, this investigation aims to study the possibilities of political representation for human and other-human interests, particularly in Free Prior and Informed Consent–FPIC- contexts.

This study requires my observation of daily activities from 2020 to 2021 in the Resguardo Predio Putumayo in the Colombian Amazon. During this time I will also teach two workshops. One of the workshops will be on Indigenous rights and the other on community mapping. I will be taking written notes and, with authorization of the local authorities, I may also record and take photographs. I may also ask people to participate in one or more oral interviews, which would last approximately one hour. In these interviews people will be asked to provide information about their knowledge on the relationship between the Indigenous communities, the forest, the spirits, the extractive industry and the national government. People's participation is voluntary, thus they may choose not to participate in the study, to withdraw at any time, or to refuse answer any question that they do not wish to respond. Their name[s] will never be revealed in written or oral presentations without their explicit permission. Likewise, for pedagogical purposes and only with their permission, portions of the interviews may be played in conference presentations. The records will only be accessible to myself and I will be kept them under lock and key. I may use material from this research in future research.

If there are any questions or concerns, participants may ask me directly or they may also contact my supervisor, Prof. Scott at his office +1 514 398 4291 or by email at colin.scott@mcgill.ca. If people have any questions or concerns regarding their rights as a participant in this research study, they can contact Lynda McNeil the McGill Ethics Officer at +1 514-398-6831 or at lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

I, _____ _____as representative of _____ agree with this investigation.

Observations:

Signature: Date:

Appendix B

Informed Oral Consent Script for Indigenous participants (Interviews)

McGill University
Department of Anthropology Postal Address Camilo Gomez
Stephen Leacock Building 855 Sherbrooke Street W. Tel: (514) 903-5400
McGill University Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3A 2T7 Email: Camilo.gomez@mail.mcgill.ca

My name is Camilo Gomez. I am Ph.D. student in anthropology at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, under the supervision of professor Colin Scott. This research is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada—SSHRC- and by the Social Sciences and Humanities Development internal grant (Info Ed: 74881) from McGill University. My project aims to support the protection of Indigenous territories in the Amazon by exploring the differences between the Colombian development model and the Indigenous alternatives to development. By doing this, my research is looking for a way to improve the relationships and the communication between the national government and the Indigenous communities in Colombia.

For this reason, I will document the importance of different local everyday practices such as hunting, fishing and gathering as well as o public political and religious activities.

Because this study also requires oral interviews and due to your role as _____ in this community, I would like to have an interview with you. If you agree, I will ask you about your knowledge on the relationship between the Indigenous communities, the forest, the spirits, the national government, and the extractive industry (mining, oil, wood, fishing, etc.). Your participation is voluntary, thus you may choose not to participate in the study, to withdraw at any time, or to not answer the question that you do not wish to respond. Also your identity or your name will never be revealed to anybody in any form without your explicit authorisation. Likewise, for pedagogical purposes and only with your permission, portions of this interview may be played in conference presentations. The records will only be accessible to myself and I will be kept them under lock and key. I may use material from this research in future research.

If there are any questions you may ask me directly. I am giving you the information of my supervisor, Prof. Scott and, if you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this research study, I am also giving you the contact information of Lynda McNeil, the McGill Ethics Officer.

Do you have any questions or concerns? ? (Yes/ no)
Would you like to be interviewed? ? (Yes/ no)
Please remember that you may raise any questions or concerns at any point of the interview
Do you consent to be tape-recorded as part of the documentation of this research? ? (Yes/ no)
Do you consent to being photographed? ? (Yes/ no)
Do you consent to audio records of you being presented at academic events such as conferences, seminars and/or classes?
(Yes/ no)
Do you consent to photographs of you being presented at academic events such as conferences, seminars and/or classes?
(Yes/ no)

Appendix C

Informed Oral Consent Script to quote Indigenous participants

McGill University
Department of Anthropology Postal Address Camilo Gomez
Stephen Leacock Building 855 Sherbrooke Street W. Tel: (514) 903-5400
McGill University Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3A 2T7 Email: Camilo.gomez@mail.mcgill.ca

My name is Camilo Gomez. I am Ph.D. student in anthropology at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, under the supervision of professor Colin Scott. My project aims to support the protection of Indigenous territories in the Amazon by exploring the differences between the Colombian development model and the Indigenous alternatives to development. By doing this, my research is looking for a way to improve the relationships and the communication between the national government and the Indigenous communities in Colombia.
For this reason, I will document different opinions on public policies and the importance of different local everyday practices such as hunting, fishing and gathering as well as public political and religious activities.

I remember that (in the last meeting or in the last conversation) you said something like _____.

Would you like to elaborate explain a little bit more what you meant by that affirmation? (Yes- no)

Would you authorize me to quote you in my investigation, i.e. to use your name and role in the community and specify the context in which you made that comment? (Yes- no)

Appendix D

Informed Oral Consent Script for government officials and ONG's representatives (Interviews)

McGill University
Department of Anthropology Postal Address Camilo Gomez
Stephen Leacock Building 855 Sherbrooke Street W. Tel: (514) 903-5400
McGill University Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3A 2T7 Email: Camilo.gomez@mail.mcgill.ca

My name is Camilo Gomez. I am Ph.D. student in anthropology at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, under the supervision of professor Colin Scott. This research is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada—SSHRC- and by the Social Sciences and Humanities Development internal grant (Info Ed: 74881) from McGill University. My project aims to support the protection of Indigenous territories in the Amazon by exploring the differences between the Colombian development model and the Indigenous alternatives to development. By doing this, my research is looking for a way to improve the relationships and the communication between the national government and the Indigenous communities in Colombia.

Because this study requires oral interviews and due to your role as _____ in name of the organization, I would like to have an interview with you. If you agree, I will ask you about your knowledge on the relationship between the Indigenous communities, the forest, the spirits, the national government, and the extractive industry (mining, oil, wood, fishing, etc.). Your participation is voluntary, thus you may choose not to participate in the study, to withdraw at any time, or to not answer the question that you do not wish to respond. Also your identity or your name will never be revealed to anybody in any form without your explicit authorisation. Likewise, for pedagogical purposes and only with your permission, portions of this interview may be played in conference presentations. The records will only be accessible to myself and I will be kept them under lock and key. I may use material from this research in future research.

If there are any questions you may ask me directly. I am giving you the information of my supervisor, Prof. Scott and, if you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this research study, I am also giving you the contact information of Lynda McNeil, the McGill Ethics Officer.

Do you have any questions or concerns? ? (Yes/ no)

Would you like to be interviewed? ? (Yes/ no)

Please remember that you may raise any questions or concerns at any point of the interview

Do you consent to be tape-recorded as part of the documentation of this research? ? (Yes/ no)

Do you consent to being photographed? ? (Yes/ no)

Do you consent to audio records of you being presented at academic events such as conferences, seminars and/or classes?

(Yes/ no)

Do you consent to photographs of you being presented at academic events such as conferences, seminars and/or classes?

(Yes/ no)

I, _____ _____as representative of _____ agree with this investigation.

Observations:

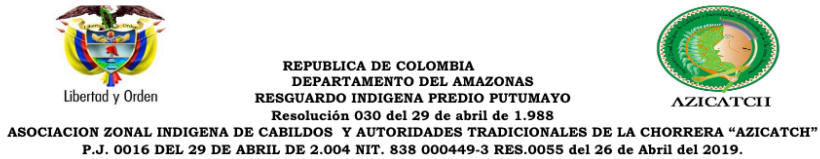Signature   Date:

Appendix E

Life Plan for the children of tobacco, coca and sweet cassava. Available at:
https://mcgill-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/camilo_gomez_mail_mcgill_ca/EZLUcZcRt8xAi0KO4Hg7lsUBNax6Iikhjl5GOkUb7LY6Wg?e=4%3aKKfZrQ&at=9

Appendix F

La Chorrera, Resguardo Predio Putumayo, Amazonas, Colombia
Agosto 26 del 2019

A quien corresponda:

Ref.: **Carta de presentación y Autorización para adelantar contactos en nombre de AZICACH**.

Cordial saludo.

Por medio de la presente y de manera formal yo: **BARTOLOME ATTAMA TOIKEMUY** con cedula de ciudadanía 15.878.075 de Leticia, en calidad de **PRESIDENTE** de la Asociación Zonal Indígena de Cabildos y Autoridades Tradicionales de la Chorrera – **AZICATCH, PRESENTO Y AUTORIZO** a **CAMILO GÓMEZ,** candidato a doctorado de la universidad de McGill, a adelantar contactos de índole académico y cultural con organizaciones nacionales e internacionales, para apoyar los objetivos y metas del plan de Vida de los Hijos del Tabaco, la Coca y la Yuca Dulce que- son los pueblos indígenas del centro de la amazonia uitoto m+n+ka, bora, okaina y muinane representados por esta asociación.

Cordialmente.

BARTOLOME ATTAMA TOIKEMUY
C.C.:15.878.075 de Leticia
PRESIDENTE DE AZICATCH
Celular:3208113059

(Authorization to hold meetings and make alliances, granted by AZICATCH)

Appendix G

Legal Framework on Indigenous Reservations. Available at: https://mcgill-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/camilo_gomez_mail_mcgill_ca/EQRIFGv88JtGtvhHAZq3oMABqf2BqJ1IWCkbJv4tQcf3cA?e=4%3a4hXzZK&at=9

Appendix H

Questions formulated within the 2018 National Population Census – CNPV. Available at: https://mcgill-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/camilo_gomez_mail_mcgill_ca/EacfNPFDP6FAnKr0x71sFdIB-d1kdSH39Fok0rEovPY0lQ?e=4%3ahUIGIc&at=9