



**Geographies of Marronage:  
Dispossession and Resistance in the Last Palenque**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

**The University of Sheffield**

**Faculty of Social Sciences**

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**October 2018**



Al *Palenque* de Benkos Biohó  
A aquellos que resisten contra la injusticia.  
A mi madre.

For the *Palenque* of Benkos Biohó  
For those who struggle against injustice.  
For my mother.

## Acknowledgements

Firstly, my immense gratitude goes to the University of Sheffield for granting me the *University Prize Scholarship* that allowed me to pursue this doctoral degree. I also sincerely thank the Society of Latin America Studies (SLAS), The Postgraduate Researcher Experience Programme, and the Culture, Space and Difference Research Cluster for supporting my work during these years.

I am indebted to the community of San Basilio de Palenque and research participants for sharing their stories of dispossession, resistance and ancestral knowledge on territory. This thesis is for you. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors Dr Eric N. Olund and Dr Daniel Hammett for their guidance, critical feedback and motivation during my doctoral study and related research. I would like to thank Dr Adam Whitworth for his encouragement as a tutor in the initial stage of this doctoral study. I am grateful to Professor Jean Grugel for initially guiding me during my doctorate.

My sincere thanks go to Professors María Cristina Navarrete, Jaime Arocha, Maguemati Wabgou and Alfonso Cassiani Herrera, Aiden Salgado, Bernardino Pérez, my research assistant, and the former president of the community of San Basilio de Palenque, Nicasio Reyes Salgado, who provided me with an opportunity to discuss the black geographies of Colombia critically and from a Latin American perspective.

I would also further like to express my gratitude to Barry Hunter and Carlos Salinas from Watertight Solutions Ltd: Water, Land and People (Canada) who guided me as a human rights lawyer into the land of participatory mapping. I am grateful for the support and kind observations on my research made by Dr Gordon Barret.

I thank the university staff, my *D5* fellows and university colleagues for the stimulating discussions and for all the support I have had in the last four years. Additionally, I thank my colleagues in the Attorney General's Office in Argentina. In particular, I am grateful to the Federal Prosecutor, Dr Rodolfo Marcelo Molina, for his constant encouragement and support.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my ancestors, parents, sisters, nephews, brothers-in-law, my uncle, and friends for helping me throughout this doctoral journey. *Yo no soy sin ustedes.*

## Abstract

This thesis explores the past and present geographies of dispossession and resistance of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean, constructed and reproduced by community practices since colonial times. The origin of these practices is in the strategy of slave resistance of marronage, the process of enslaved people escaping cities, large farms and mines and building communities (specifically *palenques* in the Colombian context) away from their owners. The primary study site, San Basilio de Palenque, was such a *palenque*, and it still exists today as a town of descendants of runaway slaves located in northern Colombia. Qualitative research methods were implemented in this study, including interviews, participatory mapping and archival research in the *Archivo General de la Nación de Bogotá* [The National General Archive of Bogotá], the *Archivo Histórico de Cartagena de Indias* [The Historical Archive of Cartagena de Indias], and the *Archivo General de Indias* [The General Archive of Indies] in Seville, Spain. Furthermore, legal analysis —black-letter, socio-legal and critical studies analysis— was conducted on relevant Colombian legislation. The overall aim of the thesis is to contribute an empirical study as a basis for addressing literature on counter-hegemonic territories that resist state-based territorialities in Latin America by expanding what qualifies as such, and scholarship on how the law can become an instrument of precarity and territorial dispossession by showing how even the most well-intended law can produce dispossession.

This thesis develops the concept of geographies of marronage of San Basilio de Palenque as what I call entangled territories of resistance under an ongoing cycle of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. This research explores the colonial *palenque* as the origin of the region's geographies of marronage by focusing on its transformation from a clandestine site to a *poblacion*, a part of the colonial regime. A *poblacion* was a place for realising freedom but, at the same time, a way of isolating blackness in the Colombian Caribbean. However, this new territory rapidly proved precarious, and it has suffered violent deterritorialisation over the course of over two centuries. In response, in recent times many of San Basilio de Palenque's residents have migrated beyond its borders to form new communities elsewhere, that follow the logic of counter-hegemonic territories. As a strategy of reterritorialisation, these migratory communities – called in this research as urban *palenques* and refugee-like *palenques*- along with the town -the mother-

*palenque*- have produced entangled territories of resistance. This spatial production—past and present—follows a recurring logic of marronage through which *Palenqueros* seek freedom, autonomy and belonging through producing tangible and intangible territories of resistance under conditions of precarity. This research also analyses whether the Colombian land rights discourse protects or endangers these *Palenquero* entangled territories. The analysis shows how this legal discourse has erased centuries of marronage in the area by legally reconfiguring Maroon spaces as empty, but, at the same time, occupied by Afro-descendants, neither preventing nor reversing land grabbing, but substantially accelerating its appropriation by outsiders.

In summary, research findings demonstrate that the colonial logic of marronage is still the basis of current community strategies of reterritorialisation to resist land grabbing. This thesis also evidences how the Colombian state's land rights discourse is the force behind the territorial dispossession suffered by San Basilio de Palenque by portraying its geographies as precarious, with neither owners nor history, yet occupied by descendants of Maroon people, while acting as a factor of on-the-ground territorialisation in favour of the white elites.

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# CHAPTER 1: Introduction

## 1. Introduction

This thesis investigates the geographies of marronage of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean. These geographies encompass territories built by tangible and intangible practices of community resistance against dispossession. In colonial times, marronage was the act of African men and women escaping from slavery in the cities, large farms, and mines to establish autonomous communities in remote and inaccessible areas. These communities in Colombia were known as *palenques*. Findings in this thesis indicate that the ancestral logic of marronage, which was creating space (or *palenques*) to find belonging, is ever-present in the current strategies of reterritorialisation developed by the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María. Furthermore, this thesis analyses the relationship between the Colombian land rights discourse and Afro-descendant territories. My findings show that this discourse has functioned as a legal trap that co-opts communities and their strategies of mobilisation for land restitution while facilitating and legitimising a status of dispossession.

The geographies of marronage studied in this thesis are explored through the case of San Basilio de Palenque, also known as the *Palenque*. The *Palenque* is a town of approximately 7,500 descendants of runaway slaves. San Basilio de Palenque is located in the northern part of Colombia in an area called Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean (Ministerio de Cultura de la República de Colombia and Cartografía de la Diversidad., 2010). The *Palenque* is considered the last Maroon community in this country (Navarrete Peláez, 2008). I visited this community for the first time in November 2015 when land restitution was a prominent topic of public debate: agrarian reform and land restitution were part of the agenda of the peace negotiation between the government and the FARC-EP (the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army). This peace negotiation was one of many attempts since the 1980s to put an end to the war that has been taking place since 1940s in Colombia (Bouvier 2006; Gomez-Suarez 2017). In November 2016, the government and the FARC-EP reached a peace agreement that included the right of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities to obtain restitution of land lost as a consequence of the war (Gobierno Nacional Colombiano and FARC-EP, 2016). The land has been at the roots of the armed conflict in Colombia between

the armed forces, guerrilla, paramilitary groups and drug-traffickers (Deas, 2014)<sup>1</sup>. Land restitution without reproducing and reinforcing old and new inequalities is also at the roots of a sustainable peacebuilding process in this country (Melo, 2015; McKay, 2018a).

The dispute among illegal and legal armed groups to control territories has caused a humanitarian crisis that includes forced displacement along with chronic poverty, extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances and sexual violence (International Crisis Group Latin America, 2003; Garay Salamanca, 2009). As explained in detail in the following chapters, Afro-descendant communities in Colombia are the ones to have been most affected by forced displacement (Corte Constitucional de Colombia, 2009; Rodríguez Garavito, Alfonso Sierra and Cavelier Adarve, 2009).

San Basilio de Palenque as an Afro-descendant community became caught up in the armed conflict and did not escape from this nexus of armed violence and territorial dispossession. However, despite the forced displacement, the *Palenque* has developed strategies of resistance analysed in this thesis. As an activist scholar, I intended my research in the *Palenque* to contribute to its community agenda for land restitution. In the 1970s, Fals Borda, a Colombian sociologist and pioneer of participatory action research, encouraged researchers to reduce the distance between themselves and the communities, thus developing a more equal and non-exploitative relationship (Fals Borda 2011; Oslender 2013). My initial plan was for my doctoral findings on territorial dispossession to be used as evidence in a community legal strategy for land restitution in the context of the 2016 peace agreement.

However, as my research progressed, I firstly discovered the lack of a geographical analysis of the past and present patterns of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of San Basilio de Palenque. Secondly, I found out that San Basilio de Palenque was not a single territory but many, which were built by its members after migrating (in some cases, forcibly) to other places. Thirdly, I understood that the land lost due to the armed conflict was less significant in terms of quantity but, in fact, the most difficult to recover, and the reason for this is related to the traumatic and violent loss experienced by the community, as explained further in this thesis. Finally, a territorial demarcation made by the Colombian state in 2012 under the land rights

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<sup>1</sup> Unequal distribution of land triggered the appearance of left-wing guerrilla groups that agitated for agrarian reform since the 1970s against elites in power (Rivas Nieto and Rey García, 2008). Right-wing private militias (or paramilitary forces) along with the Colombian armed forces have tried to counter these guerrilla groups (Pécaut and González, 1997; Grajales, 2011). Drug trafficking is another dynamic that has become entwined with the armed conflict during the last decades, increasing the level of violence in the country (Pécaut, 2000; Estrada Gallego, 2009).

discourse which was to be the basis for restitution turned out to be the most detrimental action in the history of the *Palenque*.

I realised then that achieving territorial justice for San Basilio de Palenque meant uncovering a silent process of deterritorialisation based on a state discourse of racialisation of its geographies since colonial times to the present day. This realisation urged me to leave behind the false certainty of the law and to search for new strategies that connected with the ancestral logic of marronage. Linking with the logic of marronage of the *Palenque* implies capitalising on the traces of the fight against slavery in colonial times which are still alive in the oral tradition, tangible and intangible community practices, and historical records that are in colonial archives. The match between oral tradition, community practices and the archive not only deepens our knowledge about the geographies of marronage of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean, which is the aim of this thesis, but serves as the foundation for a long-term strategy for achieving territorial reparation for San Basilio de Palenque.

## **2. Why study the Geographies of Marronage of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María?**

The “other Colombia” (Serje 2007:38) - the non-white Colombia hidden beyond the mountain chain of the Andes, finds itself in a process of continuous loss – not only of lives taken by the state, paramilitary and corporate violence but also of territories lost through violent appropriation. Along with the indigenous reserves, this Colombia also includes territories inhabited by Afro-descendants (or black geographies), which have been exposed to territorial dispossession since colonial times.

Afro-descendants are estimated to number 10 million people (United Nations 2012), approximately 20% of Colombia’s total population (United Nations 2017).<sup>2</sup> Despite being the most academically and politically visible Afro-descendants in Colombia, those who live rurally in the Pacific region make up only 29.5% of the total Black population (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, 2011). The rest, approximately 70% of the Afro-descendants, live in the following regions of Colombia and predominantly in urban areas (Hoffmann, 2002): Urabá Chocó, Antioquia-Córdoba, Norte del Cauca-Sur del Valle, Bajo

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<sup>2</sup> Colombia’s total population was estimated in 48,229,000 by 2017 (United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2017).

Cauca Antioquia-Córdoba-Sucre, Caldense, Norte del Valle and the islands of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina (Centro de Investigaciones y Documentación Socioeconómica, 2009). The *Raizales* live on the islands of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina. They are estimated in 19,399 (Abello Vives and Mow, 2008). Both the *Raizales* and the communities living in the Pacific region hold a particular legal status that is explained further in this introduction.

In the Pacific region, during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, enslaved Africans and their enslaved descendants were left by their owners to seek accommodation around the mines where they were exploited as a labour force. Despite being enslaved, some of them were able to buy land and create family groups and a sense of belonging along with indigenous communities (Romero Vergara 2017). For the case of the Pacific, Escobar (2008) articulates the identity of these communities based on a rural and ‘ecological’ mode of life that produces an *indigenised* conception of blackness, as alluded to earlier. This has had important political consequences. As explained in more detail later, the black communities living along the Pacific Ocean obtained the recognition of their land rights in the 1991 Constitution, which divided the Afro-descendant communities in the country between those located in the Pacific region and ‘the rest’, thereby creating a legal hierarchy that still causes tensions within the Black Social Movement. This land rights discourse deployed by the Colombian State has reinforced a stereotype that all black communities are rural and indigenised (Wade, 1993, 1995, 1996, 2002, 2009). This stereotype obscures, for instance, the presence of black communities in urban areas and black activism in the cities (Wade, 2008), as this thesis will explore in the case of *Palenquero* communities in Cartagena de Indias.

This thesis will focus on the under-represented and under-researched Maroon communities of the Colombian Caribbean. These are communities of descendants of escaped slaves from cities, large farms and mines, who gained autonomy over their territories after war and negotiations with the colonial authorities during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The production of these territories raised a particular identity, the *Cimarrona*, based on *cimarronaje* [marronage] as an active resistance against oppression. In the latest figures available, it was estimated in 2005 that approximately 1,130,000 Afro-descendants live in the region (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, 2011).

My subject of study is San Basilio de Palenque. San Basilio de Palenque is one of these areas despoiled by white elites and disregarded by both academia (Valencia Peña, 2011) and the law,

because its territorial identity as a place of runaway slaves or Maroons [*Cimarrones*] has made it fall sharply into a pattern of invisibility (Price, 1983). During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, for Maroons, territory was synonymous with redress for uprootedness and freedom from captivity. African slaves developed different strategies to resist domination (Price 1973; Burton 1997; Gutiérrez Azopardo 1980; Spicker 2000; Valencia Villa 2003), and one of them was marronage. As explained in the first section of this chapter, marronage was the escape from slavery and the building of communities (or *palenques*) in places inaccessible to the perpetrators of the colonial extermination campaigns (Price 1973; Navarrete Peláez 2006; McFarlane 2008; Navarrete Peláez 2008; Kars 2013). The *palenques* evolved from areas of defence to freedom (Guerrero García, 2007), and finally into autonomous territories ruled by the Maroons and recognised by the colonial regime (Navarrete Peláez, 2008).

The *palenque* is the focus of this research because it highlights the Maroons' struggle for territory in a landscape that also comprised indigenous people and Spanish invaders (Olsen, 1998). The idea that freedom would become a reality beyond the *palenques* enabled African slaves and their descendants to embrace the Colombian independence war (Gutiérrez Azopardo, 1980; de la Fuente and Gross, 2010). Nevertheless, the new-born republic and the end of slavery in 1852 in Colombia did not bring significant changes, because Afro-descendants continued living in material poverty with the stigma associated with the colour of their skin (Gutiérrez Azopardo, 1980; Minski, 2011). They were denied by a society that started to recognise its roots in indigenous culture and its European legacy as modernity (Arocha, 1998). Their territories became characterised as exotic and wild by the white elites in power (Serje, 2007), and the Maroons' tangible connection with their territories and their rule over them were ignored by state institutions (Comisión de Estudios sobre la Violencia en Colombia, 1987; Arocha, 1998). Furthermore, this characterisation has legitimised several cycles of violent dispossession by various non-state actors over the course of the community's history, as detailed further in the thesis.

The new Constitution of 1991 was a turning point in the formal recognition of the Afro-descendants as citizens of the multicultural Colombian State (Arocha, 1998; Wade, 2009). The Constitution recognised land rights for two Afro-descendant groups: firstly, the black communities living in the riverine areas of the Pacific Ocean (also known as the black communities of the Pacific Ocean) (Wade 2009) were given legal recognition due to the biodiversity present in this geographical area (Rivas, Hurtado Saa and Agudelo, 2000; Asher and Ojeda, 2009); and secondly, the *Raizales* of the islands of San Andrés, Providencia and

Santa Catalina were also legally recognised because of their particular history of colonisation, *mestizaje*, religion, language and geographical position away from continental Colombia (Burgos Guzmán, 2003).

Territorial reparations for the Afro-descendants in Colombia have been seen in these two cases of legal recognition (Arocha Rodríguez and Moreno Tovar, 2007). Nevertheless, these so-called reparations have not included all of these communities; the *Palenque* and other Afro-descendant communities were left behind by a property land rights discourse which makes them invisible and does not embrace the significance of their territories and the connection with their people. This lacuna in the law led these ‘legally forgotten’ Afro-descendant communities to believe that it was necessary to gain a legal entitlement to protect their territories. As explained in the following chapters, this is the legal trap that co-opts the Afro-descendants while territorially dispossessing them. Agnew and Oslender (2010) and Bryan (2012) have pointed out that land rights discourse promoted by states has been a way of interfering in indigenous and black territories in Latin America, in regions such as the Pacific Ocean area of Colombia and lowland Bolivia. However, we still know very little about whether this discourse protects or dispossess Afro-descendant territories in this continent. This research aims to reveal the function of the land rights discourse and its relationship with the demand for territorial justice for San Basilio de Palenque. This analysis may have possible implications for the justification of territorial rights of other Afro-descendant communities across Latin America. As this research will suggest, this justification needs to be constructed separately from the logic of property rights discourse and, instead, be based on past slavery, uprootedness and home-making in new geographies.

No significant geographical research has been done about the past and present community of San Basilio de Palenque and, therefore, this research fills that gap empirically and theoretically. My study draws mainly on anthropological and historical investigations about the *Palenque* and different theoretical concepts -namely, dispossession, resistance, and *precarisation* of territories- that enabled me to embrace the patterns of deterritorialisation and resistance developed by the community. My empirical findings were obtained through six months of fieldwork in the town of San Basilio de Palenque, the forced displaced communities of *La Pista* and *Rafael de La Bonguita*, and the city of Cartagena de Indias, from November 2015 to April 2016 and during July 2017. Figure 1 shows these study areas. *Rafael de La Bonguita* is a settlement within the town of San Basilio de Palenque, and therefore, it is not pinpointed in the map.



During these periods, I conducted interviews, community-based mapping, and archival research based on a participatory approach. I also did archival research in the *Archivo General de la Nación de Bogotá* [the National General Archive of Bogota], the *Archivo Histórico de Cartagena de Indias* [the Historical Archive of Cartagena de Indias], *Archivo General de Indias* [the General Archive of the Indies] in Seville, and the *Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi* [the Geographical Institute Agustín Codazzi] during short visits in 2015 and 2016. The use of participatory methods of data collection is coherent with my positionality as an activist scholar and a *mestiza* female researcher doing doctoral studies in Afro-descendant communities in the Colombian Caribbean.

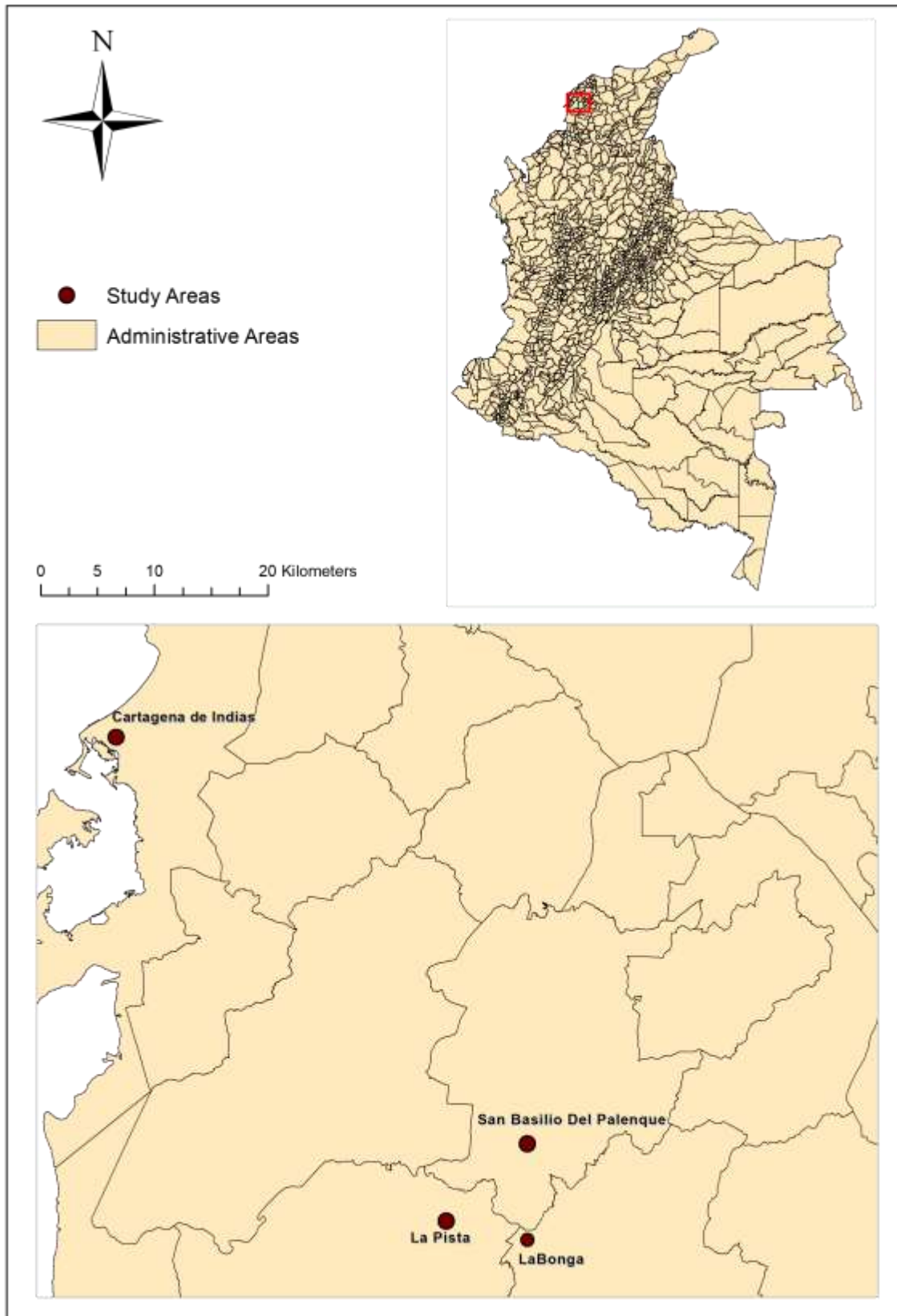


Figure 1. Map of the study areas

### 3. Some Definitions

As is apparent in the research context above, this thesis utilises concepts that are contested in the literature, namely, race, territory and resistance. These require some clarification of how they are conceptualised here and used to underscore perspectives of the Afro-descendant communities of the Colombian Caribbean. ‘Race’ has multiple definitions (Haney López, 1994; Dennis, 2013; Hill, 2017). For instance, following anti-essentialist approaches, Nash (2003:639) conceptualises it as “a naturalized hierarchy of biologically distinctive human groups” that has been deconstructed by also exploring processes of racialization which place individuals and groups within racial categories and have material effects in terms of the unequal distribution of power and wealth.” This is echoed by Vasquez Heilig’s definition of *racism* as “the inequitable racial hierarchy that governs resource distribution” (Vasquez Heilig et al. 2012:407). Gilmore conceptualises racism more pointedly as “the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death” (Wilson Gilmore, 2007:28). Gilmore’s exploration of California’s carceral geography shows one way in which the “constructed nature of race” is inherently spatial (Price 2010:148).

Race, racism and racialisation tend to be defined in Geography from Global North perspectives. Peter Wade’s (2008) definition of race for the case of Latin American countries is particularly useful here because it highlights particular elements that recur in this research on Colombia. Accordingly, Wade (2008:177) conceptualises race as a “social construction” that produces mixture, as well as discrimination and violence against indigenous and black identities. Whiteness and mixedness are associated with high status and development in Latino societies that are invested in the European aspects of their origins to the exclusion of the indigenous and the African. Thus, explicit proximity to *Europeanness* (not just whiteness) in terms of ancestry culture, is a crucial aspect of defining race, including blackness, in Colombia. But the social category of race has other particularities in this study.

As with the definitions of Gilmore and others, violence is an essential element of Wade’s concept of race. For an analytical framework to expand upon the violence of racism resulting from the Latin American investment in whiteness and mixedness as *Europeanness*, this dissertation utilises the multidimensional concept of violence developed by Galtung (2016), which is explained in detail in Chapter 2. This concept includes the relegation of certain groups to second-class citizenship as a form of direct violence, a process which can be seen in the historical treatment of Afro-descendants in Colombia as slaves and/or dangerous Maroons (as explained in Chapter 5 for the case of San Basilio de Palenque). Making Afro-descendants

invisible in Colombian society was also a form of violence exercised against them. One indication being that discussions about blackness did not appear in Colombian academia until the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Wade, 2008). This invisibility prompted Wade (2008) to define blackness as the *denied* element of the racial landscape in Colombia. As noted previously, blackness was associated in Colombia's racialised landscapes with certain geographies in the country, such as lower-elevation and tropical areas populated with people with dark skin defined as lacking morality or culture (Restrepo, 2007). Through the association of race and place, the idea of *territorio* became an essential element of specific Afro-descendant identities in Colombia, as important to black communities in their own way as to indigenous communities (part of the 'indigenisation' of blackness noted by Wade (1993, 1995, 1996, 2002, 2009)). This contrasts with US-centric accounts of blackness in particular, which tend to define blackness in terms of appropriated labour in contrast to defining indigeneity in terms of appropriated land (Wilderson, III, 2010).

As with race, territory is also a contested concept in the literature. Territory has been defined both as a neutral location and a strategic geographical area crossed by power dynamics (Brighenti, 2006), a spatial and bounded container of power (Elden, 2010a). In these conceptualisations, whether neutral or not, or historical or not, territory has been mainly understood from the Western European state's perspective (Agnew, 1994). For instance, Halvorsen (2018:3) highlights that more interrogation is needed regarding the Eurocentric modern concept of territory that reduces it to "the exercise of power' by states." This thesis contributes to critiques of the traditional Eurocentric state-bounded notion of territory by drawing upon Latin American scholarship (Mañano Fernandes, 2005, 2009, 2010; Lopes de Souza, 2009, 2015; Agnew and Oslender, 2010; Bryan, 2012; Porto Gonçalves, 2012; Zibechi, 2012) that focuses on the excluded as producers of different territories that compete against state and other actors, such as white elites and armed groups, for the imposition of different patterns of socio-spatial relationships and development.

For the community of San Basilio de Palenque, the *palenque* was a form of territory that facilitated the emergence of the *Cimarrona* [Maroon] identity. Territory – the Montes de María noted previously and developed further in Chapter 4 - enabled a life away from slavery. In modern times, the production of territory in rural and urban areas has constituted a continuum that has allowed the members of San Basilio de Palenque to resist territorial dispossession and other forms of racial violence/oppression to maintain community and identity.

Resistance has been widely conceived as opposition to domination (Ortner, 1995) that can include a variety of acts from rebellion to everyday strategies (Scott, 1985; Holmes, 2007). These can range from silence (Wagner, 2012), to strategically avoiding protest (Adas, 1981), to sabotage (Scott, 1985). Haynes and Prakash (1992) propose embracing power and resistance as changing, fluid and overlapping elements. Seymour (2006:305) defines resistance “in a context of differential power relationships,” and therefore, this notion “refers to intentional, and hence conscious, acts of defiance or opposition by a subordinate individual or group of individuals against a superior individual or set of individuals. Such acts are counter-hegemonic but may not succeed in effecting change.” Furthermore, Chandra (2015:565) explains that to resist is “to minimally apprehend the conditions of one’s subordination, to endure or withstand those conditions in everyday life, and to act with sufficient intention and purpose to negotiate power relations from below in order to rework them in a more favourable or emancipatory direction.” “Resistance as negotiation” with “structures of power and domination” (Chandra, 2015: 565-566), especially the state, is an aspect present in the practices developed by San Basilio del Palenque, which are analysed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Resistance is understood in this research as tangible and intangible practices developed by the *Palenqueros* that, while opposing deterritorialisation by various forces, enabled them to produce space and belonging after multiple experiences of being uprooted. Resistance, then, is conceived here not in negative terms, but as productive of place, identity and community. More specifically for this dissertation, resistance includes practices of marronage. Practices of resistance from the colonial times to the present days, that is, ‘marronage-as-resistance’, are described in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

## **4. Thesis Structure**

My doctoral thesis has seven chapters -including Chapters 1 and 7 as Introduction and Conclusion, respectively- and three of them are empirical, answering the research questions posed in this investigation. It also comprises a chapter that describes the conceptual background and another that contains the research methods of this thesis and the positionality of the researcher.

### **Chapter 2: Conceptual Background**

The first section of this chapter reveals the lack of a significant geographical analysis of the past and present territorial dispossession and resistance of San Basilio de Palenque, while

exploring relevant research on this community, mainly from an anthropological and historical perspective. This section also examines the relationship between land rights discourse and certain forms of territories (e.g. *campesino* and indigenous), that counter the traditional understanding of territory promoted by states. It also studies how under-represented communities have resisted the interference and violence of the land rights discourse over their territories. The second section analyses literature on community places as objects of forced loss, the resulting homelessness and strategies of resistance against dispossession. The last section examines how ‘precarity’ as a theory can interrogate the territorial dispossession suffered by the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María. I also explore scholarship about how legal discourse can be used as an instrument for the induced exacerbation of the vulnerability of some lives and, therefore, the ways territories can be legally transformed into a precarious state, facilitating their dispossession.

### **Chapter 3: Positionality and Methods**

This chapter explores my positionality as an activist scholar, a female investigator researching locations with high levels of violence against women, and a *mestiza* researcher analysing Afro-descendant geographies. I reveal the privileges and obstacles faced in the field. This chapter then describes the qualitative and other methods used in my research design including interviews, mapping and archival research, all of them conducted in different locations within Colombia and in Seville, Spain. In accordance with my positionality as an activist scholar, my methods were implemented using a participatory approach, including the archival research. Due to some communities where I did research living in internal forced displacement, I discuss ethics and measures implemented to minimise re-victimisation based on my experience as a human rights lawyer.

### **Chapter 4: The *Palenque***

This chapter analyses the *palenque* in colonial times from a historiographic perspective based on colonial records found in the General Archive of the Indies in Seville, Spain, and the National General Archive of Bogotá. It revisits, (sometimes) contradicts, and expands on previous historiographic research developed mainly by Maria Cristina Navarrete Peláez (2008) and Alfonso Cassiani Herrera (2014b) about San Basilio de Palenque during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This chapter also fills a gap in the literature mentioned before by adding a geographical approach to the *Palenque*. Accordingly, this chapter proposes a new way of understanding this rebel community that focuses on its transformation from a clandestine site to a *población*, a

part of the colonial regime. A *poblacion* was a place for realising freedom but, at the same time, a way of isolating blackness in the Colombian Caribbean. This chapter has shown that the record strongly suggests that the liberation of all the slaves in the Province of Cartagena was an ambition of the *Palenque*, at least, until their own survival through their incorporation as a *poblacion* into the colonial system took priority. Furthermore, in this chapter I navigate the strategies developed by the African slaves and their descendants -some of them analysed for the first time- for redressing uprootedness, creating a home in new geographies, and gaining freedom 138 years before the rest of the slaves in Colombia. By understanding the colonial *Palenque* as the origin of the region's geographies of marronage, this chapter sets the foundation for analysing the current geographies of dispossession and resistance of San Basilio de Palenque.

### **Chapter 5: Entangled *Palenques***

This chapter delves into the contemporary geographies of marronage of San Basilio de Palenque as entangled territories that resist dispossession. This network of 'entangled territories of resistance' includes the town of San Basilio de Palenque as the mother-community or the *Palenque*, migratory communities built in the city of Cartagena de Indias (also known as urban *palenques* in this thesis), and in rural areas because of forced displacement (also known as 'refugee-like *palenques*' in this thesis). The analysis of all these entangled *palenques* fills the gap in the study of San Basilio de Palenque by providing a geographical analysis of its dynamics of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. This study also empirically advances the Latin American literature on counter-hegemonic (e.g. *campesino* and indigenous) territories, that challenge the traditional understanding of territory (Mançano Fernandes, 2005, 2009, 2010; Bryan, 2012; Zibechi, 2012; Haesbaert, 2013; Lopes de Souza, 2015; Meek, 2015; Courtheyn, 2018; Halvorsen, 2018). Furthermore, this entangled way of experiencing and living the territory allows for the identification of different community practices to gain space, belonging and freedom in host places. The idea of the colonial *palenque* nurtures these practices, overcoming loss of place and racial discrimination. This study of the urban *palenques* and the refugee-like *palenques* expands empirically on debates about the construction of spaces of belonging by migratory communities in receiving societies (O'Reilly 2000; Doraï 2002; Willis & Yeoh 2002; Ehrkamp 2005; Ehrkamp 2006; Ehrkamp 2013; Rivera-Salgado 2014), but in this case, the context is one of internal migration at the national scale. It also empirically expands the literature on geographies of absence and violence (Porteous, 1988; Smith, 1994, 2000; Hewitt, 2001; Porteous and Smith, 2001; Oslender, 2008; Parr and Fyfe, 2012; Parr *et*

*al.*, 2015), but focusing on survival after the use of violence in these territories of resistance. This chapter sets the scene for analysing the interaction of these entangled territories of resistance with the Colombian land rights discourse.

## **Chapter 6: The Legal Trap**

This chapter analyses how the Colombian land rights discourse deployed by state on the protection of Afro-descendant territories is the force behind their dispossession, by legally constructing them as vacant and precarious despite schizophrenically equally recognising the presence of Afro-descendants in their lands. This legal construction makes possible their appropriation by outsiders as a factor of on-the-ground reterritorialisation in favour of the powerholders. This case study contributes to the literature on imaginative geographies (Gregory, 1995; Said, 2000; Torre, 2010; Tuathail, 2010; Fields, 2012; Velásquez Runk, 2015) that explains how space can be crafted by legal and non-legal discourses to exclude subalterns from or suppress them within their own places (Elden, 2010b; Bennett, 2016). Whereas other legislation intentionally aims the dispossession of these groups, for instance, Israeli legislation regarding Palestine (Fields, 2012), the Colombian land rights pursue, in principle, the protection of black territories. Nevertheless, it ended up having the same effect, dispossession. This finding shows that property rights discourse is not reliable for the protection of the subalterns because it follows the logic of colonialism. This colonial logic promoted precarity for racialised people contradicting the aims of marronage, which is the achievement of belonging and security necessary to exist as people. The analysis on the effect of the Colombian land rights discourse also empirically advances literature on the induced exacerbation of vulnerability (precarity) by the implementation of the law in the case of black territories (Gregory, 2006, 2007; Vélez-Torres, 2016; Burridge and Gill, 2017; Mountz, 2018). This chapter also expands the examples of cultural and structural violence developed by Galtung (2016) by studying legal asymmetries present in the land rights discourse that bring segmentation of the mobilisation of the Afro-descendants for land restitution. The chapter also aims to propose the foundation for a new form of justification of the right to territory of the Afro-descendant communities in Latin America, separate from a property rights discourse and indigenised discourse. The geographies of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean cannot be embraced by a property rights discourse that understands territory as a commodity and causes dispossession, while also having historically treated the very people it is meant to protect as commodities as well. Therefore, their protection requires



looking back at the history of marronage and the intrinsic link between territory, freedom and survival.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusions**

The concluding chapter presents the academic contributions of this research and some avenues for future investigation. This thesis provides an analysis of the past and present patterns of dispossession and resistance of the geographies of marronage of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean. This research also empirically expands academic debates regarding counter-hegemonic territories that contest state-based territorialities in Latin America and the role of the law as an instrument of precarity for the case of black territorialities in the Colombian Caribbean. This research for the first time addresses academically how property rights as a legal discourse are potentially particularly dangerous for the case of Maroon geographies of San Basilio de Palenque. After acknowledging the violent capacity of land rights for Maroon territories, I envision the protection of these territories by delving into the tensions (without suppressing them) of different legal discourses including property rights over lands, the right to territory and the rights of nature itself. Furthermore, this thesis develops the concept of geographies of marronage as entangled territories of resistance in the Colombian Caribbean under dynamics of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation since colonial times to the present day. In terms of avenues of future research, I propose deepening the analysis of the entangled territories of resistance by adding, for instance, the study of *Palenquero* communities in Panama and Venezuela and other *pueblos negros* [black towns] located in the Montes de María that could be linked with former *palenques* erased by colonial extermination campaigns during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. We need to know more about the impact of land rights in other Maroon territories in the Americas and the Caribbean and different types of blackness in Colombia to destabilise hierarchies among communities and to deconstruct essentialism that renders invisible the presence of different identities buried in a fixed notion of blackness, a rural and indigenised model of being Afro-descendants.

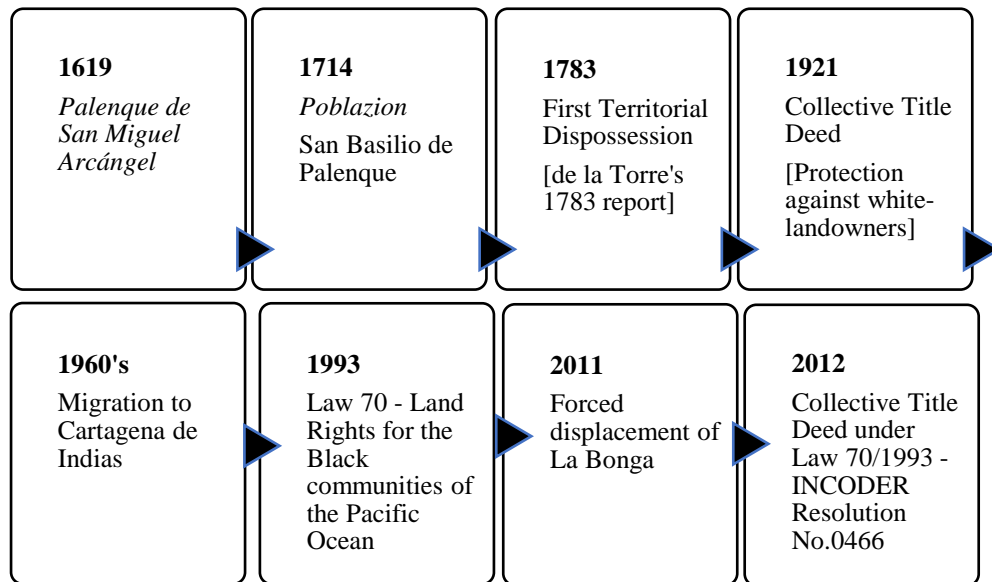


Figure 2. Timeline of the *Palenque's* history

## CHAPTER 2: Conceptual Background

This chapter begins by describing the existing academic knowledge about San Basilio de Palenque, which serves as the foundation for its geographical analysis. Secondly, this chapter explores different areas of study for approaching geographies of marronage of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María. The conceptual problematic that emerges from this literature review is two-fold: how the Maroon spaces of San Basilio del Palenque were constructed by the powerholders as precarious to facilitate its appropriation, and how this community has resisted by developing counter-hegemonic and entangled territories based on the ancestral logic of marronage. A single approach cannot address the patterns of territorial dispossession experienced by the *Palenque* and its mobilisation for reparation. Therefore, this literature review is more thematic than disciplinary in order to more clearly frame the existing state of academic knowledge on the research topic (Ward, Hourse and Hamer, 2009; Oliver, 2012). First comes the existing scholarship on San Basilio de Palenque itself, which is mainly limited to the disciplines of Anthropology and History. Along with existing scholarship on the *Palenque*, section 1 includes a discussion drawn from areas such as Legal and Political Geographies, Latin American Studies and Socio-Legal Studies focusing on the violence that inheres in the legal construction of private property, a state discourse that has significantly impacted San Basilio de Palenque. The section also includes a discussion of various conceptualisations of territorialising resistance to such state-based violence, significantly drawing from Latin American scholarship that in some respects contests ways the state is often framed in Anglophone Geography. Section 2 shifts conceptual register to place and agency in loss from areas such as Black Studies, Conflict Resolution Studies, Moral Geographies, and Political Philosophy in order to analyse the strategies of reterritorialisation developed by San Basilio de Palenque to counter deterritorialisation. Section 3 brings together discussions about precarity from areas such as Legal and Political Geographies and Political Philosophy, in order to analyse how spatialities of precarity were legally constructed in San Basilio de Palenque. The study of these multidisciplinary literatures helped me to think *geographically* about San Basilio de Palenque.

## 1. The *Palenque*

A geographical analysis of the past and present *Palenque* is missing. This thesis provides an empirical and academic geographical study of this community with the aim of filling this gap in the literature. Nevertheless, San Basilio de Palenque has been an object of analysis from other disciplines. For instance, scholars in anthropology (Cross & de Friedemann 1979; Pérez Palomino 2002), humanities (de Friedemann 1991; Del Rosario de Avila Torres & Simarra Obeso 2012; Aldana 2013), genetics (Martínez *et al.*, 2013; Ansari-Pour *et al.*, 2016; Schwegler, 2016), history (Navarrete 2001; Navarrete Peláez 2008; Navarrete 2014; Cassiani Herrera 2014b), and linguistics (Bickerton & Escalante 1970; de Granda 1971; de Friedemann & Patiño Roselli 1983; Moñino 2017; Schwegler 2017) have all informed my current understanding of the *Palenque* and its residents. This dissertation primarily draws from historical and anthropological literature about the *Palenque* to build its conceptual framework.

The first accounts of the colonial history of San Basilio de Palenque were part of the oral tradition narrated by the elders in Cartagena de Indias (Cross and de Friedemann, 1979). The novel, *Historia, leyendas y tradiciones de Cartagena* [History, legends and traditions of Cartagena] captured this oral tradition. Camilo Delgado, under the fictitious name of Dr. Arcos, wrote this novel describing the kidnapping of an African king, Benkos Biohó or Domingo Biohó, his wife, queen Wiwa, his son, prince Sando Biohó, and his daughter, princess Orika. The Biohó family was subsequently enslaved in Cartagena de Indias. Along with other slaves, they escaped from slavery and built the first *palenque* or community of black rebels outside of Cartagena de Indias (Cross and de Friedemann, 1979).

The pursuit of freedom and preventing the romance of princess Orika with a Spanish captain were the reasons that spurred her father, Benkos Biohó, to build autonomous territories. Further, in the book, the author described the war that took place from 1600 to 1796 between the colonial regime and the black rebels or *Cimarrones* [Maroons]. The war ended with the assassination of the last descendant of the black leader, Benkos Biohó, the extinction of his people and, in the author's view, the commencement of tranquillity in Cartagena de Indias (Cross and de Friedemann, 1979).

The work of Maria Cristina Navarrete Peláez (2001; 2008; 2014) challenged the legends of San Basilio de Palenque as recounted by Dr Arcos, which described the destruction of the Maroon communities in the Montes de María and the rise of Cartagena de Indias in colonial times.

Navarrete Peláez provides a historiographic account of the Maroon struggles against the colonial regime and the survival of the *Palenque de San Miguel Arcángel* through its conversion into the town of San Basilio de Palenque in 1714.<sup>3</sup>

Navarrete Peláez analyses the history of this Maroon community from 1580 to 1714 based on archival records found in the *Archivo General de Indias* [The General Archive of Indies], the *Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid* [The Historical and National Archive of Madrid], and the *Archivo General de la Nación de Bogotá* [The General Archive of the Nation of Bogotá].

Alfonso Cassiani Herrera (2014b), a historian from San Basilio de Palenque, has produced a historiographic work of his community for the same period addressed by Navarrete Peláez (17<sup>th</sup> century). His research has contributed to identifying an area where the colonial *palenque* was located during the colonial times. He provides a transcription of the peace agreement signed in 1714 between the Spaniards and the *Cimarrones* without an actual analysis of its clauses.

This thesis provides a geographical approach to the analysis of the colonial history of San Basilio de Palenque initiated by Navarrete Peláez and continued by Cassiani Herrera. Some of the records analysed by Navarrete Peláez (2008), Cassiani Herrera (2014b) and other colonial documents used in this research revisit and expand their historical analysis beyond 1714 and until 1783.

The study of San Basilio de Palenque in contemporary times came with the work of Nina de Friedemann, also known as the ethnographer of the *africanías y cimarronismos* [Africanities and marronages] in Colombia (Arocha Rodríguez, 2016). She started her anthropological work in the *Palenque* in 1974. Her research described the annexation of *Palenquero* lands by white-elite landowners in 1880 (Cross and de Friedemann, 1979). This account of the territorial dispossession of the *Palenque* in contemporary times is of particular interest for this dissertation because it shows a process of land deprivation beginning in the 1880s that continues until present times. This thesis endeavours to document and analyse the ongoing land dispossession in present times.

Along with Richard Cross, a photographer, de Friedemann (Cross and de Friedemann, 1979) explored the contemporary social and cultural structure of San Basilio de Palenque from an

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<sup>3</sup> María Cristina Navarrete (2003a) has studied the *palenques* in the Province of Cartagena de Indias and Santa Marta during the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Colombia in her book *Cimarrones y Palenques en el siglo XVII*. She also has analysed in particular the *Palenque del Limón* and the *Palenque de Matudere*, which were destroyed during the colonial wars against them by 1633 and 1693, respectively (Navarrete Peláez, 2008; Navarrete, 2011).

anthropological and visual perspective. The aim of her study was contesting black stereotypes while highlighting the social richness of black societies in Colombia. For instance, de Friedemann (Cross and de Friedemann, 1979) described the presence of *kuagros* in the community, which are groups that *Palenqueros* [members of the community of San Basilio de Palenque] join during childhood. The *kuagros* have a female component and a male component. During puberty, the *kuagro* obtains a name, a leader, and an insignia which gain the recognition of the community. *Kuagros* are rivals and compete with each other, for instance, for being the best dancers or musicians in the town. Sometimes, this competition includes physical confrontation. Marriage mostly takes place within the *kuagro*.

The work of Jesús Natividad Pérez Palomino (2002), an anthropologist from San Basilio de Palenque, expands in current times the study of the *kuagros* in the community.<sup>4</sup> Pérez Palomino describes an internal border within San Basilio de Palenque through the existence of two districts: the *barrio de arriba* [upper district] and the *barrio de abajo* [lower district], when a *kuagro* emerges in the former, another emerges in the latter. In adulthood, the *kuagros* evolve to *juntas*, which provide mainly economic support during funerary ceremonies, but without losing the social aspect of these groups.

Pérez Palomino (2002) explains how some geographical features, such as *el arroyo* [the creek] is the primary community space for social interaction, transmission of ancestral knowledge, the resolution of social and familiar conflicts and physical and spiritual cleansing. In the *arroyo*, the intimate world of the *Palenque* is exercised individually and collectively. In Pérez Palomino's words (2002:27), "everything [in the *Palenque*] stayed there [in the creek], everything is discussed there, and everything is solved there."

Restrepo and Pérez Palomino (2005) explain the different spaces of the town of San Basilio de Palenque. San Basilio de Palenque comprises the *poblado*, which is a group of around 400 houses (huts and brick houses), and the *montes* or countryside surrounding it. In the *montes*, the agricultural life of the community is nurtured, including crop-growing and cattle-rearing, mainly under the care of men. The *poblado* has a church, schools, a cemetery, the main square, and a primary health-care centre. In the *poblado*, public spaces are male-dominated, such as

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<sup>4</sup> Pérez Palomino uses for the term *kuagros* 'k' instead of 'c', as Nina de Friedemann used in her work, because 'c' is not part of the *Palenquero* alphabet.

the streets and the square. Patios and kitchens are female-dominated spaces, because women are in charge of the household and farmyard animals, such as chickens and pigs.

Studies, such as the one conducted by Nina de Friedemann in the *Palenque* in 1979 and Pérez Palomino in 2002, exposed the fact that analyses of societies of Afro-descendants in Colombia had not taken into consideration their particularities. Sometimes, they were analysed as indigenous people (Wabgou et al. 2012). The *Teoría de la Africanía* [theory of Africanity] (Wabgou et al., 2012) – also known as *Huellas de Africanía* [footprints (or traces) of Africanity] (de Friedemann, 1992a, 2000) and *Afrogenesis* [Afro-genesis] (Arocha Rodríguez, 1996)- came to highlight the presence of black communities and the existence of an African legacy in the current Colombian society (Maya Restrepo, 2000). The white elites tried to erase culturally and genetically this African heritage through such means as miscegenation (de Friedemann, 2000).

In the case of San Basilio de Palenque, scholarship underscores examples of African traces which inform daily life, such as music and the use of drums as forms of communication within the community (de Friedemann 1992; de Friedemann 2000; Arocha Rodríguez 2016). The *lumbalú* is one of the leading examples of African traces cited in the scholarship that consists of a performance that includes chants, dances and drums during burials (de Friedemann 1991a). Schwegler (1996) explains that the chants are in the *Palenquero* language but contain Bantu words from Congo.<sup>5</sup>

There is a difference between searching for traces of ‘Africa’ -as the theory of Afro-genesis pursues- and looking for traces of the colonial *palenque* in the current community. Navarrete (2003) describes the *palenques* as syncretic communities of indigenous, European and African traditions. This dissertation analyses community strategies of territorialisation developed in colonial times by the African slaves and their descendants during the process of marronage and how the current community of San Basilio de Palenque mobilises this legacy (traces) of strategies for territorial reparation.

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<sup>5</sup> *Palenquero* is a creole language spoken in San Basilio de Palenque, which “is drawn mainly from Spanish, but contains a number of items (...) which are presumably African in origin” (Bickerton and Escalante, 1970; de Granda, 1971). A recent study conducted by Schwegler (2017), which is based on linguistic and genetic findings, validates the hypothesis that sustains that the main origin of the African ancestors of San Basilio del Palenque can be found in area also known as Mayombe in the current Republic of Congo, which has Kikongo as main language. Nevertheless, he highlights the necessity of further investigation that explains the existence of words with Sub-Saharan origin that were absent in previous studies, such as, words coming from Angola and other places near Central West Africa.

One thing that a territorialisation approach underscores is that blackness is not homogenous in Colombia, and different black communities have distinct histories, geographies and identities. The theory of Afro-genesis had a continuation in the political realm when public discussions about different types of blackness started in Colombia. In the early part of the 1980s, the presidential candidate, writer and Afro-descendant, Juan Zapata Ollivela (Prescott 1996; Wade 2009; Wabgou et al. 2012), was popularly named as coming from the *negritudes* [blackness(es)] (de Friedemann, 2000). This term replaced the words ‘*negros*’ [blacks], and ‘*morenos*’ [browns] (de Friedemann, 2000) used to identify the Afro-descendants in Colombia. The term *negritudes* is reminiscent of the French student movement in the 1930s that promoted *negritude* as the qualities and values shared by all black peoples worldwide (Senghor, 1974).

The use of plural ‘*negritudes*’ instead of ‘*negritud*’ encompasses the plurality of black identities that exist within Afro-descendants as a whole. For example, the black communities living in the riverine areas of the Pacific Ocean, the *Palenqueros* from San Basilio de Palenque, the *Raizales* from the island of San Andrés y Providencia, and other Afro-descendant people living in urban centres. This dissertation contributes to expanding the analysis of a particular Afro-descendant identity –the *Cimarrona* [Maroon] in relation to its territories. *Cimarrona* is an adjective used in Colombia that implies being descendants of runaway slaves, who built their autonomous territories during the colonial times.<sup>6</sup>

In the next section, this literature review explores various conceptualisations of the relationship between land rights discourse and territories (e.g. Afro-descendant territories) that may or may not correspond to the traditional logic of territory promoted by states in order to begin to offer some analytical approaches for thinking more *geographically* about San Basilio de Palenque.

### **1.a. The Violence of Land Rights Discourse**

Law can produce spatialities of injustice, particularly for racialised groups (Delaney, 2016). Through the analysis of these spatialities, geographers such as David Delaney and Nicholas Blomley (1994, 2003) have explained in particular how property law has built violent geographies in the Western world and its colonies. For instance, Blomley analyses the production of violent geographies specifically for the case of British Columbia, Canada, in the

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<sup>6</sup> Price (1973) explains that the word ‘Maroon’ (in Spanish, *cimarrón*) was initially used to name the domestic cattle that ran into the hills in the so-called New World, lately to the indigenous people who escaped from slavery and then, to the African runaway slaves around 1530. Tardieu (2006) explains that the word ‘*cimarrón*’ also means wild plants.



late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and rural England, in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, looking in both scenarios at the Common Law system. Latin American countries, such as Colombia, mainly have the Civil Law system. Nevertheless, similarities between both legal systems can be pointed out for the purpose of the analysis of the intersections between property, law and violence.

In general terms, law has been defined as a “*closed system*” [“set of norms, practices and rules”], which is impersonal, logical, rational, and objective (Blomley, 1994:8). Therefore, law-making and law-applying are seen as benign and socially useful activities (Blomley, 1994). Geographers such as Blomley (1994, 2003, 2014), Porter (2014), Delaney (2016) and Roy (2017) critique this liberal characterisation of property as a neutral right in settler societies and beyond, as do others in socio-legal studies broadly speaking (Keenan, 2010; Butler and Athanasiou, 2013). Blomley’s critique of property’s ‘legal geographies’ is a useful entry point for framing the literature this thesis will use to understand the effect of the discourse of land rights on the protection of Afro-descendant territories in the Colombian Caribbean.

Legal (and political) geographers start from the commonplace scholarly observation that liberalism has framed violence as a phenomenon that happens outside the law (Rosenfeld, Gray Carlson and Cornell, 1992; Butler and Athanasiou, 2013). Law can be enforced but always in an authorised way by states (Elden, 2007, 2010a; Vaughan-Williams, 2008). However, Blomley (2003:121) argues “that violence plays an integral role in the legitimisation, foundation, and operation of a regime of private property,” and the geographies private property produces. Thus, violence shapes and is intrinsic to the transformation of land into private property and its particular socio-spatial relations. This argument is exemplified by the geographical concept of the frontier, a spatiality imposed by the Western world, especially in settler states such as Canada and the United States. The frontier is a contested concept because it is often understood of both as a zone of contact and cooperation but also division and conflict (Paasi, 1998, 2009; Newman, 2003; Agnew, 2008; Doeveenspeck, 2011; Johnson *et al.*, 2011; Fourny, 2013). Regarding division and conflict, Blomley (2003:125) states that “inside the frontier lie secure tenure, fee-simple ownership, and state-guarantee rights to the property. Outside lie uncertain and undeveloped entitlements, communal claims, and the absence of state guarantees to property,” and overall, as spatially-minded scholars outside legal geographies ranging from Serje (2005) in anthropology to Saldaña-Portillo (2016) in Latin American Studies also emphasise, violence. Blomley (2003:124) explains that for the West, this violent “space of the savage” exists beyond the frontier, while (Olund, 2002) shows how even when geographically contained within reservations, such space is still seen as ungovernable. It is a lawless space

with no property and is, therefore, violent. At the same time there is an active disavowal of the violence of the West regarding the dispossession caused by colonialism which produced the frontier and the reservation. Property over the indigenous peoples' lands was achieved by the combination of force and law (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013; Mackey, 2014) and later with the imposition of a type of knowledge about the world, including its people and its geographies, which is considered *impartial* and *rational* and therefore, valid and an imperial epistemology that became consolidated during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (de Sousa Santos, 2005; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2016). This further contributed to the commodification of territories and the enforcement of land rights (Hannah, 2000).

Given the mutually constitutive relation between violence and the law, Blomley (2003:129-130) argues that "violence was not only an outcome of the law, but its *realization*. The establishment of a Western liberal property regime was both the point of these violences and the means by which violent forms of regulation were enabled and reproduced. Space, property, and violence were performed simultaneously." He explains that the land system then creates exclusion and inclusion as a disciplinary power: "Legal violence is sanctioned violence" imposed on bodies through physical and non-physical (self-constraining) means (Blomley, 2003:130).

An example of this physical imposition – or type of violence - is the act of expulsion from a territory carried out by state upon an indigenous person (Olund, 2002; Blomley, 2003; Porter, 2017; Ioris, Benites and Goetttert, 2019). Blomley (2003:130) explains that "violence is also imposed on other bodies through more routine legal acts, through forms of legal inaction, or through threatened or implied means." He gives the example of violence over a woman, who is a victim of domestic abuse, as a result of a decision of the police forces of not interfering in episodes of marital violence. State inaction and bureaucracy also operates outside the domestic sphere and can negatively impact on subalterns' mobilisation for land rights (Ubink, Hoekema and Assies, 2009).

I argue such passive legal paralysation of subalterns' mobilisation is also an example of structural violence, following Galtung (1969, 1996, 2016)'s definition of violence. I put Galtung's (1996;1969; 2016) definition of violence in conversation with critiques derived from legal geographies in the thesis because it is one of the most prominent in the literature related to peace studies and conflict resolution. For Galtung, violence can be direct, structural and cultural. Direct violence impedes the satisfaction of basic human needs even when it could

have been possible to achieve them. Examples include killings, maiming, siege, misery, repression, alienation and second-class citizenship.

Structural violence implies the existence of an exploitative structure which paralyses struggles and the mobilisation of the subalterns by penetrating, segmenting, marginalising and fragmenting them. Cultural violence plays the role of legitimiser of both direct and structural violence through discourses based on religion, ideology, language, art, and academic knowledge production when the discourse dehumanises others and facilitates their exploitation. Furthermore, this typology of violence can be completed by the idea of “ecological degradation” that threatens human survival (Galtung 1996:198; Galtung 2016).

I will revisit Galtung’s definition of violence in later chapters. Regardless of the particular theorisations of violence, and despite the effects described of the intersections between law, property and violence in the West, Blomley (2014) states, with considerable ambivalence and qualification, that property in some contexts can be beneficial and progressive in the Common Law system. For instance, Courts have obliged the Canadian state to recognise the aboriginal title (right to use and possess lands) reconciling (or at least attempting to) the pre-existing indigenous sovereignty with the sovereignty of the Crown (Blomley, 2014). Blomley (2014:1293) states that “the ambiguous promise of reconciliation (...) is that settler law, an instrument of dispossession, can be used to sustain indigenous human geographies.” Under this understanding, for Blomley, property can be both an instrument of dispossession and a platform for resistance for indigenous people. Even though still asymmetric, treaties signed between settler states and first nations can remake property relations, reordering the space under the own terms of the indigenous communities.

Others, such as Anthias and Radcliffe (2015), take this ambivalence further. For the case of indigenous people in Bolivia, and generally in Latin America, Anthias and Radcliffe (2015:257) describe indigenous land rights as an “ethno-environmental fix”, which is the result of the neoliberal policies promoted by the global development institutions along with states during the 80s and the 90s with stated protective intentions towards indigenous people. To explain the notion of “ethno-environmental fix, Anthias and Radcliffe (2015:257) utilise the collective titling of indigenous land in Bolivia that legally produces “designated territories” (also known as Original Communal Lands). They also point out that these territories rely on “long-standing stereotypes of indigenous populations as relatively static and sedentary, rooted

(“fixed”) in certain territories and to particular forms of development” (Anthias & Radcliffe 2015:261).

These “ethno-environmentally fixed” territories materialise “a spectrum of governance approaches that sought to synergise protection of vulnerable populations and highly-valued natures from the destructive effects of markets”(Anthias and Radcliffe, 2015:257). Despite this understanding, Anthias and Radcliffe (2015) explain that they do not suggest that collective titling has solved, in a way, the dispossession or the environmental damage of the indigenous territories. Rather, they point out that collective land rights were an active demand of the indigenous people. But, aligned with authors such as Keenan (2010), Anthias and Radcliffe (2015) argue that land rights also provide certainty for private companies, such as those dedicated to extractive activities, to operate in indigenous territories with the expectation that indigenous people will play the role of guardians of the biodiversity present in these areas.

Anthias and Radcliffe (2015) describe the frustration that pursuing land title has caused the indigenous people in Bolivia, a feeling that prompted a renewal of the pursuit of indigenous autonomy. This frustration comes along with the critique of the narrow understanding of the relationship that the communities hold with their lands articulated by the discourse of agrarian rights. Egan and Place (2013:136) argue that indigenous worldviews show that “there are other ways of understanding land and property and geography, where the world is not divided neatly into exclusionary categories of inanimate and animate, human and non-human, and where the idea of land as a commodity that can be broken up into pieces and sold for profit is alien.” Indigenous worldviews regarding land cannot be generalised, essentialised or idealised. Accordingly, Bryan (2000) denies the existence of a universal notion of property in the indigenous world, and especially a concept that can take as reference the Western notion of ownership. In this line, this thesis pursues a specific understanding of the notion of property and territory for the case of San Basilio de Palenque.

However, these universalising tendencies have also been present in academic explanations of the relationship that the black communities in Colombia hold with their lands. For example, Cassiani Herrera (2014a), *Palenquero* and historian, understands that land rights discourse for black communities developed by the Colombian state in the 1990s follows the logic of ancestral law and the collective property of the Afro-descendant communities. The idea of a ‘single’ ancestral law and ownership of black territories is a generalisation that does not capture the

different social and historical processes of the different Afro-descendant communities in Colombia.

Furthermore, Cassiani Herrera (2014a) points out that the *Cimarrones* [Maroons] implemented a traditional justice system in the *Palenque* that was rooted in the idea of resisting against slavery. He does not explore in detail the content of this legal system beyond the mention of the existence of community taxes and the assertion that this system is based on daily community practices. Cassiani Herrera identifies three types of territories in the *Palenque*: 1) the ancestral territory built as a result of slave struggles for space and freedom during the colonial times, 2) the territory in actual possession of the community, and 3) the territory legally recognised by the Colombian state. This typology developed by Cassiani Herrera implicitly recognises a process of deterritorialisation suffered by this community. While the ancestral territory represents the maximum land extension owned by the community during colonial times, the territory currently recognised by the Colombian state represents a smaller portion of the one possessed by San Basilio de Palenque previously.

For Cassiani Herrera, legal recognition of the community's territories by the state and strengthening *Palenquero* cultural identity are needed to counter deterritorialisation and obtain land restitution. But the scholarship reviewed above on other examples of dispossessed peoples relying upon the state to enforce land rights suggests his optimism may ultimately prove misplaced. This thesis focuses on this process of *Palenque* cooptation through land rights discourse implemented by the Colombian State, which in turn enlarges the list of examples of structural violence given by Galtung (1969;1996; 2016).

In the rest of this section, this thesis engages with literature on existing counter-hegemonic territories produced by Afro-descendant, *campesino* and indigenous people. These discussions highlight that Afro-descendant, *campesino* and indigenous people have a different relationship with their territories compared to states. These discussions are even more critical than Blomley (2014) and Anthias and Radcliffe (2015) regarding the relationship between these territories have with the land rights discourses deployed by the states. For instance, Bryan (2012:216) describes a “territorial turn” in Latin America as a neoliberal trend towards the recognition of indigenous and Afro-descendant territories through a land rights discourse promoted by states. This “territorial turn” (Bryan, 2012:216) is the starting point for extending a neoliberal, i.e. marketised approach to governance into the territories of the subalterns.

Land formalisation through the land rights discourse has been pointed out as ineffective to provide certainty against evictions for underrepresented communities. In fact, land rights discourse has been seen as a driver for the creation of uncertainty and community conflicts over land (Ubink 2009). For example, elsewhere in the world, land registration has also been proven insufficient to attract investments and development projects in the case of rural communities in Burkina Faso (Brasselle et al. 2002). Likewise, the formalisation process of turning “peri-urban” into urban areas has been perceived as exploitative and unreliable by residents in Hailong (China). This transformation has deteriorated community support networks for housing that pre-existed the urban registration system (Smith 2014:371). Traditional land arrangements within these communities, which could be interpreted as ‘precarious’ by an external observer, have delivered much higher certainty.

In Latin America, land rights discourse has facilitated new state interventions within counter-hegemonic territories that contest the traditional territorial model (Bryan, 2012). Bryan (2012) gives as an example of these counter-hegemonic territories the territory of the black communities living in the riverine areas of the Pacific Ocean in Colombia (Black communities of the Pacific Ocean). The analysis of counter-hegemonic territories in the literature is analysed in more detail in the forthcoming section. For the black communities of the Pacific Ocean, the territory is a collective living space based on ethnic and cultural identity and ecological practices of production (Escobar, 1999; Cogollo *et al.*, 2008). Escobar (2008:25) has named these collective spaces as “territories of difference,” which contain simultaneously indigenous and black population in the same geographical area.

Agnew and Oslender (2010:196) explain that the legal recognition of black and indigenous people’s ownership over their territories is a process of state reterritorialisation that exposes the existence of “overlapping territorialities,” between state and other non-state actors, such as the FARC [The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia] and the black communities of the Pacific Ocean. This overlapping is unwanted by the Colombian state, and therefore, it must be neutralised. In the case of the black communities of the Pacific Ocean, Agnew and Oslender wonder what the motive of this legal recognition is, and the control of areas outside of state’s domination forms the basis of the work of Bryan (2012) and Agnew and Oslender (2010).

Land rights discourse for the recognition of the ownership of the territories of Afro-descendant and indigenous people is based on a property right discourse. Alexander and Preñalver (2012) explain that property has been acknowledged through three main approaches: 1) a relation

between a subject and an object with the subsequent rights to possess, use, secure, profit, execute, and transmit; 2) the power to exclude others from scarce resources, and 3) the faculty to allocate these resources in a certain way. The first position may not accurately embrace the relationship that Afro-descendant communities have with their territories, which are not seen as commodities (Hale, 2011); while the two other approaches may represent the manner in which these communities have been dispossessed from their lands.

Butler and Athanasiou (2013:27) highlight the need for the creation of a new language that decolonises land rights and places them beyond the colonial “apparatus of property.” Keenan (2010:435-436) proposes the concept of “subversive property” by giving as an example of indigenous people’s land in Australia. For Keenan, the concept of property varies depending on time and space. In some scenarios, the property can be ‘subversive’ by questioning the dominant model of property, which is the one that is protected by law. The “subversive property” of the indigenous people in Australia reshapes the exploitative aspect of the hegemonic property based on “individual and community practices and understandings.”

In order to justify the right to the territory of Afro-descendant communities in Latin America that stems from the logic of a property right discourse, literature about territorial rights was also explored, such as the work of Miller (2012) and Nine (2008). Miller (2012) highlights that States share with indigenous people the entitlement to exercise territorial rights (e.g. the control of resources and borders). States and indigenous people are understood by Miller as collective subjects that have “certain features such as common identity and a shared set of social rules.” (Miller 2012:258). These collective subjects are required to be in a long-term possession of the territory which allows them to add material and symbolic value and be recognised as possessors of the right to territory. Value can be only added to a territory that can be possessed legitimately, for instance, without causing the displacement of rightful owners.

Ypi (2013:241) adds “sub-state groups or supra-state agents” to the list of qualified possessors of territorial rights. Afro-descendants are not mentioned in this literature as potential holders of a right to territory. Furthermore, there is a gap to fill by analysing the territorial tensions that may emerge between the Colombian state and an Afro-descendant territory, such as San Basilio de Palenque, in particular, through the land rights discourse. This thesis will do so by drawing upon the inextricable links between territory, law and violence articulated in legal geographies and allied literatures, and explorations of alternative accounts of territorialisation that are even sharper in their critiques of the promise of property rights.

## 1.b. Spaces of Resistance

In keeping with efforts amongst post- and de-colonial scholars to decolonise academic knowledge production (Mignolo, 2010; Ramani, 2011; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012; Escobar and Mignolo, 2013; Naude, 2017; Noxolo, 2017a, 2017b; Barnes, 2018), I have critically engaged Latin American scholarship on the production of space that interrogates the mainstream Anglophone literature on this topic. Latin American scholarship highlights the existence of counter-hegemonic territories, which compete against traditional territoriality constructed under the capitalist model (Lopes de Souza, 2009, 2015; Bryan, 2012; Zibechi, 2012). The struggle between these two models (capitalist and non-capitalist) is for the imposition of different patterns of development and the control of the national territory. *Campesino* and indigenous territories are typically given as examples of these non-capitalist territories (Mançano Fernandes 2005; 2009; 2010; 2016). The *campesino* and indigenous territories expand the examples of what Mountz (2013:838) calls “spatial arrangements of power” because they are in a permanent process of contesting and competing against the spatialities of the state’s sovereignty from a bottom-up approach (Agnew, 2005; Elden, 2007). Islands, prisons, seas, bodies and borders (Hyndman, 2007; Dixon and Marston, 2015) are some of the types of spatial power arrangements that trouble state by creating grey areas where sovereignty acts and is produced, but often intermittently in a precarious and uncertain way and at different scales and intensities (Mountz, 2013).

The analysis of *palenques* or Afro-descendant communities in the Montes de María, such as San Basilio de Palenque and its associated *Palenquero* communities that have migrated to rural and urban areas in Colombia enlarges the list of different territories which coexist with the state. As another example to be included in Bryan’s examples of counter-hegemonic territories mentioned previously, all these *Palenquero* communities contest state-based territoriality through resistance and agency.

During colonial times, in the British Caribbean, Cummings (2018) describes the existence of “Maroon territorial sovereignty within colonial geographies” as a result of treaties between the colonial authorities and the Maroons that involved the granting of lands. These lands allowed the Maroons to survive by enabling access to food, shelter and the creation of a military defence system (Price, 1973). Understanding the Maroon territories as sovereign during the colonial times allows us to consider them as equal with what Mançano Fernandes (2010:66) calls “*primer territorio*” [first territory], the space of governance of the nation-state. In the 19<sup>th</sup>



century, Haiti, Liberia and Abyssinia constituted examples of “Black sovereignty” that unsettled the Western world (Salt, 2015:267). Focusing on Haiti, Salt (2019:14) explains that this country “rewrote the rules about who could and could not be a sovereign body, as well as how that sovereignty would be performed.” At first glance, Maroon territories in the Colombian Caribbean could be seen as pioneers in performing ‘sovereignty’ in colonial times. However, the idea of analysing the spatial dimensions of groups, who were and are transformed into a subaltern position in Latin America, through concepts such as sovereignty, power, and frontiers explored in the Anglophone Geographical literature to analyse the idea of nation-state has been put into question (López Sandoval, Robertsdotter and Paredes, 2017; Courtheyn, 2018). Despite acknowledging the work of Salt (2015, 2019) and Cummings (2018), this research prefers to understand the counter-hegemonic logic of the *palenques* closer to the idea of autonomy than to sovereignty.

Furthermore, studying the relationships that these subalternised groups have with states reveals that Afro-descendant, *campesino* and indigenous groups in Latin America have different political views regarding the idea of autonomy, as explained further in detail in chapter 5. For instance, Courtheyn (2018) describes the concept of territory of the *campesino* community of San José de Apartadó in Colombia, who declared themselves as a peace community, which differs from claims on collective territories recognised by the state for some Afro-descendant and indigenous communities in the country. The declaration of San José de Apartadó as a peace community means in practice “that guerrillas, paramilitaries, the army and police stay out of their villages, while refusing to provide supplies or information to any armed group (Courtheyn, 2018:1433),” thus materially undermining the state’s violent enforcement of its territorial sovereignty. The community had refused a collective demarcation of their lands because they reject following the logic of state-based territorialities of control over nature and population, especially extractivism. They see land as a “living being” (Courtheyn 2018:1443). Through a combination of places and practices, such as “self-sufficient farms, *campesino* networks, solidarity caravans and massacre commemorations”, San José de Apartadó has built an alternative idea of territory that nurtures its collective and political identity.

Nevertheless, for Latin American scholars, such as Haesbaert (2013), power remains as a central element in the territories of the social groups. While hegemonic groups control territories by domination, counter-hegemonic groups do it by a symbolic and *affective* appropriation of the space. Although unequally, power is present in every type of social relationship and it can take the form of resistance that produces micro-territories that struggle

against the form power is more commonly thought to take, the macro-territory or state and its logic of private property enforced through violence.

Resistance is then not the opposite of power, but a part of power dynamics. López Sandoval et al. (2017:44) argue that despite “its ubiquitous nature, polysemic use and its hybrid conceptual construction, *territorio* is a highly specific if fluid construct in Latin America.” *Territorio* becomes an arena of negotiation and contestation crossed by practices of appropriation of the space, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation that are essential to consider for the analysis of the spatialities of the social movements in Latin America, and in San Basilio de Palenque, as the subject of analysis of this thesis.

Haesbaert (2013:11) rejects the idea of overusing ‘deterritorialisation’ to explain different phenomena related to mobility and cultural hybridity of social groups, especially subaltern groups. He argues the overuse of this term could paradigmatically lead to “*el fin de los territorios*” [the end of the territories] from a geographical approach. He argues that scholarship has not adequately explored the nexus between deterritorialisation and precarisation, where deterritorialisation means the loss of control of their own territories by the subalterns, but also the production of new forms of territory by these same people.

Haesbaert (2013) develops his argument through the case of the *Gauchos* from southern areas of Brazil, who are migrants in the North of this country and in other countries, such as Paraguay. For this case study, what is seen as deterritorialisation, in fact, is multi-territoriality and trans-territoriality, where the prefix, *trans*, implies that there are many territories, but they are not disconnected. These characteristics of the territories allow the subaltern group to survive by transiting in between spaces and power dynamics. Haesbaert (2013) calls these territories as *territorios alternativos en la globalización* [alternative territories in globalization] as an effective and affective appropriation of spaces by subaltern groups.

Despite academic discussions, “*territorio* has provided the possibility to express feelings, understanding, struggles for what groups claim to be collective demands and to discover endogenous possibilities for change” (López Sandoval et al. 2017:57). Accordingly, Haesbaert (2013) states that the first function of the territory, whatever form it takes, is as *abrigo* [shelter] and resource for the subalterns.

This research is interested in exploring how the concept of territory can be a platform, a conceptual tool for social change for San Basilio de Palenque. For example, Meek (2015:1183)

explains how educators of the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, or MST [Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement] use education as a type of territorialisation by critiquing the dominant control over territory, "the dominant ideas about land use, and advocating counter-hegemonic forms." After all, for the MST, the battle, for instance, between agroecological practices and hegemonic ranching is first a "struggle over the meaning of land" (Meek 2015:1185). Under this vision, educator-students, who are in charge of education, are trained along the lines of the "Gramscian organic intellectual" (Meek 2015:1197): "They arise from within, and are passionately connected to, the subaltern class" (Meek 2015:1181).

During the peace negotiations of the 2016 final peace agreement, debating the meaning of territory for the different actors involved in the Colombian armed conflict, including state, armed groups and Afro-descendants, *campesino*, and indigenous associations, was considered strategic for achieving a sustainable peace (Cairo *et al.*, 2018). The 2016 final peace agreement included a concept considered ambiguous and novel in peacebuilding, *paz territorial* [territorial peace] (Cairo *et al.*, 2018). For Jiménez-Martín (2016:60), territorial peace is also a "space in dispute" in the context of the peace negotiations because there is not a consensus about its meaning. However, its mention underscores the necessity to analyse the spatial tensions that arise among the different model of territories, one promoted by the Colombian state and others by the *campesinos*, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. These spatial tensions are at the core of the armed conflict (Cairo *et al.*, 2018). This research contributes to understanding the concept of territory of an Afro-descendant community, San Basilio de Palenque, and its potential spatial tensions with the territorial model of the Colombian state.

Cairo *et al.* (2018:484) argue that the concept of *paz territorial* that emerges as an outcome of the peace process in Colombia can be utilised as a "mere lip service" that "leads in a perverse way to the "pacification" of different regions consolidating a territorial model of the centralized state at the service of oligarchic economic interests." For Jiménez-Martín (2016:60), the armed conflict has produced geographies of war that have transformed the "*territorios vivos*" of Colombia [living territories], making possible their appropriation by armed actors as they are "empty or dead spaces" facilitating accumulation. The peace process, through the concept of territorial peace, can revert this process by recreating geographies of peace. The geographies of peace as a horizon are characterised by the construction of the space through the consolidation of *territorios justos* [just territories]. However, she highlights that not all the territorial injustices in Colombia, such as the subordination of certain territories, such as the collective territories, can be explained through the recent armed conflict as a driver of spatial

organisation. As this literature review has already discussed, this research analyses the long history of racialisation as another cause of the hierarchisation of the space and territories in this country.

Drawing on the consequences of deterritorialisation for subalterns, the following analyses scholarship on the process of recreating homeland in receiving communities by migrants. This scholarship enhances the study of spaces of belonging and resistance (O'Reilly 2000; Willis & Yeoh 2002; Ehrkamp 2005; Brun 2015; Brun & Fábos 2015; Ehrkamp 2017) built by dispossessed *Palenqueros*. Such spaces in other places have received different names elsewhere in the literature, e.g. "satellite communities (Rivera-Salgado 2014:39) and "places of belonging" (Ehrkamp 2005:345). All of them highlight the agency of migrants in their receiving societies in the context of uprootedness and discrimination. Agency includes, for instance, the development of practices of becoming 'invisible' or 'inaudible' to ease discrimination and harassment and become safe in the receiving societies (Howes and Hammett, 2016).

Awan and Langley (2013:229, 231) use the term "diasporic territories" to describe the production of space by Kurdish and Turkish migrants that cause "topological deformations" linked with dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in London. Awan and Langley build on Appadurai's (1996:33) concept of "ethnoscape," which is a landscape created by transnational forces and voluntary "moving groups" as a new feature in globalisation. The examples of "ethnoscape" given by Appadurai (1996:33) were about "enclosed spaces"(Awan and Langley, 2013:239), such as homes and cars. Awan and Langley (2013) extend the examples of "ethnoscape" (Appadurai, 1996:33) to public spaces in an urban centre.

In the context of the Palestinian diaspora and the loss of their territory in 1967, Doraï (2002:87) conceptualises "diasporic territory" as a symbolic mechanism to prolong homeland in exile, for example, refugee camps, settlements or resettlements in third countries. Doraï delves into transnational networks built over the years between the territories occupied by the State of Israel and the "diasporic territories" in third states. He analyses how the lost homeland is recreated in the receiving societies in which Palestinians are forced to live while they wait for their return, such as calling refugee camps the names of their villages. Accordingly, Harker (2009:329) explores the Palestinian diaspora through the idea of 'home' as a more vivid space, producing a different portrait of Palestinians and their private worlds, away from the stereotype of only victims of occupation.

All these previous studies provide ways of approaching the experiences of the *palenquero* migrants in the production of new communities in receiving societies, such as Cartagena de Indias, as a strategy of resistance against territorial dispossession. However, the case studies pointed out are examples of transnational migration, but in ours, the migration is internal, expanding the previous literature by querying the need for crossing a *national* border in order to understanding migrant crossings between, and productions of, different forms of territorialisation of the palenque. What are the (re)territorialising strategies developed by San Basilio de Palenque to resist and belong in current times in Colombia?

## **2. Dispossession and Agency**

The analysis of the forced loss of territories suffered by *Palenquero* communities requires delving into the conceptualisation of place as an object of loss. Smith's (1994; 2000) work on absence and place is a starting point for discussing the dispossession of community territories through the exercise of violence. In 'Geography and Social Justice,' Smith (1994) explains that the forced absence of people is a feature that shapes landscapes. This is exemplified through four cases of groups unfairly evicted from their places: 1) Native populations during Apartheid; 2) the Jews confined in ghettos during the Nazi Holocaust; 3) the further resettlement of Jews in Palestine that caused the displacement of its Arab residents; and 4) populations forcibly removed by market interests. These 4 cases of study are examples of Smith's geographies of absence, which encompasses loss and the survival of few (Smith, 2000).

The loss and abandonment of local communities are named "homelessness" by Smith (1994:272). Smith (1994) borrows the concept of 'topocide' – defined by Porteous (1988:75), as "the deliberate annihilation of place" –to frame the analysis of the case studies described above. The concept of 'topocide' was constructed by Porteous (1988:75) in connexion with the extinction of a village located in Howdendyke, East Yorkshire (England) due to the settlement of industries in that area. As summarised by Porteous (1988), Adam (1980) points out the idea that death/annihilation could be used appropriately in the case of communities and not only regarding individuals. However, a description of the different patterns of resistance *after* surviving dispossession is missing in the literature on topocide.

I am interested in answering what follows from dispossession. Discussions about resistance are a fundamental part of the history of San Basilio de Palenque. Building the geographies of *marronage* of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María implies looking at both the

territorial dispossession suffered by the communities and the resistance exercised against it. Ideas of place destruction and death/annihilation make community strategies of resistance invisible. The communities become passive objects of loss and not actors of change for reparation. This characterisation of communities closely follows the logic of non-existence and denial that violence attempts to install in the collective memory of the dispossessed and the official national history.

This doctoral research is also interested in analysing how certain *Palenquero* places were transformed by unconstrained violence to provoke the elimination of human lives and hinder the escape of survivors. In this sense, this research explores why, after the period of direct violence finished (following Galtung's definition of violence stated in section 1.a), the return to the abandoned territories seem uncondusive. What is that impassable border post-violence that has hindered some *Palenquero* communities from recovering their lands? Literature that addresses the phenomenon of mass violence and its aftermath is used to construct an answer to these interrogations.

This literature finds its precedent in the work of authors such as Arendt (1958), Agamben (1998;1999), and Levi (1989) considering the results of the Nazi Holocaust perpetrated during the Second World War, where concentration camps were the object of analysis as places where violence was used pervasively against the victims of the war. Agamben (1998:19) names concentration camp as a "space of exception" because people were denied their political status to become bare life that could be violated freely, and the death of political subjects was replaced by the fabrication of corpses in masse (Agamben, 1999). In Latin America in the context of the Dirty Wars and the practice of forced disappearances, Calveiro (2006) describes the logic of concentration camps during the last military dictatorship in Argentina (1976-1983), as places of terror and disappearance, where perpetrators performed the role of 'lords' of life and death over the political prisoners in captivity.<sup>7</sup>

In this research, these places of captivity are termed as *spaces of loss*, where life itself was taken from the subjects with the purpose of physical extermination. In these places, violence performed the role of an instrument in the act of dispossession of human life. When violence

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<sup>7</sup> The Argentine case is particularly highlighted because, in terms of accountability of a dictatorial past of gross human rights violations, this country has successfully provided truth, justice and memory for the victims (Crenzel, 2008; Maculan, 2012; Lessa, 2013) while other countries in the Southern Cone, such as Brazil, Chile and Uruguay, have mainly perpetuated impunity and blindness about the atrocities committed during the decades of state terror (Bakiner, 2010; Goes, 2013; Skaar, 2013).

takes place in this manner, e.g. killings and forced displacement, the Maroon territories, which were symbols of freedom and past struggles against slavery, were suddenly transformed into *spaces of loss*: What are the conditions/community strategies to return to their territories when the violence subsides?

In spaces of loss, violence has not acted with the same intensity and purpose on all its victims. For example, gender and religion were conditions that increased the amount and type of violence suffered during captivity. Female political prisoners in Argentine concentrations camps were particularly punished for the transgression of their roles as mothers and wives when they decided to join the left-wing armed organisations (Feijoó and Nari, 1994). Combatant women needed to be re-educated by the regime through a system of punishments, including sexual violence (Zavala Guillén, 2013). Jewish political prisoners in concentrations camps in Argentina were treated with particular cruelty through torture and mistreatment that included the use of Nazi symbols and the appropriation of their property (Feierstein, 2011).

In Colombia, there are many Afro-descendant territories with different histories of violence. For instance, Oslender (2008) describes the destruction of the territories owned by the black communities of the Pacific Ocean that caused forced displacement. Their territorial destruction was the result of the implementation of terrorist practices by armed groups in these geographies. Our analysis requires questioning how the *Cimarrona* or Maroon identity that San Basilio de Palenque holds could have impacted differently on the way violence was exercised in its geographies.

Despite the violence exercised against prisoners in the *spaces of loss*, it was possible to perform acts of resistance in captivity and battles against domination. Agamben (1999:44-45) describes the presence of the “Musselmänner” in Nazi concentration camps as the living dead, the uncomfortable existence of those rejected by both the inmates and the perpetrators who continued breathing but without “will and consciousness.” This description of the inmates as passive objects of domination has perpetuated in the collective memory the image of Jews as sheep that may be lead to their death without rebellion (Tanay, 2006). Nevertheless, resistance did exist in concentration camps in the Nazi genocide and during the last dictatorship in Argentina (Levi, 1989; Calveiro, 2006; Tanay, 2006; Maher, 2010; Zavala Guillén, 2013).

In the case of the African slaves and their descendants in the territory of Colombia during the colonial times, the transatlantic ships, the *haciendas* [large farms], and the mines were spaces of captivity with limited space for human life (Escalante, 1973; Price, 2011). Nevertheless,

despite all these dehumanising experiences, slaves did not docilely accept slavery but rather developed strategies to resist and oppose domination. Burton (1997) and Certeau et al. (1980) differentiate strategies to resist slavery from outside the colonial regime from tactics within the regime that demonstrate opposition and finding spaces of autonomy. Examples of the former could be revolts, suicides (Gutiérrez Azopardo, 1980), infanticide and abortion (Spicker, 2000). Moreover, the destruction of tools, the reduction of labour (Burton, 1997), the self-purchase of freedom, the use of the legal system to claim for a change of owner due to severe mistreatments (Valencia Villa, 2003), and temporary escapes from plantations (*petite marronage*) (Price, 1973), all constitute examples of opposition from within the regime.

As a case of Maroon resistance within the regime, de Friedemann (1990:87) describes the “*cabildos negros*” or “*casas de cabildos*,” which were barricades next to the sea in Cartagena de Indias during colonial times that provided ‘healthcare’ to the slaves, who were ill after the passage. The “*cabildos negros*” evolved from precarious ‘hospitals’ to places of socialisation among slaves leading to collective cultural and religious practices. De Friedemann contrasted the “*cabildos negros*,” as a form of association that took place within the colonial system, to the *palenques*, as a form of resistance outside the system.

The analysis of different strategies developed by the Afro-descendant community of San Basilio de Palenque to confront the loss of territory, when their places were transformed by different types of violence in *spaces of loss* or *geographies of absence* during the last century, can expand the previous literature on slave (and their descendants) resistance in oppressive contexts by showing how dispossession may deprive a people of land, but not necessarily of agency.

### **3. Territorial Precarity**

This section explores ‘precarity’ and how it is addressed in the literature in human geography in ways that might usefully interrogate the geographies of marronage and the territorial violence experienced in them that causes territorial dispossession. The analysis of ‘precarity’ in human geography is incipient, but it has significantly increased over time. Close to the concepts of insecurity and vulnerability (Millar, 2017), precarity has been analysed in a wide range of literature relation to labour markets and migration (Bourdieu 1998; Waite 2009; Reid-Musson 2014; Lewis et al. 2015); the so-called War on Terror (Butler 2006; Ettlinger 2007;



Butler 2010;Woon 2011); quotidian spaces, emotions and women (McLafferty and Preston, 2010); and queer workers and economic vulnerabilities (Hollibaugh and Weiss, 2015).

Two authors can be highlighted as pioneers in the study of precarity in human geography. The first is Nancy Ettlinger (2007), who calls for expanding precarity beyond the cases related to market labour and terrorism. She aims to raise awareness about both the existence of precarity in different spheres of human lives, and the negative results of the futile enterprises for achieving certainty, for instance, as the result of the so-called War on Terror. Second is Louise Waite (2009), who analyses precarity in the context of migrants working in low-paid sectors in the United Kingdom. She concludes that their heterogeneity precludes homogenous analysis which makes their different life-experiences of precarity invisible. Waite (2009) delves into the role of precarity both as condition and enclave for resistance and mobilisation. San Basilio de Palenque and its migratory *palenques* could be understood as counter-hegemonic territories (Bryan 2012) that are precarious yet mobilised towards resistance (Waite 2009). This mobilisation requires previous awareness of their precariousness (Waite 2009).

Bearing in mind this call for particularity in the analysis of precarity, this dissertation analyses the distinction made by Butler (2010) between being ‘precarious’ –as an attribute- and ‘precarity’ –as a project. Precariousness defines *all* human lives because they can be erased with or without intention on account of their fragility. *Precarity* is the intentional and political use of that fragility that comes along with humanity causing some groups become exposed to violence. While some lives are worthy of protecting and mourning, for example, American lives, others, such as Afghan lives, do not even qualify as such and their losses do not entitle sorrow (Butler, 2006). The question is how are communities such as San Basilio de Palenque made into a state of precarity?

Under the logic of war, Butler (2010) analyses how power frames life under certain norms that attribute its value or not, thereby creating a normative archetype of a valuable life, for instance, the American way of life (Butler, 2009). Further developments made by Butler and Athanasiou (2013) have expanded ‘precarity’ beyond the ‘War on Terror.’ Butler and Athanasiou (2013) describe the action of regimes that cause territorial expropriation, such as in the case of Palestine and indigenous people. In our case of study, the analysis requires revealing the conditions under which territories are framed as valuable and therefore worthy of protection in Colombia.

Butler (2006) poses a question of how race and ethnicity have impacted the categorisation of some lives as both not worthy and inhuman. In consonance with the ideas of Ettlinger (2007) and Waite (2009), Lorey (Puar *et al.*, 2012) asserts that all people do not experience precarity in the same way. Age, class, gender and race impact on how people experience precarity. Race and blackness have been analysed through precarity lenses, in such instances as precarious labour markets, slavery legacy and Afro-Americans as the “perpetual precarious class in America [USA]” (Hill II 2017:95; Barchiesi 2012). Therefore, this research explores how the race of the members of San Basilio de Palenque has an impact on the consideration of their territories as valuable (or not) and worthy of protection (or not).

Racialization of precarity in Colombia has a long history since colonial times, allowing the study of the *palenque*, as a territory, through the lenses of precarity. In Colombia, since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Afro-descendant communities have developed different strategies for owning land (Navarrete Peláez, 2008). Nevertheless, the full exercise of rights over their territories is still not a reality. For instance, in the context of the armed conflict, it was emphasised that dispossession had affected Afro-descendants more than indigenous and *mestizo* people (Corte Constitucional de Colombia, 2009; Rodríguez Garavito, Alfonso Sierra and Cavelier Adarve, 2009).<sup>8</sup> The Afro-descendants have also experienced the transformation of their territories into battlefields due to the high level of violence, e.g. massacres (Corte Constitucional de Colombia, 2009).

This anti-black racism dates back to the first century of colonisation. A binary opposition between white as civility and black as savagery was constructed during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in New Granada (Cháves, 2007), representing another example of Galtung's (2016; 1996) cultural violence. As mentioned in the introduction, this binary opposition had a correlation in the classification of the geographical areas in Colombia: The Andes, mountain chain dominated by white people, and the “*trópico salvaje*” [wild tropic], lower lands, mainly populated by Afro-descendants and indigenous people (Arocha Rodríguez & Moreno Tovar 2007:588).

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<sup>8</sup> Colombia has 7.9 million people living in forced displacement due to the armed conflict. 7.7 million are internally displaced people. Colombia has the second most forced displaced people worldwide after Syria (ACNUR - La Agencia de la ONU para los refugiados, 2017). Afro-descendants constituted the 12.3% of the internally forced displaced people in 2012. Afro-descendant communities are estimated in 10 million people (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2012).

The ‘tropic’ included the Afro-Pacific and other ‘peripheral areas’, such as the Caribbean coasts and jungles, considered empty lands without history and condemned to violence, conflict, and the exploitation of their resources under the logic of capitalism without constraints (Serje 2005; Arocha Rodríguez & Moreno Tovar 2007).

Serje (2005:302; 2007) highlights that indigenous and Afro-descendant areas have been considered the “other Colombia” ruled by violence and chaos since the Spanish conquest and remain (supposedly) in a continuous state of war. For the white elites, the non-white Colombia needs the presence of the state. Its chaos is a product of state absence. Therefore, the state pursues the control of the non-white Colombia and its natural resources by the use of legal and illegal force with the subsequent campaign of terror and human rights violations (direct violence in Galtung’s approach). The ‘absence’ of the Colombian state has also allowed local powers –also members of the white elite in governance– to create areas of economic and human exploitation and profit without accountability. In this scenario, the state profits through this exploitation while reconquering these territories. With this, the state gains order and development in these ‘peripheral areas’ through induced precarity, thereby bringing tranquillity to the white areas in the country.

Broadly speaking, then, legal discourse can become an instrument for precarity in the sense that Butler has outlined. For instance, BurrIDGE and Gill (2017) explain the gross and permanent uncertainty of asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom with limited and precarious access to justice and therefore, subjects of an unevenly constructed legal precarity. Along the same line, Mountz (2013; 2011) describes the situation of a group of forced migrants living in detention centres in islands suffering from geographical and legal isolation. More directly and in keeping with Agamben’s account of spaces of exception, Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, detention centres where prisoners of the War on Terror have been incarcerated under ambiguous legal statuses, have allowed precarious (lawless) confinement without any time-related restrictions during interrogations (Gregory, 2006, 2007).

This thesis aims to understand how the Colombian state achieves the control of non-white geographical areas, such as San Basilio de Palenque, by other means than the more spectacular instances of state power explored by geographers such as Gregory and Mountz. This thesis explores literature about how the spatiality of precarity can be legally constructed through the discourse of property rights outlined previously, and how *Palenqueros* nonetheless exercise

agency in response to precarity and dispossession to reterritorialise their community in entangled *palenques*.

#### 4. Conclusions

San Basilio de Palenque has been analysed from anthropological and historical perspectives. The historical research about this community focuses on its transformation from *palenque* into town from 1580 to 1714. The anthropological research about San Basilio de Palenque describes the social and cultural structure of the current community. However, a geographical study of the past and present *Palenque* that explores territory, dispossession and community resistance is still absent from the literature.

Historical and anthropological studies highlighted that San Basilio de Palenque, along with other Afro-descendant communities, was part of the Colombian society. This academic acknowledgement also showed that blackness is not homogenous in Colombia. The Maroon identity held by San Basilio de Palenque is characterised through the act of escaping from slavery to build autonomous communities. Thus, this thesis delves into the past and present patterns of territorialisation of San Basilio de Palenque in the process of building communities and facing uprootedness, the analysis of which is lacking in previous research. Doing so will require drawing upon concepts from various literatures on territorialisation.

Geographers and socio-legal scholars have criticised the liberal characterisation of property as a neutral right in settler societies and beyond by highlighting the state's need for space to be governable by different means, including the use of violence. Territorialisation practices of *campesino* and indigenous communities have been conceptualised as counter-hegemonic in the literature addressing land rights in Latin America. The *campesino* and indigenous territories have clashed with the traditional, state-centric understanding of territory. The dispute over the meaning of territory in Latin America has been proven fluid and contested. Its effects range from the physical appropriation of the land of the communities to the resolution of armed conflict, such as the Colombian, that had transformed their geographies in torn-war places. Territory is acknowledged by these communities as a platform for change.

While some scholars understand land rights discourse as a new form of state intervention in the Latin American counter-hegemonic territories, others still consider them as platforms for resistance by the subaltern and a way for protecting their territorialities. These differing positions suggest land rights as a discourse seem to be insufficient to provide protection against

territorial dispossession. Furthermore, the study of racialisation as a factor in dispossession is incomplete, as there is a lack of analysis about the impact of the land rights discourse in the case of Afro-descendant territories, such as San Basilio de Palenque.

The dispossessed are often forced to move. Migratory communities have developed different strategies to create belonging and resist discrimination in receiving societies in order to counter territorial dispossession. This phenomenon has been primarily analysed for the case of transnational migration. The *Palenquero* migration outside the borders of its mother community as well as the types of strategies built to overcome the lack of home has not been previously analysed.

An exploration of the existing literature on absence and place has raised the question of what follows the loss of territory. Research on mass violence and its aftermath -when places were transformed physically and symbolically in a way that did not allow the survivors to return- is also explored in this analysis in terms of community survival and resistance. This exploration informed potential strategies to recover these places developed (or not) by San Basilio de Palenque.

Furthermore, scholarship on precarity in human geography has been used to interrogate the geographies of marronage of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean. For instance, how has blackness been utilised to make some lives precarious? Just as importantly, how has it served as a resource for survival? This analysis seeks to problematise how the specific Maroon identity has impacted the legal consideration of the geographies of San Basilio de Palenque by both the state and the community.

Colombian literature on human geography reflects how the national territory has been classified in accordance with the race of its inhabitants. This classification has caused powerholders to pursue control of the indigenous and black territories by the use of force. Apart from the use of direct violence, scholarship on how the law has precaritised certain lives, for instance, refugees, is explored. This faculty of the law makes us wonder if territories can be legally made precarious (for example, Afro-descendant territories) in order to facilitate their dispossession.

## **5. Research Aims and Questions**

Under these premises, this doctoral research addresses how the Colombian land rights discourse has legally constructed the Afro-descendant territories. This research aspires to enlarge these debates, particularly the ones associated with the spatiality of precarity about law and race (specifically in the case of black or Afro-descendant territories).

### **5.a. Research Aim**

To critically analyse the past and present geographies of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean.

### **5.b. Research Questions**

*Primary research question:*

- What is the relationship between the Colombian land rights discourse and the territory of San Basilio de Palenque?

*Secondary research questions:*

- What is the past and present significance of territory for the community of San Basilio de Palenque?
- How has the community experienced and resisted deterritorialisation?
- How is the history of the territorial struggle of their ancestors mobilised in practices engaged by the community to resist dispossession?

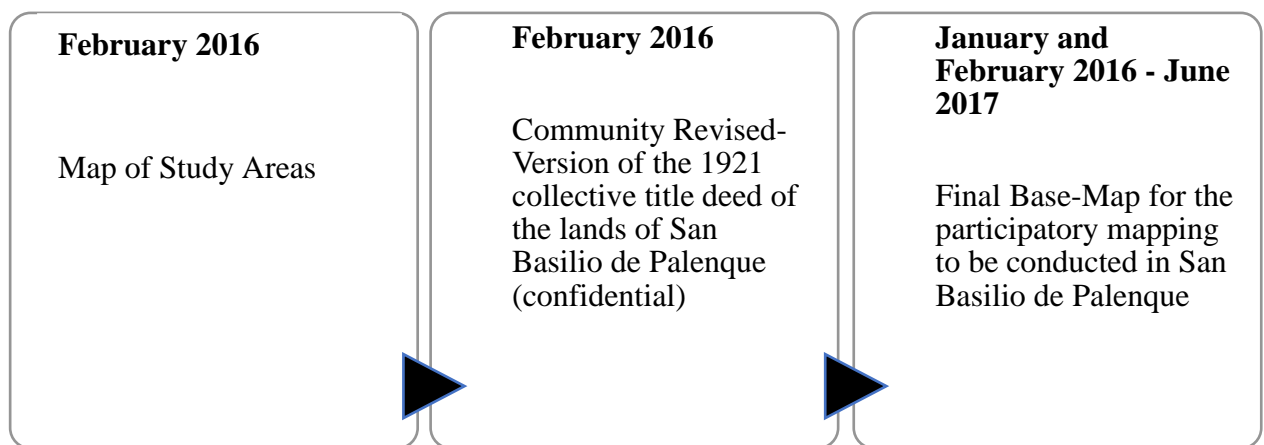


Figure 3. Timeline of the Maps produced during this research

## CHAPTER 3: Positionality and Methods

### 1. San Basilio de Palenque as a Case Study

San Basilio de Palenque became my doctoral case study after my work as a human rights lawyer with *campesinas* [small-hold female farmers] from the Colombian Caribbean during 2013 and 2014. These women were victims of the armed conflict and built activist networks to obtain reparation for the crimes committed against them. They taught me that land dispute was the root of the war in their country and that the consequences of land grabbing and forced displacement profoundly affected their communities and daily lives (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014).

Around 6,142,702 hectares were forcibly abandoned or plundered in the context of the armed conflict in Colombia, which is approximately five percent of the area of the country. This number of hectares does not include the territories under collective ownership, such as the lands of Afro-descendants and indigenous people. As a result of this process of territorial dispossession, 434,100 families were internally displaced between 1980 and 2010 (Garay Salamanca *et al.*, 2011).<sup>9</sup>

The agents of internal forced displacement in Colombia have been paramilitary groups, guerrilla movements, the armed forces, the government and its war on drugs, and the battles fought among and against all of them (Reyes 2009). Control over territory for economic, military and socio-political domination, drug trafficking, and the development of agricultural, commercial, industrial, and livestock projects are considered to be the drivers of land dispossession (Ruiz Ruiz, 2007; Agencia Presidencial para la Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional-Acción Social y Proyecto Protección de Tierras y Patrimonio de la Población Desplazada, 2010).

Among the various rural-based communities in Colombia, such as indigenous peoples and *campesinos* [small farmers], Afro-descendants are the group most affected by land grabbing and forced displacement (Corte Constitucional de Colombia 2009; Rodríguez Garavito *et al.* 2009; chapter 2 of this thesis). Exploring the reasons behind this phenomenon in the case of San Basilio de Palenque was the main reason for choosing this community as my case study.

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<sup>9</sup> The *Unidad Administrativa Especial de Gestión de Restitución de Tierras Despojadas* [The Special Administrative Unit for the Restitution of Dispossessed Land] does not have official figures from which to estimate the scale of land dispossession because of the armed conflict in Colombia.



The other reason was that San Basilio de Palenque has been disregarded by academia (Valencia Peña, 2011) in comparison with other Afro-descendant communities that have been well documented, such as the black communities of the Pacific Ocean (Escobar and Pedrosa, 1996). The Maroon identity of San Basilio de Palenque made it fall into a pattern of invisibility (Price, 1983) as the holder of the particular inheritance of being descendants of runaway slaves, who built their autonomous territories away from slavery.

In this chapter, I reflect on my positionality as a researcher and my research methods. Doing research implies embracing social reality from a particular understanding of the world (Hammett, Twyman and Graham, 2015). As a researcher, I cannot entirely remove myself from my values and aims while investigating (Jensen and Glasmeier, 2010): “All research is ideological” (Letherby, 2003:5). To make an accountable construction of knowledge, I explain in the following sections my relation as a researcher with three characteristics that had an impact on my doctoral investigation: my race, activism and gender.

The research strategy implemented in this doctoral study included different qualitative methods of data collection, such as archival research, participatory mapping, and interviews (Mason, 2002; Brockington and Sullivan, 2003; Polkinghorne, 2005; DeLyser, 2014; Hammett, Twyman and Graham, 2015). These research methods aimed to collect data that allowed me to analyse San Basilio de Palenque as a case study (Yin, 2003) of racialisation of territories, dispossession and resistance.

## **2. Positionality**

In this section, I explain how my race, my professional background and my gender impacted my research design. As Naz (2012) argues researchers play different identities in the field that are interpreted by the participants influencing the data collection. I see myself as a *mestiza*, which in academia is associated with the term hybridity (Bhabha, 1994; Dwyer, 2002). I am a human rights defender linked with the role of an activist scholar (Jones, 2007). I am also a woman in academia with challenges and obstacles that I faced when I conducted my fieldwork in a male chauvinist environment like the Colombian Caribbean (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo and Observatorio del Caribe Colombiano, 2010).

## 2.a. The *Mestiza*

I am a product of *mestizaje* as the policies implemented in Latin America to erase the African and indigenous legacies from the pro-European new societies. These policies were carried out on the bodies of African and native women mainly through rape (Spicker, 2000). I say mostly through rape because as described by Navarrete (2003b; 2012) for instance, during the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Colombia there were certain intimate relationships between Spaniard men and African female slaves which were long-lasting and, in some occasions, public. However, these relationships were exceptional and should be understood in the context of slavery and unequal power dynamics, where female slaves perceived these unions as opportunities for their progeny to be born free (Navarrete 2003b; 2012).

Although the origin of *mestizaje* as sexual exploitation of African and indigenous women should never be forgotten, we, the *mestizas*, are also the outcome of loving the different, sometimes the opposite, the strange other. Some years ago, the novel *The Inhabited Woman* written by Gioconda Belly (2006) illuminated my contested identity: European and indigenous women coexist within me both in enmity and sisterhood. This coexistence forced me to come to terms with all my ancestors, the oppressors and the oppressed who inhabit me.

Hybrid identities have been an object of analysis under different experiences of miscegenation, highlighting the struggle for belonging associated with mixed racial ancestry. For instance, race studies in South Africa during and post-apartheid have described coloured people (including, for instance, Khoisan and Griquas people), who were born from the mix of whites and indigenous groups (also among these), as rejected by both sides. Coloured people were perceived by whites different from blacks with certain privileges due to their lighter skin, but without citizenship. However, in the construction of the new South Africa, they were not black 'enough' for natives as they were 'lacking something' (Erasmus, 2000, 2001). In the United States of America, mixed-race people have been accused of passing for white or black depending on the benefits and opportunities involved by their association with one or another identity (e.g. positive actions, such as quota system for minorities) (Piper, 1992).

My hybridity comes from the union of my indigenous and Spanish ancestors from my father's side and Europeans from my mother's side. My father was born in Peru, and, like many others, he was a migrant within Latin America moving to Argentina to have access to free and universal higher education. He was 14 years old when he arrived at a student accommodation next to my mother's house. My mother was the second child and the only daughter of a family

of Italian and Irish descendants with a strong Catholic education. They fell in love with each other and got married when they were 18 years old. Their marriage lasted until my dad passed away in 2007.

The Italian side of the family presented their opposition to this union; my dad was a *morocho* [Brown] and a dubious believer. My dad lost his Peruvian accent, and so far as I can recall his voice, his accent was Argentine. He never talked about his life in Peru nor wanted his last two daughters to visit his hometown or meet his family. My sisters and I unconsciously learned that there were certain things that we could not ask him, and indeed that this part of us was something that we did not discuss in public: Our Peruvian side, mainly because the colour of our skin, did not reveal itself outwardly. We looked white like my mother. My father learned or was forced to assimilate himself into a society which discriminates against Latin American migrants and indirectly instructed his daughters with his example to follow his steps by passing for what the Argentine society praises; European descendants.

During my childhood, my idea of ancestors was only my Italian grandmother, Enriqueta, a delightful cook, football lover and Eva Peron admirer. Enriqueta insisted that Eva Peron was a natural Swedish-like blond. My sisters and I tried to make her understand unsuccessfully that Eva's hair was as dark as my dad's. However, a leader, a female icon should be blond. She reminded us that *Evita* (as the masses knew Eva Peron) gave her a baby doll, her first baby-doll. A baby-doll was a significant gift for a girl who was working in the fields of the Buenos Aires province as a *campesina* after her family arrived from the Southern part of Italy.

Her life was marked by the aftermath of the wars in Europe: the hunger and the exile. She was almost illiterate but proud of the culture of work that she thought she imprinted on Argentina along with the rest of the European migrants. In her discourse, the idea that before the European migration in the 1920s the lands of Argentina contained nothing, was prominent. These lands had nothing worthy, like *empty* lands, which needed to be filled with the European values of 'hard work.' The idea of working hard to succeed was something that intrinsically has marked my life.

The afternoon that my grandmother asked me to explain to her how to cook pasta, I sadly understood that we were starting to lose her. Her dementia progressively took her back to her roots in Italy, her mother, and an Italian dialect, that we did not speak, suddenly appeared. During the last days of her life, she remembered places where we never lived, but we found

ourselves immersed. The remembrance of a distant past taught me something that I would experience after my travels around the world, that there are places that we never leave.

The love for my father (or my assimilated father), who my grandmother finally regarded as a son after an initial rejection, was tangible as well. He died first. After he passed away, she used to say with complete certainty that he was joining the family table every afternoon for her food, possibly the only way she was able to express love and care. Enriqueta left us the day her football team won another tournament, and the city was celebrating.

When I was 12 years old, I met my other grandmother, my other half: Aurora, indigenous descendant, full of stories and colours. She stayed with us for some months, and I cannot remember when she arrived or when she left. Aurora shared the room with my sisters and me. I still remember her stories of imaginary creatures that inhabited the lands in Peru and the spirits of the trees. I was fascinated with them, but my mother promptly warned me that these were only legends, myths, and non-Catholic teachings, something that I did not peacefully accept and questioned early. After this, I have started a journey of exploration of my hybridity with an aim -at the risk of sounding pretentious- to symbolically reconcile the worlds that inhabit me, to make peace between them: I am their outcome.

I say symbolically because after reading the book *The Sunflower* by Wiesenthal (1997), where different voices reflect on the possibilities and limits of forgiveness after human tragedies, such as, genocides or war, I understood that I am not entitled to forgive in the name of the line of my ancestors who were murdered, raped and dispossessed of everything which belonged to them. I honoured them, and part of my career was dedicated to working with ethnic communities in Latin America. I could have been them, but I had the privileges of the other world. In this internal journey of reconciliation, I feel that I am with them when I work (or research) in partnership with underrepresented groups, away from the guilt of having white ancestors, in a permanent reflection and assessment of my practice.

The encounters, tensions and contradictions -that are present in experiences of miscegenation- endure in my identity as *mestiza* inhabiting my research. My research is a continuation of my *mestizaje*: I am an Argentine researcher in a Western academic institution addressing from European and Latin American theories the struggles of Afro-descendant communities for territory in Colombia.

My research becomes the “mestiza consciousness” and the “third space” in action (Anzaldúa, 1987:77; Bhabha, 1994:36; Wade, 2008:186). The *mestiza* consciousness means living *in-between* spaces (Anzaldúa, 1987), in the only place where both my indigenous grandmother from Peru and my Italian-descendant grandmother never disagreed on: the love for the land as the only true love. From different worlds, they were women who had an intrinsic connection with their lands, with the *tierra as campesinas*, and both shared stories of exile.

Nevertheless, for us, the *mestizas*, the connection with the land is always contested. Anzaldúa (1987) wisely warns: The *Mestiza* has no land. I have chosen the North, where nothing is attached to me, not even the language, in a personal search for my land away from my diverted roots. In a very different context, slavery, this research delves into strategies developed by the runaway slaves of San Basilio de Palenque and their descendants to overcome uprootedness after their kidnapping from Africa. There is a search for belonging as a remedy that interconnects -with different intensities- every experience of migration and “homelessness,” as the word chosen by Smith (1994:272) in his geographies of absence. However, in the case of forced migration, belonging becomes synonymous with survival.

Okely (1992:9) argues that the personal is political but “is also theoretical.” Anzaldúa (1987:77) proposes the “new mestiza consciousness” as an independent conceptual territory away from the duality of worlds in conflict, the *in-between*, the borderland of black, indigenous, and white spaces, a site for inclusion. This description of the borderland as a multi-ethnic space recalls Navarrete's (2003a) characterisation of the *palenques* as syncretic spaces of African, indigenous and European elements. Although not an international borderland, San Basilio de Palenque is also the borderland with its *Palenquero* identity of resistance against violence and dispossession. Its territories are reminiscent of a body assaulted by different actors but also defended by the community.

This theoretical proposition could be understood as the *mestiza* methodology that enlightens my research. The *mestiza* methodology delves not only into the territorial loss but the strategies developed by San Basilio de Palenque *in-between* places to pursue territorial reparation since colonial times to the present day. These include strategies created between San Basilio de Palenque, as the mother-community, and its satellite settlements (or migratory *palenques*), which are emplaced in cities and rural settlements.

## 2.b. The Human Rights Defender

Wade (2008) asserts that *mestizaje* has two different meanings: On one hand, it is a reassertion of the idea that no one is white (de Friedemann, 1992b) empowering the African and indigenous peoples within societies while reasserting histories of miscegenation in Latin America. On the other hand, *mestizaje* is a source of discrimination and racism when it is used as a state policy for erasing the non-white elements of the societies or making these elements invisible.

In relation with the last aspect of *mestizaje*, the researcher may contribute to shifting the balance of power in favour of disadvantaged groups (Hammett, Twyman and Graham, 2015) and promote, for instance, the end of racial discrimination through the expansion of knowledge. I see myself as an activist scholar, and as every activist scholar, I have also “dual loyalties— to academia and to a political struggle” (Hale 2006:100) mobilised by the researched communities. The aim of this research is constructed from this perspective: To deepen the knowledge of the past and present geographies of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María. This research aim comes along with a ‘beyond academia’ project objective, which is to convert my doctoral findings into evidence to support San Basilio de Palenque’s community land claims in the ongoing peace process in Colombia.

Under the paradigm of the activist scholar, research has been seen as the foundation of action for change, an emancipatory door for subjugated groups, and not only a producer of apolitical knowledge (Siplon 1999; Chatterton 2006; Jones 2007;). For instance, Chatterton, Hodkinson, and Pickerill (2010:250) understand that academia is political while promoting social change through social movements, which academics belong to, or through marginal groups that they support. In this context, Chatterton, Hodkinson and Pickerill (2010) seek to challenge the vision of academics as professionals who analyse the reality from an “ivory tower.” Instead, the authors consider scholars and disadvantaged groups “as citizens jointly challenging the broader social system.” My critique to this position is that this academic-social group joint partnership is desirable, but not real: Can a member of these groups, for instance, a member of the community of San Basilio de Palenque, be considered in their daily political struggles as entitled as a professor of a British university? Privileges matter when voices want to be heard broadly.

Chatterton (2008:422) has promoted what he calls “radical ideas” within academia, for instance, by developing curricula on activism and empowering students to engage with social change, a change from within towards the world. However, the author does not highlight who

dictates what change is needed and where, and led by whom, the researchers or the researched communities. To address these concerns, for instance, international development and governance researchers seek to engage communities during the research design and production of knowledge (Frieling, Lindenberg and Stokman, 2014; Beebeejaun *et al.*, 2015; Mason, 2015; Jo and Nabatchi, 2016). I have a dream that one day more researchers from disadvantaged communities will lead their investigations. In the meantime, as I will explain in the following sections, I used participatory research methods in San Basilio de Palenque, whom I work with/for, transforming even historical-geographical research methods into a community-based one.

However, the discussion that remains open is why it is necessary to pursue impacts on the researched communities and implement research methods that promote the participation of the communities. Routledge and Driscoll Derickson (2015) propose developing solidarity practices between academics and non-academics while doing research. These practices include, for instance, dispersing resources owned by academics in favour of their collaborators (e.g. social movements/communities). Nevertheless, contributing to the improvement of the daily life of researched communities should not only be pursued because it is altruistic, but because it is fair. Profiting from data collected in vulnerable communities, in the form of degrees, publications and grants, career enhancement and social status as an academic elite without contributing to their political and social mobilisations, is unethical, exploitative and another way of exercising cultural violence over them (following Galtung's (2016) definition of violence).

My work as a human rights defender started in 2003 in Guatemala by addressing the consequences of the internal armed conflict in this country. My path as a human rights lawyer continued in the criminal investigation of mass atrocities around the globe. The personal reason behind my professional choices was the fact that I was born during the last military dictatorship in Argentina, and I knew the devastating consequences of state violence in a society. My objective as a criminal lawyer was not to leave anyone in my investigations behind. In a context of legal heterosexism, I exposed the sexual violence perpetrated against political prisoners in concentrations camps of the Province of Buenos Aires in Argentina, and analysed the systematic rape of boys and men as a weapon of war during the armed conflict in the Former-Yugoslavia. Before my contribution, the focus was on women and girls because sexual violence was perpetrated most extensively against them and there was also a stigma when it comes to researching about male rape.

I was interested in revealing the economic violence and the private actors behind state repression in Argentina, for example, the role of companies such as Mercedes Benz in the forced disappearance of their workers as an ideological and physical cleansing of ‘unwanted’ elements within their labour force. These concerns are also present in the selection of my case study: San Basilio de Palenque is a community left behind by state, and its territorial dispossession has been carried out by a colonial regime and then economic actors in a context of long-term armed conflict and racial discrimination.

These dynamics present in San Basilio de Palenque are what academia has acknowledged as “internal colonialism,” a legacy of the past colonial relations in Latin America (Sidaway 2002:18). This legacy is what is meant to be revealed and analysed in this research. In the same line as Anzaldúa (1987), Pérez (2005) explains that there are spaces trapped in between colonial and postcolonial times. San Basilio de Palenque is ostensibly one of them. This research acquires, for some moments, the shape of a criminal investigation. Accordingly, evidence was collected and prepared to support the legal claims of the community while also serving the purposes of my doctoral research.

As I explained in section 1 of chapter 2, San Basilio de Palenque has been an object of analysis from different perspectives, such as anthropology, history, genetics, and linguistics. It is easy for any social researcher to surrender to the complex beauty of the history of struggles and losses of this community. Routledge & Driscoll Derickson (2015) state that academia is more comfortable in its task of being critical than collaborative with the researched communities. The main contribution of these investigations to San Basilio de Palenque has been the creation of awareness about the presence and the legacies of the Afro-descendant communities in the Colombian society to revolt against social indifference and racism (Arocha Rodríguez, 2016). The creation of awareness is indeed relevant, but not enough. Hence, this research aspires to provide San Basilio de Palenque with findings that can be used as supporting evidence to promote their political agendas.

### **2.b.1. Ethics while Researching**

In April 2015, I travelled to Colombia to have informal meetings with Afro-descendant leaders, who were also gatekeepers for my work within the community of San Basilio de Palenque. The main reason for my travel was to gauge the interest and usefulness of my research about their land claims and protection against forced displacement for the community. Their answer was assertive: ‘Absolutely. We have been waiting for so long.’



I explained in detail to the president of the community council, Nicasio Pérez Salgado, that there was a minor risk that my presence as a researcher in the field could escalate tensions between his community and private actors, such as business enterprises, with regards to land grabbing. We agreed this was part of the risk assumed by every local human rights defender working in some areas in Latin America and by every ethnic community in Colombia claiming for territorial justice. General awareness and monitoring of news sources were implemented as safety measures.

I then obtained the authorisation from the community to develop my academic project, and the community was fully informed of this task. In return, I had to submit to San Basilio de Palenque my research findings and present them in a format that they could use them for their mobilisation for land rights. My personal and professional commitment to the community ran beyond this, and we started developing local projects, such as the construction of an archive that contains the historical documents that I found in colonial archives in Bogotá, Cartagena de Indias and Seville, Spain. The colonial documents collected can serve as evidence in legal claims for land restitution, but also as study and research material in the community. We are also designing a post-doctoral project that can allow the community to find out about the existence of other *pueblos negros* [black towns] in the Colombian Caribbean that share similar patterns of racialisation.

Regarding research ethics and integrity procedures for my fieldwork, the community members were approached in person to explain the research and invite them to participate in the work. They were provided with an information sheet on the proposed project, and I also orally explained it and dissipated doubts that appeared during the ongoing work. Due to the social and cultural background and traditions, participants were sometimes reluctant to sign informed consent. As a result of that, oral consent was recorded in an audio-digital format. Oral consent was particularly implemented in the case of participants who were illiterate. Nevertheless, they were offered to provide written consent by choosing a person that they trust or a relative as a witness.

The option of written consent was offered for people who could read and write and were comfortable with that. Informed consent forms were discussed and completed or recorded for each individual prior to participation in research activities. It was up to the participants whether they wished to be anonymised or identified by their real names in this research project, as well

as future research and knowledge transfer activities, such as papers and lectures. None of them chose to be anonymised because they wanted their voices to be heard.

## **2.c. Female Researcher**

Cupples and Kindon (2003) explain that as researchers we cannot detach ‘the field’ from our everyday life. ‘The field’ is influenced by our family, friends and colleague relationships affecting the production of knowledge. As a woman doing solo research in the Colombian Caribbean, this involved overcoming violence in the private and public spheres of my life. During my fieldwork, I paid the price in both spheres, which had an impact on my research. In my personal life, I was a victim of domestic violence when my investigations started to demand more hours of work, including interviewing people or doing archival research away from my ex-partner’s control. His city, Barranquilla, had to be removed from the list of places to conduct my study due to harassment, which he tried to extend to other places, such as Bogotá, Cartagena de Indias, and my researched community, San Basilio de Palenque.

Scholarship has addressed safety issues of doing ‘solo’ research (Kenyon and Hawker, 1999), researching in conflict areas (Naz, 2012) and dealing with the risk of sexual harassment of female researchers at the hands of male participants (Sharp and Kremer, 2006). I looked for accounts of researchers who experienced domestic violence while doing their fieldwork that subsequently impacted their data collection. I could not find any such statements. What I read were stories of rapes and sexual assaults suffered by female researchers in the field. Female researchers refer to the lack of an open debate on the matter in academia for different reasons, such as self-blaming, public blaming of the victim (Huang, 2016; Steffen, 2017) and accusations from colleagues of building their career over these tragedies (Huang, 2016).

Steffen (2017) describes her sexual assault during her fieldwork in China while remembering the rape and murder of Henrietta Schmerler, an anthropology student at the Columbia University in the 1920s, while she was researching an indigenous community in Arizona. Steffen (2017) also collects other contemporary stories of sexual offences during fieldwork. Some researchers have started speaking out about sexual violence exercised against them by participants, insiders or strangers in the field.

However, talking about violence exercised by partners or close male relatives against female researchers in the context of research/fieldwork seems to remain as a taboo. I thought about stating in this research simply that I could not do fieldwork in certain localities such as in

Barranquilla, because of personal reasons. The phrase ‘personal reasons’ could evade many questions that can come up after this acknowledgement. Nevertheless, to avoid calling things by their names makes violence more harmful and promotes self-blaming and impunity. Some women who were victims of sexual assaults during their fieldwork pressed charges against their aggressors (A. Johnson, 2017), but others did not (Huang, 2016). This decision is informed and personal, and therefore, it cannot be judged by others. I did not press charges for domestic violence against my aggressor because the enforcement of the Colombian law on violence against women is difficult on the ground (Caicedo, 2005). I did not want to be victimised for a second time by a police officer.

As part of my fieldwork preparation, I made a Fieldwork and Risk Assessment to obtain an authorisation from the university to proceed with data collection in an area not considered utterly safe by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I envisaged potential hazards regarding physical safety and the ongoing armed conflict in the country, but never from my ex-partner. He was even my emergency contact. The World Health Organization (2013:n/p) has declared that violence against women is a “global health problem of epidemic proportions,” however, this risk was not conceived as such by the institution or myself. Gendered vulnerabilities (Steffen, 2017) associated, for instance, with domestic violence in the field does not appear as a category on the risk assessment form provided by the university. This absence discourages consideration of measures to implement in the case that violence occurs.

Whether it was a bad or good decision, I did not tell my supervisors what had happened to me; I was scared that they could decide to bring me back to Sheffield. I shared the violent episode I suffered with the historian, Maria Cristina Navarrete Peláez, who I went to visit in her city, Cali, to interview about her work on San Basilio de Palenque. Anita, her housekeeper and an Afro-descendant woman, took care of me giving me *Moringa* leaf tea to overcome the spiritual pain. Anita told me about many abusive men and not-as-lucky women as me who did not survive to tell the story. I wondered why I thought I had immunity from violence from my ex-partner.

I used to be a lawyer working on violence against women, even in the Colombian Caribbean with women’s NGOs. I was aware that violence against women does not distinguish race, class or education, yet I remained cognizant of the privileges that I had to confront it. While some women in Colombia have to remain in their homes with their aggressors because of economic reasons, I could buy flight tickets that allowed me to put distance between him and myself right

away. I was ashamed of myself, the human rights lawyer, becoming a victim, and felt that quitting on my fieldwork, that I had prepared for for a period of one year, would have been another victory of the aggressor over me. Perhaps I should not have done it, but I never stopped working and continued my data collection, postponing my grieving.

The members of the community were also informed about the situation of violence that I was facing while doing my fieldwork. The community's isolation and its own 'security' systems that involved, for instance, the control of the entrance of San Basilio de Palenque by male youth on motorbikes - made me feel safe only there. They were in charge of taking people from the highway, where small buses stopped 4 kilometres from the heart of San Basilio de Palenque, the community square. However, the community could not be my permanent accommodation because of the water emergency that the community went through, which caused water to be brought by horse, mule and motorbikes from other towns. The two water pumps existent in San Basilio de Palenque were out of service, and the different governmental authorities from municipal to departmental level disregarded responsibilities on the matter. However, even without that water scarcity, the water was not suitable for drinking for me due to poor sanitisation in the area.

Apart from having to make changes to my research design due to the domestic violence I suffered, e.g. eliminating places for data collection, such as Barranquilla, this situation impacted in other ways my work in San Basilio de Palenque. The realisation that I was also a victim of violence helped to build trust with them. In other words, I was there to contribute to their land claims but, they also offered me care and support through shared conversations that allowed me to deepen into discussions on the consequences of violence. Violence is a difficult topic to address with victims at first meet.

The support that I received came from my research assistant, the local teacher Bernardino Pérez, community council authorities and local helpers. Accordingly, Cupples (Cupples & Kindon, 2003) describes how being accompanied with their children during her fieldwork was beneficial because it helped her to build rapport with her participants and understand different aspects of motherhood in Nicaragua. Presenting ourselves to our participants as human beings with problems and sufferings, away from the "ivory tower" where researchers are sometimes placed as explained by Chatterton et al. (2010:250), contributes to equalising (although not wholly) power dynamics between both parties.

Robson (1997) describes how being a single woman researching in Nigeria was seen as anomalous and the impact of the visit of their relatives from the UK helped her to place herself in a more understanding way to her participants. In this sense, women in the community were attentive in their listening, but also reluctant, sometimes, to engage in discussions with me: a woman of my age, single with no children, was suspicious. Prayers for me to find a good husband were their main wish for me.

My marital status was a topic of debate in the community because women start having partners and children before they are 18 years old. I found myself in the situation to explain many times the reasons why I was not married yet, sometimes even before starting the interviews. I delved into this uncomfortable feeling that appeared to me every time I had to answer these questions. I realised that in my two roles, as a criminal investigator and researcher, I was the one in charge of making inquiries and receiving answers; a power position that I had to give up if I wanted to be consistent with my commitment as an activist scholar.

Within the borders of San Basilio de Palenque, my research had a good reception in the community and the Community Council whose members were only men. Debates on territory are male-dominated because men are considered experts on this topic. They are the ones who mainly crop and take care of the cattle in the rural areas while women are housewives or street sellers of traditional sweets in urban areas such as Cartagena de Indias. They acknowledged me as white and not as a *mestiza* (a '*colorada*' [alluding to my red face under the sun] as they used to call me), a well-educated person coming from a European educational institution and a lawyer –a profession that still provides a sort of authority to the one who holds it. This acknowledgement allowed me to participate in meetings, and give opinions and directives to men when I conducted my data collection.

I should have been excluded from the male-dominated discussions on territory, or at least considered an outsider due to my gender. I included women as much as I could in my research methods, as explained later in this chapter. In other Latin American countries, such as Ecuador and Mexico, *campesino* and indigenous women have been reported largely excluded from community territorial governance (distribution and use of the land) with minimal influence on decision-making and commonly mediated for their male relatives on land discussions (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2011; Radcliffe, 2014). Including underrepresented members of a group is part of my commitment as an activist scholar. Accordingly, Routledge and Driscoll Derickson (2015) have promoted female participation in their research in India, looking for

improvement of female capacities and well-being following their positionality as activist scholars.

Edmonds-Cady (2012) states that the insider status of the researcher as recognised by the participants is built based on race, social status and its implications for the researcher. My race and my education made me almost a peripheral insider (Adler and Adler, 2011; Jenkins, 2011) in debates on strategies towards community mobilisation for land restitution. Being a peripheral insider permitted me to observe their group interactions, and I decided only to engage in their discussions when my opinion on a matter was consulted. I swapped between the positions of insider and outsider during my fieldwork. Rubin (2012) emphasises that recognising how these two positions simultaneously operate while researching can positively contribute to creating rapport with participants by engaging with them more horizontally.

Outside the boundaries of San Basilio de Palenque, the situation of conducting field research as a woman was different. Street harassment including verbal and physical abuse is part of the daily life of women in the Colombian Caribbean. For instance, to overcome street harassment, I wore big clothes, avoided makeup and hid my hair under a cap. My white complexion and Argentine accent exposed me as an outsider and put me in a worse position regarding vulnerability to harassment in some occasions. The presence of a man as a companion was a helpful way to deal with these kinds of situations while working. In my case, my research assistant played this role; Bernardino Pérez was well-known and respected in this area because of his job as a local teacher.

After several days in Bernardino Pérez's company around the area, I was identified by the local men as under his 'protection' or 'belonging.' He also implemented the strategy of introducing me to some men in the area, especially those who were street sellers, explaining to them my job in the community. His introduction allowed me to start moving 'freely' without male 'supervision' in towns like San Pablo and Del Viso. Research assistants are invisible accounts of reflexivity, positionality and methodology developed by researchers (Molony and Hammett, 2007). As Kaufmann (2002) states perhaps the best way to acknowledge their presence is by highlighting our dependence on research assistants.

I am aware that I could not have safely collected my data without Bernardino Pérez's care and insights about the area. Having his companionship and expertise was one of my privileges as a woman researching in the Colombian Caribbean with research funding that facilitated his work

with me. Many other female researchers –especially those coming from the so-called global south- have to do their research alone, being more exposed to insecurities and violence.

Regarding other privileges, in February 2016, WHO declared neonatal malformations caused by the Zika virus as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (World Health Organization, 2016). The Caribbean region was a hot spot with 44.5% of the 18,165 cases of Zika virus disease registered by January 2016 occurring in Colombia (Cano Moreno, 2016; Ministerio de Salud de Colombia, 2016). In particular, San Basilio de Palenque holds specific risk factors related to its geography, e.g. wetlands and high temperatures of around 40 Celsius degrees that made it a perfect scenario for the proliferation of *Aedes* mosquitoes. Nevertheless, the dry season maintained the situation under control, mainly because the creek, which is the primary water source in the urban area of the community, was completely dry due to environmental change and illegal logging.

As a woman of reproductive age, I followed all the travel advice given by the WHO and other health agencies to avoid infection during my work in the community and my days in Cartagena de Indias, such as the use of repellent, bed netting during the night and ingestion of Vitamin B1. These safety measures were a privilege that I could afford, but not the women of San Basilio de Palenque because for them repellent was a luxury as well as was the use of contraceptive methods to prevent or delay pregnancy.

### **3. Research Methods**

This section outlines the different methods of data collection implemented in the research for this thesis including archival research, interviews, legal research and participatory mapping. These diverse sources of data ranging from the historical to the contemporary were put into conversation with each other to answer the research questions about the *Palenqueros'* centuries-long struggle to territorialise their community. As will be discussed in more detail, neither the colonial archives nor the community's oral tradition alone can give a full picture of the community's strategies of resistance against dispossession that I was looking to analyse in this research. Both are selective constructions of what happened, and inevitably, so is my analysis of these two main sources.

Archival research was conducted to obtain records about the historical development of the territory of San Basilio de Palenque to understand its dispossession from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. Some of the interpretation of these records was participatory. However, one

particular participatory output is not included in the thesis. A colonial record containing the descriptions of the borders of the territory owned by San Basilio de Palenque by 1921 was analysed by the community through their oral tradition, resulting in a participatory mapping exercise that documented deterritorialisation in a new way. The resulting map remains confidential while the community considers its next steps for land restitution. Nevertheless, archival research also provided materials for this dissertation through which to explore the colonial past of San Basilio de Palenque regarding the production of territory during slavery. These documents from colonial archives, detailed later, also provide a historical reference point for exploring through interviews with community members how this legacy of production of territory has recently been mobilised in the community's strategies for reterritorialisation. Thus, this archival material, through both my own discourse analysis and the community's analysis described below of the 1921 title deed, contributes to answering all of the research questions.

However, beyond analysing the 1921 title deed, discussions with the participants regarding their colonial history of were crucial because one of the limits of archival research can be found in the silences of the archives (Harris, 2002; Fowler, 2017; V. Johnson, 2017). Fowler (2017) explains that these silences are a consequence of the lack of neutrality of the archives: archives are framed by decisions and power, including policies about what “decisions would not be recorded, how information was once regarded, or simply the pressure of events” (Fowler, 2017:6). Silences are also the result of selecting which documents are worthy to keep or not for historical purposes, and/or which historical records are kept confidential or intentionally destroyed by powerholders. Archives also contain silences regarding racialised subjects because power tends to suppress the voices of the subalterns, including those who cannot easily be controlled (Harris, 2002; Cassiani, 2006; Trouillot, 2015; Fowler, 2017).

In the context of the Haitian Revolution, Fowler (2017) states that the colonial archive presents gaps regarding the political thought of the black revolutionaries. Trouillot (2015) explains that it was unthinkable for the colonial system to accept the idea of slaves revolting towards freedom and country independence, “Negro obedience” was the only possible reality accepted by the slavery system (Trouillot, 2015:72). Decisions about what to include in archives were thus framed by this political narrative, leading to the exclusion of subaltern voices. Similarly, Harris (2002:73) highlights that in apartheid-era archives black resistance and other marginalised voices were silenced, and “black experiences were also poorly documented, and



in most cases were seen through white eyes. Similarly, the voices of women, the disabled, and other marginalised people were seldom heard.”

Such silences were present in Colombian colonial archives regarding the active role of the slaves in the cities after independence. Cassiani (2006) explains how the colonial society of Cartagena de Indias only kept in their historical records the stories of submissive slaves while occluding those who had an active and political role in the city. For Cassiani (2006), the combination of blackness and lack of passivity was uncomfortable for the *Cartagenera* white society, which led to the suppression of the stories of revolting slaves in the texts produced during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Colombia.

Nonetheless oppressive regimes have excelled not only regarding the extermination of dissidents but in the art of recording their annihilation campaigns. But they also have excelled in destroying records when they can threaten perpetrators of human rights violations with prosecutions after political transitions (Miller, 1998; González-Ruibal, 2007; V. Johnson, 2017). As a lawyer doing criminal investigation, I had a vast experience in identifying these gaps in the archives. As with other oppressive regimes, the Spanish colonial system narrated the direct war against the *palenques* in detailed documents that are mainly analysed in chapter 4. These documents are kept in colonial archives in Spain. The colonial authorities developed a secure system of keeping records of the events that took place in their colonies. One hard copy was kept in the local governments or churches and others was sent to the archives back in Spain. However, many colonial records kept in the Cartagena de Indias have disappeared. There are many explanations provided as to why this happened, including destruction by the armed forces that fought for the Colombian independence, damage arising from tropical weather and the lack of a sufficient infrastructure that ended up conspiring against its preservation.<sup>10</sup>

Considering these limitations of silences and selectivity, the voice of the colonial archives is that of the state representing white elites and the Crown, with evidence of black voices filtered through this voice through exclusively second-hand reports by colonial authorities and their informants (as detailed in chapter 4), which raises again the question of reliability of these accounts. Therefore it was important that in this research, colonial records found in Colombia and Spain were co-analysed and put into conversation with the oral tradition of this community (explained in the following paragraphs), which was captured through different research

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<sup>10</sup> Personal communication with Professor María Cristina Navarrete Peláez in Cali on November 19, 2015.

methods including interviews and participatory mapping exercises to understand the history, experiences and significance of territory for the community. This raises the question of the limitations of oral tradition and its status as a ‘corrective’ to the official archive. We know that there are “groups, indeed whole societies, that operate outside a written culture do not produce archives in the conventional sense” (Fowler, 2017:3). Fowler (2017) argues that oral traditions can be understood as non-conventional archives. However, I resist the idea of embracing the memories of the people through the concept of the archive, which is intrinsically embedded in power and hegemony. Also, this research prefers to understand the archive itself as a “form of memory” (Johnson, 2017:103): dominant, but as with every memory, a fallible one that can be interrogated by the subalterns, as showed section 3.a.3. of this chapter. As Johnson (2017:109) states, “no record can possibly capture everything.” But this is also true of human memory; lawyers know that no witness can possibly remember all that happened in a crime scene.

The idea of improving the colonial narrative by filling the archive with the voice of the excluded promotes – even unintentionally - a hierarchy between the archive and oral tradition where the last one serves to the purpose of completing the narrative of the power. This is why I prefer to understand that archive and oral tradition are different types of memory that coexist in tension. The overlaps, agreements and disagreements between oral tradition and the archive form a contested territory. Rivera Cusicanqui (2016) has explored the relationship between orality and written words. She describes that, *mestizo* and *mestiza* researchers firstly believed that records contained only lies and the orality, nothing but the truth. Slowly, *mestizo* people discovered that orality was based as well on documents.

The Bolivian scholar gives as an example the oral tradition regarding how some indigenous communities bought their *own* lands with payments of gold and silver to the Spanish invaders. Rivera Cusicanqui (2016:132) describes how the *caciques* [indigenous leaders] discovered these titles deeds in their travels to Lima and Sucre proving that these memories had the origin in these documents. For her, this example shows how history is not linear: “the fact of independence, for example, is a forgotten fact. We are still in the colony.” This research shows how the ownership of the territory of the San Basilio de Palenque has a strong correlation – even with some disagreements - with the historical records found during my archival research demonstrating the fluidity described by Rivera Cusicanqui (2016) between oral memory and written words.

Nevertheless, I argue that Rivera Cusicanqui (2016) is overstating that *the* importance of the archive as the basis of the oral tradition, for instance, the origin of some oral tradition can be found, for instance, in written agreements over lands. Written agreements, before being written, start with the spoken word or even with body language in a continuous process of negotiation. This assertion can be explained through the story of the Maroons of the Montes de María that this research delivers mainly in chapter 4. In a synthetic way, it could be described that before reaching the 1714 peace agreement with the colonial authorities regarding land and freedom, the Maroons faced a journey of direct confrontation with the system, alliances with key actors of the regime and other slaves, peaceful interludes and the strategic use of a geography, that finally induced them to sign a peace treaty. This back-and-forth journey includes oral and body language, written words, the loss of the written records – title deeds for territory - because of different *violencias*, including the armed conflict, and the new encounter with the lost historical records and the community, that it is described in section 3.a.3.. It is through this recursive interpretive journey through different forms of situated memory that we deal with the impossibility of trying to reconstruct ‘the’ whole truth from archives and oral traditions about San Basilio’s territorial history and geography.

In order to capture oral tradition about territorialisation and dispossession, interviews were conducted with community members in different locations in order to provide deeper engagement with the past and present meaning of territory for the community, the causes of its loss and community strategies to overcome deterritorialisation. Interview locations were carefully considered, as Elwood & Martin (2000) explain that interview sites provide key information to qualitative research regarding spatial and social relations providing a broader context that influences both researcher and the participants. Immediate surroundings were analysed through observation of the daily life of the participants to draw out further data that contributed mainly to contextualising the community and the *Palenquero* lifestyle and society in this research. Therefore, interviews in this research were broadly conducted in rural and urban spaces and areas of forced displacement. Interview places in these local spaces included homes, the *montes* [fields], community places such as the cultural centre, school, trade paths, the creek as a place of collective gathering, and the main square in the town of San Basilio de Palenque. In Cartagena de Indias, the interviews were also conducted in homes in the *Palenquero* districts, in restaurants and cafes and schools and universities mainly following the preferences of the participants.

In my first meeting with the community, they allowed me to research their territory provided that I would offer a legal analysis of the current Colombian legal framework regarding land rights that could contribute to their community strategies for land restitution. The importance of this was reiterated in many interviews. Legal documents are often overlooked resources which can be used to fill gaps in archives by providing a vision of a time regarding certain social issues. However, this depiction is again mainly from the perspective of the powerholders and political majorities. Nevertheless, in some cases, these political majorities represent the subalterns, such as in the Bolivia of Evo Morales, an indigenous, *campesino* and *cocalero* political leader and current president of this country opening opportunities for social change and new strategies of resistance for the oppressed (Pinto Ocampo, 2006; McKay, 2018b).

Legal research also aimed to explain the legal framework deployed by the Colombian state to recognise the territories of the black communities and its consequences for San Basilio de Palenque's efforts at land reparation, thus addressing the primary research question of this thesis. The legal analysis that I conducted based on my legal expertise included black letter, socio-legal and critical studies approaches, which are explained further in section 3. c.. Archival research in colonial archives provided legal data and background information for the legal analysis, for instance, through the 1714 peace treaty between the Maroons and the colonial authorities that is analysed in chapter 4, and the 1783 de la Torre's report that is analysed in chapter 5. Furthermore, data collected in interviews and participatory exercises highlighted the tensions between the community's understanding of territory and the one promoted by the Colombian state. Therefore, I also did legal research on more recent legislation as detailed in chapter 6. The legal analysis will be shared with the community in a workshop that will take in the community in 2020 contributing to discussions on land restitution as part of the agreements reached with the Community Council of San Basilio de Palenque during my fieldwork.

Finally, the participatory mapping pilot conducted in San Basilio de Palenque aimed to support the community's agenda for land restitution with maps that can serve as documentary evidence for legal use. This research method was intended primarily to contribute to community legal claims in the context of the peace process in Colombia. However, the way that this method was implemented, which is explained in further detail in section 3.d., included a group discussion regarding some of the main themes presented in this thesis: territory, deterritorialisation and reterritorialization. The group discussion activity was included not only to help address the research questions, but also as an activity which resonated with the community's oral tradition.

### 3.a. Archival Research

Archival research (Chatterjee, 1997; Kelly, 2009; Ogborn, 2010; Hammett, Twyman and Graham, 2015) aimed to produce historical and legal evidence of the territory owned by San Basilio de Palenque and its dispossession since the colonial times to the present day. My search in archives focused on maps of San Basilio de Palenque and other related evidence produced by the colonial regime, such as colonial population censuses, letters exchanged between colonial authorities about the struggles carried out by the fugitive slaves while building *palenques*, and the first aerial picture of the community. Archival searches were carried out in the *Archivo General de la Nación de Bogotá* [The National General Archive of Bogotá], the *Archivo Histórico de Cartagena de Indias* [The Historical Archive of Cartagena de Indias], and the *Archivo General de Indias* [The General Archive of Indies] in Seville, Spain in order to secure the documentation existent in relation to San Basilio de Palenque from colonial times until 1921.

The analysis of these records analyses the colonial discourse present in the historical sources through two manners. Firstly, by delving into the everyday words used to represent the colonial *Palenque de San Miguel*, its members and their actions, I looked for evidence of the Maroon's agency and the strategies they implemented to overcome slavery despite being deliberate targets of occlusion by the colonial regime through its hegemonic discourse (McEwan, 2003; Danto, 2008; Limb, Knight and Root, 2014; Achugar, 2017). This analysis is mainly developed in Chapter 4 where the colonial past of the community is explored in detail to provide a basis for a subsequent understanding of how past strategies of resistance have been put into action in present times. Secondly, as explained in the next sections of this chapter, the colonial records were analysed by the community from a participatory approach building bridges and spotting disagreements between the oral memory and the archive.

Furthermore, the archival research had the purpose of securing copies of documents which were part of San Basilio de Palenque's history that remained materially inaccessible for them while held in colonial archives in Bogotá, Cartagena de Indias, and Seville. Economic reasons and physical and cultural distance have prevented the members of the community from being able to collect these documents for their records and land restitution. The year 1921 emerged as a relevant date in the investigation conducted by de Friedemann (Cross and de Friedemann, 1979) when a land demarcation was requested from the authorities by the members of San Basilio de Palenque to protect their territories from land grabbing perpetrated by white-elite

landowners. This land demarcation was the first collective and legal attempt registered in the community's history to defend their territories against dispossession in modern times. To protect the community's territory from the consequences of the war, its second land demarcation took place in 2012 and was the result of Law 70 on Afro-descendants communities and territory (República de Colombia, 1993). This legislation and its effects on land protection (or lack of protection) are explained in detail in chapter 6.

Paper copies of the 1921 collective title deed and other documents related to land tenure, such as informal agreements, were once in the community's possession. Sarai Zuñiga Pedraza and Ismael Maestres Simanca were once in possession of a paper copy of the 1921 title deed.<sup>11</sup> They are members of *Todo Sonrisa* [All Smile], which is one of the *veredas* of San Basilio de Palenque. A *vereda* is a group of houses, whose residents are related not only by proximity but also by a sense of solidarity and belonging to the same place. *Todo Sonrisa* has a particular history of forced displacement because a group of families was internally displaced multiple times, but always remained together in displacement. As a group, before and during the forced displacements occurred in the 2000s, they decided to destroy these legal documents because holding evidence related to the ownership of land was extremely risky for their lives.

Nowadays, the risk of holding property documents has decreased, and the creation of a local archive for their collection can contribute to reducing threats to individuals. The selection of historical documents that I acquired during my fieldwork can serve as a stimulus for the community construction of their local archive. The idea started to materialise after securing a grant of the Postgraduate Researcher Experience Programme of the University of Sheffield and the Ministry of Culture of Colombia that allowed us to have a workshop where we discussed the steps to follow.

During November and December 2015, I consulted 5,000 maps under the section '*SMP-Sección Mapas y Planos: 1550/1976*' of the catalogue of the National General Archive of Bogotá. I found maps with historical interest for Maroon communities in Colombia, and San Basilio de Palenque in particular. In the Historical Archive of Cartagena de Indias, I worked during February 2016, until I found the 1921 collective title deed that is explained in detail in the next section. The searches in the General Archive of Indies took place in June 2016, where invaluable historical registers and evidence regarding the territorial dispossession of San

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<sup>11</sup> Sarai Zuñiga Pedraza and Ismael Maestres Simanca were interviewed in *Todo Sonrisa*, San Basilio de Palenque, on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

Basilio de Palenque were collected including more than 1,000 pages of handwritten 17th century Spanish file that contains letters exchanged between colonial authorities, and population census.

Another archival search was conducted in the Agustín Codazzi Geographical Institute and the Colombian Institute of Rural Development (Bogotá) to find modern maps and the current demarcation of San Basilio de Palenque made by the Colombian state in 2012. On November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015, a formal request was made to the Colombian Institute of Rural Development for a copy of the 2012 collective title deed granted by the Colombian government: There was no formal answer. The community provided me with the final draft of this collective title deed during my first visit to San Basilio de Palenque in November 2015.

### **3.a.1. Mapping Collectively the 1921 Collective Title Deed**

Figure 4 shows the Title Deed no. 131 (August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1921) formalising the right of the residents of the *Palenque de San Basilio* to the land that was distributed by Antonio de la Torre in 1779. The title deed was found in the *Sección Notaría - Serie CB –Tomo I* [Notary Section – Series CB – Folder 1] in the Historical Archive of Cartagena de Indias. Only the last eight pages of the title deed remain, the rest seemed to be torn off from the notary book. The first pages can still be known due to the work and publication of the title deed made by the anthropologist, Nina de Friedemann (1991b) in the journal *América Negra* [Black America].



Figure 4. Title Deed no. 131 (August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1921). Source: *Archivo Histórico de Cartagena de Indias, Sección Notaría - Serie CB –Tomo 1*

In the introductory part of this deed, it is described how three members of the *Palenque de San Basilio*, Andrés Beltran, Pedro Torres and Juan de Mata Reyes, on behalf of their community, made a request to the notary of the Municipality of Carmen de Bolívar to formalise some testimonies. These testimonies were given to a municipal judge to prove the right to property over lands. Antonio de la Torre demarcated these lands in 1779 as belonging to the community. Antonio de la Torre was also known as the founding father of many towns in the area, which was called *María La Alta* at the time of the title deed (de Friedemann, 1991b).

This land formalisation was to ensure that in the future copies of the title deed could be requested by other people for different purposes. The members of the current community council, who participated in the collective title deed demarcation process which was made by the Colombian state and finished in 2012, were not aware of the existence of the 1921 title deed. In 2016, I gave a copy of this document and the publication made by Nina de Friedemann to the president of the community council, Nicasio Reyes Salgado.

### **3.a.2. Participatory Historical and Geographical Research**

The advantage of the 1921 title deed was that it contained a description of the borders of San Basilio de Palenque that allowed the community to interrogate and challenge the understanding of their territory in this record and therefore, the power of the colonial archive. The archive has been defined as a container of power that shapes social identity and collective memory: “...



the loci of power of the present to control what the future will know of the past” (Schwartz & Cook 2002:13). How to include participatory research methods that partially counter this control in archival research has been an increasing concern in Human Geography (Bressey, 2014; Cameron, 2014; DeLyser, 2014; Geoghegan, 2014).

DeLyser (2014:93,95) proposes to use participatory research methods in historical-geographical research for the analysis of the archive. The concept of participatory historical geographies aims “to forward community-based agendas.” Nevertheless, the author warns that participatory methods cannot always be fully applied to this type of research because of the impossibility of engaging directly with certain communities that the researchers work with. For example, her case study is female pilots in the USA during the 1920s and 1930s, who are no longer alive. However, DeLyser proposes other strategies to overcome this limitation through, for instance, personal contributions of researchers to historical collections (donations of historical pieces to museums and volunteering in the archives); and finally, “public scholarship”, for example, raising awareness beyond academia on research topics, e.g. intellectual contribution of the researcher to a film delving into her case study.

These activities proposed by DeLyser could be characterised more as activism or support of social causes than participatory research. My critique is that actual participatory research implies the necessary interaction of the researched community with historical records. Stoler (2002) explains that the archive orders facts to narrate them from the perspective of the colonial system. From this thesis’s perspective, the encounter between the historical records and the communities could ‘disorder’ the colonial narrative if participants contested the archival account while proposing their own version of their history. Stoler (2002) asks how researchers can deconstruct the colonial versions of the history of the communities. I assert that the use of participatory geographical and historical research requires that the researched communities become the researchers of their own history.

In the following sub-section, I describe the engagement of members of the community with the 1921 title deed, delving into its interpretation and contestation. For instance, these participants added other community sites, which were not mentioned in the 1921 title deed, but the oral tradition suggests they were part of the borders of San Basilio de Palenque at that time: a match between collective memory and spatiality.

Chatterjee (1997) suggests the combination of both, the colonial and the local archives, for the analysis of women’s visibility/presence in South-Asian history during the 18th and 19th

centuries. The inclusion of the records of the ruling families of South Asia expanded the social analysis which is often circumscribed by the vision of the empire administrators. Nevertheless, the community of San Basilio de Palenque does not have a local archive that contains historical records of the community or title deeds, primarily because during the times of direct violence, people were forced to destroy them to continue alive as explained by Sarai Zuñiga Pedraza and Ismael Maestres Simanca.<sup>12</sup> As previously stated, this research aims to return the historical records found in the colonial archives to the community for its collection, legal purposes and community history.

### **3.a.3. Participatory Historical and Geographical Research Actual Method: Walking the 1921 Title Deed**

As I mentioned before, the 1921 title deed contains descriptions of the boundaries of the community including points of reference, such as creeks, wetlands and farms. Carlos Pérez and Juan Felipe Santana were appointed by the community council to participate in producing a community-revised version of the 1921 title deed by a GPS demarcation. My researcher assistant, Bernardino Pérez, who also had an extensive knowledge of San Basilio de Palenque's territory, Carlos Pérez, Juan Felipe Santana and I conducted this task together as a team.

Walking the boundaries of the title deed took three journeys also using transportation, e.g. motorbike and moto-taxi. The dry season, the lack of water in the community and high temperatures -around 40 Celsius degrees- were the primary physical challenges to cope with as a team. This 'walking' was done as a group, and the team led me through the geographies of San Basilio de Palenque. "Meaningful walking" (Jung 2013:622), "walking ethnography" (Anderson 2004; Duncan & Duncan 2010:241) and "walking tours" (Aoki & A. Yoshimizu 2015:621) are different names for a method that aspires to acknowledge territory as a sensory experience. In its participant-led and collective way, it is research from below (Phillips and Johns, 2012).

This mapping also aimed to quantify the territory owned by the *Palenqueros* in 1921 and compare it with the collective title deed made by the state in 2012. Having established the territorial dispossession, this allowed delving into its causes. This exercise also helped me to deepen knowledge on the territory of San Basilio de Palenque, their members and potential

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<sup>12</sup> Sarai Zuñiga Pedraza and Ismael Maestres Simanca were interviewed in Todo Sonrisa, San Basilio de Palenque, on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

participants for the other methods used in this research. Expanding this knowledge allowed me not to be limited to the suggestions made by my research assistant and the members of the community council. It was also an opportunity for the members of San Basilio de Palenque to get familiar with the purposes of this research and trust me as an ally in their land claims.

In order to conduct a community-revised version of the title deed, I matched both -the remaining part of the 1921 title deed found in the Cartagena de Indias's archive and the first eight pages of the transcription published by the anthropologist Nina de Friedemann (1991) in the journal *América Negra* in 1991– obtaining, as a result, our transcription of the title deed. There were minor disagreements between de Friedemann's transcription and what we could read from the remaining part of the 1921 title deed. Our transcription was read, discussed and interpreted by the local experts on territory mentioned before. The team also examined the title deed with the elders in the community to identify the places and geographical points that potentially could have experienced changes in their names from 1921 to date. For instance, some large farms described in the title deed had changed their names or disappeared.

From the title deed, 13 location points were identified by the experts. Figure 5 shows the small farm of Carlos Cassiani, which is a location point added by the experts as a community site which constitutes the highest point in the community. These 14 location points were marked by the use of a GPS, and four pictures of each location point were taken following the cardinal directions in the order of North – West - South and East. The final demarcation of the 14 location points was not only the work of the team but also the result of the indications given by other members of San Basilio de Palenque, who we met on our way and helped us to reach the sites while telling stories of dispossession and violence in the places. These stories gave me background information about contemporary land grabs which was useful for subsequent interviews about the history and geography of territorial dispossession and resistance and their interpretation. Furthermore, I conducted a preliminary legal analysis as to whether these causes could be technically addressed through the legal framework of the Colombian state regarding land rights for black communities for the future report to be submitted to the community.



Figure 5. The Small Farm of Carlos Cassiani

The *walking* also allowed me to clarify concepts related to the geography of San Basilio de Palenque. For instance, the North direction for the community is the South in the maps made by the Colombian state. Bernardino Pérez, my research assistant, explained that the ancestral logic places the North in the highest part of the community, where the community's primary water source is: the *arroyo* [creek], a place of social and ancestral knowledge exchange, as explained by Pérez Palomino (2002), or at least it was until illegal logging destroyed it in the last decade. Nevertheless, we agreed with the idea that for the community-revised version of the 1921 title deed, we would follow the North as given in state maps for legal purposes.

Moreover, some local concepts related to territory were explained by Carlos Pérez, such as the presence of *aljibes* and *cazimbas* on our road. Figure 6 shows women digging *aljibes* and *cazimbas* (wells) in San Basilio de Palenque to provide water to their families first, and the

community later. Women are in charge of finding the “eyes” of the land, where the groundwater is.



Figure 6. *Aljibes* and *cazimbas*

The walking method revealed that discussion of territory in the area is still risky to life. Although the community was actively participating and aware of the purposes of my research, its members advised me never to admit -outside of their boundaries- that my work was related to territorial dispossession and to say instead that I was helping in their local school.

Their concern was profound, and an example of this was that the driver of the only direct bus that linked Cartagena de Indias with San Basilio de Palenque, Toñito, welcomed me after my first trip to the community when I took the bus. He was in charge of my care when I travelled from Cartagena de Indias to their lands. Furthermore, two events during my research confirmed that the risk surrounding land claims was real. Firstly, during our GPS demarcation, we were followed by an armed man near the *María* wetland who interrogated us about the purpose of our demarcation. Secondly, we received the news of a massacre of three *campesinos*, who had made claims on land, on our way to visit one of the displaced communities, *La Pista*. The terror and the traumatic memories from past times when the repression of *campesino* leaders was daily could be felt everywhere, especially, in *La Pista*.

After obtaining the location of these places by GPS, these locations were converted into a map, which provided a community-revised version of the 1921 title deed, using Geographical Information System software (Shiffer, 2002; Weiner, Harris and Craig, 2002; Batty, 2003; Aitken and Kwan, 2010). After the walking, while giving me water, the members of the community reunited in a local kiosk and told me that this walking had made me one of them and part of the territory. Carlos Pérez corrected me when I asked him which family the owner of a *roza* [portion of land used for cropping by a family] was within San Basilio de Palenque: “We belong to the territory; the territory does not belong to us.”<sup>13</sup> The map produced by the community after the walking exercise is not disclosed in this thesis because it is part of the current community strategy for land restitution and will remain confidential until the community allows its publication.

### **3.b. Interviewing the Experts**

This doctoral study included 29 adults as interviewees: 11 women and 18 men. Women were encouraged to participate in the process of data collection to challenge power dynamics and exclusion (Sletto *et al.*, 2013). The selection regarding age was diverse to acknowledge the broadest picture of the research problem (Polkinghorne, 2005). Elders who had an extensive knowledge of the territory were especially considered for interviews for their knowledge on the evolution of the community (Tobias, 2000). Participants were recruited using gatekeepers, such as my research assistant, local helpers and members of the community council. After the community-revised version of the 1921 title deed, I invited some interviewees to join the research project, and these also helped to contact other people who were interested in the topic of territory (Valentine, 1997). As noted before, the interviews took place in San Basilio de Palenque, displaced communities, Bogotá, Cali and the urban *palenques* in Cartagena de Indias. Although women interviewees were fewer in number, and problematic from a participatory perspective, the data obtained in the semi-structured interviews of women about resistance in contemporary times was richer as shown in chapter 5. This is particularly so in the Cartagena de Indias, as many of the women were highly educated political activists, and in the displaced communities where women were more expressive about their memories of forced displacement than the men. Semi-structured questions (Mason 2002; Longhurst 2010; McDowell 2010; Phillips & Johns 2012; Hammett et al. 2015) had three main areas of in-depth inquiry: territory, dispossession, and resistance. However, although interviews were semi-

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<sup>13</sup> Dialogue with Carlos Pérez in San Basilio de Palenque on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

structured with a set of questions about these three themes, they became spaces of horizontal dialogue where the participants also took the role of interviewers asking me for instance, what home is for me. The fact I was also giving answers about these topics usually affected in a positive way the answers of the participants, because it appeared to allow them to be more honest and open around certain internal divisions within the community regarding visions of territory.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Spanish, my mother tongue and language that is also spoken by the community, in the following locations: 1) San Basilio de Palenque -the mother community; 2) *La Pista* and *Rafael de La Bonguita* –both internally displaced communities; and 3) Cartagena de Indias, a traditionally white city, where *palenquero* migratory communities are emplaced in some of its districts. Although other cities can also be considered urban *palenques*, such as Barranquilla and Caracas, the scope of this research is limited in this sense to Cartagena de Indias. Barranquilla had to be dismissed as a place of study due to security reasons as explained earlier.

Furthermore, the city of Caracas could provide insights about transnational migration and the building of *palenques* beyond the Colombian borders. Nevertheless, this transnational dimension will await exploration in future research because of the volume of data collected in the present doctoral study. The interviews conducted in all the places mentioned before allowed us to delve into both the causes and consequences of territorial dispossession and the strategies created to overcome the loss of homeland and racial discrimination while achieving a sense of belonging and freedom in other spaces.

Discussions on territory caught the attention of the members of the community because it is currently a hot topic that divides San Basilio de Palenque into two camps: those who support the collective title deed and those who, affected by material poverty, see selling their lands as an opportunity to start a new life somewhere else. This controversy played in my favour for conducting interviews because everyone wanted to give their opinion on the matter. Nevertheless, in the communities living in forced displacement, the vulnerability was higher because the precaritisation and contingency that they faced in their daily lives. Survivors of gross human rights violations should receive different treatment regarding research care (Jelin, 2003; Appelbaum, 2008) because the memories of the traumatic events may stimulate pain and distress in the interviewee. Therefore, the researcher should adopt during these testimonies counselling attitudes and strategies to mitigate these collateral effects (Coyle and Wright,

1996). I chose the following strategy to reduce re-victimisation during the interviews in the communities living in internal forced displacement. These strategies were developed during special training taken and my experience as a human rights lawyer conducting criminal investigations of mass crimes, which included the interview of victims of those crimes.

I conducted shorter interviews (30 minutes approximately). I expanded the time of my introduction and explanation of my research to develop trust and empathy. I took as many breaks as needed by the participants. I created spaces of debriefing that included ‘shared silence’ and physical contact such as holding hands is culturally accepted in this context. The participants were invited to contact me if, after their testimonies, forgotten memories sprung into their minds and they thought this material could enrich their narratives and the research (Polkinghorne, 2005). I met most of the participants several times during my stay in the community after the interviews took place and these casual meetings were opportunities to enlarge their original testimonies.

Each interview was analysed through a holistic approach. This approach implies embracing the narrative of the interview as a whole (Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014). I crafted a “profile” of the interview by using the own participant’s words in a narrative form (Seidman 1991:91) capturing words, utterances (Roulston, 2014) and silences (Jelin, 2003), especially when participants referred to episodes of direct violence. Secondly, the interviews were collected and organised by using NVivo (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). After getting familiar with the sample, an index of “organizational categories” or “bins” was used to sort out the data (Maxwell & Chmiel 2014:25). This initial index was improved in a list of “substantive categories” (by using the ‘wording’ and the language of the participants) and “theoretical categories,” and finally these categories were consolidated in a catalogue of themes (Crang, 2005; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014; Hammett, Twyman and Graham, 2015). These themes were territory, dispossession, resistance and *Palenquero* identity, which identified “patterned responses” in the interviews’ data set that led to answers to the research questions proposed in this project (Braun & Clarke 2006:82).

Lastly, I maintained conversations in Cartagena de Indias and Cali with a land rights activist from the Valle del Cauca and five academic experts on the history of San Basilio de Palenque and other Afro-descendant communities that helped me to clarify concepts developed in their academic work that I used as conceptual background.



### 3.c. Legal Data and Analysis

Legal analysis in this research was conducted from three different approaches: black letter, socio-legal and critical studies approaches that are explained in further detail. The legal data analysed includes the Resolution No.0466 that granted the *Palenque* a collective title deed in 2012. The Resolution No.0466 has its foundation on Transitory Article 55 of the Constitution, Law 70/1993 and Decree 1745/1995. A mixed-legal research methods approach was used to analyse these legal instruments, premised on a textual and technical analysis of the letter of the law in all cases. This type of analysis is also known as the ‘black letter’ approach, but it includes a doctrinal approach to fully interpret the legal data content (Gestel and Micklitz, 2014). Steele (2012:5) states that the doctrinal study “is concerned with the substantive content of the law and therefore, with the analysis of legal materials, primarily cases and statutes and primarily for the kinds of purposes associated with lawyering.” This analysis implies the “identification of the legal positions (...and) identification of gaps in the law that require reform or features of it that can be improved” (Steele, 2012:6). This type of legal study is the foundation for moving forward to the incorporation of other approaches, such as socio-legal and critical legal studies, to address (intended and unintended) material-discursive effects of legal documents.

A socio-legal approach utilises empirical data collected by research methods of social sciences to interpret the law (Halliday, 2012). This approach helps to answer legal questions related to the process of creation, implementation, use, and social effects of the law (Halliday, 2012). The qualitative data used to fulfil the empirical-legal research method comes from both primary and secondary data: articles on the topic, archival records, personal communications, and interviews with members of the community and other actors, who are land rights activists or were part of the discussion during the constitutional reform in 1991 on ethnic rights.

The critical studies approach is also implemented in the analysis of the legal data. Critical studies analyse the law and legal theories by rejecting the idea that “the law regulates society in a neutral, value-free way. Instead, they see such law as reflecting the value of those making law, and these values in turn as reflecting dominant values” (Nicolson, 2012:43). This approach exposes the power of legal discourse that makes the Afro-descendant communities invisible in their territories, and their lands –despite being under their possession for centuries- categorised as ‘empty.’ In Colombia, as Arocha (1998) points out, indigenous people are seen as its roots and European-descendants are seen as a racial/social aspiration with no space for the Afro-descendants.

### 3.d. Participatory Mapping Pilot

The participatory mapping pilot described in this section is a research product meant to support the community mobilisation for territorial reparation. Providing legal evidence to the community regarding their land dispossession is part of my larger activist research project in San Basilio de Palenque along with this doctoral dissertation. Therefore, while the community-revised version of the 1921 title deed had the main purpose of gathering data for this research and the community, this participatory mapping pilot was originally pursued to generate evidence for the community's legal consumption. However, the pilot did provide inputs for this dissertation as explained further in this section.

Participatory mapping constitutes a technique for collecting “detailed data on local understanding of location, resources and mobilities” directly from the participants (usually communities) that allow for the elaboration of a map as an outcome (Hammett et al., 2015:118). This method is based on knowledge produced at the grass-roots level, and therefore it is also known as “counter mapping”, “social mapping”, “power mapping” and “remapping” (Herlihy & Knapp, 2003:303). As a result of the use of this technique, however, the map can adopt the format of the so-called Western style or alternative models, for example, sketch maps (Herlihy and Knapp, 2003) and “*mapas parlantes*” [oral maps] (Sletto et al., 2013:201).

The adoption of a map format during our participatory mapping exercise was a decision made in a collegial way between the participants and I after answering the following question: What is the community-based map for? (Bryan, 2011). Some maps developed by communities can seek to contribute to filling in gaps in their history, while others can aim to be used as evidence in community land claims. I conducted participatory mapping exercises in San Basilio de Palenque with the purpose of using the map for legal submission as evidence of the land dispossession suffered by the community. The decision made by the community was to engage the system on its terms, in other words, in a map format that was common for a tribunal. The so-called Western style was chosen to produce the outcome or map.

The use of the Western style in the mapping of traditional territories has been seen in the scholarship as a tool of community empowerment (Herlihy and Knapp, 2003), but also as a new form of domination (Bryan, 2009; Sletto *et al.*, 2013). To minimise the risk of the use of the map as a tool of domination, I held spaces for informed discussions in San Basilio de Palenque providing details of the method, and assessed the possible impact on other strategies regarding mobilisation towards land restitution.

In Latin America, the protagonists of participatory mapping have mainly been indigenous communities (Herlihy and Knapp, 2003; Bryan, 2009; Radcliffe, 2010; Reyes-García *et al.*, 2012). In the case of communities of Afro-descendants, for instance, Oslender (2004:970) describes an exercise conducted with the black communities of the Pacific Ocean by the Agustín Codazzi Geographical Institute. In this exercise, the members of these communities “drew up mental maps of what they conceived to be their territories (...) The results of this exercise were then translated into cartographic material (...) and served as an important tool in the process of collective land titling for black communities on the Pacific coast.”

In San Basilio de Palenque we used one of the several possible ways to develop a participatory mapping exercise in communities, also known as map biography, which constitutes a picture that tells the story of the relationship between a person and his/her territories. Map biography is defined as a “collection of interview data about traditional use of resources and occupancy of lands by First Nation persons, and the presentation of those data in map form” (Tobias, 2000:XI).

In San Basilio de Palenque, I also conducted a participatory mapping exercise that combined: 1) pictures of landmarks, which were taken by the members of the community with disposable cameras; and 2) the use of GPS to obtain the location of the landmarks, which was used for demarcating the areas. The coordinates were converted into map features (location points) using a GIS software. I call this exercise auto-photography maps. However, these particular maps have been excluded from the present analysis because the data collected through other methods allowed me to answer my research questions.

There are reasons why I chose the map biography approach to be developed during my fieldwork. Firstly, this methodology has been proven successful, for instance, in the legal recognition of territorial claims, such as in the case of indigenous communities in Canada (Tobias, 2000). Secondly, it is a method that includes conducting face-to-face interviews with the participants and having a connection and similarities with the traditional testimonial evidence tendered before tribunals. Thirdly, this technique permits the analysis and understanding of multiple uses of territory that exceed the Western understanding of the land as a commodity. For the case of San Basilio de Palenque, these multiple uses of the territory are explained in chapter 5.

Informal conversations with the members of San Basilio de Palenque and the expert on the territory of the community council, its president Nicasio Reyes Salgado, gave me an estimate

of the area occupied by the *Palenqueros* during the colonial times. The current area recognised in 2012 by the Colombian state as belonging to the community is 3,353 hectares, the built-up part of San Basilio de Palenque. It excludes the rural area or the *montes*. Archival research developed in the Agustín Codazzi Geographical Institute of Colombia made possible the identification of maps which were used to create the base-map of San Basilio de Palenque for the participatory mapping.

The base-map coverage exceeds state's version of the community by including the rural area, and it was designed during the course in participatory mapping taken in Alberta (Canada) with the cooperation of two experts in GIS, Carlos Salinas and Barry Hunter. This map was tested by the members of the *vereda* of *Todo Sonrisa*: Sarai Zuñiga Pedraza (female, 49 years old), Ismael Maestre Simanca and Juan Manuel Castaño Ariño (males, 50 and 66 years old respectively). Although I proposed doing the participatory mapping as an individual activity, the participants agreed on completing the mapping as long as it was done collectively as the work of their *vereda*.

Sarai Zuñiga Pedraza, Ismael Maestre Simanca and Juan Manuel Castaño Ariño's shared history of territorial dispossession, persecution and multiple internally forced displacements have made a bond among them. The research strategy should be permeable to changes suggested by the participants. This is based on the respect of their agency, especially in the case of victims of gross human rights violations, whose agency was undermined by the use of force many times. Negotiating their participation with me contributed to participants reasserting their expert role on the mapping of their territories, while contributing to their social empowerment on the promotion and protection of land rights as leaders in their communities and in front of outsiders. For instance, after I recorded the closure of the activity in an audio file, Figure 7 shows the participants closing the mapping exercise with a picture as they proposed.



Figure 7. Participatory Mapping Pilot in *Todo Sonrisa*, San Basilio de Palenque

As explained before, debates on territory in San Basilio de Palenque are male-dominated. The participation of Sarai Zuñiga Pedraza tried to counter this imbalance and capitalise her knowledge on territory and activism on land rights as a victim of the armed conflict. Nevertheless, during the mapping, the presence of Sarai Zuñiga Pedraza was not constant because she was in charge of feeding her grandchildren, men and other neighbours who arrived at Juan Manuel Castaño Ariño's house to see the activity and make comments on the mapping. The mapping had to be interrupted on many occasions to engage Sarai Zuñiga Pedraza again in the exercise.

The exercise conducted in *Todo Sonrisa* pointed out that the base-map of San Basilio that I prepared during my work in the geographical institute in Bogota had to be expanded. San Basilio de Palenque's territories ran beyond my initial calculation. Other maps from the

Agustin Codazzi Geographical Institute of Colombia were added to the base-map to conduct the final participatory mapping. Figure 8 shows the final version of the base-map. The final participatory mapping will be carried out after the dissertation research as a contribution of this research to their territorial legal claims. However, the pilot of this mapping done in *Todo Sonrisa* provided me insights on the borders of the community, concepts of territory and dispossession, its causes and consequences during the group discussion.



Hojas Cartográficas 30IVB, 30IVD, 31IIIA, 31IIIC, 37IIB, 37IID, 38IA, 38IC

Escala 1:25,000

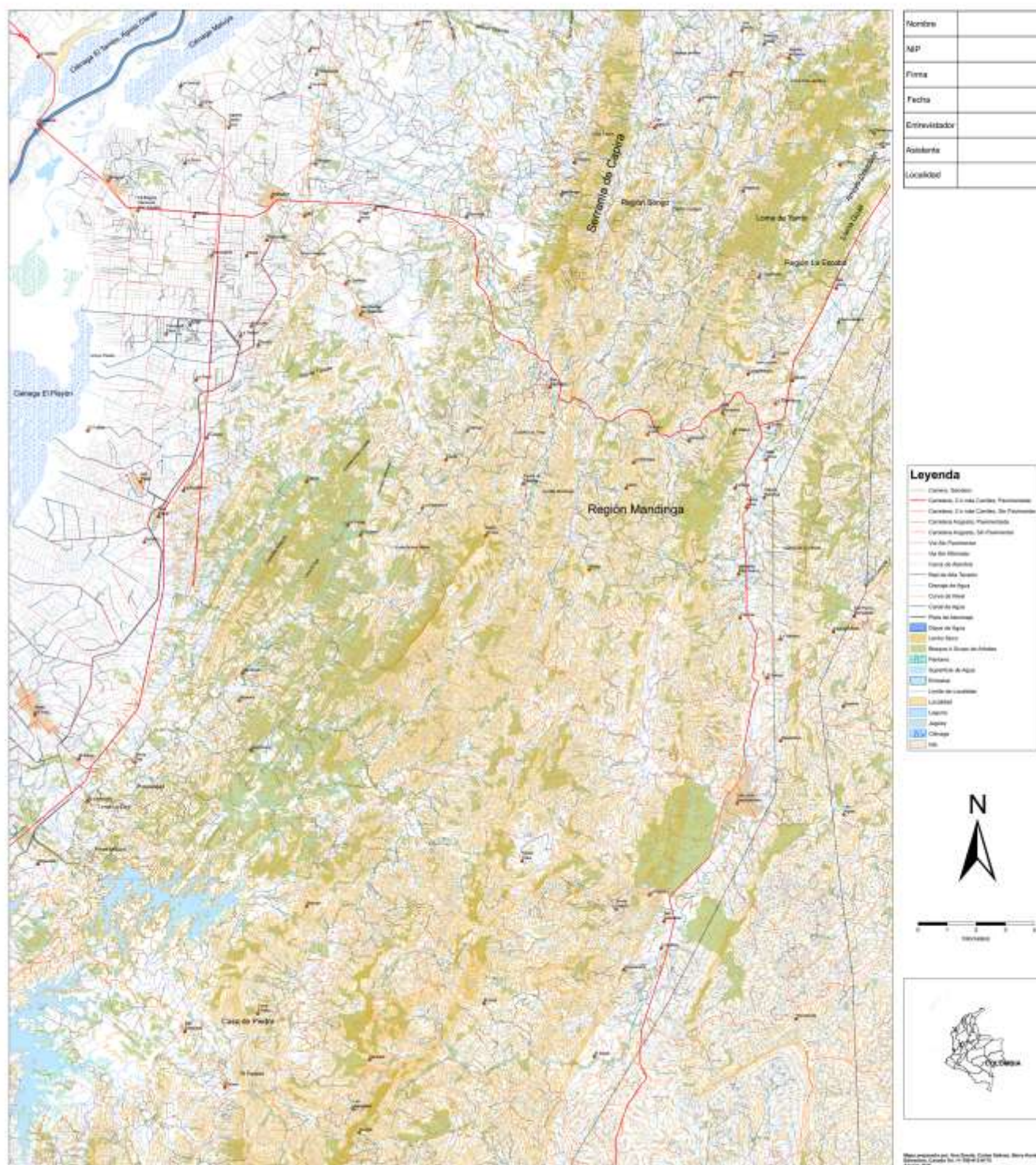


Figure 8. Final Base-Map for the participatory mapping to be conducted in San Basilio de Palenque

## 4. Conclusions

Residents of San Basilio de Palenque are part of the group most affected by land dispossession in Colombia, the Afro-descendants (Corte Constitucional de Colombia, 2009; Rodríguez Garavito, Alfonso Sierra and Cavelier Adarve, 2009). San Basilio de Palenque's analysis from a geographical perspective may contribute to community territorial reparation, as boundary delimitations remain a matter of contention. In this chapter, I described my positionality as a researcher and the mixed, largely qualitative methods implemented in the research design for investigating the *Palenque* as a case study. My identities as *mestiza*, human rights defender and a woman in academia had an impact on this research, firstly in the formulation of the research aims, then the selection of methods, and then their implementation in the field. This impact was primarily in my use of participatory methods wherever possible to drive the project's overall research agenda for the benefit of the community, and to interrogate and counter the discourse of the state that rendered the community invisible and precarious.

While my racial identity had advantages and disadvantages in the field, my experience of gender-based violence at first put the study at risk. When the emergency was overcome, the acknowledgement of the violence that I had experienced permitted me to build rapport in the community. My accounts of domestic violence suffered during my fieldwork highlighted the need for a discussion concerning the taboo that appears to surround this topic in academia and a gap in Fieldwork and Risk Assessments.

As explained in the introduction of the research methods section of this chapter, this research had as pillars archival material gathered in Spain and Colombia, the Colombian legal code, and the community's oral tradition collected through interviews and participatory mapping. The law most directly captures the state's vision and discourse regarding land rights of the Afro-descendants in Colombia. The analysis of the relationship of this legal discourse and the territories of San Basilio de Palenque answered the main question of this research. Archival research, interviews, participatory mapping and legal research were the primary data sources to analyse the dispossession and its causes experienced by the community. Each method provided different lenses to study this process of territorial loss and resistance. It is relevant to underscore the transformation of historical-geographical research into a participatory method involving the community in the analysis of the colonial records held in remote archives.

The hegemonic discourse present in the historical records and the law were presented in this thesis in the form of quotation as well as the oral tradition contained in interviews and dialogues



maintained during the participatory mapping exercises. However, in chapter 4, direct quotations were not included because they were not directly translatable from 17<sup>th</sup> century Spanish. Therefore, for the sake of clarity, I chose to paraphrase these archival materials.

Specific types of analyses were discussed already in this chapter. However, the main approaches to analysis were thematic which often provided a foundation for further critical discourse analysis (Seidman, 1991; McEwan, 2003; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Danto, 2008; Limb, Knight and Root, 2014; Maxwell and Chmiel, 2014; Hammett, Twyman and Graham, 2015; Achugar, 2017). The convergence of different sources and analysis created in this research areas in-between, sometimes in conflict and sometimes in harmony, as territories in confusion (Lopes de Souza, 2009, 2015) that were addressed through a holistic approach. As proposed by Achugar (2017), this research broke hegemonic ways to understand the past geographies of marronage of San Basilio de Palenque filling the gap in the analysis of dynamics of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation in the present.

Fieldwork had the purpose to situate the past, contained in the records, in the present (Achugar, 2017) through the oral tradition. In this way, Rivera Cusicanqui (2012, 2016:76) explains that traces of different pasts (e.g. “the pre-Hispanic, colonial, liberal and populist”) converges, for instance, in the *Mestizo* present of Bolivia. In Aymara, “future-past are simultaneously inhabited by the present” (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2016:84). Under this cosmovision, “the past is ahead because it the only thing that we knew, a thing, that we can look at, feel and remember” (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2016:84). But, there are different versions of the past. The archival past was challenged by the community of San Basilio de Palenque through its oral tradition. It is possible to interact with the past beyond the hegemonic voice of the archive in the present.

For Rivera Cusicanqui (2016), the decolonisation of *Mestizo* people demands an articulation of multiple pasts with the present, temporalities which are indigenous, female and collective, with the aim of removing the submission and silence that comes along with *mestizaje*. This way of encountering multiple pasts is a common issue in *Mestizo* feminist methodology (Anzaldúa, 1987). However, this approach to thinking geographically the relationship between past and present is also useful for talking about black people in Colombia, as the subordinated past in Latin America is also Afro-descendant, not just indigenous. It needs to be acknowledged for the emancipation of the subalterns. In the next chapter, this thesis looks at the past by introducing the *Palenque* in colonial times and lays the foundation for understanding the

current geographies of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María and their reterritorialisation strategies to resist dispossession.

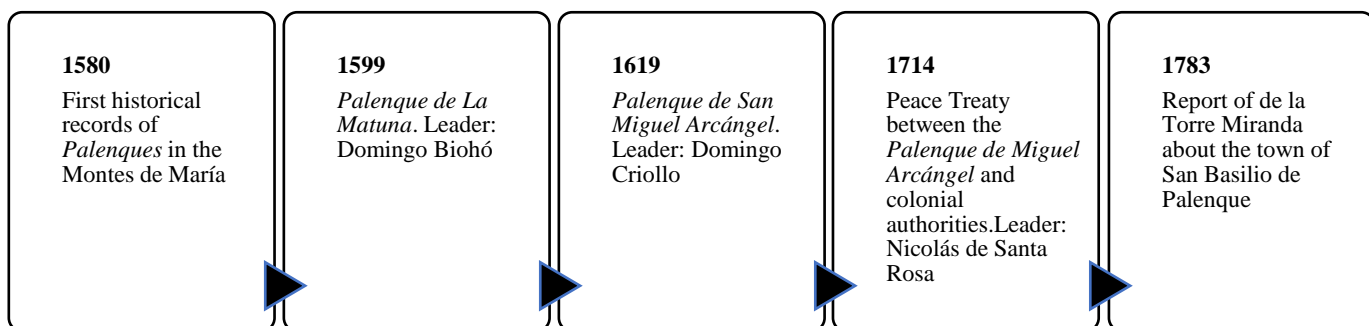


Figure 9: Timeline of the colonial history of San Basilio

## CHAPTER 4: The *Palenque*

### 1. Introduction

This chapter delves into the meaning of the *palenque* during colonial times and its implication for the origin of the geographies of marronage of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean. Although I will conceptualise these geographies in chapter 5, since their establishment, they have been what I will call ‘entangled territories’ predominantly populated by Afro-descendants living through a continuous process of dispossession and resistance. Understanding the past *palenque* provides insights for grasping current forms of reterritorialisation developed by the *Palenqueros* to gain freedom and belonging in the face of recent forced displacement and through migration to Cartagena de Indias while giving birth to their new geographies.

The *palenque* remains as the basis of contemporary community strategies of resistance against territorial dispossession. Historical literature defines *palenques* as communities built in remote areas as a result of a process of marronage in Colombia mainly during the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Escalante, 1973; Navarrete Peláez, 2008; Cassiani Herrera, 2014b). As stated in the introduction of this thesis, marronage is defined as the escape of slaves from cities, large farms and mines to build autonomous territories (Price, 1973; McFarlane, 2008; Kars, 2016). The conceptual analysis of the term ‘*palenque*’ developed in this thesis refers to *Palenque de San Miguel de la Sierra de María* [*Palenque* of St Michael of the Hill of Mary], from 1686 to 1783, based on records found in the General Archive of Indies in Seville and the National General Archive in Bogotá. *Palenque de San Miguel de la Sierra de María* will be referred to, from this point in the chapter onwards, as *Palenque de San Miguel*.

The reason behind the selection of *Palenque de San Miguel* as a case study is because it is the only survivor of eleven or twelve *palenques* which existed in the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean during the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Navarrete 2003; Navarrete Peláez 2008). This chapter explores how and why *Palenque de San Miguel* survived by turning into a *poblacion* [town], a part of the colonial regime. In the analysis of this transition -from *palenque* to town—the answers to questions related to its survival emerge. Figures 10.a and 10.b. show the Province of Cartagena de Indias made in 1787 that includes San Basilio de Palenque, which was considered a *poblacion* by then. San Basilio de Palenque is located on the map under the

name, *San Basilio*, in the area called *Montaña de María* [Mountain of Mary], southeast of the city of Cartagena de Indias.<sup>14</sup>

The chapter also focuses on the analysis of the peculiarities of the *palenque* as a territory, which has been mostly absent from historical literature on San Basilio de Palenque. During the colonial period, the physical boundaries of *Palenque de San Miguel* were defined by the Maroon's perception of personal freedom. The *Cimarrones* [Maroons] were free inside the *palenque* yet were enslaved men and women outside its territory. The *palenque* was a type of territory that made freedom possible for the runaway slaves and their descendants during slavery.

As the historical records analysed in this chapter show, *Palenque de San Miguel* also gave the slaves who lived in Cartagena de Indias the possibility of negotiating the improvement of living conditions with their 'owners' by threatening them with a possible escape to the *palenques*. The Maroons of *Palenque de San Miguel* engaged in resistance against slavery through different means, while showing interest in the liberation of all the slaves of the Province of Cartagena de Indias. At least, until they negotiated their survival and became a *poblacion* in 1714 as a part of the colonial regime.

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<sup>14</sup> This map of the Province of Cartagena de Indias was made by Juan López, member of the Society of Literature of Seville and the Society of Vascongada and Asturias, in 1787. Furthermore, it was stated that the map was made based on reports about the Province of Cartagena de Indias written by the Captain Antonio de la Torre in 1777 describing the new *poblaciones* in the province.

Figure 10.a. Map of the Province of Cartagena de Indias, 1787.

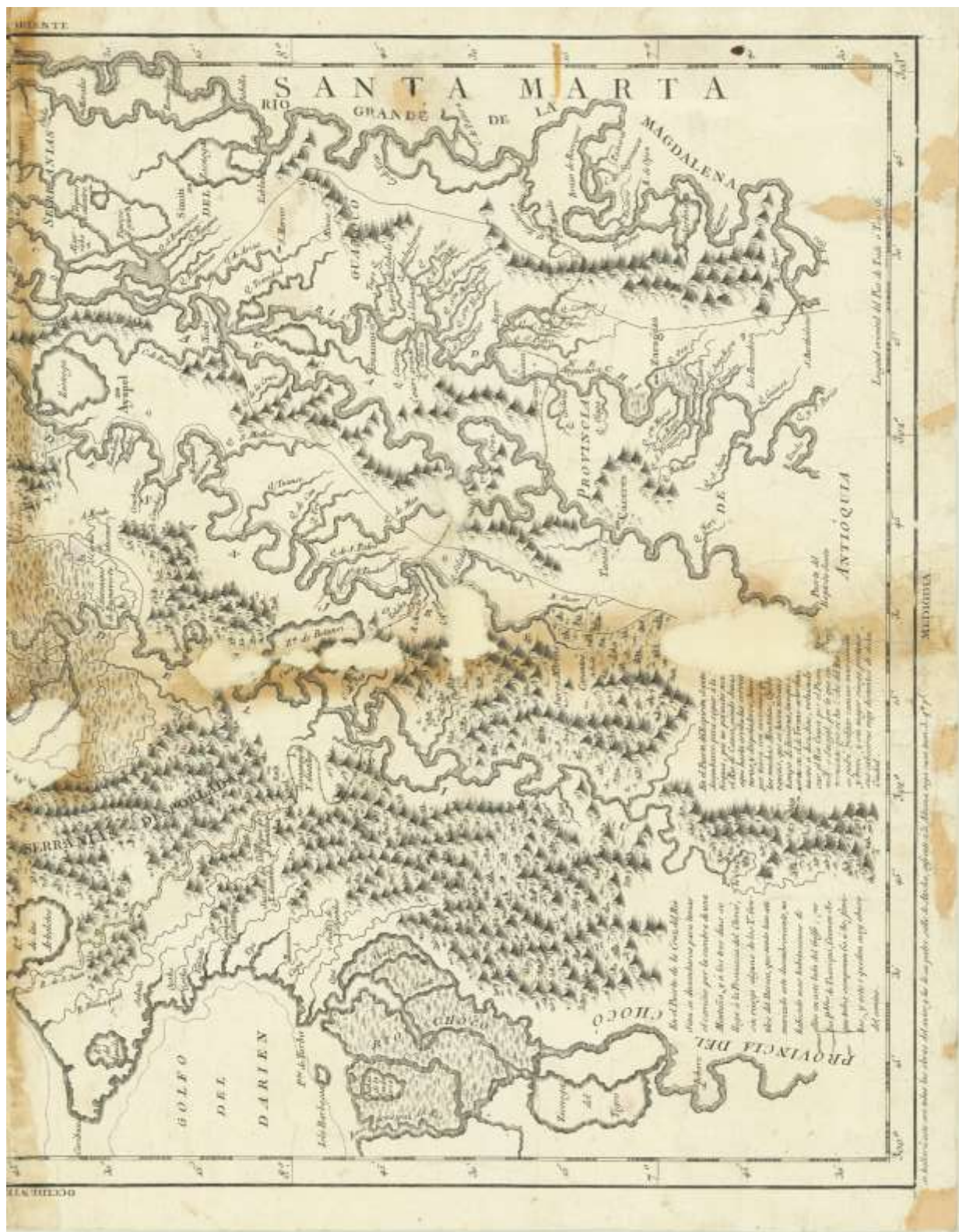
Source: *Archivo General de la Nación, Colombia. Sección: Mapas y Planos, Mapoteca 2 Ref.: 1284*





Figure 10.b. Map of the Province of Cartagena de Indias, 1787.

Source: *Archivo General de la Nación, Colombia. Sección: Mapas y Planos, Mapoteca 2 Ref.: 1284*



## 2. Historical Sources and Analysis

Previous historical analysis has addressed the evolution of *Palenque de San Miguel* until the signature of a peace agreement in 1714 between its residents and the colonial authorities, which led to its transformation into a town, San Basilio de Palenque, a part of the colonial regime. My study draws upon two academic sources -detailed below– and leaves to one side sources on the colonial history of San Basilio de Palenque which are based on secondary and/or non-specified historical sources, as well as sources that only collect historical documents without a significant critical analysis (such as, Escalante 1954; Borrego Plá 1973; Arrázola 1986; Guerrero García 2007). For example, Castaño (2015) revisits secondary sources, which mainly consist of historiographic scholarship developed in Colombia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to develop what he calls an ethnohistorical analysis of the *palenques* located in the Colombian Caribbean during the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. He states that the *palenques*, including *Palenque de San Miguel*, capitalised on their territories being in inaccessible geographies and their knowledge of these inaccessible terrains afforded them protection during colonial times. This chapter empirically develops Castaño's argument by giving concrete examples of how the Maroons of *Palenque de San Miguel* benefited from their territory based on new archival research that provides insights into particular strategies of survival. For example, I analyse how they took advantage of certain geographical features present in the Maroon territories, such as water bodies, including the building of a defence system that aimed to prevent the entrance of outsiders into their communities.

However, in this chapter, I take as my point of departure two particular works. The first is historian María Cristina Navarrete Peláez's 2008 work, *San Basilio de Palenque: Memoria y Tradición: Surgimiento y avatares de las gestas cimarronas en el Caribe Colombiano* [San Basilio de Palenque: Memory and Tradition: Emergence and Vissicitudes of the Maroon struggle in the Colombian Caribbean]. Navarrete Peláez offers an account of the earliest emergence of geographies of marronage in the region, including the establishment of *Palenque de San Miguel*. She describes the appearance of *palenques* around 1580, including *Palenque de la Matuna*, led by the runaway slave Domingo Biohó, from around 1599-1600. Domingo Biohó was killed and his *palenque* destroyed around 1618-1619. Navarrete Peláez finds in *Palenque de la Matuna* the beginning of a process of Maroon struggles in the Colombian Caribbean. After Domingo Biohó, this slave resistance was led by another *cimarrón*, Domingo Criollo, who will be a significant figure in the analysis below, from 1655 to 1694 when his



*palenque* was finally destroyed. Slaves and their descendants who survived the destruction of *Palenque de la Matuna* built a new *palenque* in the same area. This new *palenque* was *Palenque de San Miguel Arcángel* (our case of historical analysis). In 1714, the signature of a peace agreement ended up with the transformation of *Palenque de San Miguel Arcángel* into the town of San Basilio de Palenque. In between this chronological narrative, Navarrete Peláez describes Maroon struggles against the colonial authorities, the interludes of peace, and family, social, racial and economic structures of *Palenque de San Miguel Arcángel*.

The second work is by Cassiani Herrera, a historian from San Basilio de Palenque. In the same time period addressed by Navarrete Peláez, *Palenque Magno: Resistencias y Luchas Libertarias del Palenque de la Matuna a San Basilio Magno 1599–1714* [Magnus Palenque: Resistances and Freedom Struggles of *Palenque de la Matuna* to the Magnus San Basilio 1599 – 1714] describes the efforts and strategies of the Maroons to achieve peace with the Crown that culminated in the peace agreement in 1714. Cassiani Herrera's historiographic analysis is based on *The Testimonio de autos obrados por el Gobernador de Cartaxa D Germo. Badillo sobre la Reduzion de los Los negros del Palenque ndo. Sn Miguel de la Sierra de María* [Certified Document of the Investigation conducted by the Governor of Cartagena, Gerónimo Badillo, about the reduction of the blacks of the *palenque* also known as St Michael of the Hill of Mary]. Cassiani Herrera's study does not contain an analysis of the 1714 peace agreement but a transcription of its content. Cassiani Herrera expands the study initiated by Navarrete Peláez by highlighting the importance of Benkos Biohó for the oral tradition of his people. The oral tradition regards Benkos Biohó as the first and most relevant leader of slave resistance. Cassiani Herrera denies that Benkos Biohó existed or was the founding father of San Basilio de Palenque as the oral tradition suggests. Based on the historical records, Cassiani Herrera explains that Domingo Biohó was the actual founding father of *Palenque de la Matuna* around 1599. As with Navarrete Peláez's position, Cassiani Herrera highlights that *Palenque de la Matuna* is the starting point of a process of marronage in the Montes de María that concluded with the creation of the town of San Basilio de Palenque.

This chapter revisits and expands the historical analysis made by Navarrete Peláez and Cassiani Herrera by bringing new themes into consideration, such as the *palenque's* geography and concrete examples of its capitalisation by the runaway slaves to be free and survive colonial wars against them, and other strategies of slave resistance previously unexplored. This chapter challenges some of the positions taken on the history of San Basilio de Palenque in this previous scholarship. For instance, Navarrete Peláez (2008) states that *palenques*, including

*Palenque de San Miguel*, did not aim to end slavery. This research challenges Navarrete Peláez's assertion by bringing to light some additional considerations regarding *Palenque de San Miguel*. Residents of this *Palenque* had a strategic interest in the liberation of rest of the slaves of the Province of Cartagena de Indias, at least prior to negotiating their own autonomy with the colonial regime by accepting isolation in 1714.

A further example is Navarrete Peláez's (2008) establishment of a correlation between certain racial groups in *Palenque de San Miguel* and the possession of particular skills that contributed to community strategies of resistance, an interpretation that is questioned in this research. In addition, this chapter reexamines Navarrete Peláez's portrayal of the Catholic authorities as allies of the Maroons, but without pointing out that the pacification of the *Palenque* also aligned with the church's own interests and agendas. This research analysis is based on historical records up to 1783 and yield insight into the events that took place in San Basilio de Palenque with respect to territorial dispossession following the ratification of the peace agreement in 1714.

## **2.a. Historical Sources**

The historical and geographical study conducted in this chapter addresses seven historical documents which are presented in chronological order. The focus of this chapter is the 1714 peace agreement, which is contained in the document listed as ii). The peace agreement was a turning point in the history of San Basilio de Palenque as will be illustrated later. The historical records contained in i), iii) and iv) are used to describe points stated in the 1714 peace agreement as complementary sources. As mentioned in the previous section, the 1714 peace agreement was only compiled by Cassiani Herrera (2014) in his work, '*Palenque Magno: Resistencias y Luchas Libertarias del Palenque de la Matuna a San Basilio Magno 1599–1714.*' This chapter provides an original analysis of the peace agreement.

- i) The *Expediente sobre pacificación y reducción de los negros fugitivos y fortificados en los palenques de Sierra María, visto por el Consejo de Indias de 1691 a 1695* [File on the Pacification and Reduction of black fugitives, who were fortified in the *palenques* of the Hill of Mary, seen by the Council of the Indies of 1691-1695 – (Creation date: from 24/05/1686 to 03/07/1693); and the *Expediente sobre debelación de los negros alzados de los palenques de Sierra María y las competencias de jurisdicción suscitadas entre la ciudad de Cartagena, el sargento mayor de la misma, el teniente general y asesor de guerra y el gobernador y capitán general. Tramitado por el Consejo de*

*Indias de 1694-1696* [File on the defeat of the black rebels of the *palenques* of the Hill of Mary and the jurisdictional disputes between the city of Cartagena, the principal Sargent of this city, the general lieutenant and the war adviser and the governor and general captain, seen by the Council of the Indies of 1694–1696 - (Creation date: from 30/05/1693 to 22/09/1695).

These historical files (more than 1,000 pages of handwritten 17<sup>th</sup> century Spanish) contain an exchange of letters, reports and decisions from the colonial authorities that preceded the signature of the peace agreement with the residents of *Palenque de San Miguel* in 1714. The analysis of this chapter delves into descriptions that include colonial extermination campaigns conducted against *Palenque de San Miguel* and other *palenques*, such as *Tabacal* or *Matudere*. *Tabacal* and *Matudere* were erased by the colonial regime by 1693. The historical records acknowledge the disputes and disagreements between the Spanish Crown and the local authorities of Cartagena de Indias to address the situation of the *palenques*, the existence of which threatened slave property and the economy of the crown and the city.

- ii) The *Testimonio de autos obrados por el Gobernador de Cartaxa D Geramo. Badillo sobre la Reduzion de los Los negros del Palenque ndo. Sn Miguel de la Sierra de María* [Certified Document of the Investigation conducted by the Governor of Cartagena, Gerónimo Badillo, about the reduction of the blacks of the *palenque* also known as St Michael of the Hill of Mary].

This collection of historical records contains letters exchanged between the Governor of Cartagena de Indias, Gerónimo Badillo, the Captain of the city of Cartagena de Indias, Alfonso de Guzman, and the Bishop, Antonio Maria Cassiani; a capitulation proposal made by the Governor to the members of *Palenque de San Miguel* on December 9<sup>th</sup> 1713 in Cartagena de Indias; and the actual peace agreement reached in the *palenque* on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1714. All these historical records provide useful information for understanding the process that concluded with the transformation of *Palenque de San Miguel* into the *poblacion* [town] of *San Basilio Magno* or *del Palenque*, a part of the colonial regime.

- iii) The *Cartas de Antonio de La Torre sobre la fundación de poblaciones para la Corona Española de fecha 18 de mayo de 1781 y 28 de Noviembre de 1783* [Letters of Antonio de la Torre on the foundations of towns for the Spanish Crown on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1781, and November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1783]

The letters describe in detail the work of de la Torre in the foundation of 43 towns for the Spanish Crown in the Colombian Caribbean. In his expeditions through this region, de la Torre arrived in the area of the town of *San Basilio de Palenque* 70 years after the 1714 peace agreement had been signed.

In *Ma Ngombe: Guerreros y Ganaderos en Palenque* (Cross and de Friedemann, 1979), Nina de Friedemann introduces the colonial *palenque*, a community of slave rebels, to delve into an anthropological analysis of the community in the 1970s. In her study, she uses historical documents from 1603 to 1799 compiled by Arrázola (1986) about San Basilio de Palenque from colonial archives.

Accordingly, de Friedemann mentions the report of de la Torre (document listed as iii) that made ‘official’ in 1783 the ownership of the community of San Basilio de Palenque over lands (Cross and de Friedemann, 1979). As explained further in this chapter, more than ‘making official’ the land ownership of the community, this report legitimised the first territorial dispossession of the *Palenque*.

- iv. The *Sitio y feligresía del Pueblo de San Bacilio del Palenque que dista quatro leguas al de Mahates* (1777) [Site and parishioners of the town of San Bacilio del Palenque, which is four leagues from Mahates], and *Padrón echo en el ano de mil setecientos setenta y ocho de el número de Almas, con distinción de sexos, estados, classes y castas inlussos parbulos que avitan en esta Provincia con arreglo a lo obtenido en la Provincia (...) de diez de noviembre de mil setecientos setenta y seis* [A census made in the year 1778 of the number of souls, with distinction of sexes, states, classes and castes including children in this Province [Cartagena de Indias], according to what was obtained in the Province (...) on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1776].

These censuses contain information on the population of San Basilio de Palenque from 1777 to 1778. Censuses include numbers of men and women, racial categories within the community, and freedom or slavery as a life condition.

## **2.b. Historical Analysis**

In the historical sources mentioned above, the runaway slaves and their descendants, who built *Palenque de San Miguel*, are mainly acknowledged by the colonial regime under the names of *Cimarrones* [Maroons], *negros alzados* [black rebels] and *negros del Palenque de las Sierras de María* [blacks of *Palenque* of the Hills of Mary]. Their intentions towards freedom, social

and political organisation of their communities were interpreted and registered by the colonial authorities in these records.

In some cases, the voices of the Maroons were explained by their allies, who were also actors of the colonial regime, such as Catholic authorities, for example, the priests Balthasar de La Fuente, Miguel del Toro and Antonio María Cassiani. In this chapter, the term ‘colonial regime’ includes the Spanish Crown, the Catholic Church, authorities and the *vecinos* of Cartagena de Indias. The term ‘*vecinos*’ refers to the owners of the slaves, probably their most fierce enemies, also known as the white elites.

In the historical sources, the powerholders reproduced the voices of the black rebels (those they were trying to defeat) by transcribing, for instance, a letter sent by the Maroons to the colonial authorities regarding negotiations. Navarrete Peláez (2008) explains that in some historical records – which mainly registered trials conducted against the *Cimarrones* – their testimonies were preserved word for word by notaries. Nevertheless, she does not dismiss the possibility of misquoting and misrepresenting the testimonies of the Maroons in the transcription. Navarrete Peláez states that it is a task of researchers to identify and reveal the possible reasons behind these alterations made by powerholders.

In this chapter, my analysis deconstructs the colonial discourse present in the historical sources by delving into the everyday words used to represent *Palenque de San Miguel* and its members. This chapter aims to reveal the Maroon’s agency and the strategies implemented to overcome their oppression when they became deliberate targets of occlusion by the colonial regime and its discourse (McEwan, 2003; Danto, 2008).

For the case of the British Caribbean, through the lenses of security studies, Noxolo and Featherstone (2014:603) highlight the agency of the enslaved men and women in the production of the geographies of slavery. Noxolo and Featherstone (2014) explain that this region has been historically produced by the legacy of slavery as a brutal state of “in/security.” The plantation remains at the roots of this process, as a site of production of insecurity for the enslaved African men and women. However, this region has been co-produced by the resistance of the slaves to improve their daily living conditions or to struggle, including violent means, which caused terror for the slave’s owners.

As stated above, this research highlights the agency of the enslaved men and women that has been occluded, for instance, in the way that the 1714 peace agreement was finally drafted. This

peace agreement has the markings of capitulation, where the Governor of Cartagena issued a pardon for the crimes committed by the Maroons, and they promised him in exchange obedience, calmness, and tranquillity towards Cartagena de Indias. They also became vassals of the king of Spain, being ready to defend his possessions from external attacks. Nevertheless, this narrative of Maroons as defeated people is belied by the active role that they played in the achievement of the 1714 peace agreement, which is evident in the colonial documentation as explained in the following sections.

### **3. The Metamorphosis: from *Palenque* to *Poblacion***

There is a live community debate about the actual name of the town. Should it emphasise its origin as a *palenque* or its character as a *poblacion*? Whereas some residents call it *Palenque de San Basilio* [*Palenque* of St Basil], others call it San Basilio de Palenque [St Basil of *Palenque*]. Legally, *Palenque de San Miguel* lost its *palenquidad* (*Palenque* status) when it became a *poblacion* within the colonial regime, thereby turning into San Basilio Magno or de *Palenque*.

This dissertation explores the transition from *palenque* to *poblacion* after the signature of the 1714 peace agreement between the Governor of Cartagena de Indias, Gerónimo Badillo, and the Captain of this *palenque*, Nicolás de Santa Rosa, and the benefits of this transition for the powerholders. The peace agreement was signed under the auspices of Antonio María Cassiani, Bishop of Cartagena de Indias. Cassiani was an ally of the *palenque*, but also a member of the colonial regime, as a representative of the Catholic Church.

The 1714 peace agreement was satisfactory to the parties involved in the struggle, the Spanish Crown, and the Maroons: On one hand, the Maroons obtained freedom, based on the respect of specific rules, and self-determination over territory. On the other hand, the colonial authorities and the white elites kept the African rebels away from the city and their possessions, such as *haciendas* [large farms] and other slaves who could be mobilised by this desire of freedom. By imposing law and religion on the Maroons, the colonial regime was finally free from the expenses needed to go to war against them without assuming any liability for the costs associated with its incorporation into the colonial system as a *poblacion*.

Academic definitions describe the *palenques* as the outcome of marronage, as the process of escaping from slavery and finding new places to regain freedom. Looking at slavery experiences in Haiti and the United States of America, Roberts (2015, 2017) has underscored

this escape of men and women from slavery defining marronage – as a permanent flight and as freedom – thus highlighting their agency. Through the analysis of the British Caribbean, Cummings (2018) underscores the state of precarity that comes along with marronage, for instance, regarding the access to food and shelter. This chapter and the following one describe this state pointed out by Cummings (2018) in the past and present Maroon territories of the Colombian Caribbean that has been trying to counter by developing different community strategies that will be described in further detail. The construction of *palenques* elsewhere has been one of them, and where it is possible to find a state closest to freedom in this process of marronage, but certainly not in the permanent act of escaping or confronting as in the colonial times.

Aligned with the mainstream literature (Burton, 1997), Roberts (2017) also identifies different types of marronage, petit and grand marronage. Petit marronage included individual flights and grand marronage collective flights that had as an outcome “territorially bounded communities outside the parameters of a regime of unfreedom” (Roberts, 2017:220). For Roberts (2017), petit and grand marronage did not aim to dismantle slavery as a system. Accordingly, Ciccariello-Maher (2019:200) understands grand marronage as the most radical form of marronage because it is “a reservoir of power for an eventual counterattack aimed not only at the abolition of slavery but the abolition of the very ontological and social structures that are its most pernicious legacies.”

As explained before, the outcome of grand marronage was a type of territory, *palenques*, in the Colombian context. For instance, Escalante (1973:74) defines *palenques* as places “where groups of Maroon slaves sought refuge in the thick, tropical forests and formed communities where they could keep their original cultures alive.” In Escalante’s concept, *palenques* are shelters accompanied by untamed and inaccessible geographies as spaces for developing (or recreating) an autonomous culture and society.

Navarrete Peláez (2008:37) also defines *palenques* as “communities of fugitives.” During a personal communication in Cali on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Navarrete Peláez also emphasised the *palenque*’s function of shelter that made possible a social structure. She highlighted the singularity of each *palenque*, avoiding generalising about their histories. Navarrete Peláez also described the architecture of *palenques*, which were fortified and surrounded by *palos* [wood stockade] as protection. The word *palenque* comes from the Spanish word, *palo*.

Cassiani Herrera (2014:89) defines *palenques* as “warrior communities of peace.” During a personal communication with Cassiani Herrera in Cartagena de Indias on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2015, the historian from San Basilio de Palenque conceptualised *Palenque de San Miguel* as “a nest of [peaceful] resistance and creativity” even when that implied going to war to defend its culture and space.

The colonial records also give definitions of *Palenque de San Miguel* close to Navarrete Peláez and Cassiani Herrera’s conceptualisation. A *palenque* was a “*refugio de los negros y negras que se ausentaban de sus amos*” [shelter of the male and female blacks, who ran away from their masters] (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 2). The *palenque* was also defined as the “*refugio de todos los negros de la Provincia que no se querían reducir*” [shelter of all the blacks in the province, who were not willing to come back to their condition of slaves] (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 367).

*Palenques de María* [*Palenques* of the Hill of Mary] were described as “*la cabeza de la sedición de todos los esclavos de esta Provincia*” [the head of the sedition of all the slaves in this province] (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 494). For the colonial authorities, the *palenque* was a sanctuary for rebels, who tried to escape their fates as slaves, and a spark that ignited uprisings of the slaves living in the city and large farms.

Neither the definitions of *palenque* given by Navarrete Peláez and Cassiani Herrera, nor its concept coming from the text of the colonial records address the passage from being a rebel community of African slaves to becoming a town of the colonial regime. The works of Navarrete Peláez and Cassiani Herrera focus upon its first stage after the escapes of the slaves, and in the case of *Palenque de San Miguel*, until the signature of the peace agreement in 1714.

This chapter embraces the meaning of a *palenque* through the process of its loss by extermination or assimilation as a new territorialisation (town) of the colonial regime. Whether it was by extermination or assimilation, there was a loss of the place as African rebels knew it (“homelessness” as described in Smith’s (1994:272) geographies of absence). While extermination made this loss irreversible, assimilation reformulated the idea of community. Extermination or assimilation were two different fates that sometimes correlated with the strategies developed by the different *palenques*.

Some strategies implemented to resist against the colonial power made a difference in helping *Palenque de San Miguel* avoid being dragged into destruction. *Palenque de San Miguel*



survived because they developed other skills, such as negotiation and alliances with other colonial actors, apart from direct war and confrontation. The regime displayed less tolerance towards those *palenques* adjudged to be belligerent. For instance, *Palenque de Tabacal* was destroyed around 1693 while peace was under negotiation with *Palenque de San Miguel*. *Palenque de Tabacal* was perceived as a direct threat to property, such as in the form of attacks on conveyances that made trade difficult among cities as well as the intentional burning of large farms.

The colonial regime also feared possible alliances between *Palenque de Tabacal* and slaves in other cities facilitating rebellion. The historical records show a consensus between the authorities and the white elites that extermination was the only way forward to deal with *Palenque de Tabacal* and its active resistance: Any negotiation, such as pacts of non-aggression, seemed uncondusive (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 313-314, 356) (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 208, 274).

However, at the same time, peace was being negotiated with *Palenque de San Miguel*. *Palenque de San Miguel's* forging of alliances with Catholic actors, its continuous offers to the authorities to capitulate and achieve peace, and its politics of defending against attacks but not initiating them were among other strategies that facilitated the survival of this *palenque* in the long-term.

Nevertheless, for both *Palenque de Tabacal* and *Palenque de San Miguel*, *palenques* were built on a strong desire of freedom and a place to call home in a hostile environment that reduced Africans and their descendants to the category of slaves. This desire could only be fulfilled by the disappearance of their clandestine phase - a community of fugitives in the words of Navarrete Peláez (2008) - after which life would be possible not only within the borders of *palenques* but beyond.

To overcome this clandestine phase, *Palenque de San Miguel* chose to play within the system – looking for creative ways to confront it, as Cassiani Herrera points out<sup>15</sup>- instead of waging war as *Palenque de Tabacal* did. The experience of *Palenque de Tabacal* is resonant with the stories of the victims who died in Nazi concentrations camps and did not leave accounts of their suffering or transit through horror (Levi, 1989). It is not a coincidence that the records on those erased *palenques* (for instance, *palenques* of *Tabacal*, *Arenal* and *Duanga*) are rare and

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<sup>15</sup> Personal communication with Alfonso Cassiani Herrera in Cartagena de Indias on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015.

sometimes found in relation to the history of *Palenque de San Miguel*, the one who negotiated with the colonial regime and survived (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 368, 375).

Understanding why *Palenque de San Miguel* became a *poblacion* permits exploration of the tension between what was feared about its existence as a clandestine site and what benefit could be obtained by the colonial regime in avoiding its eradication from the system. A *poblacion*, therefore, had two faces; simultaneously it was a place for the realisation of freedom by slaves, but also an enclave where black fugitives were isolated to protect white Cartagena de Indias and its property.

The origin of the geographies of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de Maria in the Colombian Caribbean, where predominately Afro-descendant people populate specific areas, could factor into the process whereby some *palenques* were erased while *Palenque de San Miguel* was turned into a *poblacion* under the power of the Spanish Crown. When escapes occurred, communities were built by the run-away slaves clandestinely. *Negros* and *negras* were ‘hunted’ alive to return to their ‘owners’, and some of these escaped slaves were murdered or punished to prevent other escapes, and their communities destroyed (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 360, 362, 482). The conversion or *reduzion* of a *palenque* into a *poblacion* was a subsidiary plan for the Spanish Crown, a plan B. The word *reduzion* or *reducción* -in modern Spanish language [reduction]- used in the heading of the file containing the 1714 peace agreement (listed in this chapter in section 2) a.ii) has two meanings in the Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy: “1) Action and effect of reducing something; 2) Indigenous town converted to Christianity” (Real Academia Española, 2016: n/p).

Conversion into a town and Catholic faith came when eradication was unsuccessful or no longer profitable, such as when Maroon resistance was strong, and survivors found ways to join other *palenques* or started to build new ones (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 482) (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 13). Compensation given by the ‘masters’ for the recovery of their slaves or their sale in other markets was not enough to cover the expenses of the extermination expeditions (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 13, 44-46, 68, 69).

Eradication was also the first solution implemented to deal with *Palenque de San Miguel* until a peace agreement appeared to be more beneficial for the colonial actors involved –except for the white elites, who coveted the return of their slaves no matter the consequences. San Basilio de Palenque is this metamorphosis, a passage or *in-between* (the borderland for Anzaldúa

(1987)), from subversion and direct violent persecution to resistance that led to isolation, freedom and agency over their territories.

#### 4. Formulating Survival

The narrative of the survival of *Palenque de San Miguel* starts with the arrival of the priest, Balthasar de la Fuente, in 1682 to a “*poblacion grande (...) en dicha Sierra de María*” [a big population on the Hill of Mary] of “*negros levantados*” [black rebels] with the purpose of converting them into Christians. Balthasar de la Fuente met the “*negro Gobernador*” [the black Governor] of *Palenques de María*, Domingo Criollo, leader of four captains of different nations or *palenques* (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 12).

Domingo Criollo proposed peace with the Crown to the priest, who could become a mediator between the Maroons and the colonial power. As a proof of good disposition, Criollo offered his son to the Crown, to receive the sacraments of the Catholic faith, thereby acknowledging Balthasar de la Fuente as the priest of his territory and spokesman in front of the colonial authorities. In return to Criollo’s offers, they would obtain lands and freedom for all : “*que ellos defendian su libertad, y que él con los suyos lo eran de inmemorial tiempo à esta parte*” [they defended their freedom, because he and his people were free since immemorial times to the present day] (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 11-13).

Nevertheless, the colonial authorities did not accept the deal between Balthasar de la Fuente and the Maroons. In 1683, the authorities commenced extermination campaigns against the four *Palenques de la Sierra de María*, destroying and burning their accommodations and corn and yucca crops (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 15, 16, 26, 28, 39, 49). Despite these politics of aggression towards the *palenques*, the Maroons built alliances with members of the Catholic Church, such as Balthasar de La Fuente and Miguel del Toro, who interceded in front of the Crown and obtained for them the *Cédula Real* of May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1688. This Royal Order granted pardons for the crimes committed by the Maroons of *Palenques de María* and ‘privileged’ them with the recognition of their freedom (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 278).

For the Catholic Church, the *palenques* were sources of new Christians who, after baptism, came under the protection of the priests (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 495). Baptism gave them a sort of ‘immunity’, which was probably sought by the Maroons and may be the reason why the leader of *Palenques de María*, Domingo Criollo, requested Balthasar de La

Fuente, in their first encounter, to administer the Catholic sacraments to the people (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 12).

During the peace negotiations, the presence of Balthasar de La Fuente was a reassurance that violence would not be carried out against them. Phrases such as, “*saldrían solo con el Obispo*” [they would only go out [from the *montes*] with the presence of the Bishop], give an example of the relationship between them (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 56, 57). Furthermore, the cropping of their lands to supply provisions for Cartagena de Indias and acting as a defence from indigenous people and pirate attacks were other reasons pointed out by Balthasar de La Fuente to favour the conversion of the *palenques* into towns (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 54).

These reasons were also shared by the colonial authorities back in Spain. The Council of Indies, on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1691, pointed out several motives why the king of Spain was keen on the pacification of the *palenque* instead of its destruction:

- 1) peace;
- 2) protection of the white property (large farms and slaves);
- 3) a new army to defend the city from attacks;
- 4) provisions for Cartagena de Indias as the *palenques* were agricultural areas.

The king would concede freedom to all of them, pardon their crimes, and provide protection as members of the Catholic Church and vassals of the Crown and its lands. The king was aware that the owners of the slaves would resist his decision, but he would keep his word and provide his treasury to assure the permanence of his decree and end the reduction of the *palenques*. He highlighted the benefits that peace would bring and that the destruction of the *palenques* was unfeasible (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 80, 82). Domingo Criollo agreed with this offer (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 111).

I suggest that the origin of the name *San Miguel* given to the ‘big *palenque*’ of the *Sierras de María* lies in the way this Royal proposition was conveyed to Domingo Criollo. Balthasar de La Fuente announced in public speeches the freedom for all the *negros* who decided to follow him, raising two flags: one with the figure of the Archangel St Michael (*San Miguel*) and the other with the symbol of the Inquisition (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 269, 452, 453). Freedom to *Palenque de San Miguel* was invoked by using the image of the warrior Angel

of God, St Michael, and therefore, its name may be eponymous. This hypothesis may bridge the gap in the literature identified by Navarrete Peláez (2008) concerning a lack of explanation as to why this particular name to call the *Palenque* was chosen.

This news concerning the granting of freedom for *Palenque de San Miguel* caused different reactions: On one hand, the *vecinos* of Cartagena de Indias were afraid that freedom could be extended to all the slaves, endangering their possessions. On the other hand, slaves started to join *Palenque de San Miguel* after escaping from slavery and residents of other *palenques* joined to enjoy the ‘privilege’ conceded to this community. These uprisings and escapes after freedom for *Palenque de San Miguel* was announced are explored in detail in a later section of this chapter (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 270, 272, 274, 493, 494, 495).

The colonial authorities had differing opinions, ranging from calls to attack and destroy the *Palenque de San Miguel* for good and in disregard of the *Cédula Real*, to recognising freedom only for the *negros criollos* (those born in the *palenque*), who would break ties with their ancestors and relatives, the slaves. This last strategy would make *Palenque de San Miguel* weaker as a group, consistent with Galtung’s (1996; 2016) segmentation of subalterns as an example of structural violence.

By destroying *Palenque de San Miguel*, the *vecinos* would be able to recover their runaway ‘slave property’ (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 276, 500, 510). In 1685, the extermination campaigns started against the four *palenques* of the hill of Mary. The local colonial authorities decided that the Royal order would be “obeyed but not executed.” They understood that its implementation had pernicious consequences for the *vecinos* of Cartagena de Indias, which had not been foreseen by the king, as slaves could escape and join the *Palenques de María*. After all, the local authorities justified their disobedience by arguing that the *Real Cédula* was obtained from the king because of a “*sinistra relación*” [sinister relationship] between Balthasar de La Fuente and the Maroons (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 391, 392, 500) (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 311, 313).

Following the suspension of the *Cédula Real*, rumours on the uprising of *palenques* reached Cartagena de Indias, as well as those of other attacks conducted by the Maroons, such as the poisoning of the meat supply of the city. These rumours were proven false (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 311, 315, 316). Nevertheless, this fear created the ideal atmosphere for justifying colonial extermination campaigns against the rebel communities: “*pues es menos*

*inconveniente que ellos perezcan que no el que perezcamos nosotros*” [it is less inconvenient that they perish than us instead] (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 323).

Cummings (2018:48) explains these “colonial anxieties” caused by marronage also present in the British Caribbean. For Cummings (2018), marronage was a response to the violence and insecurities of the plantation. The life of marronage was insecure and precarious, for instance, regarding access to land and food. Insecurity did not only affect the Maroons, but a rather sense of insecurity affected the colonial system as well. The existence of Maroon communities caused fear and a “sense of insecurity” among the planter class having, as a result, the implementation of policies, law and surveillance (Cummings, 2018:50). Marronage unsettled the colonial boundaries which previously been perceived as more secure. Cummings (2018) argues that agreements over lands for the Maroon in the treaties with the colonial authorities in the British Caribbean region were a dispositive to assure security for the colonial system. Similarly, in the case of colonial Colombia, marronage provoked anxiety amongst the elite, and as shown above, provoked a response going well beyond surveillance.

On December 10<sup>th</sup> 1693, the Governor, Sancho Ximeno, stated in a letter his *deseo* [desire] for the destruction of *Palenques de María* (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 357). The result was 92 Maroons captured, 43 killed (including the leader of *Palenques de la Sierra de María La Alta*, Domingo Criollo (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 359, 364)) and the burning of 137 *bohíos* [huts]. The head of Domingo Criollo was displayed in the *palenque* first and Cartagena de Indias later (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 362). The records show that the destruction included *Palenque de San Miguel*, but also other *palenques*, such as *Bongue*, *Duanga* and *Arenal* capturing in total 200 Maroons (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 362, 482, 504). The royal reaction to the disobedience of the colonial authorities to the *Cédula Real* was to open investigations, which were registered in the historical records.

The pattern of ‘extermination first, *poblacion* later’ seems to be the one followed by the colonial authorities until the peace agreement reached with *Palenque de San Miguel* in 1714. A note inserted at the end of this colonial record described the building of a new *palenque* in the area of Santa Marta and the plan for its *reduction* (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 46/47). Nevertheless, the records do not describe what happened to this *palenque* in Santa Marta, if the negotiations were successful or the initiative ended up in extermination. However, it at least shows a disposition in the colonial authorities not seen before the case of *Palenque de San Miguel*.

After the experience of the Spaniards with *Palenque de San Miguel*, reduction may have seemed to be a cheaper and more convenient option for them, providing peaceful agricultural areas from which they could get provisions and food while trading their products. Furthermore, by ‘reducing’ the problem of runaway slaves, through the consolidation of black areas away from Cartagena de Indias, they would protect the white property (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 16).

The process of isolating blackness in the Caribbean was not only a result of the Maroon mobilisation to find a place to live in freedom, but the performance of the law through a peace agreement that included isolation as a requirement for remaining free and independent as people. The Maroon leader, Domingo Criollo, also offered their segregation as people as a strategy of survival: “*no saliere negro de él [palenque], ni tuviese comunicación con persona*” [no negro shall leave the *palenque* nor have communication with any person] (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 361).

This condition of isolation may explain the gap in the history of *San Basilio de Palenque* from 1784 to 1921, which has been hard to fill from archival sources. The collective memory, the 1921 title deed, and the studies of Cross and de Friedemann (1979) help to reconstruct the territorial dispossession carried out by landlords that slowly started around 1880. Nevertheless, there is a gap of 137 years that seems impossible to overcome, at least for now.

After the ‘reduction’ of *Palenque de San Miguel*, the imposition of Catholicism was the following step because the *palenques* were considered areas without “*pastto espiritual*” [spiritual food or Catholic sacraments] (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 6, 28). Maroons were portrayed by the colonial system as living in the *montes* with no houses or any social or cultural structure like “*alarbes*” [Arabs] (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 6).

This portrait made by the colonial authorities, such as in the letters of the Governor of Cartagena, Gerónimo Badillo, clashes with the position that was recognised for *Palenque of San Miguel de la Sierra de María* as an entitled party during the negotiations with the Crown over freedom and territory. For instance, the negotiation of the agreement with *Palenque of San Miguel* was conducted between the Captain of Cartagena de Indias, Alfonso de Guzman, and the Captain of the *Palenque*, Nicolás de Santa Rosa, as representatives of the parties involved.

Overall the final version of the peace agreement allowed the Maroons to retain more political and economic power than in the initial proposals. This change could have many reasons, such as the final agreement in the community being conducted by a religious authority and ally, the Bishop Antonio María Cassiani, instead of a military officer, the Captain Alfonso de Guzman, which may have allowed the Maroons to modify or impose different conditions on the agreement. It is possible to speculate on the reasons which may have led to the granting of additional concessions to the Maroons in the final agreement, but any such details are absent in the extant history of *San Basilio de Palenque* and cannot be confirmed.

This section established that *Palenque de San Miguel* survived because it developed other skills, such as negotiation and strategic alliances with powerholders, apart from defence and confrontation. Its isolation was negotiated in the 1714 peace agreement, and Maroon isolation was considered beneficial for both parties. The Maroons secured territory and freedom, and the colonial regime kept its property safe while avoiding rebellion and new escape attempts by slaves. The next section delves deeper into other reasons that made *Palenque de San Miguel* survive in the long-term.

## **5. Reasons for Survival**

The 1714 peace agreement was the first territorial demarcation of San Basilio de Palenque. The Governor of Cartagena de Indias, Gerónimo Badillo, requested all the Maroons (who were living in *Palenque de San Miguel*, in the hills and in an area that cannot be identified because it is illegible on the colonial document) to settle in a place considered suitable by the colonial authorities (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 19). The idea of a ‘suitable area’ is explained further but it implies the absence of previous occupants, such as indigenous people and Spaniards broadly. After their escape from captivity and before the 1714 peace agreement, the Maroons occupied all the area known as Montes de María [Hills of Mary].

The Montes de María constitute the ancestral territory. For the Maroons, beyond the Montes de María’s physical boundaries was slavery and uprootedness, and within them, self-determination. The return to this living experience of freedom was the first border known by the Maroons. For the Africans, who were enslaved in the Americas, the Montes de María was an encounter with their lost “immemorial freedom” (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 13).



For the *negros criollos*, who were born in the *palenques* without ‘owners,’ their experience was both a restriction of movement beyond their territories and slavery -as a human tragedy lived by their relatives and the new runaway slaves that reached the community- that happened outside their *montes*. The idea of Maroons controlling all this untamed geography caused fear within the colonial regimen because they appeared to be unstoppable (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 27, 29, 84).

The subversion of slaves was the main threat to the colonial regime. Navarrete Peláez (2008) points out the *palenques*, including *Palenque de San Miguel*, did not aim to end slavery. It is necessary to critically reflect on this assertion. I am not in a position to assert what the vision of all the *palenques* of the Colombian Caribbean was during the 17<sup>th</sup> century regarding freedom for all the slaves and the abolition of slavery as a system. This analysis is outside the scope of this research. Nevertheless, in the following paragraphs, I will develop some considerations regarding how *Palenque de San Miguel* endangered slavery and its interest in the liberation of the rest of the slaves in the Province of Cartagena de Indias.

This research does not disregard that Navarrete Peláez’s position is a common claim in the historiography of marronage in Latin America, for instance, a similar position is maintained in the case of Afro-descendants in Brazil (Reis 1983; 1993). Reis (1993) investigated in his research an unsuccessful slave rebellion in Bahia in 1835. While Southern African (mainly Angolan) slaves revolted against slavery through the building of independent *quilombos* (the equivalent of *palenques* in Brazil), Western Africans (mostly Hausas and Nagôs) used violent confrontation in cities and plantations. Reis (1993:148) highlights “the most striking absence in the rebellion was, without a doubt, that of Bantu speakers (from southern Africa).” However, according to Reis, there were exceptions to these dynamics. In some cases, Angolans also used violent means to revolt, and some Hausas and Nagôs joined the *quilombos*.<sup>16</sup>

For the case of Colombia, the fact that the *palenques* were isolated territories did not preclude confrontation with the colonial regime. Being a *palenque* did not imply *per se* the absence of the use of force and the threat of force by the Maroons, as shown in this chapter in the case of *Palenque de San Miguel* and *Palenque de Tabacal*. The correlation established by Reis (1993) between ethnic and linguistic background and certain strategies of resistance seems to become weaker in the case of the *palenques* of the Montes de María. The slaves in the province of

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<sup>16</sup> For the case of current community of San Basilio de Palenque, internal differences within blackness are explored in chapter 5.

Cartagena de Indias during the 17<sup>th</sup> century mainly came from lower and upper Guinea, Angola and Congo (Navarrete, 2012). Thus, it is valid to conclude that the population of the *palenques* of the Montes de María were also from these regions. Thus, the population of *Palenque de Tabacal* might have this composition, which did not prevent its direct confrontation with the colonial regime, and its subsequent destruction by 1693, as explained in section 3.

Furthermore, *Palenque de Miguel* were mainly Southern Africans and Bantu speakers (de Granda, 1971; Arnaiz-Villena *et al.*, 2009; Fang, Martínez and Marrugo, 2013; Ansari-Pour *et al.*, 2016; Schwegler, 2017) but the record is strongly suggestive of the intention of the *palenque* to liberate the rest of the slaves of the Province of Cartagena de Indias.<sup>17</sup> At least, until they negotiated their own survival and freedom with the colonial regime in 1714 in part by acceding to their isolation. This intention of the *palenque* is an open question that needs to be further explored in historical research regarding San Basilio de Palenque. In the case of *Palenque de San Miguel*, my thesis contends that this *palenque* jeopardised slavery and this was a reason why the colonial regime negotiated its incorporation in the system as an isolated *poblacion*. *Palenque de San Miguel* was able to resist in different ways against the extermination campaigns of the colonial authorities and to attract other slaves to join its rebel community, as explained in the previous sections. These conditions put *Palenque de San Miguel* in a position to tackle slavery in the Province of Cartagena de Indias, along with the support of allies in the city, large farms and other rebel communities.

In this sense, there is a strong possibility that the leader of *Palenques de María*, Domingo Criollo, had in mind more than the individual and collective freedom of a group of slaves and their descendants. Furthermore, on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1690, the priest Balthasar de La Fuente was appointed by the king of Spain to pacify and reduce these *palenques*. The priest described to the colonial authorities his conversations with Domingo Criollo during their encounters in the *montes*. In these encounters, Domingo Criollo explained to the priest their links with other bigger *palenques* in the areas of Santa Marta and Panamá, indicating their networks among rebels and their strength (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 13). Moreover, in March

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<sup>17</sup> The origins of the population of San Basilio de Palenque could be tracked in communities of “the West and the South coast of the African continent and Bantu-speaking populations, such as Angola, Bengal and Congo” (Fang *et al.* 2013: 256). The paternal line of the first founding fathers of the *Palenque* was identified as *Yombe*, which is currently linked with an ethnic group, which lives mainly in Pointe-Noire, Congo (Ansari-Pour *et al.*, 2016). Bioko Island was also mentioned as a possible origin of the ancestors of San Basilio de Palenque (Arnaiz-Villena *et al.*, 2009). *Palenque de San Miguel*’s ancestors were mainly Bantu speakers (Arnaiz-Villena *et al.*, 2009; Fang, Martínez and Marrugo, 2013). Bantu language, specifically in its Kikongo variety, became the root of the language spoken in San Basilio de Palenque (de Granda, 1971; Schwegler, 2017).

1693, colonial investigations stated that, for the Maroons, the freedom of the fugitives was not enough. They had the objective of increasing in number to resist invasions and initiate hostilities that would lead to the liberation of all the slaves in the Province of Cartagena without any distinctions (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 391).

However, after *Palenque de San Miguel* became a *poblacion* in 1714, the negotiated isolation and the agreement of the end of the war between Cartagena de Indias and the community might have implied a change of plan towards the freedom of all the slaves remaining in the city and large farms. Giving up this plan was possibly a way to guarantee their survival. However, after 1714, the archival documents concerning the history of this community are scarce, precluding a definitive explanation for the apparent change in intentions at this time. After the 1714 peace agreement obtained with the Spaniards, the Maroons of *Palenque de San Miguel* might have become aware of their power and skills as negotiators, which could allow them to achieve more than freedom circumscribed to the *palenques* or new *negro* towns, but freedom altogether. Nevertheless, the transformation of a *palenque* into a *poblacion* could serve as a mechanism to stop *negro* revolutions by preventing conflict and escapes, as one of the conditions imposed on this new *poblacion* to remain free was the prohibition of receiving new fugitive slaves.

Therefore, for the slaves, the obstacle to finding shelter in *Palenque de San Miguel* after running away could have contributed to accepting their domination while promoting the slavery status quo. However, *Palenque de San Miguel* was not the only *palenque* near Cartagena de Indias able to receive fugitives. The descriptions contained in the documentation on the Captain of Cartagena, Alfonso de Guzman, show that there was more than one *palenque* in the Caribbean, but *Palenque de San Miguel* was *Palenque Grande* [the big *palenque*], most prominent.

Alfonso de Guzman was a mercenary, owner of a private army hired by the Spanish Crown and the inhabitants of Cartagena de Indias to carry out the extermination campaigns against the *palenques*. He was the instigator of the burning of at least two *palenquillos* [small *palenques*] (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 1, 7, 44). These practices resemble the actions of military and paramilitary groups in the same area in the 2000s who are responsible for causing the destruction and displacement of *La Bonga*, the rural reserve of San Basilio de Palenque. These paramilitary groups are the private armies of the white landlords and the Colombian armed forces.

The use of private armies or mercenaries by the colonial regime to control territories in the Colombian Caribbean has continued for over four hundred years (Restrepo and Pérez, 2005). Nevertheless, in the case of *Palenque de San Miguel*, Alfonso de Guzman dropped the idea of its destruction and instead switched to delivering threats and propositions on behalf of the colonial authorities (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 3, 8). Some of the reasons why the colonial regime changed its tactics in the case of *Palenque de San Miguel* emerge from the colonial records.

The size of *Palenque de San Miguel* was likely one of the reasons because the colonial authorities referred to other *palenques* using the diminutive in the Spanish language: *palenquillo* [small *palenque*] (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 7, 11). However, when they described *Palenque de San Miguel*, the colonial authorities used the word ‘*grande*’ [big] calling its members as “the blacks of the big *palenque* also known as San Miguel” (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 2).

The Captain Alfonso de Guzman and the Bishop Antonio Maria Cassiani informed the Governor that this *palenque* had more than 600 *negros* that were ready to fight, but the census made by the Captain of the Palenque, Nicolas de Santa Rosa, in 1714, registered 234 women and men. These figures made the Captain reconsider the viability of an attack (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 3, 15, 30);

*Palenque de San Miguel* also had informants spread in the Province of Cartagena. Informants allowed them to have a network that provided information, possibly about attacks. The historical records suggest that in some moments they lost the communication with their informants in the city (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 2). The lack of information could have made them more frightened in a context where extermination campaigns were carried out against the *palequillos* [small *palenques*]: *Palenque de San Miguel* could be the next. Although the fear of extermination in the *palenque grande* appears all through the colonial documentation, this did not paralyse their mobilisation and negotiation with the Crown.

The Maroons were proactive in the search for peace by developing negotiation skills and influence before some colonial authorities, such as the Bishop Antonio María Cassiani. This Bishop was in charge of implementing the peace agreement in the community, which was first proposed to the Maroons by the Captain Alfonso de Guzman in the name of the Governor (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 18, 31-32). Although some scholars such as Navarrete Peláez (2008) have portrayed the Bishop as a fatherly figure for the *negros del Palenque* and a

guarantor in front of the Governor, the Bishop had his own interests in settling the conflict between the Maroons and the Crown. For instance, the building of a church in the community for the administration of Catholic sacraments was the sixth condition in the original proposal of the peace agreement. However, the building of the church became the first condition in the final peace agreement when it was implemented in the community by the Bishop (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 32-33).

The bishop changed the name of the *palenque*, *San Miguel* –the warrior Angel of God– to San Basilio (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 31): The warrior identity present in the name of the *palenque* was suppressed, and the *poblacion* received the name of a docile figure, a saint. The Bishop stated in his letters that the strength of *Palenque de San Miguel* was a security threat for Cartagena de Indias, the large farms and the gold and silver mines (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 51). These seemed to be also concerns for the Bishop.

As described in section 2, Castaño (2015) states that *Palenque de San Miguel*, as the rest of the *palenques* of the Colombian Caribbean, benefited from its territories being located in untamed geographies and their knowledge about them for its protection during the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The following paragraphs provide specific empirical examples of how certain geographical features were capitalised on by the Maroons of *Palenque de San Miguel*.

The Montes de María's geography helped them to remain isolated because of the presence of water bodies and wetlands, which acted as barriers against invasions during certain seasons. These natural barriers were mentioned by Captain Alfonso Guzman, who was only able to attack the *palenque* when “the waters decrease” (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 14, 45) (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 49) or “in January [the attack] was not possible because of the water” (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 362). Figure 11 shows water bodies currently present in the territory of the *Palenque*.



Figure 11. Water Bodies in the *Palenque*

The hills and the vegetation were other natural barriers of defence: “*tan insolentados [los Cimarrones] con el seguro de las espesas montañas, en que habitan*” [[The Maroons] were insolent because of the protection given by those thick mountains where they live] (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 356). During the attacks against other small *palenques*, the direct route of escape of the Maroons was to *Palenque de San Miguel*, which was at the foot of a hill (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 13) (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 383). The vegetation also made difficult the entrance of the armies into the *palenque*’s areas: “*se metían [los soldados] por los costados rompiendo monte (...) con sigilo como se debía por ser como eran estos parajes de montes tan espesos*” [They [soldiers] cut into the *monte* from the sides (...) gingerly as these places had thick vegetation] (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 362). Tardieu (2006) explains that the word ‘*montes*’ means uncultivated land with thick vegetation, such as trees and brushes. The expression ‘being in the *montes*’ went hand-in-hand with the fact of being a *cimarrón* [Maroon].

Natural resources helped the Maroons to obtain materials for shelter, food, and protection, and they had specific knowledge to make use of them (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 12, 13). For instance, the *palenques* were surrounded by trench and wood stockades, *fortificados* [fortified] to make them impenetrable (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 26, 38).

One of the meanings of the word *palenque* is “wooden fence or wood stockade that is made for the protection of a post, to close the ground in which a public party or combat takes places, or for other purposes” (Real Academia Española, no date a). Figure 12 shows how these wood stockades are still used to demarcate areas in San Basilio de Palenque and other towns nearby this community. The soldiers described the presence of traps surrounding the *palenques* in the form of poisonous prongs under a layer of soil in colonial times (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 383).



Figure 12. Wood Stockades in the *Palenque*

The environment and the use that the Maroons made of it conspired in their favour to protect them during times of war. The moments of peace imposed by nature, for instance, during the wet season and the rise in water levels, could have been capitalised upon by the Maroons to prepare for new attacks coming from Cartagena de Indias.

The geography described above is the *montes*, which has been a fundamental part of the territory of San Basilio de Palenque from colonial times to the present day. Figure 13 shows the characteristic geographical landscape of the *Palenque*. The *montes* made *marronage* and freedom possible for the slaves and their descendants because they allowed them, during certain times, to be unreachable and find a temporary territorial peace. In their collective memory, the *montes* represent the warrior spirit of their ancestors, something that cannot be



ever entirely owned as territory and for some moments, it has its individuality, as a separate being that acts by its own will.



Figure 13. The *Montes*

### 5.a. Negotiating Territory

On territory, the initial proposal made by the Governor, Gerónimo Badillo, contains a specific clause on lands which was omitted in the 1714 peace agreement. The clause on territory states that the land where the Maroons would live and crop must be free, understood as being vacant or empty. The Governor added that these lands were going to be indicated by the authorities (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 19). Nevertheless, this clause was not included in the final text of the 1714 peace agreement, possibly because the Maroons were already in possession of lands, the Montes de María, for at least 30 years.

The Montes de María is highlighted in the title of the colonial file (listed in this chapter in 2) a. ii.)) as the location of *Palenque de San Miguel*. The idea of giving to the Maroons empty lands implied that the ownership of indigenous people and Spaniards would not be disturbed by them (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 63, 70). There is no mention in the historical records that indicates that these territories were taken by the dispossession of indigenous people. However, this could have been possible. Victor Cimarra, *Palenquero*, mentioned in his



interview that they owed indigenous people apologies for the land taken during the colonial times to build their communities.<sup>18</sup> This is addressed in chapter 5.

The Maroons possessed the *montes*. An example of this is in the descriptions of Balthasar de La Fuente of his first encounter with the community. Balthasar de La Fuente arrived in *Palenque de San Miguel* with a group of indigenous people as companions who warned him that this was a community of black rebels who would murder them if they found them in their territories. The Maroons were aware of the visits of the priest to their territories and requested him not to enter into their lands until they called him for the administration of the sacraments. They also added that Domingo Criollo was the one who was ruling these territories (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 12). Their land possession was well-known by the colonial authorities, the indigenous people, the *vecinos* of Cartagena de Indias, and the owners of the large farms nearby the *palenque* (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 83).

Both the peace agreement and its first draft promoted the isolation of this community except for trading products between the Maroons and the Spaniards (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 22, 37). The shortage of food in the colony during that time made these agricultural areas strategic for the supply of Cartagena de Indias. Assuring supplies for the city may also be the reason why ‘passports’ were given to the Maroons of *Palenque de San Miguel* for their free movement in Cartagena de Indias and other provinces (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 40). Except for trade, the members of the community -who were responsible for the administration of justice [*justicias*]- had the duty to impede the entrance of Spaniards, *mulatos* [a person of mixed white and African ancestry], indigenous people or any other person such as runaway slaves, into the community (Archivo General de Indias, 1714:37).

Nevertheless, in a letter of March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1691, after his arrival from Spain and the concession of the *Real Cédula* on the freedom of *Palenque de San Miguel*, Balthasar de la Fuente explained that the aim was not isolation, but rather the constitution of one or more communities of runaway slaves and the annexation of those within cities. *Mestizos*, *Mulatos* [mixed persons between African and white ancestry] and *Zambos* [mixed persons between African and indigenous ancestry] could join these communities. In the draft of the peace agreement, the isolation was more a right of the community than an obligation, unless its visitors were slaves because they became its responsibility (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 22).

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<sup>18</sup> Victor Cimarra was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on 19<sup>th</sup>, February 2016.

The legal practice of excluding people of colour from – or marginalising them within – “racialized white spaces that have a racially exclusive history, practice, and/or reputation” has been conceptualised as “racial territoriality” (Boddie 2010:406). Like legal geographers, such as Blomley (2003) and Delaney (2016), Boddie (2010) explains that space has been used as a tool to produce a racial hierarchy that has resulted in the subordination of, in his case, African Americans. During slavery, examples of this were the plantation and different restrictions on slave’s mobility to pursue reducing chances of rebellion. Law was a substantial tool for maintaining this racial territoriality: “The complete authority of whites over blacks -including their corresponding power to exclude, marginalize, and confine slaves and even free blacks within prescribed spaces - was premised on property rights and backed by the power of the state” (Boddie 2010:427).

Regarding *Palenque de San Miguel*, the interest of the colonial authorities of identifying who was in or out of the new *poblacion* was important precisely because of this issue of enforcing property rights in human beings. An example of this was the obligation of the *justicias* [residents of the town in charge of the administration of justice] to return to their ‘masters’ the slaves who were away from the community for an extended period (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 35). The head of *Palenque de San Miguel*, its Captain, was in charge of conducting a census of the Maroons in different racial categories that are analysed in the next section (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 37).

The strict census of the residents of the new *poblacion* was a reminder that the concessions on freedom and territory given to them would not be extended to other *palenques* or slaves. The *Real Cedula* was a concession of freedom for the case of *Palenque de San Miguel*, a ‘privilege’ (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 356). For the rest of the Africans and their descendants, liberty would not come until 138 years after the 1714 peace agreement. San Basilio de Palenque, as a territory of freedom - but also the isolation of blacks from the whites of Cartagena de Indias – would become the origin of the geographies of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean.

This section explained that the ancestral territory of San Basilio de Palenque was the Montes de María that provided the African slaves and their descendants a return to their lost freedom. However, freedom for a few did not seem to be enough. The *Palenque* endangered slavery, and the possible liberation of all the slaves of the Province of Cartagena at the hand of the Maroons facilitated negotiation with the colonial authorities and its transformation into a *poblacion*

through a peace agreement. The 1714 peace agreement was the first territorial demarcation of the *Palenque* under a condition of isolation that blocked possible slave rebellion. *Palenque de San Miguel* survived because it was able to capitalise on different factors, such as its size, its network of informants in the city and large farms, proactivity in the search for peace and negotiation, and the strategic use of its territory.

## 6. Race and Diversity

Race mattered in *Palenque de San Miguel*. With the respect to freedom, the 1714 peace agreement established different categories of Maroons living in the *palenque*. This classification had an impact on the way freedom was afforded to them. Both the so-called *negros criollos* – who were born in the *palenque*– and the *negros de castas* –who were the Africans from different nations or *castas* that lived in *Palenque de San Miguel* for more than 20 years- were considered free. The rest of the Maroons had to ‘buy’ their freedom with their crops, such as corn, which were understood as community payments. The Captain of the *Palenque*, Nicolás de Santa Rosa, was responsible for ensuring that these payments were delivered to the owners of the slaves (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 34, 37-38). Achieving freedom for all the Maroons living in *Palenque de San Miguel* was a common task for their residents.

These categories of Maroons present in the peace agreement may have been imposed by the colonial authorities and internalised by the Maroons or they may have emerged within the community and were used against them by the regime to divide the group. Navarrete Peláez (2008) states that these racial divisions appearing in the *palenque* caused confrontations. For instance, Navarrete Peláez (2008) points out that the *negros criollos* and *negros de castas* had different views on how to negotiate with the Spaniards: the *negros criollos* used more peaceful negotiation methods than the Africans, who were willing to use force as the primary instrument to achieve their aims. The different visions conspired against unity.

After all, the *negros criollos* did not experience the kidnapping from Africa, the domination of slavery and the escape from it, but they knew that freedom was something gained by their ancestors and worth fighting for. The historical records suggest that there was an awareness of the different racial identities present in the *palenque*: on one side, the African slaves as pioneer rebels, and on the other side, their descendants who were born free in the community.

The awareness of different racial identities and the traits attributed to them also extended to leadership in *Palenque de San Miguel*. Domingo Criollo, the main leader of the *Palenques de*

*María*, as his surname indicates, was born in the community, and led the negotiations with the Spaniards, as did his descendant, Nicolás de Santa Rosa. Santa Rosa was the final negotiator of the peace agreement in 1714.

The armed wing of the *Palenque*, in the times of Domingo Criollo (1655-1694), was in the hands of the military Captain Pedro Mina, *negro de castas* and “the most bellicose,” and who withstood the attack against *Palenque de San Miguel* and endured beyond the death of Domingo Criollo. However, during the extermination campaign that costed the life of Criollo (1694), Pedro Mina was captured and negotiated his life with the help of a butler from a large farm in exchange of becoming “a perpetual slave” of the king by ending his days confined in a castle (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 517, 518). Navarrete Peláez’s correlation between racial categories and the possession of certain skills is not consistent with the particular case of Mina. Even though Mina was African, he showed negotiation skills for saving his life.

Despite these racial perceptions among the Maroons, priests close to them stated that, in the *Palenque*, there was a shared understanding of non-separation between the *negros de castas* and the *negros criollos* within the community as a form to prevail (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 361). However, these racial differences were exploited by the colonial regime with the apparent purpose of making them weaker as a group. As explained above, the *Real Cédula* recognised the freedom of all the *negros* of *San Miguel* without distinctions.

Nevertheless, after the *Real Cédula* and before the peace agreement the local authorities proposed to concede freedom only to the *negros criollos* and tried to recover the runaway slaves to return them to their owners or sell them in the market (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 311, 313, 332). The Maroons did not want to accept this offer because they considered themselves all free under the *Real Cédula* (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 356). The authorities started independent negotiations with the *negros criollos*, offering freedom and in return, they were to indicate the routes and location of other *palenques* and give the slaves back to their ‘masters.’ This proposition was also rejected. (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 360, 361) (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 310, 500).

Nevertheless, the historical records also stated that a priest informed the colonial authorities that some *negros criollos* offered to return the runaway slaves –the “*simarrones de todas las castas*”– in exchange of their freedom (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 39). However, the *negros criollos* were scared because the *negros de castas* were greater in number and this

made it difficult to revolt against them (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 278). Perhaps the politics to divide and generate confrontation in the *palenque* might have a reception in a particular group of Maroons born in the community. This tactic of recognising the freedom to one group but not to others was not only applied within *Palenque de San Miguel* but in the differing treatment of *palenques*: *Palenque de Tabacal* was exterminated while *Palenque de San Miguel* was converted into a town. This strategy was even used at the interior of the confederation of *Palenques de la Sierra de María*.

The *Palenques de la Sierra de María* were described by the colonial regime as a confederation of four *palenques* that had Domingo Criollo as the primary leader. They were the “head of rebellion of all the slaves in the Province (...) confederated in the Hill of Mary.”<sup>19</sup> *San Miguel* was the biggest, and the extermination campaigns were directed with more emphasis against it before the peace agreement. *Duanga* and *Arenal* are named as two of the other *palenques* which were members of the confederation, but the fourth member is not mentioned in the historical records (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 482, 487). Each of them had a captain and probably their own identities and politics (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 12). When one of the *palenques* was under attack, their members found shelters in the others and went back to their communities when peace was restored (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 13).

From the historical records, it is possible to understand the population size of *San Miguel* at the time of the peace agreement as well as its racial composition. In 1714, the census conducted by the Captain of the Palenque registered 113 *negros criollos* including 57 *negros criollos* [males] and 56 *negras criollas* [females]. Escaped slaves numbered 121: 75 males and 46 females, 36 of who had lived in the *palenque* for more than 20 or 30 years (21 males and 15 females) (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 29-30). These figures did not mention the presence of other identities present in *Palenque de San Miguel*, who were registered in other historical records. In the *Palenque*, there were fugitives, including runaway indigenous people, and particularly women, such as *Zambas* [mixed women of indigenous and African ancestry], *Mulatas* [mixed women of white and African ancestry] and blacks who were married but escaped from their husbands or were kidnapped by the Maroons from other towns (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 12, 381).

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<sup>19</sup> The mention of the *Palenques de María* [*Palenques* of the Hill of Mary] in the historical records was used sometimes as a synonym of the *Palenque de San Miguel*, and sometimes referred to the confederation.

The official numbers of the slaves in captivity in the province of Cartagena de Indias from 1533 to 1736 were around 56,000. However, illegal trafficking was estimated to duplicate, triplicate or increase fifty percent more than the official number. One-third of the population of the slaves in captivity were females (Gutiérrez Azopardo, 1987). Thus, the number of runaway slaves in the *Palenque* (75 males and 46 females) shows that male and female slaves were about equally likely to escape. There was a balance of genders within the *criollo* population. Nevertheless, the 1714 peace agreement was not a women's business because it was agreed between the Bishop, Antonio María Cassiani, and the male members of *Palenque de San Miguel* (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 31). As stated in the positionality and methods chapter, discussions on government and territory within San Basilio de Palenque are still male-dominated to this day.

In *Palenque de San Miguel*, only men who were heads of family were entitled to vote for the political authority of the *poblacion* (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 36). The *poblacion* had to elect a local authority with the approval of the Governor. The local authority had the duty of choosing a sheriff and *justicias* -who were responsible for the administration of justice including the punishment of crimes, issues related with freedom payments and the return of the slaves to their masters as a result of their escape to the community.

The Captain of the Palenque, Nicolás de Santa Rosa, had the political and economic command of the *poblacion*, but in the case of his death, the *justicias* had to ask the Governor for the designation of a new captain (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 36, 39). In the capitulation proposal, the captain of the *Palenque* would retain the economic control of the community, but a white man appointed by the Governor would exercise the political and civil power (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 20). The documentation suggests that the command of the *palenque* was through inheritance because Santa Rosa's father was the former Captain, Domingo Criollo, who was killed during one of the attacks that the community had suffered previously (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 49). The first authorities of the *poblacion* were chosen by the Bishop from among the *criollo* population (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 39).

*Criollo* power was another demonstration that the Spaniards prefer negotiating with them and not with the Africans, but it also empowered them over the African leaders who were pioneers of the resistance (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 28). Belligerence was punished under the logic of the colonialists; it was never the plan of the local colonial authorities to extend freedom to the runaway slaves but to punish and exterminate them.

For the negotiation of the peace agreement with *Palenque de San Miguel*, a *Zambo*, Juan Marquez, the nephew of the Captain of the Palenque, Nicolás de Santa Rosa, was used as a messenger between the parties (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 2, 4, 8). A *Zambo* is a mixed man with indigenous and African ancestry. In a way, the *Zambos* were one step closer to the ideal of whiteness than the Africans and the *negros criollos* born on Latin American soil.

The presence of Juan Marquez in the negotiation denotes the mistrust that the Spaniards had with the Africans and their descendants. The role played by Juan Marquez is particularly interesting because although he signed the letters sent to the Captain Alfonso de Guzman, as his “faithful servant”, he never did provide full information to him. For example, he did not disclose the location of other *palenques* and fugitives after the destruction of a small *palenque*, places that he probably knew due to his kinship with the chief military leader of the *Palenques de los Montes de María* at that time. Nevertheless, Juan Marquez described the terror that the destruction of other *palenques* had caused in *San Miguel*. He knew how to write and read and also used their contacts to deliver more letters to his uncle in the *palenque* to speed up the communication between the parties, which probably helped the success of the negotiation (Archivo General de Indias, 1714: 11-13).

This section showed how race was used by the colonial power to segment and destabilise the *palenque*. Maroons were aware of the distinction between those who were enslaved in the New World and their descendants born in *Palenque de San Miguel*. Despite this difference, the *Cimarrones* understood that to fall into the trap of internal confrontations to gain some benefits from the colonial power would have made them weaker as a group and threatened their survival.

## **7. The *Palenque* and Beyond**

This section analyses, firstly, the extraterritorial influence of the *Palenque de San Miguel*'s freedom in the city and large farms outside their borders where other slaves continued in captivity. Secondly, this section describes the continuation of *San Basilio de Palenque* after the peace agreement in 1714. Three documents are taken into consideration to analyse this last aspect:

- 1) the *Carta de Antonio de La Torre sobre la fundación de poblaciones para la Corona Española de fecha 28 de noviembre de 1783* (title given in this dissertation) [Letter of

Antonio de La Torre on the foundation of towns for the Spanish Crown on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1783],

- 2) two population censuses, which have not been an object of analysis previously in the historical scholarship: a) the *Sitio and feligresía del Pueblo de San Bacilio del Palenque que dista quatro leguas al de Mahates* (1777) [Site and parishioners of the town of San Basilio de Palenque, which is four leagues from Mahates] (Census 1) and, b) the *Padrón echo en el ano de mil setecientos setenta y ocho de el número de Almas, con distinción de sexos, estados, classes y castas inclussos parbulos que avitan en esta Provincia con arreglo a lo obtenido en la Provincia (...) de diez de noviembre de mil setecientos setenta y seis* [A census made in the year 1778 of the number of souls, with distinction of sexes, states, classes and castes including children in this Province [Cartagena], according to what was obtained in the Province (...) on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1776] (Census 2).

*Palenque de San Miguel* could create or enlarge spaces of autonomy for the slaves who lived in the city and large farms, who probably did not consider *marronage* as an option, but certainly wanted to see their living conditions improved by their ‘owners.’ As explained before, *marronage* was the escape from captivity to join the *palenques*, whether for a short time or with the intention to remain permanently. The descriptions made above about *Palenque de San Miguel* during the colonial times show that life was challenging in the *palenques* because of the environment and the constant state of war.

The existence of *Palenque de San Miguel* promoted *negro* revolts and escapes in Cartagena de Indias, especially when the slaves knew about the existence of the *Cédula Real* granting freedom for the Maroons of this *palenque* (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 356, 365, 366) (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 493). The colonial regime did not underestimate the strength of *Palenque de San Miguel* (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 39). The *Palenque de San Miguel*’s survival was a reminder to the slaves that a life without domination was possible and for the slaveholders, this reminder threatened their slave possessions (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 224).

The Maroons of *Palenque de San Miguel* could be perceived by their peers as powerful, resilient and able to struggle against the colonial regime and slavery. Even before the peace agreement, alliances built between the Maroons and the slaves living in the city and large farms allowed them to exchange information on attacks, escapes, and insurrection (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 27, 84, 85, 87, 311, 365). There was a mutual necessity and not only for



the Maroons in the rebel communities, who were isolated and eager for the information as they waited for the next attack to occur. For a rebellion of the urban slaves to happen, they knew the support and active participation of the Maroons of *San Miguel* was indispensable, due to their skills in war and negotiation (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 366).

The slaves threatened their ‘owners’ with the possibility of joining the *palenque* if their living conditions were not improved in the city and on large farms (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 344). The threat of escape allowed the slaves the possibility to improve their captivity conditions. It was a fact that the *palenques* increased in number every day and this could be the result of a strategy displayed by the Maroons to achieve a sufficient number of members in the *palenques* to make revolt against the colonial system possible (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 40, 391). This atmosphere gave the slaves leverage for negotiation with their ‘owners’ despite being in a state of slavery. As argued above, the conversion of *Palenque de San Miguel* into a town, a part of the colonial regime, could be understood as a strategy to stop the slave escapes, by blocking the access to the community for new runaway slaves as a condition of the *Palenque*’s freedom (Archivo General de Indias, 1686-1693, 63).

After the signature of the peace agreement in 1714, Census 1 shows that by 1777 the population of the town had grown rapidly. For instance, there were 140 *bohios* (huts), 305 females, 301 males and seven others whose their genders could not be identified -because some parts of the records are illegible- making a total of 613 people living in San Basilio de Palenque (Archivo General de la Nación - Colombia, 1777).

The names and surnames of the members of the community are Spanish, such as Norberto, Manuela, Joaquina, Julian, Francisco, among others. Navarrete Peláez (2008) explained that the members of the *palenques* adopted the surnames of their previous owners, as a strategy imposed by Domingo Criollo. The explanation for this was that in the case of being recaptured, this would allow the families to remain together, and not to be considered slaves of the king of Spain and sold abroad. A similar process is described by Price (2011:10) in the case of the Maroon communities in Surinam, where their first groups organised themselves and kept “the name of the plantation as a collective identity (...) Nasí people from the Nassy family plantations at the Jews Savanna.”

The population census shows that the Maroons also adopted the names of prominent characters of their history, for instance, Cassiani, in remembrance of the Bishop Cassiani, who was their ally during the signature of the agreement in 1714 (Archivo General de Indias, 1777). Pérez

Palomino (2002) states that Bishop Cassiani imposed surnames on the Maroons during their baptism to assure their conversion into the Catholic faith. In this thesis's investigation, it was found that 'Domingo' is a name used in several cases by the members of the community, probably commemorating their former leader during the times of war against the colonial authorities (Archivo General de la Nación - Colombia, 1777). The use of a name, 'Domingo', associated with its past struggle against the colonial regime may show the emergence of the public community identity associated with marronage and resistance as explained in the following chapter.

On territory, in the title of the census 1, San Basilio de Palenque was no longer associated geographically to the Montes de María, but rather the nearest town, Mahates. Nowadays Mahates is a municipality of the Department of Bolívar that contains San Basilio de Palenque. (Archivo General de la Nación - Colombia, 1777). The Census 2 (1778) of the Parish of *Palenque* registered one member of the Catholic Church, no white or indigenous people, 314 free people of different colours and 391 slaves of different colours, a total of 706 inhabitants in San Basilio de Palenque (Archivo General de la Nación - Colombia, 1778). The absence of indigenous people differs from the previous records which highlighted the presence of them in the community before the peace agreement in 1714 (Archivo General de Indias, 1693-1695, 12, 381). Possibly their existence in the community would have been a clear transgression of the clause of isolation, and therefore, their presence was not included in the census.

The former racial categories, *negros de castas* and *negros criollos*, were changed for *libres de varios colores* [free people of different colours] and *esclavos de varios colores* [slaves of different colours]. The expression of 'different colours' portrays the mix in the population of San Basilio, possibly with other races, such as white and indigenous people with the Africans and their descendants. The categories 'free' and 'slave' remain as the main division, which draws a line between those residents who enjoyed the 'privilege' of freedom and those who still were in the process of 'buying' it.

The letters written by Antonio de la Torre, a Spanish expeditionary, on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1781 and November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1783, described in detail his role in the foundation of 43 towns for the Spanish Crown in the Colombian Caribbean. In his expedition through this region, de la Torre described San Basilio de Palenque as a community of runaway slaves who fought to find a place to live. The Spanish expeditionary called this place "*montaña de María*" [mountain of Mary]. Furthermore, de la Torre states that his arrival in the area of *Palenque de San Basilio* was 70

years after the peace agreement was reached between the Spaniards and the Maroons. He enumerates some clauses present in the agreement, such as the forced isolation of the community, the presence of a Catholic priest in *San Basilio*, and the possibility to choose their authorities. Moreover, de la Torre describes that this population were living mostly in the *montes*, where they were hunters, and living in family groups in small precarious uncomfortable accommodations showing “*indolence*” (Archivo General de Indias, 1783:14). Men and women of *San Basilio* barely used clothes and did not show any respect to the priest or interest in restoring the church of the *poblacion*. They had conflicts with nearby large farms and traders and were accused of killing a captain and committing other offences while escaping punishment (Archivo General de Indias, 1783:14).

On territory, de la Torre states that the area Montes de María belongs to San Basilio de Palenque. Accordingly, he points out: “... since then [the time of the agreement] they possessed as theirs all the area known as *Montaña de María* where nowadays are established six sites that I’ve founded with more than 100 families; and because of this they [Maroons] resisted and made difficult that road” (Archivo General de Indias, 1783:14). The expeditionary does not provide the names of these six sites. Nevertheless, he mentioned all the 43 towns founded during his work for the Crown.

“Santana de Barú, San José de Rocha, Pasacavallos, Purísima Concepción de Ternera, Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria de Arjona, San Juan de Timiriguaco, Santa Rosa de Flamenco, San José de Folojolo, San Cayetano, San Francisco de Asis, Nuestra Señora del Carmen, San Jacinto, San Juan Nepomuceno, San Agustín de Playa Blanca, Parroquia de Facamocho; Parroquia de Facaloe, Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria de Magangué; San Sebastián; Retiro, Tacasaluma, Santiago, Cascajal, San Benito Abad, Since, San José de Corozal, San (...) [ilegible in the historical record]; Cincelejo, San Rafael del Chinú, San Juan de Sahagun, Santo Tomás Cantuariense, San Antonio Abad, San Onofre, San Fero, San Bernardo Abad, Purísima Concepción; San Antonio de Momil; San (Emilio); Ciénaga de Oro, San Carlos (de Colorina); San Pelayo y San Gerónimo” (Archivo General de Indias, 1781, 4-15).

The realisation of participatory mapping in the community could help to estimate which of these are the six sites mentioned by de la Torre as being located in San Basilio’s territory. Furthermore, de la Torre also states that the Maroons did not passively accept their territorial dispossession carried out through the foundation of new towns of colonialist residents within their borders, showing opposition where possible (Archivo General de Indias, 1783,14). This account is the first land dispossession registered in the history of San Basilio as the commencement of a process that would continue until today, and it is one of the objects of analysis of this doctoral research.

This section explored how the existence of *Palenque de San Miguel* gave community members who were still slaves –those who remained in captivity in the city or large farms- the leverage to negotiate improvements in their living conditions with their ‘owners.’ This strategy developed by the slaves was not previously analysed in the literature on slave resistance mentioned in chapter 2 (Escalante, 1973; Price, 1973, 2011; Gutiérrez Azopardo, 1980; Burton, 1997; Spicker, 2000). The transformation of the *palenque* into a *población* blocked possible revolts and slave escapes and the negotiation capacity of captive slaves reverted to the previous status quo. This section also described the continuation of the *población* after the signature of the 1714 peace agreement, focusing on its population growth, the slow disappearance of the racial categories, *negros de castas* and *negros criollos*, and the incipient emergence of a public identity associated with their struggle against the colonial regime. Finally, this section described the first territorial dispossession of the *Palenque* around 1783 after the establishment (or re-organisation) of new towns within their lands.

## 8. Conclusions

This chapter explained the colonial *palenque* by providing insights into the historical antecedents of current processes of reterritorialisation that have been reproduced over the years by the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María and given birth to their geographies of marronage. This production of the *Palenque* underpins the present community practices of resistance against territorial dispossession, which are analysed in the next chapter. The first main contribution of this study of the peculiarities of the *palenque* as a territory is primarily historical, particularly in that it fills gaps while extending previous historical research conducted mainly by Navarrete Peláez (2008) and Cassiani Herrera (2014). By deepening the analysis of these peculiarities, my research proposed a new way to understand the *palenque* through its process of transformation, the loss of its clandestine phase, and its emergence as a *población* under the 1714 peace agreement.

This research also expanded chronologically previous analysis of the history of San Basilio de Palenque from 1714 to 1783 based on historical records. In the case of some records, which were mentioned before in the scholarship, my research provided additional analysis or new interpretations. For instance, the 1714 peace agreement, a turning point in the history of the *Palenque* and its territory, was compiled by Cassiani Herrera (2014), but without providing an analysis of its clauses.

This chapter also critically reviewed the evidentiary basis of Navarrete Peláez's (2008) position that the *palenques* did not aim to hasten the end of slavery. *Palenque de San Miguel* jeopardised slavery through its capacity to resist against extermination and also by serving as a 'promised land' for captive slaves. Therefore, the *palenque*'s incorporation as a territory controlled by the colonial regime became a necessity. This chapter has shown that the record strongly suggests that the liberation of all the slaves in the Province of Cartagena was an ambition of the Maroons of *Palenque de San Miguel*, at least, until their own survival through their incorporation as a *poblacion* into the colonial system took priority. However, this is an open question that demands further analysis in historical research about the colonial *palenque*.

Moreover, the 1783 report of de la Torre was considered by de Friedemann (Cross and de Friedemann, 1979) as the formalisation of the ownership of the community over their lands. For this research, it is precisely the opposite. This report represents the first historical record of the process of territorial dispossession suffered by this community from colonial times to the present day. The first dispossession was based on a discourse that portrayed their territories as precarious and dangerous and therefore not worthy of recognition or protection. The continuation of this discourse in current times is analysed in chapter 6.

Regarding new historical findings, this chapter showed that the *palenque* was a type of territory—a counter-hegemonic territory- that made freedom possible for the runaway slaves and their descendants during slavery. Its physical boundaries were defined by the perception of being free men and women inside of the *palenque* or enslaved outside. These physical boundaries were also defined by specific geographies of the site, for example, water bodies and hills, and the Maroon's capacity to defend these boundaries. *Palenque de San Miguel* also gave the slaves, who lived in the traditionally white Cartagena de Indias and large farms, the possibility of negotiating the improvement of living conditions with their 'owners' under the threat of a possible escape to the rebel communities.

*Palenque de San Miguel* survived because it developed different skills apart from war, such as negotiation, strategic alliances with actors of the colonial regime and the tactical use of their geography as protection. Race (or the classification of the residents of the *palenque* into African slaves and their descendants born 'free' in the *montes*) was used by the colonial regime to try to divide the community. But the community resisted, and this commitment to unity was another factor in their survival.

The *Palenque de San Miguel*'s existence as a clandestine site was feared by the colonial authorities as a threat to the white property, but its conversion into a *poblacion* was acknowledged as beneficial, for instance, as a potential provider of agricultural products for the city. The passage from *palenque* to *poblacion* implied not only the building of a place for the realisation of freedom for the slaves and their descendants, but also for black isolation, which assuaged white fears.

The powerholders obstructed slave mobilisation by freezing a process of marronage in the area through the destruction or incorporation of a *palenque* into the colonial system. Slave escapes, and alliances between the slaves living in cities, rural areas and *palenques* became more difficult and therefore black uprisings that could have threatened slavery were prevented. To briefly summarise the broad historical argument, then, the origin of the geographies of the Afro-descendants in the *Montes de María* in the Colombian Caribbean could be found in the process of both extermination and survival of Maroon communities. Some *palenques* were erased by the colonial system, while *Palenque de San Miguel* survived by turning into a *poblacion* under an obligation of isolation demanded by the regime and accepted by the community to retain freedom and autonomy. Even then their territory was not secure, as the process of dispossession experienced by the community today was well-underway by the 1780s.

These findings have implications beyond the historical literature on the Colombian Caribbean. The 1714 peace agreement delivered, as Cummings (2018) explains for the British Caribbean, security for the colonial system. Therefore, a *poblacion* – as a new territory - was a remedy to reduce the colonial system's anxieties while protecting white space and property, anxieties that in the context of the marronage of Montes de María were based on the production of a type of territory by the *Cimarrones*, the *palenque*.

Isolation of blackness in the Colombian Caribbean by the performance of the law, achieved through the 1714 peace agreement, is another example of the idea of "racial territoriality" in the legal sense that Boddie describes (2010:406). However, isolation through the 1714 peace agreement was also an aim pursued by the Maroons as a strategy of survival and security planned since their escape from slavery to the building of their *palenques*. Where authors, such as Cummings (2018), only see the benefits of the isolation for the colonial system, this chapter highlighted the benefits – anticipated freedom and autonomy - for the Maroons showing their agency during negotiation.

Marronage, as practised by the runaway slaves of the Montes de María, was a form of resistance against slavery that produced a form of territory for the *palenque*. Noxolo and Featherstone (2014) explain that the geographies of slavery of the British Caribbean are the result of both the insecurity caused by slavery and the agency and resistance of the slaves against this insecurity. The plantation as a site was seen as the basis of the production of violence (Noxolo and Featherstone, 2014). For Cummings (2018), marronage was a response to this insecurity. Noxolo and Featherstone (2014) and Cummings (2018) risk homogenising the analysis of the geographies of slavery by focusing only on the plantation in the British Caribbean. Marronage - as a slavery resistance strategy - happened in colonial times in different places in America (Price, 1973; Navarrete, 2003a; Bledsoe, 2017), including the Montes de María. For the Maroons of the Montes de María, the foundation of the violence and insecurity of slavery could be found in different white spaces, such as cities, mines and large farms, not just plantations as found in British colonies. Thus, we need to expand our conception in Anglophone security studies about slavery in the British Caribbean about what spaces of marronage might be. Furthermore, the *palenques* were the answer found by the runaway slaves and their descendants to counter the violence exercised against them. Their *palenques* were where a state closest to freedom was found more than in the state of flight per se -as suggested by Roberts (2017). For the Maroons of the Montes de María, their idea of freedom was not simply to escape captivity but to develop societies based on specific territories as shown in this chapter and in the next one. However, *palenques* did not completely avoid a state of precarity, which the Maroons tried to address by the signing of the 1714 peace agreement.

Finally, while in many ways this chapter has been a (relatively) straightforward historical account that contributes to the various bodies of scholarship on historical geographies of marronage cited here, it also speaks to scholarship on present-day territories of resistance. Benefits shared between the colonial regime and the Maroons show that, in some circumstances, the aims of the counter-hegemonic territories, which have specific histories and evolve over time (Mançano Fernandes, 2005, 2009, 2010; Bryan, 2012; Zibechi, 2012; Haesbaert, 2013; Lopes de Souza, 2015; Meek, 2015; Courtheyn, 2018; Halvorsen, 2018) can be strategically aligned with the powerholders' aims without losing sight of their own interests. This raises the question of whether during these periods they could be still interpreted as counter-hegemonic. I argue that the complexity of the strategies of survival developed by *Palenque de San Miguel* during the colonial period demonstrates that this territory was dissident by nature, even also undermining among their peers in the way they related to the

powerholders. In the transition from *palenque* to *poblacion*, the acceptance of isolation was something also sought by the community to survive. Surviving in a context of gross racial violence was a counter-hegemonic act, and the fact that the community was included in the regime did not strip away its character of being disruptive for the colonial landscape. The *palenque* served as shelter, a notion used by Haesbaert (2013) to describe the function of the territories for subalterns as platforms for resources and possibilities for social change. The meaning of geographies of marronage as part of the title of this research tries to capture then the source and the remedy for the insecurity and violence of slavery, which was a type of territory or shelter, produced by the *Cimarrones* of the Montes de María. The next chapter explores how this history of marronage, dispossession and resistance, and the colonial *palenque* itself, is mobilised in the current practices of reterritorialisation developed by the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María to counter deterritorialisation by the state and other agents, while producing new geographies of marronage, or what I will call entangled territories of resistance.



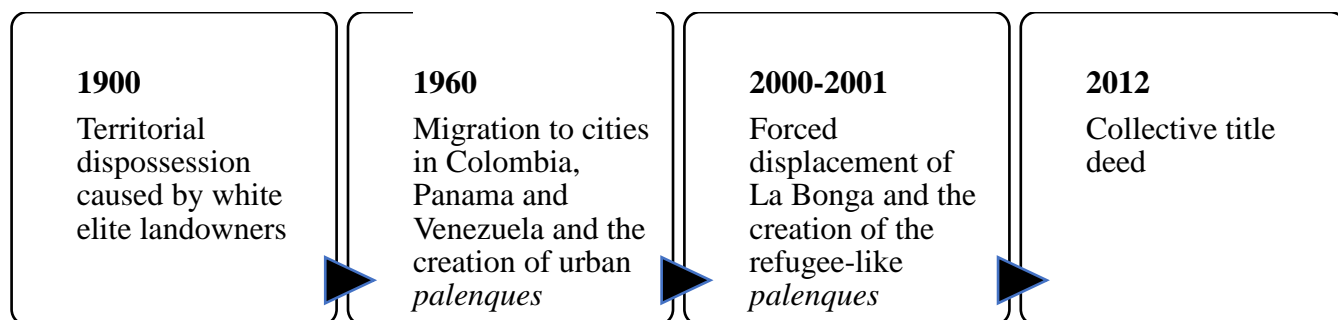


Figure 14: Timeline of the Entangled *Palenques*

## CHAPTER 5: Entangled *Palenques*

### 1. Introduction

This chapter analyses the logic of marronage in the current geographies of San Basilio de Palenque. This logic includes tangible and intangible practices to gain space, and therefore, freedom and belonging after uprootedness as in colonial times. The study of these practices highlights that San Basilio de Palenque is not a single territory as analysed by other approaches, such as anthropology and history (Cross and de Friedemann, 1979; Navarrete Peláez, 2008). Instead, this chapter proposes to understand this community by delving into the different territories (or *palenques*) that coexist within the idea of San Basilio de Palenque. These territories are entangled, characterising the complexity of the geographies of the marronage of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean.

Halvorsen (2018:2) refers to the coexistence between hegemonic (state-based) territories and other “bottom-up grassroots” territories in the same space as ‘overlapping and entangled territories’ immersed in a hierarchal and sometimes violent relationship. In this research, the term ‘entangled territories of resistance’ is used to describe the production of ensemble spaces that configures the geographies of marronage of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean.

These entangled territories of resistance can be considered a new example of the counter-hegemonic territories in Latin American scholarship. In the Latin American literature, counter-hegemonic territories (mainly *campesino* and indigenous) (Mançano Fernandes, 2005, 2009, 2010; Bryan, 2012; Haesbaert, 2013; Meek, 2015; Courtheyn, 2018) trouble state-based territory. These territories have also been called “territories in ‘resistance’” (Zibechi 2012:5) and “territories of divergence and confusion” (Lopes de Souza 2009:57; Lopes de Souza 2015). These counter-hegemonic territories overlap and entangle with state-based territory, competing for the establishment of political projects on the same space (Mançano Fernandes 2010; Bryan 2012; Halvorsen 2018).

The Afro-descendant counter-hegemonic territories in Latin America remain under-explored from this perspective with some notable exceptions, such as the territories of Maroon-descendant communities in Brazil - also known as *quilombolas* - (Porto Gonçalves, 2012; Pérez-wilke, 2014) and the black communities of the Colombian Pacific Ocean (Cogollo *et al.*,

2008; Escobar, 2008; Agnew and Oslender, 2010). San Basilio de Palenque is also an (entangled) counter-hegemonic territory. For its current residents, the colonial *palenque* represents their ancestral territory, the Montes de María, which was built and defended by negotiation and the physical struggles of the Maroons. As analysed in chapter 4, the commencement of marronage as a practice of resistance started with the escape of the African slaves from cities, mines and large farms, and their subsequent settlement in remote areas. The desire to recover lost freedom appeared early during slavery, and the building of *palenques* was seen as a solution to overcome uprootedness. The first colonial records of the existence of *palenques* started in 1580 in the area of Cartagena de Indias (Navarrete Peláez, 2008). The emergence of these rebel communities was almost concomitant with the increasing slave trade in this area in the late part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the decline of the native population (Navarrete, 1995, 2012). This ancestral territory, the Montes de María, was turned into a *poblacion* in 1714. However, since then, the ancestral territory has been facing dynamics of dispossession through to the present day. The *Palenqueros* have developed various tangible and intangible practices to resist deterritorialisation.

The primary practice studied in this chapter is the creation of *Palenquero* communities outside the boundaries of the mother-community or the town of San Basilio de Palenque (the mother-*palenque* or the *Palenque*). From the Montes de María, the *Palenqueros* started to migrate significantly in the 1960s, escaping from different *violences* to cities in Colombia, Panama and Venezuela. In these places, they built migratory communities or urban *palenques*. This chapter analyses the urban *palenques* constructed in Cartagena de Indias. Due to the short distance between San Basilio de Palenque and Cartagena de Indias, the *Palenqueros* have assembled lives in-between the contesting realities of these two places, the borderland of Anzaldúa (1987), in an eternal coming-back never far from where home indeed is: the *Palenque*. When the Montes de María became battlefields in the 2000s as a consequence of the armed conflict, some *Palenqueros* fled from the agricultural reserve of San Basilio de Palenque, the *vereda de La Bonga* (which this research refers to as *La Bonga*), to different areas to find shelter. These communities are called in this chapter ‘refugee-like *palenques*.’

This network of entangled territories of resistance (the mother-community, the urban *palenques* and the refugee-like *palenques*) brings together the idea of San Basilio de Palenque. By analysing this network of territories, this chapter addresses the lack of geographical analysis of the dynamics of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean.

## 2. The Urban *Palenques*

The term '*palenques urbanos*' [urban *palenques*] appeared during an interview conducted in Cartagena de Indias on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016, with Jesús Natividad Pérez Palomino, *Palenquero* and anthropologist. The expression 'urban *palenques*' encapsulates the result of migration from San Basilio de Palenque to cities in Colombia, Panama and Venezuela. In the case of Cartagena de Indias, my subject of analysis, the result of the migration is districts populated mainly by *Palenqueros* and their descendants, but also by other marginalised members of the Colombian society, such as materially impoverished people from this city and other areas of the country.<sup>20</sup> Just as *palenques* in the colonial times (as explained in chapter 4), the urban *palenques* continue to function as shelters for others who are destitute and dispossessed.

This migration from the mother-*palenque* to Cartagena de Indias entails something more than people experiencing a process of movement and settlement from an Afro-descendant rural community to a predominantly white and racist urban centre: "it was people holding a culture, traditions, practices, a language, everything. They left [the community] as *Palenqueros*, they arrived [to the city] as *Palenqueros*, and they continue living [in the city] as *Palenqueros*."<sup>21</sup> The *Palenquero*'s racial identity and culture became imprinted in some districts of Cartagena de Indias, which are analysed in this chapter.

As described in chapter 2, scholarship regarding the building of migratory communities has been studied in different transnational contexts (O'Reilly 2000; Dorai 2002; Willis & Yeoh 2002; Ehrkamp 2005; Ehrkamp 2006; Ehrkamp 2013; Rivera-Salgado 2014). The concept of "places of belonging" developed by Ehrkamp (2005:345) sheds light on the construction of both urban *palenques* and the refugee-like *palenques* which are analysed in this chapter. "Places of belonging" (Ehrkamp 2005:345) are spaces produced by migrants and enabled by transnational ties between the host society and the motherland. For instance, Turkish migrants produce belonging through the creation of districts in a city in Germany, through the consumption of Turkish products and religious practices that they have maintained over time in connection with their motherland. This production of places permits them to negotiate their settlement in the receiving society on their own conditions in a context of racism against them.

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<sup>20</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

These “places of belonging” (Ehrkamp 2005:345) become visible markers of the migrant presence in the host city, which is not willing to be assimilated (Ehrkamp, 2006). From the point of view of assimilation, these spaces produced by migrants are in opposition to social peace, and therefore, they are undesirable and regarded as ghettos (Ehrkamp, 2006). In Cartagena de Indias, there were some evictions of black districts driven by market or private interests that are highlighted in this chapter. As described in chapter 4, as in colonial times, the urban *palenques* may continue to be seen by the powerholders as a way to isolate blackness in the city. Following Ehrkamp’s analysis, the tension between assimilation and the construction of a migrant identity with transnational ties has transformed the cities into *contested* spaces (Ehrkamp, 2013). In fact, Cartagena de Indias is a contested city, caught in-between (Anzaldúa, 1987) white and non-white spaces as explained further in section 2.a.

The concept of “satellite communities” developed by Rivera-Salgado (2014:39) also enlightens the analysis of both the urban *palenques* and the ‘refugee-like *palenques*.’ Rivera Salgado describes the construction of settlements of Mixtec indigenous migrants, who have been agricultural workers in California since the 1970s. These “satellite communities” challenge the current borders of the Mexican State by enlarging them while strengthening their indigenous identity against xenophobia and a racial bipolar discourse. This indigenous identity is also in the borderland between who they are in California and who they were in their indigenous communities in the South of Mexico (Rivera-Salgado 2014:29). The bipolar discourse in the US only engages with white and black identities making others invisible, for instance, as Anzaldúa (1987) states, identities living in-between two (or more) worlds. Even though the *Palenquero* migration analysed in this dissertation is internal, the expansion of the borders of the mother-community through the creation of these migratory communities elsewhere is also seen in the case of San Basilio de Palenque gaining space in the white city. This reterritorialisation strategy gave birth to particular identities held by those *Palenqueros* who were born in the urban *palenques* and the ‘refugee-like *palenques*’, which are analysed in section 2.b.

In the Latin American literature on counter-hegemonic territories, some authors have analysed in depth the existence of territories of *divergence* (Lopes de Souza 2015; 2009) or *resistance* (Zibechi, 2012) in rural spaces, urban spaces, and in between them (Mañano Fernandes 2005; Cogollo et al. 2008; Escobar 2008; Mañano Fernandes 2009; Agnew & Oslender 2010; Mañano Fernandes 2010; Bryan 2012; Porto Gonçalves 2012; Pérez-wilke 2014). Lopes de Souza (2015; 2009:60) argues that a *bairro* [district] configures a territory in two situations,

firstly, when the state recognises the *bairros* for administrative or planning purposes, and secondly when the social movements present in the districts vigorously exercise “an insurgent counter-power.” Lopes de Souza (2015; 2009) mentions two examples of ‘insurgent territories’ as spaces for the establishment of counter-hegemonic economic, social and political relationships. Accordingly, he points out roads taken in protest by *piqueteros* and the *favelas* [slums] in urban centres in Brazil.<sup>22</sup>

Zibechi (2012:38,96) also analyses different examples of what he calls “*territorios en resistencia*” [territories in resistance] in rural areas, in the margins of the cities in Latin America, and in between both (“*rurubanos*” territories). These territories are constructed by the excluded. Zibechi calls the excluded “societies in movement,” who are beyond the control of the powerholders. The “*territorios en resistencia*” are inspired by territorialisation practices for emancipation developed by indigenous people in the continent.

Zibechi (2012) does not mention the Afro-descendant struggles for space and freedom as sources of inspiration of the current counter-hegemonic territories in Latin America. Furthermore, his analysis does not include Afro-descendant territories as examples of counter-hegemonic territories in contemporary times. Examples of Zibechi’s territories that struggle against the powerful encompass different excluded groups: the *Zapatista* Army of National Liberation (ENLZ), which is an indigenous people’s movement in Chiapas, Mexico; the *asambleas populares* [popular assemblies] and *fbricas recuperadas* [recovered factories] by unemployed workers after the economic crisis in Argentina in 2001; the movement of landless workers in Brazil (MST); the *Aymaras*, an indigenous and *campesino* people’s movement in Bolivia; and collective and family-run orchards of unemployed workers in Uruguay after the economic crisis in 2002, among others.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the differences between these (rural-urban-*campesino*-indigenous) “societies in movement,” Zibechi (2012:38) highlights that the main commonality among them regarding territorial practices is the production of alternative spaces. These spaces are based on non-

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<sup>22</sup> The *piqueteros* were groups of unemployed workers in Argentina, who became organised after the economic crisis in 2001, until the government co-opted them in 2004 while creating new social organisations aligned with its politics (Svampa 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Other scholarship about these social movements: Bellenda et al. 2018; Flores 2017; Harvey 2016; Hoddy & Ensor 2018; Mançano Fernandes 2008; Ozarow & Croucher 2014; Stahler-sholk 2010; Svampa et al. 2010; Svampa 2008.

hegemonic social relationships, that Zibechi (2012:106) terms as “non-capitalist islands” or material and symbolic disruptions/breaches in the domination system.

In relation to the domination of territories by war, Jiménez-Martín (2016:63) explains how the armed conflict has produced geographies of war in Colombia that “denies, persecutes, and even criminalise certain community ways of organising the territory,” such as black communities, indigenous *resguardos* and *zonas de reservas campesinas* [*campesino* reserve zones]. These collective ways to organise the territories are considered geographies of resistance that struggle mostly against capitalist interests and extractive industries. These geographies are a strategy to collectively survive as people while promoting the construction of different worlds possible and opposed to capitalism and accumulation. The dispute over the *territorios vivos* [living territories] in Colombia is a dispute over the political organisation of the territories (Jiménez-Martín, 2016).

When these geographies of resistance (or counter-hegemonic) are eroded by different types of violence causing deterritorialisation, migration to new societies takes place. Scholars try to understand these new migrant places in terms of “places of belonging” (Ehrkamp 2005:345) and “satellite communities” (Rivera-Salgado 2014:39). These concepts, along with that of counter-hegemonic territories contribute to explaining the nature of the urban *palenques* and the refugee-like *palenques*, and the entangled territories of San Basilio de Palenque as a whole. In this sense, the idea of spaces constructed by migrants to ease their settlement in receiving societies while fighting racial discrimination, and the construction of alternative spaces of political mobilisation driven by territorial practices may be found in the entangled *palenques*. The reason is that the dispossession suffered by the *Palenqueros* overlaps with various *violences* (Galtung, 2016) that include, for instance, material poverty, racism, and group segmentation. The community response to these *violences* includes various strategies of resistance, from the use of their mother-tongue in the city to rights mobilisation, as explained in this chapter.

After these considerations, the remainder of the analysis in this section will be focused on the urban *palenques*. These districts, created mainly by *Palenqueros* in Cartagena de Indias, encompass family, racial and social structures that aim to mitigate (ease) the impact of their migration. For the *Palenqueros*, the migration to Cartagena de Indias from the mother-community is akin to crossing an international border. The urban *palenques* have functioned as:

1) a coping mechanism against both uprootedness and racial discrimination. The analysis of this mechanism is an academic contribution to the study of the mechanisms of Maroon resistance explored in the literature review chapter, expanding these strategies to the present time;

2) a territorialisation mechanism within the traditionally white city with a tangible cost for the *Palenqueros*: the cultural appropriation of their traditions by the tourism business that entertains foreigners and locals;

3) a mechanism that reinforces the *Palenquero* identity with an impact on the mother-community and public policies on ethno-education.

The origin of these urban *palenques* can be found in push and pull factors, firstly, poverty in the mother-community and secondly, the possibility of access to jobs and education in Cartagena de Indias.

In section 3, this chapter analyses the refugee-like *palenques* through the consolidation of two communities of San Basilio de Palenque, *La Pista* and *Rafael de La Bonguita*, which were forcibly displaced during the armed conflict in Colombia. However, their racial identity makes the crossing of internal borders analogous to crossing transnationally. The phrase, ‘refugee-like *palenques*’, reinforces this aspect. Brun (2015:21) has explained that internally displaced people face similar experiences to those of refugees, who find themselves *in-between* different places and times while trying to develop a “right to a place.” In the refugee-like *palenques*, the internally forced displaced *Palenqueros* recreate their lost lifestyle, reinforcing their identity to overcome “homelessness” (Smith 1994:272).

Joint analysis of the urban *palenques* and the refugee-like *palenques* show that for the *Palenqueros*, all migration is forced by the use of violence. This assertion is based on Galtung’s (1969;1996) broad and multidimensional definition of violence as explained in chapter 2. As described throughout this chapter, the migration of the *Palenqueros* is caused by direct, structural and cultural violence in the forms, for instance, of killings, poverty, racism and the confrontation between different Afro-descendant groups. While both urban *palenques* and refugee-like *palenques* were founded in response to violence, for the remainder of this section, I will focus on the origins of urban *palenques* and return to the refugee-like *palenques* later.



Alfonso Cassiani Herrera is emphatic when he explains that “a person leaves the *Palenque* only for necessity.<sup>24</sup>” The elders of San Basilio de Palenque remember a process of migration of the *Palenquero* men in search of job opportunities due to the arrival of the sugar cane companies in their lands during the early 1900s. The white-elite owners of these companies took advantage of the poverty that the community was immersed in, convincing them to exchange their lands for food and primary products in order to survive. They were employed as workers in their own lands, and when the business became unprofitable, they were dismissed, forcing them to migrate to the cities while the companies kept the lands as commodities to sell to other white-elite land owners. Galtung (1969; 2016) explains that exploitation is at the heart of structural violence through the capitalisation of inequalities. For the *Palenqueros*, these inequalities were material poverty -a type of direct violence (Galtung 1969; 2016)- and ‘second-class’ citizenship due to their race - another example of Galtung’s direct violence.

The land dispossession and migration in the early 1900s is described by Victor Cimarra, who is a *Palenquero* and sees himself as “a professional of the oral tradition”, a *cuentero* [storyteller], one of the keepers of the history of San Basilio de Palenque. Victor Cimarra explains,

“... when the fever for the land came, many men and women received provisions of rice, butter, oil, a little money and clothes, with the aim that they abandon their lands, as happens today in the big cities.”<sup>25</sup>

In more recent times, Alfonso Cassiani Herrera provides as an example the migration from San Basilio de Palenque during the so-called *veranillo* [the little summer], which was a severe drought in the 1960s that forced men to abandon their mother-community and migrate to Cartagena de Indias and Maracaibo to find jobs. Their arrival in Venezuela coincides with the oil boom in that country.<sup>26</sup> Men from San Basilio de Palenque who arrived in Cartagena de Indias only had access to those jobs which nobody there wanted to do. In this sense, Quijano (2000) explains that, since colonial times through to modern capitalism, labour has been systematically distributed in a racist way. For Quijano (2000), the African slaves were the most exploited group (economic production was placed on their shoulders) and colonised race in colonial times because indigenous people were not considered part of the regime. In current

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<sup>24</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Victor Cimarra was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>26</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

times, Quijano's picture has some resonance with the labour conditions of the *Palenqueros* during their arrival in Cartagena de Indias.

The *Palenqueros* arrived at Cartagena with the disposition to work in jobs that the *Cartageneros* [men from Cartagena de Indias] did not find interesting, such as street vending, garbage collection, sewerage. These jobs were not considered *hidalgo* [noble] enough for them.<sup>27</sup>

*Palenquero* women who migrated to Cartagena de Indias also faced a similar process of labour precarisation to that of men. *Palenquero* women started working as housemaids in white urban areas. Migrant women in domestic work is a phenomenon well-documented around the world, mainly in a transnational context (Lan, 2003; Bélanger and Tran Giang, 2013; Gavanoas, 2013; Courtis and Pacecca, 2014; Rosas, Jaramillo Fonnegra and Blas Vergara, 2018). Sometimes, domestic work has been experienced as a new form of domination (including restriction of freedom of movement), for example, by indigenous *campesino* women from the Andean countryside working for middle and upper-class families in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. These women implement strategies through the development of specific skills and knowledge that allow them to negotiate the improvement of their labour conditions and salary or move to other jobs, such as cooks and caretakers, which are considered by them as more 'professional' (Blanchard, 2014).

*Palenquero* women shortly made the decision to move from housekeeping to work as street vendors selling fruits, vegetables and traditional sweets from San Basilio de Palenque.<sup>28</sup> The reason for this change was that housekeeping was perceived as a new form of slavery, and the street, although not free of harassment, seemed to promise a sort of agency and freedom of movement, as explained by Victor Cimarra.

Why did the *Palenqueras* [women from San Basilio de Palenque] start to sell fruits or do informal work? Because all the time, working in a house as housemaids, in housekeeping, you are always being told how to do things. Did you do it well or badly? The *Palenqueras* got tired and ended up as street sellers.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Dorina Hernández Palomino was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Inirida Salgado Pérez was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Teresa Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Victor Cimarra was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Victor Cimarra was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

These decisions taken by men and women from San Basilio de Palenque that brought them to Cartagena de Indias are perceived as ‘sacrifices’ by their descendants, which were made and are still made to allow them access to education.

We were eight siblings, and we all studied because the *Palenquero* that left the *Palenque*, one of their objectives was that their children got an education. Therefore, in the case of my family, my mum and dad worked for us to get an education in Cartagena.<sup>30</sup>

These new generations that went to school and university taught their parents and other elders how to read and write in return, but more than that, they raised in them an awareness of their own racial identity as a mechanism of resistance against discrimination, as described further in section 2.c.

In the following paragraphs, I will introduce the next section that delves into the *Palenqueros* search for allies upon their first arrival to Cartagena de Indias. This introduction shows how the oral tradition of the colonial past of marronage continues to influence current strategies of resistance. A similar phenomenon may be observed among certain indigenous and *mestizo* communities in Mexico, where oral tradition is used to explain past community conflicts while resignifying them with the aim of strengthening community identity and ownership over territories (Figueroa Serrano, 2015).

In addition to this, I attempt to demonstrate that oral tradition is an intangible territory that directly resists versions of the community history built from academia. In some cases, this intangible territory also resists against versions built by academics from San Basilio de Palenque. This is the case of the dispute described in chapter 4 around the work of Cassiani Herrera (2014) and his denial regarding Benkos Biohó ever having existed or being the founding father of San Basilio de Palenque as the oral tradition still points out in the community.

The figure of Benkos Biohó is an intangible territory of slave resistance for San Basilio de Palenque. One of the schools in the town was named in his honour, and a bronze sculpture of Benkos Biohó unchained by the community is at the centre of the mother-community (as figure 15 shows), and in many murals around the town. I said ‘unchained by the community’ because

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<sup>30</sup> Inirida Salgado Pérez was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

in the original sculpture donated to the community in 1997 Benkos Biohó still had his chains. He was still a slave, not a Maroon leader.<sup>31</sup>



Figure 15. Sculpture of Benkos Biohó in San Basilio de Palenque

According to my positionality of an activist scholar, bringing out the oral tradition that resists against the official history through different cultural expressions is part of the implementation of participatory research methods (Oslender, 2013). For Fals Borda (2011), academic knowledge should be horizontally put in dialogue with popular knowledge through the oral tradition. In this sense, the use of oral tradition has been understood as a way to ‘democratise’

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<sup>31</sup> The original sculpture was made by Marcelo Villegas’s foundry inspired by the work of Luis Guillermo Vallejo, Oscar Salazar G., Pamela Salazar O., Valentina Rendón and Consuelo Muñoz, who were academics of the Genetic Institute of the Medical School of the Javeriana University in Colombia. It was donated on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1997, as a result of the IX Latin American Congress of the Association of Afro-Asian Studies, in Cartagena de Indias, with the theme of America on the routes of Asia and Africa, The Route of the Diaspora, organised by the UNESCO’s initiative ‘The slave route project (Vallejo V. *et al.*, 1997).’

history by incorporating the accounts of the members of the communities, which are mostly absent in the archive (Haynes 2010; Jessee 2011; Leavy 2011).

Victor Cimarra collects oral tradition from the elders that have been passed down through the generations and that contest the version of his community presented by historians. He becomes a practitioner of traditional knowledge -which could be understood as an example of the Maroon intangible territories- when he uses the oral tradition to explain the history of his people. Mançano Fernandes (2005; 2010) states that knowledge is a mental territory that constructs material territories with different purposes. As Victor Cimarra explains,

I've found some books, San Basilio de Palenque, I don't know what, written by Cristina Navarrete, in the first paragraph, she said: The *Palenque*, in order to find the *Palenque*, you obviously have to pass through Turbaco and Sincerin, and Arjona. I can't imagine, and it is not possible for me to believe (...) that the *Cimarrones* [Maroons] travelled through these communities. No scientist in the world, no *Palenquero*, could convince me about that [Navarrete's claim]; only the *Palenqueros* who started the marronage if they came back from death.<sup>32</sup>

There is then a different understanding between how the oral tradition and academia explain the way the Maroons reached the Montes de María to build the *palenques*. Maria Cristina Navarrete Peláez's claim is that the escape of the Maroons was through the continent. Instead, for Victor Cimarra, they used the seashore to run away to reach Turbaco and continue to the area chosen to settle their *palenques*. He explains this hypothesis by saying that the African slaves, who were used as builders of the walls and castles of Cartagena de Indias, likely brought the stones from Turbaco by boat. Turbaco was an area mainly populated in the northern part by indigenous people, who potentially could have become their allies during the escape. Therefore, the Maroons may have learned of this route and used it to escape from their kidnappers.

When the marronage started, here in this area of the country [Cartagena de Indias], walls and castles were being built. For that, they used stones that can be found in Turbaco. Indigenous people lived in the upper part of Turbaco, and it is possible that they [the Maroons] went there because this was an area of confrontation [between the Spaniards and the indigenous people]. For me, it was easier to believe that they [the Maroons] followed the seashore by boat (...) the indigenous people feared the water, but they [the Maroons] had all the *fury* [experience] after their journey [from Africa].<sup>33</sup>

The oral tradition explained by Victor Cimarra of looking for temporary refuge with allies in the 17<sup>th</sup> century may have served as a strategic example for later migration in Cartagena de

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<sup>32</sup> Victor was Cimarra was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Victor was Cimarra was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

Indias.’ The *Palenqueros* arrived firstly in Afro-descendant districts of the traditionally white city. At first glance, they thought that these black communities could be their hosts and allies in the city, but at that time, it did not result as planned. There was another frontier to cross, blackness within blackness.

## **2.a. From Allies to Rivals in the White City**

As explained in chapter 2, blackness is not homogenous in Colombia, and different black communities have distinct geographies, histories and identities. This section exposes the tensions between different Afro-descendant groups present in Cartagena de Indias. Under Galtung's (1969; 1996; 2016) concept of violence, this is an example of structural violence in the form of the confrontation of subalterns instigated by the powerholders to paralyse their mobilisation and a unified resistance in the white city.

The encountering of different migrant identities in receiving cities has as a consequence disagreement and rivalry but also alliances to cope with discrimination (Erasmus 2001; Jones 2012; Lebaron 2012; Spencer et al. 2012; Pratsinakis et al. 2017; Wessendorf & Phillimore 2018). This section delves into the result of the progressive arrival of the *Palenqueros* in Cartagena de Indias in the 1960s in the so-called *barrios de negros* [black districts]. For example, Nelson Mandela, *Chambacú*, *El Socorro* and *Lo Amador*, but also specific sectors in these black districts that slowly became only populated by the *Palenqueros*, as in *El Tambo* in the *barrio de negros*, *Lo Amador*.<sup>34</sup> As mentioned in chapter 2, Serje (2005:302; 2007) calls the black and indigenous Colombia, the “other Colombia.” As Jesus Natividad Pérez Palomino explained, these districts were the ‘other Cartagena’, poor and black, where “their popular (culture) was synonymous with being marginal.”<sup>35</sup>

In contrast, there was the white city: “the ‘tourist Cartagena’, elitist, such as *Boca Grande*, the historic neighbourhood and *Manga*. A contested city where it has never been possible to bridge the gap between these two Cartagenas.”<sup>36</sup> However, a place in the black districts was only temporary for the *Palenqueros* due to the discrimination suffered at the hands of the *negros Cartageneros* [Afro-descendants from Cartagena de Indias who were mainly descendants of

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<sup>34</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>35</sup> Jesús Natividad Perez Palomino was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Jesús Natividad Perez Palomino was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

freed slaves]. This situation soon caused the *Palenqueros* to think of migrating and consolidating their own areas.

The discrimination (that we suffered) was so bad in the areas that we lived, which were poor, poor, poor (areas) of Cartagena, and which were also black communities.<sup>37</sup>

Alfonso Cassiani Herrera highlights that for the black people the arrival of the *Palenqueros* in the white city was a “relief,” something convenient because from then on, the *Palenqueros* became “the *negros* of Cartagena.”<sup>38</sup>

We [the *Palenqueros*] speak the language [Spanish] badly, we were stigmatised as ugly, that we did not know how to behave, and our mothers were street vendors. For the *Cartageneros* [black people from Cartagena], this is what we were, as well as for the *Barranquilleros* [black people from Barranquilla].<sup>39</sup>

This discrimination was explained based on a perceived difference between both Afro-descendant groups, the *Palenqueros* and the black people from Cartagena de Indias. As analysed in other scenarios, when for newcomers it is not possible to identify themselves with other migrants based, for instance, on religious or cultural similarities, newcomers experienced alienation and clustered together as a way to feel at ease in the host place (Pemberton and Phillimore, 2018). For the *Palenqueros*, the glorified past of their community of war and resistance against the colonial regime, which is publicly acknowledged in Cartagena de Indias, for instance in the tourism industry, exacerbated that perceived difference with the rest of the Afro-descendants groups living in the city. This perceived (or instigated) difference provokes ‘envy’ and rejection in those Afro-descendant groups in the city, who have been historically characterised as passive.

However, as explained by Cassiani (2006), the attitude of the black people who lived in Cartagena de Indias during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was far from being docile. They were engaged politically and economically in the city, for example, they fought for the independence of Colombia as a way to gain their freedom. Nevertheless, the Afro-descendant presence in the official history of Cartagena de Indias was deliberately occluded by the powerholders to portray their city as predominantly and traditionally white. Current urban development projects in the city render the presence of the Afro-descendants invisible in particular areas. For

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<sup>37</sup> Teresa Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

instance, some projects aim to remove the residents of *Getsemani*, which is a traditional *barrio de negros* in Cartagena de Indias, due to market interests (Valle, 2018).

Being Afro in Cartagena is very different from an Afro-person from here (San Basilio de Palenque), the *Palenqueros*. There was this kind of discrimination. We were different in customs, accent. Most of the people discriminated against us because of our accent (...) We were discriminated against for many reasons, but more so when they hear us speak, because of our physical appearance.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, discrimination was also rooted in the idea of colourism or a hierarchy of groups based on their skin colour and their proximity to whiteness, as another example of the structural violence explained by Galtung (2016;1969).

You know that in racist politics, the *Negro* who feels that his/her skin was lighter felt superior even when he/she was black, and the one who has the chance to have their hair straighter, softer, also, that *Negro* feels superior.<sup>41</sup>

The *Palenqueros* who lived in the black districts in Cartagena de Indias constructed their districts as areas of collective resistance against discrimination. These districts are *Nariño* and *San Francisco* that later became integrated into *San Fernando*, and other small groups of *Palenqueros* established themselves in places like *20 de Julio*, *La Candelaria* and *La Esperanza*. For Jesús Natividad Pérez Palomino, *San Fernando* is representative of the idea of an urban *palenque*: “From the year 2000 onwards, San Fernando became that *Palenque*, the urban *palenque* in Cartagena. There, you find the greatest number of *Palenqueros* in Cartagena.”<sup>42</sup>

However, the *Nariño* district represents a turning point in the development of *Palenquero* areas within Cartagena de Indias because it became a place for creating awareness of their own identity and mobilisation towards ethno-education, which is analysed further in this chapter.

First, although there were *Cartageneros* [people from Cartagena de Indias] and other poor families, the district [Nariño] ended up as a district of *Palenqueros*. Second, in these districts, the intention took root, first, of keeping alive the *Palenquero* language, but even more importantly, playing the drums, and the dance groups. The strength of *Palenquero* identity was strong in these districts and stronger still in Nariño. For instance, from there came the group of youngsters that created the ethno-education in Colombia. This was a way to leave the comfort zone of the daily resistance to formulate strategies that strengthen our identity.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Jarold Salas was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Teresa Cassiani was Herrera interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Jesús Natividad Perez Palomino was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.



The creation of *Nariño* coincides with two factors. First, allies were difficult to identify in this urban context because the other Afro-descendant communities in Cartagena de Indias acted in a hostile way; and secondly, the evictions of people from some black districts in the 1970s, for example, *Chambacú*, conducted by actors previously thought of as allies, such as the members of the Catholic Church. For example, the Jesuits caused displacement when they bought land to build their educative centres in the city.

Therefore, the occupation of lands by the *Palenqueros* followed these evictions, as a strategy inspired perhaps by the tactics employed by the Maroons in the colonial past. This occupation led to the creation of the *Nariño* neighbourhood.

The Nariño district is the lower part of *La Popa* hill. When the *Palenqueros* came [from San Basilio de Palenque], they arrived there, because of the idea of the collective: where there is one [a *Palenquero*], there is another, and another after another. A neighbourhood of gradual occupation.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the racism exercised by white elites and colourism by other Afro-descendants, the urban *palenques* can be understood as a new example of strategies for gaining territories – reterritorialisation strategies in the words of Mançano Fernandes (2005) and trans-territorialities in the words of Haesbaert (2013) - within a hostile city to cope with life after migration. In conversation with Bernardino Perez, who was my research assistant, in San Basilio de Palenque, he explains that this strategy is tolerated by the white city because violent evictions are undesirable due to the tourism business and the image that Cartagena de Indias portrays to the world, as one of the safest cities in Colombia.

## **2.b. Born in Cartagena, but with a *Palenquero* heart**

Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was brought as a new-born baby to Cartagena de Indias and was raised in the urban *palenques* of the white city. He sees himself as a *Palenquero*:

Researcher: Do you feel *Palenquero*?

Alfonso Cassiani Herrera: I *am* absolutely *Palenquero* (...) I want to be [a *Palenquero*] and have to be one, in order to continue being.<sup>45</sup>

The idea of being able to be free through the exercise of their *Palenquero* identity is the key to the creation of their districts in the urban context. The creation of these districts is intrinsically linked with the logic of marronage or the struggle for freedom through space during colonial

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<sup>44</sup> Teresa Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

times, as explained in chapter 4. Along with achieving belonging and safety, pursuing freedom also emerges as a substantial reason to build urban *palenques* or “places of belonging”/“satellite communities” as mentioned in the literature (Ehrkamp 2005:345; Rivera-Salgado 2014:29)

Dorina Hernández Palomino –who currently lives in one of the urban *palenques* in Cartagena de Indias- moved from the mother-community to Bogotá to study and became immersed in the whirlwind of the capital city. She remembered the mother-community, its creek, the door of her house, which was always open to their neighbours to join in their conversations, and her kitchen, as places of *libertad* [freedom]. Unlike in the urban *palenque* in Cartagena de Indias, she experienced alienation and sense of incarceration in Bogotá.

Bogotá contains Afro-descendant settlements as does Cartagena de Indias, and analogous research has been carried out amongst Afro-Colombians in Bogotá. As a result of the armed conflict and economic crisis, settlements of Afro-Colombians have emerged in this city. In these settlements, the Afro-Colombians have developed “resilience practices” to survive in a large and segregated city. Afro-Colombians come mainly from the Pacific and the Caribbean coasts to settle in five localities of the predominantly white and mestiza Bogotá. The creation of grass-roots social organisations is given as an example of the mechanisms developed by the Afro-Colombians to cope with the city (Bula Escobar 2016:131). However, the differences between the different Afro-Colombian districts in Bogotá remain under-explored.

Dorina Hernández Palomino’s account about Bogotá is consistent with the experiences of other women migrants that similarly felt *trapped* in their new locations away from home. These women experience an emotion that is described as an “alienating experience” while fixed in a reality which their identity does not allow them to relate with (París-Pombo & Peláez-Rodríguez 2016:554). The mother-*palenque* and the urban *palenques* gave their members a sense of freedom and the chance to be the way they wanted to be without explanations, following the line of “places of belonging” described by Ehrkamp (2005:345). In this sense, Dorina Hernández Palomino explains,

Bogotá seriously affected me, for me, Bogotá was tough, it was very tough because one comes from that scenario [the *Palenque*], the one I’m describing, which is the opposite of this reality. It really affected me, I was constantly depressed in Bogotá

because it was confinement with opened doors. I was locked in, but on the street or wherever I was, and therefore, I missed so much that sort of freedom.<sup>46</sup>

Inirida Pérez Salgado was also born and raised in *Lo Amador* -a black district in Cartagena de Indias— she visited the *Palenque* for the first time when she was 16 years old. She recognises her diasporic identity growing in-between different spaces (the past and present in Rivera-Salgado (2014) and the borderland of Anzaldúa (1987). Accordingly, Inirida Pérez Salgado states: “I’m the embodiment of the *Palenqueros* born in Cartagena (...) I’m telling you that I’m from the *Palenque*. I’m not telling you that I’m from Cartagena.”

The sense of belonging to the *Palenque* grows in its urban enclaves as well as an emotional attachment to a place that they consider home. Dorina Hernández Palomino explains that this sense of belonging is taught by parents, who raise their children under *Palenquero* values and practices of living together<sup>47</sup>:

We were taught to internalise who we were, that our origin was *Palenquero*, that we had to preserve our *cría* [farmyard animals], always in contact with our uncles and aunts [who lived in the town of San Basilio de Palenque], and the tradition. I lived tradition here, I lived tradition in Cartagena. The tradition of the veiling ceremony, the tradition of the Holy Week, our cooking.<sup>48</sup>

These practices of living together involve the use of *Palenquero* language within the districts because speaking in *Palenquero* made them an object of mockery outside their borders. Mockery was the cause of progressive loss due to the decision of some members of the community to speak only in Spanish to avoid harassment. The same situation has been described in other contexts where migrant minorities have been harassed when they do not speak the dominant language - or they do not do it with the fluidity or accent expected by the elites (Creese, 2010; Howes and Hammett, 2016). Perry (2009) describes how Mixtec indigenous people have chosen to silence their language in front of Spanish or English speakers to avoid discrimination and advance their social status and rights in their migratory communities in Mexico or the US. The disintegration of Mixtec language has been a consequence of their characterisation as backwards in relation to Spanish or English and indirect discrimination of those who speak it. Residents and former residents of the urban *palenques* explained,

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<sup>46</sup> Dorina Hernández Palomino was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>47</sup> Dorina Hernández Palomino was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>48</sup> Inirida Salgado Pérez was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

I speak *Palenquero*, but I don't like to speak it. Because before, when we spoke *Palenquero*, people were laughing at us. This is why I learned little about how to speak *Palenquero*.<sup>49</sup>

Men and women from *Palenque* almost don't speak it [their language] in public, we were forbidden to speak it in public (...) When I was about to speak it, we were warned: Don't speak like this, people will make fun of you (...) The ones who arrived in Cartagena very young, we don't have a fluent *Palenquero* because of that [the mockery] (...). The majority of the *Palenqueros*, who came when they were little from the *Palenque*, lost the capacity to speak the language (...) because all the racism and discrimination, the *Palenquero* decided to live in their own world, and that caused the language to lose its fluency.<sup>50</sup>

The existence of *cria* [farmyard animals] in neighbourhoods was atypical for the white city. *Cria* refers to the act of having pigs, chickens and other small animals in the backyards of houses like in the mother-community, recreating rural settings in an urban context. Dionisia Reyes, who can be seen in Figure 16, showed me the backyard of her house in the urban *palenque*, where she used to have her *cria* until her doctor forbade it because of health reasons.<sup>51</sup>



Figure 16. Dionisia Reyes in San Fernando in Cartagena de Indias

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<sup>49</sup> Ana Joaquina Casseres Obeso was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>50</sup> Teresa Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Dionisia Reyes was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

In the *Palenque*, farmyard animals are not circumscribed to the domestic space, but they circulate freely around the streets of the town. Farm animals reshape urban space elsewhere too, such as South Africa. Even though with another aim that is spiritual instead of dietary, black South Africans slaughter animals in their new locations, modifying urban settlement patterns (Ballard, 2010), similarly to the case of Cartagena de Indias. During apartheid, these practices only existed in rural areas or black enclaves (Ballard, 2010).

In my mother's house [in Cartagena], there was a *cria* of chicken, duck and quail in the backyard (...) my parents bought pigs, and the pig was fed during the entire year, and it was slaughtered in December in San Basilio de Palenque (...) Here in the city, I experienced the traditions of Palenque de San Basilio in my home (...) My dad recreates the *cría* here.<sup>52</sup>

Closing the gap between home and distinct places through the reproduction of cultural practices such as food making has been analysed in other contexts (Collins, 2008; Johnston and Longhurst, 2012). Making food as a re-creation of San Basilio de Palenque, for instance, along with other rituals such as dance and music, exposes the possession and embodiment of knowledge as spaces of resistance (Matthee, 2004).

The music, the dance, that's the culture, our intangible heritage. This came with the *Palenquero* and the *Palenquera*.<sup>53</sup>

[I brought the *Palenque* into Cartagena] when I cook my *bollo*, my *mazamorra* and *guiso de carne* [typical food of the *Palenque*].<sup>54</sup>

Our gastronomy is huge for us. When I go to *Palenque*, there is a vegetable there, it is called *bledo*, very typical of there, and my dad taught us how to eat *bledo* with *arepa de maíz* (...) We used to have breakfast with *yuca sancochada*, with fish. The new generations eat biscuits (...), but not me, during the weekends, I make my breakfast as I was taught at home, in the way I like to enjoy it when I have the time.<sup>55</sup>

Reasserting the *Palenquero* identity in their districts operates as a coping mechanism for racism exercised by both the white and the Afro-descendant people of Cartagena de Indias under a "logic of resistance."<sup>56</sup>

Not only resistance against the state, that discriminates us and makes our parents beg for demanding and hard-work but which pay next to nothing, and because at some point, the black people of Cartagena became the *Palenqueros*, even in the eyes of the black People of Cartagena.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Inirida Salgado Pérez was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>53</sup> Teresa Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>54</sup> Dionisia Reyes was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>55</sup> Inirida Salgado Pérez was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>56</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>57</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

However, fully exercising that identity is only possible in the urban *palenques* because doing so outside their boundaries exposes their members to retaliation and harassment. For instance, this situation causes parents to decide for their children to avoid contact with the mother-community during their childhood while teaching them about the discrimination that they will encounter in the city and at the same creating awareness of their origins.

I visited the *Palenque* when I was 16 years old because our parents tried to put us in a little box in order to avoid suffering due to racism, and therefore if we disconnected ourselves from the *Palenque*, we would not suffer racism, (...) I had a very pedagogic dad in those moments. I understood afterwards why he tried to keep us away for a while from the *Palenque de San Basilio*. When I started to get to know the reality of the *Palenque*, the parties, I did not want to miss them, for instance, the patronal parties, the parties in December, and everything else that took place in the *Palenque de San Basilio*.<sup>58</sup>

The fear of suffering racial discrimination was even expressed through body language when the participants remembered episodes of harassment and discrimination during their interviews. Accordingly, Jarold Salas closed his eyes, and his voice slowed down when he remembers his days at university in Cartagena de Indias. He met there another student from the *Palenque*, and although they were from different *Kuagros*, they had to forget those divisions and became allies in the classroom. Jarold and his friend were racially discriminated against by the white education system which was unable to help them to cover the gaps in their secondary education back in the *Palenque*. Furthermore, they suffered discrimination from their peers who did not want to be close to them in the classrooms or do group work with them because their “hair was bad”, or they spoke with a different accent.

Moreover, they were victims of harassment at the hands of the police and campus security who asked them to identify themselves because a *negro* had no place in the educative institutions of the white city. For the case of British Bangladeshi young Muslim women, Nayak (2017:290) has described how racism, through these similar “emotional and embodied encounters” that *Palenquero* students suffered in Cartagena de Indias, purges the nation while exerting white territoriality. In this sense, Jarold Salas remembers his days in the University of Cartagena de Indias,

My classmate was telling me that my hair was bad because my hair is curly. I’ve started reading about my rights and these things, learning about what my rights were, understanding why my hair was like this, that my skin was different and I had

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<sup>58</sup> Inirida Salgado Pérez was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

different customs, and after that, I did not allow them to mistreat me, I became a subject of rights.<sup>59</sup>

Jarold decided to return to the *Palenque* after his studies because he is aware that in his hometown there are many things to improve. However, the harassment experienced played a significant factor as well in this decision.

[My aim is] to study and come back here [the *Palenque*] because there are many things to do. Here I'm with my peers (...) Here I don't suffer discrimination; no one is gonna shout me, that *negro*!<sup>60</sup>

Accordingly, racial discrimination suffered in the city has blurred in the urban *palenques* divisions that exist in San Basilio de Palenque itself, for instance, between its different districts, *Barrio de Arriba* and *Barrio de Abajo*.<sup>61</sup> Members of different districts back in the *Palenque* – and therefore, of different *Kuagros* – came together in the same groups in the city to support each other in difficult times, for instance, during mourning periods or economic problems. Inirida Salgado Pérez reminds us that the *Kuagros* were military defence units during the colonial times, that evolved into social groups that people join based on affinity, and sometimes there are clashes among the *Kuagros* in the *Palenque*, as also mentioned in chapter 2.

The *Palenque* has the culture of the *Kuagros*, of the *Juntas* and *Kuagros*, therefore, we created a type of *Junta*, of *Kuagro*, only for the purpose of study days because we were discriminated [in the academic institutions].<sup>62</sup>

The *Kuagros* and *Juntas* created in the urban *palenques* were the platform used to design novel practices of resistance. These practices were based on awareness of their own identity, that would have an impact not only on the mother-community but the rest of the ethnic groups Colombia, through the idea of education from Afro-descendants for Afro-descendants to their emancipation (Freire, 1993; Vlieghe, 2016).

## **2.c. Re-envisioning *Palenquero* identity**

In Cartagena de Indias, Teresa Cassiani Herrera explains how the process of migration from San Basilio de Palenque made them develop a stronger *Palenquero* identity, especially in the case of the generation of *Palenqueros* who in the 1970s had access to higher education: "... This was a process of finding us with ourselves (...) finding our roots. This is when all the

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<sup>59</sup> Jarold Salas was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

<sup>60</sup> Jarold Salas was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

<sup>61</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>62</sup> Teresa Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

process started, in the encounter or re-encounter with our roots.”<sup>63</sup> The interviews show that the realisation of their particularity was possible outside the borders of the mother-*palenque*, but in communion with the older generations back home. For the *Palenqueros*, the warning of the academics about the progressive loss of their group identity (Cross and de Friedemann, 1979) started to make sense in a context where racism forced them to deny their *Palenquero* origin to avoid harassment in the city. Migrant communities have found different strategies to maintain and communicate their identity in the receiving places while facing racism, for instance, through music, clothing, and dance (Deyhle, 1998; Farzana, 2011; Wagner *et al.*, 2012). Recovering the ‘essence’ of their identity (linked with their community past) and reconstructing their current identity in their present is a continuous negotiation that symbolically entangles the motherland and the host places (Batz, 2014). In a similar situation, Inirida Salgado Pérez explains,

For our generation, the example of the anthropologist, Nina de Friedemann was very useful, we both came together, the generation who was born there [in San Basilio de Palenque] and the generation who was born here [Cartagena de Indias] because, in a way or another, one of the main inheritance that we received from our parents and grandparents was to preserve our *Palenquero* identity. Because we were studying, we started to look at and read all that was written, and the way we are losing our language, our identity. Furthermore, racial harassment was taking place, and therefore, many *Palenqueros* did not recognise themselves like that, and many *Palenqueros* said that they came from other territories, but they were *Palenqueros*.<sup>64</sup>

This communion that brought together different generations occurred in the urban *palenques* while giving birth to a form of education from *Palenqueros* to *Palenqueros*. This cross-generational form of education developed in the urban *palenques* constitutes another example of an intangible territory (Mançano Fernandes, 2005, 2010) that bridges the urban *palenques* and the mother-*palenque*. This educative experience also had an impact outside the entangled *palenques* by enlightening other Afro-descendants in Colombia, which is the focus of this section, as explained further.

To explain this educative process in the urban *palenques*, Teresa Cassiani Herrera uses the word ‘ethno-education’ that she defines as “education for an ethnic group that means teaching the child to identify the contributions made by black people, and the ethnic diversity that there is in the country and the world.”<sup>65</sup> Examples of decolonisation of education happen all over the

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<sup>63</sup> Teresa Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>64</sup> Inirida Salgado Pérez was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>65</sup> Teresa Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016.



world (Drange, 2011; Mackinlay and Barney, 2014; Elliott-Cooper, 2017) and the rest of Colombia (as described below) trying to reveal and counter the reproduction of inequalities through the educative system (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). This section focuses on the implications for the rest of Colombia of the *Palenquero* experience of decolonised education. For Alfonso Cassiani Herrera, Teresa's brother, this type of education implies leaving behind the comfort zone of the daily life resistance and beginning to design strategies that strengthen their identity.<sup>66</sup> Teresa Cassiani Herrera was the first teacher that taught Afro-American History as a subject in the mother-community, trying to find its connections and parallels with the history of the *Palenque* and the racial harassment that they also suffered.

The appearance of the ethno-education [*etnoeducación*] in Colombia in the mid-1980s has been associated with the mobilisation of the indigenous people movement in the late 1970s, for achieving their own schools, and later with a process of community organisation that took place in black communities in northern Cauca (Castillo Guzmán 2008; Ferrero Botero 2015). For Afro-descendants, ethno-education emerged as a national public policy from Law 70, which is described in detail in the next chapter, but it can be synthetically characterised as the ethnic recognition of the rural black communities living in the riverine areas of the Pacific Ocean, including their cultural, educative and land rights (Castillo Guzmán, 2008). In this sense, this education for Afro-descendants was focused on the Afro-Pacific, but admitted some further developments for the case of other communities including San Basilio de Palenque (Romero-Medina 2010; Lipski 2012; Castillo Guzmán 2016).

Romero-Medina (2010) explains that under this scheme the public policy on ethno-education was envisioned for Afro-descendants living in rural areas and omitted those in urban centres, such as the Afro-descendants in the urban *palenques*. This section highlights precisely the contribution of the members of San Basilio de Palenque in the process of the emergence of ethno-education, a subject that has been under-researched in the Colombian literature about ethno-education. This section reflects on how this education was put into practice initially in the *Palenquero* enclaves in Cartagena de Indias. It focuses on what Meneses Copete (2016) calls the endogenous aspect of the ethno-education, which implies the advancement and emancipation of the Afro-descendants. In its exogenous aspect, ethno-education aims to

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<sup>66</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

educate the non-Afro-descendants about the history of the black communities and their exposure to racism and xenophobia in the Colombian society.

Some people are listed by Dorina Hernández Palomino and Inirida Salgado Pérez as the pioneers of the ethno-education process in Cartagena de Indias, such as Rubén Hernández, Dionisio Miranda, Dorina Hernández Palomino and Teresa Cassiani Herrera, among others.<sup>67</sup> They were youngsters from the *Palenque* who arrived at the white city to study and got together to overcome harassment. Awoken by the racism exercised against them, they built an itinerant collection of books on Black History in the urban *palenque* of *Nariño* that was used to teach their elders how to read and write. Dorina Hernández Palomino states,

We had a community library where there were many books on leadership, popular education, texts on black communities. Therefore, that library circulated among the houses (...) when the library was at my brother's house, in our house, it was in my room, and then, I read all the books, all of them, and because I was studying pedagogy to become a teacher, the main job was on literacy and I started helping with this.<sup>68</sup>

Inirida Salgado Pérez explains that in the 1970s in Colombia the high rate of illiteracy caused the government to implement a policy that compelled students to teach reading and writing in disadvantaged areas of the country. This literacy work was an academic requirement for graduation. The *Palenquero* students initiated this work with their elders in the urban *palenque* of *Nariño* and the black district of *Lo Amador*. As Freire (1993) stated, in the 1970s to learn how to read and write is to learn how to create innovative praxis that can lead to emancipation, particularly when this task is implemented by and for the oppressed. At the same time, Freire was writing about this pedagogy, the pedagogy was being implemented in the urban *palenques* inspired by books on popular education in Latin America in an itinerant library of the urban *palenques*, as my case study shows.<sup>69</sup> In this sense, Inirida Salgado Perez explains,

We started doing literacy work in our most vulnerable areas, where the level of illiteracy was high. Our parents were illiterate. Therefore, in *Nariño* and *Lo Amador*, many of our classmates, who now are part of social organisations, were part of that process. We were only high school students.<sup>70</sup>

*Palenquero* women were their main target in this process of literacy, and many had their first encounter with written *words* in the urban *palenques*. This learning process took place at the

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<sup>67</sup> Dorina Hernández Palomino was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Inirida Salgado Pérez was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>68</sup> Dorina Hernández Palomino was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>69</sup> Dorina Hernández Palomino was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016

<sup>70</sup> Inirida Salgado Pérez was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

end of their working day when women returned home after selling fruits and traditional sweets on the streets of Cartagena de Indias.

Many women came back home very late, therefore, we divided us into small groups, one group visited their houses, and another group stayed in the school [to receive others who came to learn how to write and read]. I'm currently the coordinator of this school.<sup>71</sup>

This teaching process did not stop there, and the *Palenquero* students opened a secondary school at night to continue the education of their elders and others who wanted to join the literacy programme. They progressively started to see education as a tool that could bring equity and justice to their people. This vision caused the creation of their educative centres where Race and Black History were part of their curricula. These educative institutions are mainly run by Afro-descendant leaders. Some of them are part of those young students who gave their first steps in teaching in the urban *palenques*. It is not a coincidence that the main educative institute run by *Palenqueros* is in the core of the Montes de María, where before was the *Palenque de San Miguel Arcángel*, as a bastion of Maroon resistance. As Zibechi (2012) and Meek (2015) asserts, the territories in resistance become spaces of self-education, where teachers are the members of the group and the classroom is the community. According to this, Inirida Salgado Pérez, *Palenquera*, explains,

We have been fighting, a fight in this Colombian context, it is not easy from the perspective of the social equity. Each territory needs to understand [this]: We have been giving a fight because we feel it is needed. The young people need to understand that education is the door to find equity. Based on that understanding, we agreed on that we need education, get ready, and that's why the Manuel Zapata Olivella Institute is now in the Montes de María. We came together with a group of professionals, some of them are not *Palenqueros*, but they are allies (...) this is the way the institute was created, where we give professional formation.<sup>72</sup>

The urban *palenques* were places where other cultural initiatives started such as a dance group in *Nariño* that brought together women after they finished their vending in the streets of the city. They combined their music and traditional dances from the *Palenque* under the name of *Cazimbas Negras* [Black *Cazimbas*] as a way to overcome their reality in Cartagena de Indias. *Cazimbas* are holes made next to the creek in the mother-*palenque* to fetch water (see Figure 6 in chapter 3). This cultural manifestation ended up in the consolidation of the Drums Festival and other Cultural Expressions of the *Palenque* that takes place in the town every year around

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<sup>71</sup> Teresa Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>72</sup> Inirida Salgado Pérez was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

October as a celebration of their culture and identity.<sup>73</sup>

The urban *palenques* have also functioned as spaces where claims for the recognition of rights as citizens of Colombia and political mobilisation took place. In debates around citizenship, urban *palenques* can expand the idea of spaces created by the same actors –usually considered aliens or outsiders in a society– where it is possible to build inclusive citizenship from below (Cornwall, 2002; Miraftab, 2004; Miraftab and Wills, 2005; Isin, 2009). Jesús Natividad Palomino highlights that in the urban *palenques* political mobilisation for black people's rights and “the rights of the communities” took place.<sup>74</sup>

The urban *palenques* became, in the words of Mountz (2013:838), “spatial arrangements of power,” that through their political mobilisation started to disrupt state politics, breaching the system of domination on the non-recognition of rights for the Afro-descendants (Lopes de Souza, 2009; Zibechi, 2012). This mobilisation goes hand in hand with the simultaneous rise of *Palenquero* groups in the 1970s and 1980s such as *Cimarron* [Maroon] –the first Afro-descendant group that developed the political concept of Black consciousness and marronage in Colombia– and the creation of their own social and political groups, such as *Negritudes* [Blackness(es)] in Barranquilla. Afterwards, the majority of these groups got reunited at the national level with the so-called social group, *Proceso de Comunidades Negras* [Process of Black Communities], which has its origin mainly in the social and political organization of the black communities living in the Pacific Ocean area to mobilise against land grabbing and with the support of Law 70 in 1993 (Wade, 1993; Wabgou *et al.*, 2012). Law 70 is analysed in the next chapter.

We created an organisation in *Palenque*, and later we connected with other national movements of Black communities, firstly, through *negritudes*, and new *negritudes*, and later the National Maroon Movement, CIMARRON (...) We inserted ourselves in the dynamic of the Black communities at national level (...) [in the context of the constitutional reform debates] we met our peers from the Pacific, and that's how the PCN [The Process of the Black Communities] appeared, and we left the Maroon Movement, who was against this process, which was vanguardism, because we were recognised in the constitutional reform in a way, we gained a law for the black communities (...) Therefore, we articulated ourselves in the national dynamic of the law of the black communities (...) and from this space, we fought for the Transitory Article 55 of Law 70.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Inirida Salgado Pérez was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>74</sup> Jesús Natividad Perez Palomino was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>75</sup> Dorina Hernández Palomino was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

In this section, the urban *palenques* were defined as districts and *territorios*, which were the result of the migration of *Palenqueros* to Cartagena de Indias mainly in the 1960s. They constitute the outcome of a community strategy of reterritorialisation to gain space in the white city and to produce belonging and freedom for the *Palenqueros* and their descendants, some of whom were born in these enclaves. The *Palenqueros* and their descendants suffered racial discrimination in Cartagena de Indias from the powerholders, but also at the hands of other Afro-descendants living in the city. The urban *palenques* helped the *Palenqueros* to overcome racism while exercising their own identity, for instance, the use of *Palenquero* language inside the urban *palenques*, the traditional cooking, and the act of having *cria* [farmyard animals] in the houses. Furthermore, the urban *palenques* trigger the production of intangible territories that emerge in *Palenquero* cultural products, rights mobilisation and ethno-education. Intangible territories assemble the mother-*palenque* with the urban *palenques* in a continued mobilisation of the past logic of marronage. The next section introduces other migratory *palenques*, which were built after forced displacement, that are identified in this research as ‘refugee-like *palenques*.’

### **3. The Refugee-like *Palenques***

This section analyses the refugee-like *palenques* or *Palenquero* migratory communities, which were built as a result of the internal forced displacement in the 2000s caused by the armed conflict. This analysis contributes to extant discussions around geographies of absence, direct violence and fear (Hewitt 2001; Parr & Fyfe 2012; Parr et al. 2015) by using as starting points the works of Oslender (2008) and Porteous and Smith on the material destruction of places owned by communities (Porteous 1988; Smith 1994; Smith 2000; Porteous & Smith 2001).

For the case of Colombia, Oslender (2008) describes the existence of geographies of terror by analysing the effects of the violence inflicted by regular and irregular armed actors, transnational companies, illicit coca-crops and large-scale agro-business projects operating in the territories of the black communities of the Pacific Ocean. He explains that, despite a protective legislation passed in the 1990s by the Colombian state, an ethnocide is taking place against black and indigenous communities at the hands of these actors. For Oslender (2008), this case study is a sample of the political violence and terror suffered by other rural communities in Colombia.

Looking through the lenses of the geographies of terror, Oslender (2008:81) aims: 1) to deliver

a better understanding of the “complexity of forced displacement”, (2) to study “the impact of terror and its spatial manifestations on local populations”, and (3) “to redirect contemporary geopolitical discourses of the “war on terror” that define terrorism exclusively as directed against the Western neoliberal democratic state while at the same time hiding “other terrorisms,” including those applied by these very same Western neoliberal democracies.”

The terror inflicted in these community geographies produces “landscapes of fear,” for instance, the destruction of homes and the burning of crops. In this way, fear became part of “mental and physical landscapes” affecting the return and daily life of the communities (Oslender 2008:82). Fear also imposes restrictions of movement immersing the communities in a permanent sense of insecurity along with the memories of massacres and tortures, that sometimes, cannot even be put into words. Terror brings displacement and therefore, deterritorialisation. Deterritorialisation can also be a subjective experience, for instance, when communities started avoiding places based on rumours of possible new attacks.

Reterritorialisation follows deterritorialisation (Haesbaert, 2013), for example, when displaced people arrive in the cities looking for refuge trying to starting over (Oslender, 2008). Sometimes in these narratives of geographies of violence, fear and terror, these communities have been characterised as passive objects of material loss without recognising their still present agency and the ability to create strategies for territorial reparation despite the destructive capacity of the forced displacement. The neglect of agency has also been criticised in the case of forced migrants experiencing protracted displacement (Brun, 2015), and indigenous people in Latin America who were politically organised with land claims agendas became victims of US-dominated antiterror campaigns after September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 (Radcliffe, 2007). However, indigenous people continue carrying out peaceful ways of resistance while recreating “geographies of hope” to counter fear and terror. These peaceful ways of resistance include making their voices to be heard in public decision-making spaces, claiming for lands, and activating transnational solidarity networks (Radcliffe 2007:391).

Individual and collective resistance emerged after fear and terror through different manners in the black communities of the Pacific Ocean (Oslender, 2008). For instance, populations remain hidden in places while the attacks occur and build strategic local and international alliances with human rights movements to make visible their persecution. In the case of the refugee-like *palenques*, this section reflects on the tangible and intangible territorial losses and their capacity to build resistance.

The refugee-like *palenques* are the communities of *Rafael de La Bonguita*, which is located within the built-up area of San Basilio de Palenque, and *La Pista*, which is approximately 10 kilometres away from San Basilio de Palenque. Their residents were previously members of *La Bonga*, the green and agricultural reserve of San Basilio de Palenque. Bernardino Pérez, who was my research assistant and teacher in the local school, explained that the creation of *La Bonga* happened as a result of the civil war between liberals and conservatives from 1899 to 1902, also known as the Thousand Day's War. He explained that the intervention of the United States of America made the conservatives win the war. The cost of the war was more than 100,000 people dead, the loss of Panama for Colombia and its subsequent control by the US.

This war caused some *Palenqueros* left behind in the built-up area of San Basilio de Palenque to find a place where the armed violence could not destroy their crops and cattle. They found a green area that they named *La Bonga* after a big *Ceiba pedranta* or *Bonga*<sup>76</sup> that was found on their arrival in the area and became the centre of the community.<sup>77</sup> However, 100 years after *La Bonga*'s foundation, their descendants would take the same path, but this time, back to the built-up area of San Basilio de Palenque that they had left previously. They escaped again from direct violence, which was exercised by the military, paramilitary, guerrilla groups and business companies. They abandoned their cattle and traditional crops of yuca, peanuts, and rice, that had served for years as their own subsistence and as cash-crops for sale to Cartagena de Indias and other towns.

Pedro Herrera Casseres was born in 1925 in *La Bonga*. His father, Julián Herrera Torres, and his uncles, Manuel and Marcos, are considered the founding fathers of this community.

There were three brothers, who founded *La Bonga*, they were here before (...) in the *Palenque*. Because they could not have some cattle here [in the *Palenque*], because it was stolen, they opened paths, from here [the *Palenque*] to there [*La Bonga*], to settle in. When they arrived there [*La Bonga*], they started to clean the *monte* (...) women remained here [in the *Palenque*] until the men did the work in *La Bonga* and afterwards, they were taken there [*La Bonga*].<sup>78</sup>

Néstor Santana Rivera, who was born in 1931 in *La Bonga*, sitting on the streets of *Rafael de La Bonguita*, one of the refugee-like *palenques*, still remembers how his community slowly

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<sup>76</sup> *Ceiba pentandra* (English common name 'Kapok') is an enormous tropical tree of the family *Malvaceae* that is native to both South America and tropical West Africa.

<sup>77</sup> Pedro Herrera Casseres was interviewed in *Rafael de La Bonguita* on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>78</sup> Pedro Herrera Casseres was interviewed in *Rafael de La Bonguita* on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

started to be populated by other *Palenqueros* since 1900. He recalls those days when *Palenqueros* were workers in the sugar cane companies, which were progressively taking away lands from San Basilio de Palenque. The *Palenqueros* suddenly realised that land was their strength and *La Bonga* and the lifestyle that they built there became essential to stop being beggars in their lands: “We needed a piece of land to avoid begging others (...) therefore, we were buying land little by little. My brother and I had 120 hectares in *La Bonga*.”<sup>79</sup> Along with others, they converted *La Bonga* into a rich and productive farming area with a unique identity, the *Bonguera*, until new violence destroyed everything in 2001, taking away their lifestyle.

### **3.a. Displacement and Loss: “That is something that you cannot forget.”<sup>80</sup>**

The members of the community remembered their collective, rural and sustainable lifestyle that they had before the direct violence occurred in *La Bonga* in 2001.<sup>81</sup> José de los Santos Herrera Simarra explains that “the lifestyle in *La Bonga* has always been an agricultural one.”<sup>82</sup> In his nostalgic account, *La Bonga* was seen as a green ‘paradise’ of *bareque*, which means family houses built with clay and palm, with cropping and farming areas. Figure 17 shows a house of *bareque*, that remains in the mother-community, along with brick houses, as they used to be in *La Bonga*.

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<sup>79</sup> Nestor Santana Rivera was interviewed in *Rafael de La Bonguita* on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>80</sup> Humberto Mendoza was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>81</sup> Benancio Herrera was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016. Juan Herrera Casseres was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

<sup>82</sup> José de los Santos Herrera Simarra was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.





Figure 17. *Bareque* House in San Basilio de Palenque

Humberto Mendoza states that 70% of *La Bonga*'s territory was used for cropping, for example, yam, yucca, banana and rice, and the other 30% to farmyard animals, such as pigs and chicken.<sup>83</sup> A woman, who was living in *Rafael de La Bonguita* remembers,

I lived with my husband and kids in *La Bonga*. My husband was a *campesino* (...) and I was a housewife. I had my animals at home, such as chickens, pigs and turkeys. I took care of my home. I was in charge of my home, my pigs. My lord used to go to the *monte*, we had workers and lived very happy. We had everything at home; we did not need to think: Oh, what will we eat today? We did not think that one we would be here [in *Rafael de La Bonguita*] like we are today.<sup>84</sup>

Nostalgia can be a type of suffering that can entangle vivid memories of the places forced to leave behind in the past that leads to a lived experience of homelessness in the present. This emotion can be experienced as a zone in-between the past, present and a possible future return to home that brings uncertainty (Lems 2016:419) In the testimonies of the people who survived the forced displacement of *La Bonga*, nostalgia is also a place, a space of loss. The recollection of those memories in the interviews also encompasses the description of the destruction of that *bareque* 'paradise' and the beginning of their precarious lives in displacement in the refugee-

<sup>83</sup> Humberto Mendoza was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>84</sup> Niris Erazo was interviewed in *Rafael de La Bonguita* on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

like *palenques*. Residents of the refugee-like *palenques* recall,

I remember the charisma of the people, the human warmth. We lived in a state of innocence there in *La Bonga*. We were one family (...) there was a tremendous human warmth that makes that no one forgets what we lived. We can be in other places, but we will never forget that (...) because of the violence sadly we had to flee and that [life] stayed there.<sup>85</sup>

I haven't visited *La Bonga* anymore. For me, it is sad to go back to *La Bonga* and see all we had built during our entire life, and from one moment to another, that was taken away from us.<sup>86</sup>

I remembered the entrance [to *La Bonga*], the one that we used to take, and I felt like crying (...) Every time I was looking at that little entrance, I said: Oh my Lord! We were happy in *La Bonga*, and we had to leave (...) We were super, super, better, as I say, we could farm there [in *La Bonga*].<sup>87</sup>

In psychology, forced displacement categorises a collective catastrophe with the capacity to disrupt (or not) the abilities of the victims to elaborate the facts of what they had suffered (Benyakar, 2006). Whether they were children or adults, many of them have a story to tell about what he or she was doing when *La Bonga's* forced displacement took place. Humberto Mendoza describes the forced displacement as “something that you can never forget” and a turning point in their lives.<sup>88</sup> He remembers that he was going back to *La Bonga* after a week of classes at the *Universidad del Atlántico* [University of Atlantic], in San Juan Nepomuceno. He was going to meet his family when he saw all the people abandoning the community in fear.<sup>89</sup> Evernei Casseres remembers that he was milking cows with his uncle when he received the news that they had to leave the community in less than 48hs, threatened by a paramilitary group: “everyone left carrying nothing, running, crying, there were people that cried because they were leaving behind their lands, where they could crop.”<sup>90</sup>

Furthermore, there was a need in the participants to explain their innocence and non-participation as actors in the armed conflict, and therefore, their lack of responsibility for what had happened to them. In section 3.c, I state some considerations on -what in psychology is called- ‘survivor guilt.’

We don't know why. We did not do anything. We knew nothing about why we were displaced, but it is a painful memory. Sometimes I don't even want to recall but

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<sup>85</sup> Humberto Mendoza was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>86</sup> Humberto Mendoza was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>87</sup> Juanita Cañete Orozco was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

<sup>88</sup> Humberto Mendoza was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>89</sup> Humberto Mendoza was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>90</sup> Evernei Casseres was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

there are some moments when I remember all: When I don't have anything to eat at home. I wish I could have that beautiful backyard, where we had chickens, turkeys and pigs. I used to went to the corral and see my cow and we don't have that anymore (...) We had everything.<sup>91</sup>

*La Bonga's* forced displacement began with episodes of harassment through the incursion of the military forces in their territory as a result of the presence of the FARC-EP (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army) in the area. The FARC-EP also disrupted the lifestyle of *La Bonga* when they approached the community to request provisions, putting them at risk of being considered their allies, and therefore, enemies of the state.<sup>92</sup>

We realised that before we had to leave [*La Bonga*] that the army was one of the mean guys, meaner than anyone, because there, where I lived, they stayed once in the school, they came to visit us, to interrogate us. I was told [by a soldier]: My dad is a *campesino* too, and he had to leave [his land] because the situation is difficult, and you all [the community] will have to leave as well.<sup>93</sup>

The residents of the refugee-like *palenques* also remember the killings that anticipated their forced displacement as a threat and a warning of the way that violence could escalate. The killings took place in a small billiards house that was a meeting point in San Basilio de Palenque. Gunmen shot young people that were gathered there that day, causing several casualties. José de los Santos Herrera Simarra, who was living in *La Pista*, remembered “when we arrived the boys were dead. I arrived after the massacre.”<sup>94</sup> The owners of the billiards house fled to other towns, and it was shut down. Thus we can consider this as an example of community places ripped away by violence or “topocide” as the annihilation of place (Porteous 1988:75; Smith 1994), or a broader landscape of fear in the words of Oslender (2008).

One of the explanations given by the members of the community is that the forced displacement of *La Bonga* was due to its strategic position as the door to the Montes de María. This area was wanted by the armed forces and the armed groups.<sup>95</sup>

Like in every part, the armed groups made paths, they passed through there [*La Bonga*] during the night, they [the military] knew that they [armed groups] visited there [*La Bonga*] time to time, that's why the displacement happened. People did not have anything to do with that. There was a path connecting with San Cayetano, for this side, and to Mampuján and Limon, for the other side. We did not have anything to do with them. However, they harmed us, and because of that we had to

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<sup>91</sup> Niris Erazo was interviewed in *Rafael de La Bonguita* on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>92</sup> José de los Santos Herrera Simarra was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

<sup>93</sup> José de los Santos Herrera Simarra was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

<sup>94</sup> José de los Santos Herrera Simarra was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

<sup>95</sup> Humberto Mendoza was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

flee.<sup>96</sup>

Nevertheless, those lands were bought by companies after the forced displacement of the community to establish their businesses, mainly monocropping and timbering. These business projects could be another reason behind the violence. Zibechi (2012:147) explains how the capital aims to replace the territories in resistance by “homogenous rural territories” that carry along monocropping and pesticides. Humberto Mendoza, a displaced member of *La Bonga*, describes,

Some *cachacos* [white people from Bogotá] arrived there [*La Bonga*] and invaded the territory. They took advantage of that moment buying lands because the people did not want to be there. They capitalised the moment buying large extensions of land (...) but super cheap, they took advantage of the occasion. We don't know who they are, they are companies.<sup>97</sup>

In 2000, *La Bonga* faced its first forced displacement, but this one was temporary and a result of the assassination of members of the communities of Tamarindo, Arroyo Hondo and Mampujan, who were highly involved in social and cultural affairs in the area. The community of *La Bonga* was warned that they were the next.<sup>98</sup> However, on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the second forced displacement suffered by the community had long-term effects and the building of refugee-like *palenques* in the receiving places as a result. On that April 6<sup>th</sup>, a threat from a paramilitary group came in the early morning compelling them to leave the place. Otherwise, they would suffer violence.

I remember that [the day of the forced displacement] as it was today. We left on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2001. I remembered I was washing plates with my little cousins in a creek, and my mum called because I knew how to read and I read the letter loudly. The letter said we had 48hs to leave *La Bonga*. After that, the fear, I did not even wait for them, the fear, I feared. I left with other neighbours, and my uncles, I left without clothes, with nothing, without knowing if they were ahead or behind... the fear... they said they were coming cutting heads (...) We left.<sup>99</sup>

As described in the previous paragraphs, the transformation of *La Bonga* from a ‘green paradise of *bareque*’ to a *space of loss* did not suddenly happen. Instead, it was a sustained process of direct violence (Galtung, 2016) that reconfigured the *Palenquero* territory in a tangible and intangible way as part of the geographies of war in Colombia described by Jiménez-Martín (2016). The next section describes what follows the loss of territory regarding strategies of

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<sup>96</sup> Niris Erazo was interviewed in *Rafael de La Bonguita* on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>97</sup> Humberto Mendoza was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>98</sup> Humberto Mendoza was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Niris Erazo was interviewed in *Rafael de La Bonguita* on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>99</sup> Katherine Herrera was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

survival or resistance.

### 3.b. Articulating Survival

Vital decisions were made while fleeing showing agency in the emergency: San Basilio de Palenque was the principal place chosen to find a provisional shelter. In the school of the town, the families of *La Bonga* slept and deposited their belongings, including those animals that they could collect before leaving their homes. This decision of turning San Basilio de Palenque into a shelter was strategically made; firstly, it was a place close to *La Bonga* that could facilitate an easy return to their home. Secondly, the *Bongueros* followed the advice of a local priest, Rafael Castillo, who explained to them that their permanence in the school would put pressure on the local authorities, who would intervene to try to find a solution to the disruption of classes.

The people from *La Bonga* said that if they found a place in different houses, the government would not pay them immediate attention. Therefore, they took the school as a way of putting pressure on the authorities.<sup>100</sup>

The members of *La Bonga* stayed for over four months in the school, affecting the dynamic of the town, the children and their teachers, who had to find options to continue their education. Education was considered a priority that could not even be disrupted by the war. Education was a shared priority with the urban *palenques*:

I was a teacher (...) when we arrived at the school, the school was occupied. The people of *La Bonga* found a place there (...) We had then to use the former house of culture for teaching. We taught some modules there, we also asked for space in houses to give classes. We did not suspend them (...) All the entire people [from *La Bonga*] was there.<sup>101</sup>

The presence of the displaced community made the people living in San Basilio de Palenque realise that they could be the next victims of forced displacement and steps were taken to avoid this. The town of San Basilio de Palenque made a public declaration, presenting themselves as a territory of peace including a mobilisation to Cartagena de Indias.<sup>102</sup> This declaration could have given the wrong impression that what happened to *La Bonga* was something that they deserved and there is still the necessity in the *Bongueros* to explain their lack of intervention as actors in the armed conflict.

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<sup>100</sup> Humberto Mendoza was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>101</sup> Teresa Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>102</sup> Bernardino Pérez was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

We were super good there in *La Bonga*. No one is guilty because we are on this side. We are not guilty because we were living happy, and they sent that letter [with threats], and because we wanted to continue being alive, we had to leave running. We don't know who is responsible.<sup>103</sup>

The aftermath of the forced displacement divided the community of *La Bonga* into two groups: Some members decided to start building houses in San Basilio de Palenque, creating a new district called *Rafael de La Bonguita* [Raphael of the Little *Bonga*]. This name was chosen in honour of the priest who assisted them after the forced displacement. People also call this settlement St Raphael of *La Bonga*, in this sense, the inclusion of the word Saint reflects the vision of the priest Rafael Castillo, as their helper in times of despair, as in the colonial times. Zibechi (2012) explains that the territories in resistance establish instrumental relationships with religious authorities and political parties but mainly rely on their own organisation abilities. In this sense, Neris Erazo, a displaced woman from *La Bonga*, describes,

We came and built here [*Rafael de La Bonguita*] because in the school we stayed for four months, in the school of San Basilio de Palenque until the Social Pastoral came. This is why this district is also known as *La Bonga* of St Raphael because of the priest Rafael Castillo, who was the one who gave the instruction [to build]. The community came together and bought this place where we are living now, and houses of *bareque* [clay and palm] were built. The government gave us brick houses seven years ago.<sup>104</sup>

Others started buying small pieces of land in a former empty airstrip in San Pablo following the advice of the priest Rafael Castillo. This displaced community received the name of *La Pista* [The Airstrip]: “This place was already familiar to us. We did not occupy the *monte* (...) we bought this land. It was the people from San Pablo and 1 de Julio, who came to occupy here. We, the *Palenqueros*, bought our lands.”<sup>105</sup>

As described in section 2 of this chapter, the mother-*palenque* is reproduced through material and intangible practices in the urban *palenques* in Cartagena de Indias. Despite the settlement in the refugee-like *palenques*, *La Bonga* happens as a strategy for emotionally overcoming uprootedness, for instance, in *La Pista* through the continuation of practices, such as palm knitting shown in Figure 18, and traditions such as the celebration of Easter, Christmas and the procession of St Rose of Lima. Food and dancing are the main preparations for those festivities.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Juanita Cañete Orozco was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

<sup>104</sup> Niris Erazo was interviewed in Rafael de La Bonguita on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>105</sup> José de los Santos Herrera Simarra was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

<sup>106</sup> Evernei Casseres was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.



Figure 18. Benancio Herrera, and his grandson, palm knitting in *La Pista*

This reproduction of practices initiated in *La Bonga* in the refugee-like *palenques* is reminiscent of the idea of territories that migrate with people, under the concept of “diasporic territory” (Doraï 2002:87; Harker 2009), developed for the case of transnational Palestinian migration as a consequence of the conflict with the State of Israel, explained in chapter 2. The residents of *La Pista* explain,

The tradition that we took from there was the meal of Easter, that cannot be missed, and the Saint, the Saint Rose of Lima, we take her on the streets every August 30<sup>th</sup>, we used to do that in *La Bonga* (...) We make the Saint a party every year.<sup>107</sup>

The meal has to be done in the afternoon, everyone has to cook rice in the afternoon, we took this from there [*La Bonga*] if we don’t cook rice in the afternoon, we have a bad day and night (...) My dad says that he dreams of cows and other things if he does not have rice in the afternoon. We brought this custom from there [*La Bonga*].<sup>108</sup>

Uh, yes! People are on, shaking the floor. When we have the patronal festivities, people leave in the afternoon to the next day (...) everyone dance, everyone dance here (...) the *champeta*, the *ballenato*, the *salsa*, the *merengue*, the *champeta* is from us. We listened to this music in *La Bonga*. You have to visit us during these festivities of Palenque to see all these women dancing there.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Katherine Herrera was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

<sup>108</sup> Katherine Herrera was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

<sup>109</sup> Katherine Herrera was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.



Despite the reproduction of these traditions in *La Pista* and *Rafael de La Bonguita*, there is a need to transmit and reinforce in the young generations the history of *La Bonga* and its fall after the forced displacement. The way that this life is described to the young generations suggests that *La Bonga* is becoming a thing of the past and their present is for better or for worse being written in the refugee-like *palenques*. Brun (2015) explains how the hope of the return in protracted displacement shapes the waiting, with the past remaining alive but changing over time. This process, explained by Brun (2015) and found in the interviews conducted in the refugee-like *palenques*, could also be interpreted as a strategy of survival that shows the adaptability of the residents of the refugee-like *palenques* to their new situation. Accordingly, residents of both refugee-like *palenques* explain,

I told them [my grandchildren] the history. I have taken them to know where we used to live. The other day, I took them all, and I showed them where I used to live with my children. I even took pictures there.<sup>110</sup>

Children still play traditional games, we learned them there [in *La Bonga*] and they continue playing with them. For example, the play of *la tapita*, the *peligrina*, the *tejo*, all the games, that we used to play there [*La Bonga*] We taught the little kids to play and they do it. Luis Frutos has a group of children, that work with him in the *Bienestar* [a small community centre in *La Pista*], and he taught them every day the old customs to avoid they lose the customs that we had in *La Bonga*.<sup>111</sup>

Walking the streets of *La Pista* and *Rafael de La Bonguita*, I felt the frustration and the despair that the displacement brings along with extreme poverty. These emotions appear in phrases such as, “being here [in *La Pista*] is the greatest disgrace”<sup>112</sup>, “this [*Rafael de La Bonguita*] is ruin because we can only have very little yuccas”<sup>113</sup> and “*Mami*, you leave here [*La Pista*], and we stay in hunger. Could you leave us some food?”<sup>114</sup> The loss of their agricultural lifestyle came out over and over again. Therefore, questions during the interviews in the refugee-like *palenques* were limited in time and content to avoid revictimization (Coyle and Wright, 1996). An overwhelming feeling took hold of me and I wanted to leave as soon as possible and go back to San Basilio de Palenque, to the centre of the town. In the case of *Rafael de La Bonguita*, it was some distance away.

Although *Rafael de La Bonguita* is part of the built-up area of San Basilio de Palenque, there is a sort of stigma that permeates the place, the stigma that follows displaced people. People

<sup>110</sup> Niris Erazo was interviewed in *Rafael de La Bonguita* on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>111</sup> Katherine Herrera was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

<sup>112</sup> Juan Bautista Cassiani Hernández was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

<sup>113</sup> Nestor Santana Rivera was interviewed in *Rafael de La Bonguita* on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>114</sup> María de los Santos was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.



who are awaiting something that might never happen, the return to the lost land taken away by the violences in Colombia, as a reminder for others that they could be the next facing a similar fate. They are caught in between the past and the present in a no man's land with a limited sense of belongingness, but still implementing modes of survival. This is the concept of liminality in protracted displacement that highlights that there is no limbo but a simultaneous process of marginalisation and transformation that allows forced migrants to re-make home in displacement (Brun, 2015; Brun and Fábos, 2015).

The testimonies collected in the refugee-like *palenques* are immersed in the loss of their lifestyle and insecurity about their future, their integrity and well-being, and therefore, in an awareness of their situation of precarity, which is based on their territorial dispossession.

We [people from *La Bonga*] divided ourselves between San Pablo and *Palenque*. Everything that was left there [in *La Bonga*] was a loss (...) *La Bonga* is dead in life, there are just a few people who come back to work, but none dare to stay.<sup>115</sup>

Since we lost our territory, our lands, we don't have the right to live there [*La Bonga*] We are not living there. Our husbands, some of them go there to work. We don't live well, I don't feel well (...) Very bad, super bad, super bad, that's the way I feel because now I'm a woman who has to be a street vendor, I have six children. My children are studying and I have to leave my home to sell on the streets, like other women here, in different towns to help my children to have a better life.<sup>116</sup>

Territorial dispossession generates a level of alienation in the people living in the refugee-like *palenques* which makes challenging the visualisation of paths for change and/or restoration of the 'paradise' lost, particularly in a context where displacement was exercised by direct violence (massacres and fear of death). Therefore, the central question during my days in *La Pista* and *Rafael de La Bonguita* had the purpose of discovering the reasons behind the impossibility to return to *La Bonga* after the direct violence ceased. In breaking the cycle of displacement, it was slowly becoming possible.

### **3.c. The No-return, the Return and the Idea of a Return**

Juanita Cañete Orozco is 53 years old, and she embodies a life of uprootedness in between the entangled territories of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María. Although she was born in the urban *palenques* in Cartagena de Indias, Juanita sees herself both as *Palenquera* and *Bonguera*. She made her life in *La Bonga* with her husband and nine children until the forced displacement took them to *La Pista* and then the streets of Cartagena de Indias as a vendor.

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<sup>115</sup> Pedro Herrera Casseres was interviewed in *Rafael de La Bonguita* on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2016.

<sup>116</sup> Niris Erazo was interviewed in *Rafael de La Bonguita* on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2016.

Her discourse makes clear the contested visions on the return and non-return to *La Bonga*. Where there is land, there is food, and therefore, there is home. However, after 16 years of forced displacement, *La Pista*, which was thought of as a temporary shelter, is becoming permanent.

This is not ours [*La Pista*] this is not ours because we are not here as we used to be in *La Bonga* (...) the land was ours there. I used to go to the *monte*, and we collected our yucca, name, we used to go fishing, and we had our breakfast right away (...) However, I feel settled in here [*La Pista*], and I have not been to *La Bonga* for the last eight years.<sup>117</sup>

I was interested in finding out why they did not return to *La Bonga* after the ceasefire in Colombia was becoming a reality in the context of the ongoing peace negotiation. The return of the internally displaced people continues at a slow rate. In the literature, the main reasons of this slow rate are associated with risks of violence, adaptation to their new settlements, perception of the return as a new displacement (Shultz *et al.*, 2014), better educative and work opportunities in the cities, the non-existence of their former communities, housing-programs in the city for internally displaced people, and “unpleasant memories of the violence and the displacement” (Sliwa & Wiig 2016:16). This section speaks to their status as witnesses of direct violence as another reason for not going back to their territories, linked with an intangible loss of their places as they knew and their transformation from territories of resistance to spaces of loss.

Two of the reasons described by Shultz *et al.* (2014) that discourage internally displaced people from returning to their mother-communities pertain to the lack of returnees to *La Bonga*:

- 1) most significantly, the fear that violence will occur again -also mentioned by Sliwa & Wiig (2016);
- 2) the perception of certain benefits related to some infrastructure present in *La Pista*, such as electricity, safe water and access to the mobile internet.

The trauma associated with the memories of direct violence linked with places appears as a new reason not addressed by Shultz *et al.* (2014) and Sliwa & Wiig (2016). The decision of no-return is related to the perception of the lack of measures taken by the government that assures the non-presence of active armed groups in the area. A sense that no one can guarantee that

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<sup>117</sup> Juanita Cañete Orozco was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2016.

they will not face a new forced displacement. The fear is tangible in some testimonies, especially in those who were children when the displacement occurred. They hardly call their perpetrators by their names, such as the army, paramilitary or any other armed groups. They prefer to use the term “*los hombres de los montes*” [the men who live on the hills] in order to avoid direct accusations and to highlight that violence is violence independent of its agents.

I would never live alone in *La Bonga*. Sometimes, I go there and work in my *rozita* [piece of land]. I stay there for a while and come back here [*La Pista*] in the afternoon. They could come and cut our throats. What do you think? We had to run from there. It was terribly scary (...) It was tough. Imagine yourself sleeping and someone calls you and you are sleeping and they tell you that they are going to cut your throats. That's heavy, heavy.<sup>118</sup>

I would go back there [*La Bonga*] if it was an agreement under the law. But, going like this, in the way it is now, I would not do it because there is no assurance. The first thing is to look for security (...) Otherwise, I would think that someone was going to come into the night, any afternoon, then, no, no without security. I would go back to *La Bonga*, under the law (...) Before, we did not fear anything, but after that happened [the displacement], people go there with fear. You cannot fully sleep because, with every noise, you think strangers will take over the village.<sup>119</sup>

The violence had also imprinted on their territories sadness and mourning for their friends and comrades who were murdered, becoming a symbolic territorial dispossession, an intangible loss. Although environmental destruction did not occur that prevents the return of the community, their community places were embedded in a sense of loss that makes unbearable the idea of witnessing them again. Their places turn from territories of resistance into spaces of loss due to the exercise of violence without restraint. When they go back to *La Bonga*, they again become witnesses of the past horror, for instance, killings in the area and forced displacement, reinforcing the guilt of being alive, which in victimology and psychology has been called ‘survivor guilt’ (Halberstadt, 2006; Collins, Chapdelaine and Desroches, 2012; Juni, 2016).<sup>120</sup> In this sense, some members of *La Bonga*, who were interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque, described:

After that [the displacement] we went back to *La Bonga*, but in pain. A lot of anguish and annoyance, we did not have a tranquil life there because we remembered, when we arrived in the area [*La Bonga*] we started thinking that paramilitary could come,

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<sup>118</sup> Juan Bautista Cassiani Hernández was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

<sup>119</sup> Katherine Herrera was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

<sup>120</sup> Forced displacement has been widely explored in a body of psychology literature related to trauma (Silove, 2000; Pham, Weinstein and Longman, 2004; Pedersen *et al.*, 2008; Kuwert *et al.*, 2012; Shultz *et al.*, 2014), in particular in relation to protracted displacement. I acknowledge the contribution of this scholarship, however, considering the focus on literature on loss of place developed in this chapter, I will not engage with this particular scholarship.

that we could also see the guerrilla or the army, and they could kill us.<sup>121</sup>

There are many places that I lived that I could never see again, or I did not want to. There are places that I did not want to go back (...) because I can see that there our friends were killed, our friends were killed. We cannot go back there because of a religious feeling, I don't know why there is this feeling, fear of going back there. Sometimes, I go through this path and I don't look in that direction (...) because they buried a person, there, another. You create those references, yes, yes, that happened, we are scared.<sup>122</sup>

In *La Pista*, the *Bongueros* had the first contact with safe and running water, electricity and nowadays, mobile internet. A new generation was born in *La Pista* with these material conditions. Those who return to *La Bonga* see these conditions as obstacles for people getting reaccustomed to the agricultural life in *La Bonga*:

Those people are not scared. It is the environment because they are here [*La Pista*] outside the town, it is not the fear. They are here in need and I don't know what's wrong with the people. The thing is that there [*La Bonga*], there is no electricity. They got used to the electricity, the television. More than fear, there is nothing there, it is quiet. I'm happy there [*La Bonga*] I woke up with the singing of the birds.<sup>123</sup>

Despite of this general lack of return to *La Bonga*, I discovered that some displaced people from *La Pista* have progressively started going back to *La Bonga* in two different ways, firstly, by cropping again on their lands during the day, but coming back in the afternoons to the refugee-like *palenques*, and secondly, those who try to build a new life in the *old* home again. The latter are a minority. I explored the reasons that could make them see the return as a better option than staying in the refugee-like *palenques*.

María de Los Santos, who I portrayed in Figure 19, is one of these exceptions and goes back to *La Bonga*, trying to restore the lifestyle that she used to have there. She returns to *La Pista* only when their daughters and son, who are adults, demand her presence because they have run out of food. María de Los Santos brings them part of her yucca, ñame and corn that she patiently crops in *La Bonga*. She also has her *cría* of pigs, turkeys and chickens.

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<sup>121</sup> Humberto Mendoza was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>122</sup> Ismael Maestre Simanca was interviewed in *Todo Sonrisa* on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>123</sup> María de Los Santos was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.



Figure 19: María de Los Santos in *La Pista*

María de Los Santos remembers that at the time of the displacement she was an entrepreneur and a trader between *La Bonga* and other towns. After that, her life changed forever: She showed me the only money that she had in her pockets, a coin of 100 Colombian pesos, which is less than 1 penny.

I wasn't in *La Bonga* at the very moment of the displacement (...) I was on a truck taking yucca and ñame to Cartagena (...) I used to fill two tanks of fishes (...) that was my job trading between the *monte* and the city (...) If the displacement would not have happened, I would have been a *doña* [a wealthy woman] by now. My business was growing, but anyway, it is lost and it is sad.<sup>124</sup>

María de Los Santos does not experience fear in *La Bonga* but in *La Pista*. She has installed in

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<sup>124</sup> María de Los Santos was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

the refugee-like *palenque* the return to *La Bonga* as a possible option.<sup>125</sup> Other men have started following her while cropping and re-building their houses there.<sup>126</sup> Benancio Herrera says: “We are doing everything that is in our power to go back to *La Bonga* (...) Do fear the human beings, young lady. I don’t experience fear in my *Bonga*.”<sup>127</sup>

As part of a long tradition of women who have been pioneers of restoration processes after mass violence in Latin America (Rodríguez 2012; Barrios Suarez 2013; Zuriñe Rodríguez & Sánchez Mora 2015; Korol 2016; Rapone & Simpson 2018), a territorial restoration has silently started, which is led by a woman and a few other determined *Bongueros* [men from *La Bonga*] with no economic resources and only the power that gives the land under their feet.

They say that they are not going to live anymore in the *monte*, that they are well here, but I’m not well here. I sleep tranquil during the night there [*La Bonga*] During the daytime, I stay alone (...) I do not have any fear; if I had feared, I would not go (...) People ask me here [*La Pista*]: what are you gonna do if you get ill there? (...) Only God knows (...) God will allow me to return to the *Palenque*.<sup>128</sup>

This section explained the refugee-like *palenques* as the result of the forced displacement of *La Bonga* in the 2000s in the context of the armed conflict. *La Bonga* was the agricultural reserve of San Basilio de Palenque since approximately 1900 with a particular identity associated with an agrarian lifestyle. The forced displacement of *La Bonga* caused tangible and intangible territorial losses, but also the emergence of community agency and strategies of survival. The building of refugee-like *palenques*, *La Pista* and *Rafael de La Bonguita*, was a way to resist uprootedness while recreating *La Bonga* in their receiving places. Even with a limited sense of belonging, for good or bad, life continues in the refugee-like *palenques*. Despite precarious living conditions and after the direct violence ceased, the reasons for not returning to *La Bonga* are associated with the infrastructure in the new settlements, the lack of security and the transformation of their former territories of resistance in spaces of loss as a result of the violence that occurred in them.

## 4. Conclusions

This chapter provided an analysis of the logic of marronage in the current geographies of dispossession and resistance of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian

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<sup>125</sup> María de Los Santos was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

<sup>126</sup> José de los Santos Herrera Simarra was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

<sup>127</sup> Benancio Herrera was interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

<sup>128</sup> María de Los Santos interviewed in *La Pista* on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016.

Caribbean. The analysis delved into tangible and intangible and practices developed by the *Palenqueros* to gain space and, therefore, freedom and belonging in receiving places. Haesbaert (2013) highlights the need of more analysis regarding the relationship between deterritorialisation of subalterns and precarity. Accordingly, this chapter showed that present marronage for San Basilio de Palenque - more than freedom as stated by (Roberts, 2017)- is an experience of precarity in a permanent state of resistance that brings along interludes of belonging and freedom enabled by the production of tangible and intangible territories. This research showed the different manners in which the territory of San Basilio de Palenque was turned into precarious space by the infliction of different types of violence - direct, structural and cultural - causing its appropriation by outsiders, although the particular cultural violence of the discourse of land rights deployed by the Colombian state will be analysed in the next chapter.

Haesbaert (2013:9) also explains that behind the “myth of deterritorialisation” of the subalterns in Latin America multi- and trans-territoriality is hidden. This Brazilian scholar (2013) is sceptical with the potential of romanticising the concept of deterritorialisation. For example, Haesbaert (2013) argues that indigenous people living at the border between Brazil and Paraguay are subaltern groups for whom deterritorialisation entails an experience of a high degree of forced mobility as a strategy of survival that implies an articulation of multiple territories as networks. This chapter shows that deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation become a cycle for the case of San Basilio de Palenque precisely because the community search for new spaces is mainly driven for the loss of its ancestral territory due to direct, structural and cultural violence as explained in the first paragraph of this introduction (Galtung, 2016). With this finding, this study filled the gap in the analysis of the territorialities of San Basilio de Palenque in the scholarship that had this community as subject of study, especially anthropological (Cross and de Friedemann, 1979; Pérez Palomino, 2002) and historical (Navarrete Peláez, 2008; Cassiani Herrera, 2014b). This chapter acknowledged firstly that within the idea of San Basilio de Palenque different entangled territories coexist: the mother-community, the urban *palenques* in the city of Cartagena de Indias, and the refugee-like *palenques* of *La Pista* and *Rafael de La Bonguita*. This is a multi-dimensional vision of the *Palenquero* territory, one of entangled territories of resistance against dispossession. Multi- (or trans)-territoriality, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation as characteristics of the territories of the subalterns in Latin-America (Haesbaert, 2013; López Sandoval, Robertsdotter and Paredes, 2017) are also present in the *Palenquero* spatial dynamics. Along with the

indigenous, *campesino*, and urban counter-hegemonic territories in Latin America, the *Palenquero* territories of resistance —i.e. geographies of marronage – confirm the problematization with binary opposition between the state and social movements that have been explored by Mançano Fernandes 2005; Lopes de Souza 2009; Mançano Fernandes 2009; Agnew & Oslender 2010; Mançano Fernandes 2010; Bryan 2012 and Zibechi 2012.

This problematisation is due to a different understanding of the relationship between the state and social movements in Latin America from that in the Anglophone literature. In Latin America, the states have become perpetrators of gross human rights violations, for instance, in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, during the so-called *guerras sucias* [Dirty Wars]. States committed crimes against humanity and genocide, including mass killings, torture, forced disappearances and sexual violence against all of those considered subversives (Calveiro, 2006; Crenzel, 2008; Bakiner, 2010; Maculan, 2012; Goes, 2013; Lessa, 2013; Skaar, 2013; Karl, 2014; Nyberg, 2015). Black communities have also been targets of state terror as well as their entangled territories of resistance as it was proven in this chapter for the geographies of marronage of San Basilio de Palenque. For instance, Oslender (2008:81) explains how terror also was inflicted by the Colombian state on the black communities of the Pacific Ocean showing that the states are as much terrorists as other illegal armed groups acting against these communities (Wright, 2007; Bellamy, 2012; Tavares Furtado, 2015; Khalil, 2016; Wright 2019).

The perception of the state as a terrorist can be found in other subaltern *campesino* communities in Colombia as well. For instance, Burnyeat (2017) also describes the total rupture of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó in Urabá with the Colombian state. Although the community has also been under attack by guerrilla and paramilitary groups, there is a need in the community “to reaffirm the idea of the perpetrator state, one of their founding beliefs, in order to continue being the Peace Community” (Burnyeat, 2017:21). This chapter showed how the resistance of the *Palenqueros* is exercised not only against the Colombian state but against other powers that aim to control their territories, such as armed groups, business companies, drug-traffickers and white elites. These groups have acted against San Basilio de Palenque with the tolerance and acquiescence of the state. The common phrase utilised by the social movements in Latin America, ‘*el estado es responsable*’ or ‘*fue el estado*’ that captures the understanding that the state is the ultimate responsible for its actions or omissions under the duty of preventing violence or bringing perpetrators to justice after violence has occurred, also applies for San Basilio de Palenque.



Furthermore, the strategy of reterritorialisation analysed in this chapter through the creation of urban *palenques* and refugee-like *palenques* in receiving places extends the literature concerning the building of migratory communities, which to date was mainly focussed on transnational migration (Ehrkamp 2005; Ehrkamp 2006; Ehrkamp 2013; Rivera-Salgado 2014). The *Palenquero* cases of analysis shed lights on building belonging in the case of internal migration. The urban *palenques*, as *Palenquero* enclaves, serve the purpose of providing belonging along with a place to exercise their identity without restrictions. Outside their borders, the *Palenqueros* experience harassment and racial discrimination, and within, a sense of freedom for practising their culture, language and education. As in colonial times, the urban *palenques* function as “spatial arrangements of power” (Mountz 2013:838) that breach the conventional domination system (Lopes de Souza, 2009; Zibechi, 2012) and trouble the white city with rights mobilisation and awareness of their own racial identity.

The study of the refugee-like *palenques* enlarges the scholarship concerning geographies of absence (Porteous, 1988; Smith, 1994) and violence (Oslender, 2008; Jiménez-Martín, 2016) by providing an analysis of what follows the loss of place as strategies of resistance and survival in forced displacement. As for the urban *palenques*, this chapter provides a historic account of the emergence and the fall of the community of *La Bonga* and its migratory territories (Dorai, 2002; Harker, 2012) of *La Pista* and *Rafael de La Bonguita*. Caught in between the territorial loss and development of survival in the receiving places, *La Bonga* is still recreated in *La Pista* and *Rafael de La Bonguita*. For the case of the refugee-like *palenques*, the primary reason for the lack of return after the direct violence ceased is related to the conversion of their territories from spaces of resistance to spaces of loss. An intangible deterritorialisation made *La Bonga* unbearable to be witnessed again.

As studied in this chapter, the ancestral territory still provides the history and the cultural patterns that were materialised in strategies developed by the Maroons during colonial times for the construction of the *Palenque*. The territorial reparation of San Basilio de Palenque, and therefore, their survival as people cannot be understood by their leaving behind one or another form of territories (the mother-community, the urban *palenques* and the refugee-like *palenques*). The final chapter of this thesis addresses how the Colombian land rights discourse deployed by the state protects or disregards the entangled territories of San Basilio de Palenque, which were explained in this chapter.

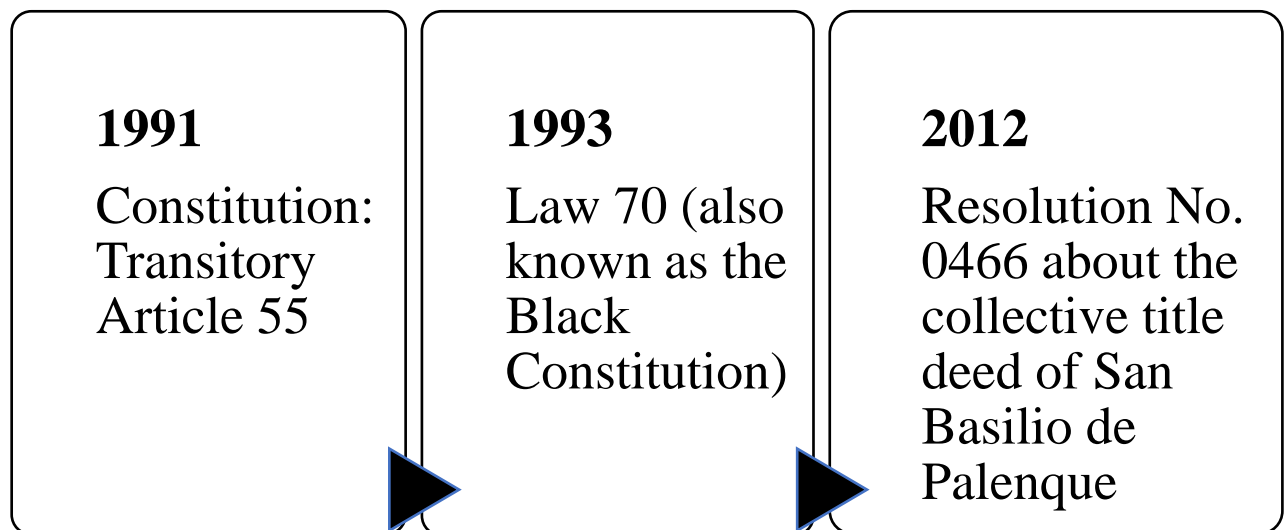


Figure 20. Timeline of the land rights discourse of the Colombian state

## CHAPTER 6: The Legal Trap

### 1. Introduction

This chapter analyses the legal construction of the geographies of marronage of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean as precarious due to having territorial dispossession as an outcome. Space is not static but permanently constructed through interrelations over time (Massey, 2005). The first territorial dispossession of the community took place around 1783 after its territories were described by the colonial regime as materially-impooverished and populated by black people with no culture or religion (Archivo General de Indias, 1783). This picture of San Basilio de Palenque served as an excuse for the foundation or re-location of towns within its borders during colonial times.

More than 200 years later, this colonial picture of San Basilio de Palenque is still present in the state's legal discourse of land rights for black communities in Colombia. In April, 2012, in Cartagena de Indias, an official ceremony took place in the square of St Peter Claver, who is considered by the white people the patron saint of the slaves in Colombia.<sup>129</sup> The then-President of Colombia Juan Manuel Santos and the then-President of the United States of America Barack Obama gave a collective title deed to San Basilio de Palenque (Instituto Colombiano de Desarrollo Rural, 2012; Tatis Guerra, 2012).<sup>130</sup> The handover of the collective title deed was not the historical territorial reparation publicised in the media, but quite the opposite. It was a staged event, which made official the dispossession of the territories of this community.

Two main issues can be highlighted regarding the collective title process in San Basilio de Palenque. Firstly, Resolution No.0466 of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development-Colombian Institute of Rural Development, recognised the collective property right of San Basilio de Palenque over certain lands in the Montes de María in 2012. These lands are described in Resolution No.0466 as rural and empty, but –paradoxically– ancestrally and collectively occupied by a Maroon-descendant community (Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural. Instituto Colombiano de Desarrollo Rural. INCODER, 2012). However, the

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<sup>129</sup> In the *cabildos negros*, while receiving health care ‘treatment’ after the passage, the Africans celebrated funerary rites for those who did not make it that included food, drums, chants and dances. Pedro Claver realised that they were a form of communication among the captives as well. He used to stop the rites, destroying the food and taking away the drums while forcing them to accept his religion (de Friedemann, 1991a).

<sup>130</sup> *La Boquilla*, an Afro-descendant community with a tradition of fishing, also received a collective title deed in this ceremony. *La Boquilla* is placed within the borders of the City of Cartagena de Indias. Since the latter part of the 20th century, *La Boquilla* has been slowly confined by tourist business developments in the area, which have reduced shores and ecosystems, damaging their sources of nourishment and work, and subsequently impoverishing the community (Butrago Villamizar, 2006).

collective title deed has never had legal effect because Resolution No.0466 was not registered with the Land Registry. Thus, while San Basilio de Palenque is in possession of some lands, it is still not formally recognised as their owner.

Secondly, the territorial demarcation contained in Resolution No.0466 was the most detrimental in the history of the community, causing a reterritorialisation in favour of the powerholders. The community claim is for around 200,000 hectares; yet only 3,353 hectares were recognised as belonging to San Basilio de Palenque in this territorial demarcation. These hectares only cover the built-up area of the community and exclude the *montes*. During colonial times, the *montes* were a symbol of freedom, as explained in chapter 4, but also (and to the present day) their agricultural reserve.

Resolution No.0466 was made primarily based on Law 70, also known as the black constitution of Colombia, regarding the recognition of territories owned by black communities based on traditional ways of production. However, Law 70 is embedded into a *terra nullius* doctrine that describes the territories of black communities as vacant, but at the same time, occupied by them since colonial times to the present day. The outcome of the implementation of this schizophrenic legal discourse has legitimised a status of territorial dispossession of San Basilio de Palenque's territories without reverting or preventing more land grabbing. As explained in chapter 2, studies deny that land formalisation of indigenous, *campesino* and other non-urban groups delivered any objective or subjective security against evictions (Brasselle et al. 2002; Ubink 2009; Smith 2014).

This chapter goes one step further by stating that, in fact, the law on the protection of black territories is the force behind their dispossession by legally constructing them as vacant, yet occupied and, subsequently, making them precarious, accelerating its dispossession. This legal construction makes possible the appropriation of Maroon territories by different actors as another example of cultural violence as defined by Galtung (1996, 2016). Contrary to a property rights discourse, this chapter offers some initial steps towards the justification of the right to territory of Afro-descendant communities through the case of San Basilio de Palenque based on their past as slaves.

## **2. Legally Crafting Geographies**

Imaginative geography refers to the process of how landscapes are discursively produced with different purposes, and therefore, effects (Gregory, 1995; Said, 2000; Fields, 2012; Perkins,

2017). For instance, in Latin America, places like the Amazonia or the Darién region in Colombia and Panama, are portrayed in images, maps, and writings as wild, rich in precious metals, such as gold, and backward geographies. These geographies are seen as in need of intervention, prompting its appropriation by outsiders, including plantation owners, drug-dealers and business companies through, for instance, logging or even promoting tourism (Velásquez Runk, 2015). In Argentina, the image of a desert was used to describe the territories taken by direct violence (Galtung, 1969) from the indigenous people allowing its appropriation by large cattle ranchers in the 1870s (Wahren, 2011). The taking of these indigenous territories and the extermination of their people was called the *Conquista del Desierto* [the Conquest of the Desert] (Torre, 2010).

Said (2000:179, 180) describes the crafting of the collective memory as, in a certain sense, manipulating the past of a nation, exalting some events and suppressing others, with a function and an aim. He explains, for instance, how Zionist Jews claim ownership over Palestine denying “millennia of history and the presence of actual inhabitants.” This invented memory has the purpose of progressively justifying the control of the Palestinian lands by the State of Israel. For this, Palestine is portrayed as an *empty* space in the desert.

Echoing legal geographers such as Blomley, Fields (2012:270), has explained the role that the property law plays in the portrayal of geographies as *empty* places. He highlights the violence of the property law by describing how the Palestinian landscape is recrafted by the destruction of homes, farms and crops. This destruction is the result of the implementation of property law as an instrument of force. The land is transferred to who is considered as the rightful owner (settlers), and the Palestinians become transgressors in their own landscapes.

Furthermore, property law promotes a “culture of hostility” towards Palestinians that enables similar offences perpetrated by private actors, such as settlers and estate owners. In the words of Galtung (1969; 2016), cultural violence is the discourse that justifies the commission of other types of violence (direct and structural) because certain groups are considered inferior, for example, regarding their race. This chapter builds on this literature to show also that what such groups produce, such as their particular forms of territory, is also considered inferior (Quijano, 2000), rendering them vulnerable to expropriation

In Colombia, along with extensive armed violence, Vélez-Torres (2016) describes how the implementation of the 2001 Mining Code territorially dispossessed *La Toma*, an Afro-descendant community located in the Alto Cauca, by granting mining licenses to private

extractive companies. In this scenario, traditional local miners of *La Toma* became illegal miners in their own lands. A collective title deed under Law 70 is pre-requisite to acquiring a mining license according to the 2001 Mining Code. Vélez-Torres (2016) shows how a lack of political will and bureaucratic capacity have prevented for more than 20 years the community to be granted the formalisation of its lands. As presented in this chapter, Law 70 has not been a reassurance for stopping or reversing land grabbing for San Basilio de Palenque either.

The legal framework for the protection of black territories of Colombia seems on the surface to differ from the property law of the State of Israel towards Palestinian land in its declarative aim. The first one declares as its objective, the protection of the territories of the black communities, while the second one explicitly justifies the demolition of homes and farms and destruction of crops in Palestine protecting the interest and the colonialist vision of the State of Israel. However, in practice, the effects of both hold similarities.

The similarities of the laws rely on the fact that, whether aiming to protect lands of disadvantaged communities or justifying their rightful dispossession by the colonialists, both, first, turn (or craft) the lands of the dispossessed *precarious* through its discourse. These lands are emptied, erased of history and previous owners, yet occupied, for instance for black communities in Colombia. Bringing together discussions about the crafting of geographies of the excluded and precarity helps to understand that property law (including land rights for ethnic communities) might not be, under certain conditions, a reliable instrument for promoting the protection of the territories of subaltern communities.

### **3. The Legal Framework of the Territorial Dispossession**

The analysis of the property law should not be focused only on the discourse. It should also include the study of its material practice “including its material violences” (Blomley 2003:135), its effects. This section shows how the land rights discourse for black communities turns their territories precarious, and therefore, allows its dispossession. As shown in this chapter, this dispossession as a legal effect contains all the types of violence described by Galtung (1969; 1996; 2016).

This legal effect includes direct violence because, for instance, it impoverishes the communities causing migration and put at risk the lives of Afro-descendants when armed groups are part of the land grabbing. Territorial dispossession also brings group segmentation among the Afro-descendant Social Movement in Colombia as an example of structural

violence. The loss of these territories is perceived as expected because after all these are products of a race considered backwards.

The precarisation of the black territories is present in the Constitution of Colombia, which was reformed in 1991. Its Transitory Article 55 commanded the Congress to enact a law that recognised the right to collective property over the *empty* lands that the black communities of the Pacific Ocean area have been occupying under traditional practices of production (República de Colombia, 1991). The character of ‘transitory’ of that article means that this mandate had to be full-filled within a two-year time timeframe. The mandate was completed in August 1993, when Law 70 was enacted by the Congress.

Both the Constitution and Law 70 stated that land rights recognition could be extended to other areas populated by Afro-descendants in the country who shared similar characteristics with the black communities of the Pacific Ocean (República de Colombia, 1991, 1993). Therefore, the Resolution No.0466 that granted the collective title deed to San Basilio de Palenque, based this concession on the assimilation of this community to the black communities of the Pacific Ocean. The process of declaring the territories as empty places but occupied for centuries by the Afro-descendant communities while establishing a hierarchy among them (Pacific region over the rest) is explored in the legislation, as a factor of on-the-ground reterritorialization in favour of the powerholders.

### **3.a. The 1991 Constitution**

In 1991, the new Constitution recognised that the Colombian nation was multicultural and multiethnic (República de Colombia, 1991). Arocha (1998) explains that the recognition of diversity had the purpose of achieving national unity and peace in Colombia. A Constitution that promotes participation and inclusion would lead to the end of violence (Mejía Quintana, 2013) because violence was a consequence of social inequality and lack of accountability (LeeVanCott, 1996).

The multiethnic recognition was also seen as a turning point for considering Afro-descendants as citizens (Arocha, 1998; Wade, 2009). Historically, this recognition has taken various forms in liberal constitutions in different countries. During 1880–1890, building a liberal governance project in the USA implied the assimilation of the natives as equal citizens before the law. This assimilation was a way of blurring colonialism from the USA discourse (Olund, 2002). The same pattern was followed in Brazil after the abolition of slavery in 1888 to wipe away the

guilt of the conversion of Africans into property by their reinsertion as equal citizens before the law (Rodrigues Alves, 2018). In the Colombian Constitution, the recognition of the Afro-descendants as citizens could be an acknowledgement of the past slavery in this country.

On territory, the Constitution recognised the right to collective property over their lands to the black communities of the Pacific Ocean. Asher and Ojeda (2009) and Rivas et al. (2000) have seen in the biodiversity present in their lands the main reason for this legal recognition.<sup>131</sup> An aspect that has not been considered or thoroughly explored in the literature is the extent to which all the focus put on the *Pacífico*, and the reinforcement of its natural resources, might alert the powerholders about its richness, thereby promoting dispossession.

Another Afro-descendant group that obtained constitutional protection was the *Raizales* of the Island of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina. This protection was given based on their cultural identity, natural resources, their particular history of colonisation, *mestizaje*, religion, language and geographical position away from continental Colombia (Burgos Guzmán, 2003). Therefore, reparations for the Afro-descendants have been seen in recent Colombian constitutional politics for ethnic territorial recognition (Arocha Rodríguez and Moreno Tovar, 2007).

However, the recognition of land rights for the Afro-descendant communities was not as complete as was the case of indigenous people (Arocha, 1998), establishing a hierarchy among both ethnic groups. In the case of indigenous people, the Constitution recognises the ‘indigenous territories’ as autonomous (Arocha, 1998) without distinguishing among different groups of indigenous people, highlighting that these territories are in the same legal position than other territorial entities, such as districts and municipalities (República de Colombia, 1991).

Burgos Guzmán (2003) highlights that the indigenous people are entitled to rule their territories with their authorities. Even before 1991, Colombian courts had recognised that indigenous people did not occupy empty lands because these territories never belonged to the state, but them. This autonomy recognised to indigenous people in the Constitution in 1991 resembles the situation of San Basilio de Palenque, after 1714, with a peace agreement that accepted the control of their borders and the faculty to establish their authorities. However, this Maroon

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<sup>131</sup> The Pacific region contains the greatest biodiversity in plants worldwide having endemic species that only have survived in this geographic area (Colombia’s Ministry of Environment & The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), n.d.).



autonomy as a result of the 1714 peace agreement shortly proved precarious after the dispossession of their territories beginning around 1783, as explained in chapter 4.

The legal construction, where Afro-descendants appear to be less entitled than indigenous people, is called in this research 'external legal asymmetry.' The reasons for this external legal asymmetry lie in history, politics, and security, with a consequent unrecognition of the Afro-descendant territorialities. With regard to history, before 1991, Colombia was officially portrayed as a country of European descendants and indigenous people with no room for other types of ethnic groups (Arocha, 1998). Afro-descendants were perceived as intruders (Olsen, 1998).

Secondly, regarding politics, the Afro-descendants did not have a delegate during the constitutional reform process in 1991, but were mainly represented by an indigenous leader from the Pacific Ocean area (LeeVanCott, 1996). According to LeeVanCott (1996), internal divisions within the Afro-descendant movement, the absence of financial resources and lack of external support were some of the reasons for the non-presence of an Afro-descendant delegate in the constitutional debates.

Thirdly, in terms of security, LeeVanCott (1996) asserts that previous governments (1980-1990) negotiated with indigenous peoples the recognition of their territories as a way to restrain the guerrilla's influence in their areas, whereas the Afro-descendants were never trusted to carry out the same task because they were not easy to control (LeeVanCott, 1996).

The second legal asymmetry found in the 1991 Constitution is internal due to its favouritism towards a specific group of Afro-descendants, the black communities of the Pacific Ocean. Accordingly, Juan de Dios Mosquera Mosquera (2012), President of the National Maroon Movement, declares that Transitory Article 55 was poorly drafted and should have contained the expression 'Afro-Colombian people', who descend from the African slaves, instead of black communities, to acknowledge the tragedy of their past and avoid the perpetuation of racial discrimination by the use of the word 'black.'

Professor Jaime Arocha, who was part of the constitutional debates, explained that the legal focus on the Pacific Ocean area was necessary because violent territorial dispossession was a severe threat around 1987 for the communities living there.<sup>132</sup> Land demarcations were needed

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<sup>132</sup> Personal communication with Professor Jaime Arocha in Bogotá on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

to stop, for instance, the arrival of timber companies. However, as stated by the Constitutional Court of Colombia (2009), formalisation of the lands in the Pacific area was the trigger for that grabbing. The Court did not explain why the more land was formalised under Law 70; the more communities experienced territorial dispossession.<sup>133</sup>

In academia, an explanation of this phenomenon has started to emerge. Melo (2015) describes how Law 70 allowed the formalisation of 6,000,000 hectares focusing on the Pacific, strengthening the ethnic identity of the communities living in this area. However, Melo asserts that extreme armed violence followed this process of land formalisation that began in the 1990s, causing forced displacement. As Grajales (2015) asserts, Law 70 neither secures nor reverses the land grabbing but reinforces the opposition of powerholders.

Oslender (2008) states that the characterisation of many of the lands owned by the black communities of the Pacific Ocean as vacant or state-owned has caused the exploitation of their natural resources by the national and transnational capital. However, Oslender did not make explicit that the characterisation of the black territories as empty places stems from this law. On the contrary, Oslender (2008) understands Law 70 as a result of a long-lasting claim of the black communities for lands, which has transformed territory into the foundation of their black identity.

A recent round-table discussion analysed the concept of territorial peace that has emerged from the 2016 peace agreement (Cairo *et al.*, 2018). As part of this academic discussion, Oslender explains that the Colombian state had previous intentions of pacifying territories through the recognition of land rights for communities in the 1990s, such as the black communities of the Pacific Ocean, based on Law 70. Oslender argues that after these land rights were granted to the communities, “the state showed little interest in supporting local efforts to create a lasting “territorial peace” in this region” (Cairo *et al.* 2018:481). For instance, at the

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<sup>133</sup> The Constitutional Court of Colombia is considered a leading actor in the protection of the rights of the victims of internal forced displacement in the context of the armed conflict (Dalto, 2011). In 2009, the Court ruled on the forced displacement experienced by Afro-descendant communities, which has been exacerbated by historical racial discrimination. The Court has described the impact of the forced displacement on the territories of these communities. The struggle of different agents of displacement for controlling the lands of the Afro-descendants have turned these territories into battlefields. The resistance of the communities against land grabbing has exposed them to a high level of violence including the perpetration of massacres, threats, and sexual violence. This direct violence (Galtung 1969; 2016) made the Afro-descendants escape to rural and urban centres or confined them in their places. Their forced displacement has facilitated the further establishment of legal and illegal businesses, such as drug trafficking, mining and monocropping, in the lost lands of the Afro-descendants (Corte Constitucional de Colombia, 2009; Rodríguez Garavito, Alfonso Sierra and Cavelier Adarve, 2009).

same time that this legal recognition was taking place, the government granted permissions to multinationals to intervene in these territories. As a consequence, during the 1980s and 1990s, these territories were materially and intangible transformed by terror campaigns conducted by different armed groups through forced displacement.

For Oslender, while the Colombian state passed a progressive legislation as Law 70, it has failed to protect these communities on the ground: “There is then a gaping disconnection between text and on-the-ground lived reality” (Cairo et al. 2018;484). In this chapter, contrary to Oslender, I argue that it is precisely the text of Law 70 that produces the lack of protection of these communities. The impact of the process of land formalisation based on Law 70 is analysed beyond the *Pacífico*, as the case of San Basilio de Palenque is related to other reasons for the internal legal asymmetry found in Transitory Article 55 that are explored in this section.

Other reasons for the internal legal asymmetry in Transitory Article 55 are, firstly, the lack of time for an appropriate discussion to consider the situation of other Afro-descendant communities as potential victims of territorial dispossession. The Transitory Article was included just before the end of the constitutional debates (LeeVanCott, 1996; Mosquera Mosquera, 2012), when the black communities of the Pacific Ocean garnered all the attention because they consolidated a robust political mobilisation based on the assertion of their ethnic and cultural identity. These communities were assisted by anthropologists, such as Arturo Escobar, to neutralise the resistance in the constitutional assembly to give them protection as indigenous peoples (Lemaitre Ripoll, 2009).

The protection given to the black communities of the Pacific Ocean has obscured the geographies of other Afro-descendant communities (Wade, 2002). The identities of these other Afro-descendant communities were homogenised -along with the rest of the Afro-descendant people in Colombia- under the rural, indigenized and ecological model of the Pacific (Wade, 1993, 1995, 1996, 2009) while denying or minimising their own vulnerabilities to territorial dispossession.

As a result of the Pacific prominence, the so-called *Proceso de Comunidades Negras* [The Process of the Black Communities] emerged and gained precedence in the Afro-descendant social movement even over the National Maroon Movement, which was a pioneer in promoting their rights as a vulnerable group (Lemaitre Ripoll, 2009). The subsequent tensions within the Afro-descendant social movement were extrapolated to the implementation of Transitory

Article 55 during the process of adoption of Law 70, which as previously mentioned is also known as the black Constitution of Colombia (Lemaitre Ripoll, 2009), in a romanticised way

Both the external and internal legal asymmetries in the Constitution are examples that enlarge the concept of Galtung's (1969; 2016) structural violence. Powerholders make precarious and fragment the ethnic movement in Colombia in general, and in particular the Afro-descendant social movement, which was considered particularly belligerent and not easy to dominate. The lack of unity in this last movement, in part promoted by an unequal legal treatment, conspires against a more effective mobilisation towards territorial reparation.

The Afro-descendant activist, Rosario *Charo* Mina, explains that the 2016 peace agreement (between the government and the FARC-EP) has allowed discussions among different Afro-descendant organisations about territory. Land grabs will occur as a result of the demobilisation of former combatants.

The guerrilla is negotiating the access to territory under the form of *reserva campesina*: a significant part of the Afro-descendant territories, because from where are they going to take land to give to the FARC? The indigenous people will not allow that because the government does not mess with indigenous people (...), the fight will be between *negros* and former combatants, that is why there is no intention to give collective title deeds to the communities.<sup>134</sup>

Mina states that the polarisation between “the Choco [about the Pacific Ocean area] and the rest [Afro-descendant communities]” instigated by the state became even more evident when a strong and unified Afro-Colombia social movement for the protection of their territories was needed in the context of the peace negotiation.<sup>135</sup>

### **3.b. Law 70 and Resolution No.0466/2012**

Law 70 recognises the right to collective property to “the Black communities which have been occupying empty lands in rural and riverine areas of the Cuenca of the Pacific under their traditional practices of production” (República de Colombia, 1993: Article 1). The expression “black communities” is also explained in the Article 2.5 as the “group of families of Afro-Colombians that hold a culture, share a history and have their own traditions and customs, in a dynamic of a countryside area with an urban centre, that keep an awareness of an identity that makes them different from other ethnic groups” (República de Colombia, 1993).

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<sup>134</sup> Rosario *Charo* Mina was interviewed in Cali on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>135</sup> Rosario *Charo* Mina was interviewed in Cali on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

The Constitution states that the right to collective property can be extended to other areas in the country, which share similar characteristics with the black communities of the Pacific Ocean (República de Colombia, 1991). However, Law 70 is more restrictive referring only to: “empty, rural and riverine zones that have been occupied by the black communities, who have traditional practices of production in other zones of the country” (República de Colombia, 1993: Article 1).

The more optimistic interpretation understands that Law 70 recognises the collective right to property of both black communities living in and outside the Pacific Ocean area (Burgos Guzmán, 2003). The other interpretation -more attached to the letter of the law- highlights that this legislation excludes from its scope both Afro-descendants living in cities, who constitute 70 per cent of the Afro-descendant population in Colombia, and the Afro-descendants living outside the Pacific Ocean region, who are 73 per cent of that same total (Hoffmann, 2002). For instance, the urban *palenques* in Cartagena de Indias would be considered outside of the scope of the law.

Solving the controversy around the interpretation of Law 70 is ultimately political in nature. As analysed in the next section, San Basilio de Palenque obtained a Resolution towards a collective title deed in 2012, but without holding all the requirements present in the law: their lands were not empty, as they were their owners since the 1714 peace treaty, and their community is rural, but not riverine. However, during an interview on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the land activist Rosario Charo Mina explained how some Afro-descendant communities located in the Cauca region are also being denied the title deed process because “they are not Pacific.”

The construction of the wording of Law 70 is unclear, and intentionally or not, spreads insecurity and uncertainty in the territories of the Afro-descendant communities, making them precarious and passive in the face of land-grabbing. The definition of lands in Law 70 refers to those occupied by the black communities of the Pacific Ocean as ‘empty or state-owned’: “They are terrains situated inside the borders of the national territory that belong to the state, and they have not owners” (República de Colombia, 1993: Article 2.4).

The understanding of the lands as vacant follows the doctrine of *terra nullius* that legitimated the dispossession of indigenous people based on the assumption that conquered territories were empty of civilised societies that deserved legal protection (Meyers and Mugambwa, 1993; Buchan and Heath, 2006). The *terra nullius* doctrine turned native territories in ahistorical

places and rendered passive their expropriation by the Western-European colonisers (Collis 2010; Zadorin 2018). However, case law against this doctrine elsewhere, as in the *Advisory Opinion on Western Sahara* (International Court of Justice, 1975) and *Mabo and Others v. Queensland (No.2)* (High Court of Australia, 1992) has recognised the existence of traditional occupancy exercised by native communities before the arrival of the settlers that configures the native title (Kidd 1994; Justice K Cullinane 2002-2003; Campos-Serrano & Rodríguez-Esteban 2017). Even though the *Palenqueros* are not natives, traditional occupancy and title recognised in these rulings are also present for the case of San Basilio de Palenque since the 1714 peace agreement, as explained in chapter 4 (Justice K Cullinane, 2002-2003; Kidd, 1994).

In legal schizophrenia, Law 70 declares that these lands are vacant but occupied for centuries by Afro-descendant communities. In the case of the black communities of the Pacific Ocean, the occupation was since the last part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, mainly without title deeds and registration. This area was populated by slaves who worked in the gold mines, which turned into social, cultural and family groups that settled in riverine areas along with the indigenous communities (Romero Vergara, 2017). In the case of San Basilio de Palenque, Law 70 disregards the 1714 peace treaty and the 1921 collective title deed, which was obtained by the *Palenqueros* to protect their lands from white-elite landowners. Under Law 70, lands become “lands of the black communities” with the collective title deed given by the Colombian state (República de Colombia, 1993).

The identity of the black communities of the Pacific Ocean, which is legally constructed as prevalent, renders invisible the other territorialities. For instance, San Basilio de Palenque is linked with the process of marronage and *palenques*. Law 70 missed a unique opportunity to modify the internal legal asymmetry present in the 1991 Constitution regarding the unequal land rights recognition and thereby avoid possible exclusions, tensions and hierarchies among the different Afro-descendant groups.

The Resolution No.0466/2012 adjudges a collective title deed in favour of San Basilio de Palenque, and it is immersed in this internal legal asymmetry. The letter of the Resolution No.0466/2012 referred to San Basilio de Palenque as the “black community, which is organised under the figure of the Community Council of MA KANKAMANA [the biggest *palenque*] of the historic town of San Basilio de Palenque (...), over empty/state-owned, rural and ancestral lands occupied collectively by this community in the Municipality of Mahates, Bolivar. This title deed was requested in 2006 by this community council, based on Law 70/1993 and Decree

1745/1995, over an empty/state-owned lands located in the rural areas of the Montes de María under the category of “lands of the black communities” (Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural. Instituto Colombiano de Desarrollo Rural. INCODER, 2012:1, 18).

The Expert Commission, who decides whether lands can be included in a collective title deed, states that the lands requested by San Basilio de Palenque were ancestral lands inserted in the ancestral territory, without external dominion, and possessed by the black community (in reference to San Basilio de Palenque) as owners. However, after this recognition, the Commission categorises the same lands as rural, empty/state-owned, riverine and occupied traditionally by the community, peacefully and without interruptions (Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural. Instituto Colombiano de Desarrollo Rural. INCODER, 2012). Therefore, the Resolution No.0466/2012 reconstructs the territory of San Basilio de Palenque under the wording of Law 70, neglecting that the 1714 peace agreement between the community and the colonial authorities declared the Maroons their owners. There have not been empty lands that belong to the state since 1714.

According to Resolution No.0466, the ancestral territory of San Basilio de Palenque is possible to be acknowledged from the so-called colonial title in allusion to the records found in the General Archive of Indies. It is stated that this ancestral territory has been lost due to violence including economic and armed conflict (Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural. Instituto Colombiano de Desarrollo Rural. INCODER, 2012). The Resolution No.0466 does not mention the borders and extension of this ancestral territory, which could have been estimated by a qualitative analysis of the colonial documents, oral tradition and participatory mapping in the community. Moreover, Resolution No.0466 did not mention the collective title deed that is part of the collection of the Historical Archive of Cartagena de Indias and which has a clear description of the borders of San Basilio de Palenque by 1921.

However, the Resolution No.0466 recognises that part of that ancestral territory lost is under private titles, and therefore, in hands of outsiders and some members of San Basilio de Palenque, who did not accept to include their lands in the collective title deed (Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural. Instituto Colombiano de Desarrollo Rural. INCODER, 2012). By acknowledging this without proposing steps for the restitution of the ancestral territory lost, dispossession for San Basilio de Palenque and reterritorialisation in favour of the powerholders are the outcomes of a legal discourse that frames the lands included in the collective title deed as empty/state-owned.

The most unfortunate side of the story is that the title deed process was initiated by the community, in the belief that this was the strategy to follow to protect their territories by accepting a portrayal of the community and their lands required by the law. This process is the legal trap of the territorial dispossession for San Basilio de Palenque.

#### **4. Territorial Dispossession as Legal Outcome**

The interviews analysed in this section under a thematic approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006) explore the views of the people on the effects of the legal discourse of lands rights and Afro-descendants. These interviews were conducted during 2015 and 2016 in Cali, Cartagena de Indias and San Basilio de Palenque. The interviewees were women and men who are activists, academics, *campesinos*, community leaders and members of the community of San Basilio de Palenque and other Afro-descendant communities in Colombia. The findings explain why despite the lack of effectiveness in terms of land restitution and the prevention of territorial dispossession, the law continues to be the primary strategy pursued by the Afro-descendant communities to protect their territories. These findings also illustrate why assimilation, as in the case of the indigenous people or the black communities of the Pacific Ocean, is another strategy implemented by underrepresented Afro-descendant groups, such as San Basilio de Palenque, to gain legal recognition of their territories. The findings shed light on the reasons why, despite the trust placed in the land rights discourse, the outcome of its implementation for the case of San Basilio de Palenque and particularly the 2012 collective title deed, is mistrusted by the community. Findings also show that land grabbing accelerated after the 2012 collective title deed in different forms, for instance, through the selling of lands included in the title deed to business companies.

Despite these misgivings, the dispossession legitimised by the 2012 title deed was accepted in order to avoid more territorial loss: “The strategy of the Community Council was to accept less, but at least, to keep something secure. In a way, we did not aspire to have the territory of *Benkos* [with reference to the ancestral territory].”<sup>136</sup> The community council acquiesced to the reality that they would not retain all of their ancestral territory, the Montes de María, because other more satisfactory strategies for land restitution did not arise in the community or seem to be achievable at that moment. Nicasio Reyes Salgado was the president of the community

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<sup>136</sup> Nicasio Reyes Salgado was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016.



council at the time of the territorial demarcation made by the Colombian state in 2012 to grant the collective title deed. Nowadays, his vision has changed.

We have knowledge of the entire territory of the *Palenque*, and we have men, in their 70s and 75s who are knowledgeable of the territory of the *Palenque*, and they told us that there was certainty about that land: The tradition. This land belonged to the members of the *Palenque*, but for different reasons, they are not in our hands anymore. That is why we are asking that these lands return to the hands of the people of the *Palenque*.<sup>137</sup>

Nicasio Reyes Salgado explained that some land (the most productive in fact) was deliberately excluded after the impossibility to buy it due to the lack of resources and unwillingness from the state to do it in their name. The reason was that this land was in the hands of white-elite landowners, who, in their understanding, would have been entitled to buy land within the collective title deed if their lands would have been part of it.

They are landowners, if they are within the collective title, they are hardly going to sell, but if they are within the collective title, they can buy our land. We are always going to be in need because we have scarce resources, always, we are going to have the necessity to sell, and they are cattle ranchers, so they will have the chance to buy all the land that they want, we do not have the means to buy them. The community assembly decided that these lands were not gonna be part of the collective title deed of *Palenque*, but perhaps lately with the help of the INCODER [The Colombian Institute of Rural Development], by buying them, could enter into the collective title deed.<sup>138</sup>

In order “to preserve the integrity of the lands of the black communities and their cultural identity”, Law 70 declares that, in case of land selling within the collective title deed, the land can be bought only by other members of the community or another member of the ethnic group (República de Colombia, 1993). Therefore, Law 70 establishes a restriction for selling land within the collective title with the intent that the land remains as part of the territory of the black communities, thereby preventing it from going into the hands of outsiders. Through this restriction, Law 70 seems to prevent the deterritorialisation of the black communities by balancing the historical imbalance between the black communities and powerholders, in other words, creating a legal symmetry.

There is a live internal debate concerning the implications of Law 70 within San Basilio de Palenque. The members of the town of San Basilio de Palenque feared during the process of state-demarcation that the inclusion of land in the hands of outsiders, but within their territory,

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<sup>137</sup> Nicasio Reyes Salgado was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>138</sup> Nicasio Reyes Salgado was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

could have put outsiders in the category of members of the community and therefore, able to increase their land possession within the collective title deed. Márquez San Martín explains that a first territorial demarcation made by the state in 2007 had an extension of approximately 7.000 hectares. This initial demarcation was rejected by the *Palenqueros* because it included outsiders.<sup>139</sup> They did not trust that the legal restriction about selling land within the collective title contained in Law 70 could in fact stop deterritorialisation on the ground and balance a historical imbalance between them and the white-elite landowners. They were right. Reyes Salgado states that one of the reasons why the collective title deed is still not registered is because people, who are strangers and do not even live in San Basilio de Palenque, are included in it. The community questioned this inclusion as made in bad faith.<sup>140</sup>

However, there are some voices, such as Alonso Salgado Cañati, *Palenquero*, who thinks that a foreigner has the right to buy land in the *Palenque*, just as the *Palenqueros* have the right to buy lands elsewhere, because the land cannot be taken outside but always remains in the *Palenque* (territory).<sup>141</sup> The distinction made by Alonso Salgado Cañati regarding the understanding of territory and land helps to introduce the next section about how the *Palenqueros* envision their *territorio*.

#### **4.a. Envisioning Territory**

The way the Afro-descendants understand their territory impacts on the strategies sought to protect their lands from forced displacement, poverty, and businesses in the area. This understanding of territory and its use are a contested topic that divides both *Palenqueros* within San Basilio de Palenque and the rest of Afro-descendant communities in Colombia. For example, Rosario Charo Mina says: “For some people, the territory is a source of life, it is one thing with the being, and you take care of it, and you do not put mechanical excavators in it.” She adds that if the territory is something that should not be altered, this creates controversy over ideas of development, for instance, whether businesses can be run in the area.<sup>142</sup>

Different communities all over the world, such as indigenous and *campesino*, have different visions of their territories (Torrez 2011; Orozco et al. 2013; Yembilah & Grant 2014; Molina Camacho 2018). The way that Afro-descendant communities in Colombia embrace their

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<sup>139</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>140</sup> Nicasio Reyes Salgado was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>141</sup> Alonso Salgado Cañati was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>142</sup> Rosario Charo Mina was interviewed in Cali on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

territories has been analysed in the context of land grabbing (Butrago Villamizar 2006; Cogollo et al. 2008; Escobar 2008). The case of the Afro-descendant communities of the Alto Cauca in Colombia and their relationship with their territories enlighten the *Palenquero* territorialities. Even though not entirely detached from modernity, in the Alto Cauca the black communities construct their places away from capitalism and making a collective task of ‘freeing’ their territories from war and mining business. The territory is life and therefore, it cannot be merchandised, transferred or altered (Mina Rojas *et al.*, 2015). The territory is occupied ancestrally and *affectionately* by the communities (Quijano Valencia 2015; Escobar 2016). This way to live and experience territory clashes with a static and private property model of territory primarily supported by the states, multinationals and Western-European academia (Escobar, 2016). For Escobar (2016), this clash requires the development of a new analytical framework that permits one to acknowledge the protection of territory in its diversity and in accordance with the different worldviews of those that inhabit it. These territories are constructed from the ancestral *sentir-pensar* [feeling-thinking] of the black communities, as well as the indigenous ones. Therefore, theoretically, these territories have to be also ‘felt’ and ‘thought’ through immersion in the contextualised territorial practices of the communities.

San Basilio de Palenque’s territorial practices involve discussions that make a distinction between the legal territory as recognised to the community through the 2012 collective title deed, and the *territorio palenquero*, which includes houses and *rozas* [the land for cropping and cattle] and which is inherited by the families.<sup>143</sup> This latter territory is categorised as collective and ancestral, and there is a clear awareness that there are lands, “which are not included in the title deed, but they are inside the *territorio palenquero*.” And, therefore, strategies should be implemented to return those lands to the people of San Basilio de Palenque.<sup>144</sup>

You know that the grandparents [the way to call the elders in the community] here say that the territory of the *Palenque* runs until the door of a church in the Community of *Ovejas* where there is a landmark (...) this explanation makes sense because look, the territory is like this (while he draws) one of its borders runs until Ovejas, to San Jacinto, then the territory follows this border, and afterwards, a hill, also known as Capiro, here there are two black communities, two black settlements, San Cristobal and Paraíso, and here is the *Palenque* (...) they say that they do not consider themselves from San Jacinto or María La Baja, but from the *Palenque*.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015.

<sup>144</sup> Nicasio Reyes Salgado was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>145</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

The *Palenque* is multidimensional and also includes an intangible territory, as “a territory in your mind”, that defines the identity of the *Palenqueros*. The intangible aspect of the territory of San Basilio de Palenque was addressed in chapter 5 as the motor that determines and constructs the tangible territory (Mançano Fernandes, 2005, 2010). This exercise does not necessarily require physical contact with the tangible territory; for example, it can also be enacted through WhatsApp group chats that provide alerts on territorial news from San Basilio de Palenque.<sup>146</sup> Along with this way to live the territory, in the *Palenque*, other incorporeal worlds coexist with the town.

The *Palenque* also encompasses other territories, such as a mythical inverted territory. The *Mojana* and the *Mojano*, who are creatures with inverted feet, white skin and long brown hair (in the case of the female creature, the *Mojana*) live in this territory under the main creek of the community. One of my participants told me that some children in the community were scared of me because I looked like the *Mojana*. These creatures kidnap, but then return, children who are not baptised or disobey community practices. For instance, children should not visit the *montes* or the creeks during certain hours alone.

The *Mojana* and the *Mojano* trick children by showing them a familiar face, but suddenly reveal their real one after kidnapping them. Baptism must take place right away to prevent these temporary abductions. The baptism was also a strategy implemented by Domingo Criollo, Maroon leader, during colonial times to protect their people from extermination campaigns, as explained in chapter 4. The progressive environmental damage of the *montes* and the creeks of the town of San Basilio de Palenque has been slowly destroying the world of the *Mojano* and the *Mojana* as well. The community is certain about this because children do not often describe encounters with these creatures anymore.<sup>147</sup>

The transmission of culture through tales and legends is a common feature around the world (Webber, 2000; Angelopoulos, 2010; Darian-Smith, 2013; Sen, 2013). The tale of the *Mojano* and the *Mojana* are one of the many that Pérez Palomino (2002) explains in his master’s dissertation ‘*Del Arroyo al acueducto: Transformación sociocultural en el Palenque de San Basilio*’ [From the Creek to the Aqueduct: Sociocultural Transformation in the *Palenque de San Basilio*]. Along with the territory of the town of the mother-community and the territory

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<sup>146</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015.

<sup>147</sup> Teresa Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Inirida Salgado Pérez was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Manuel Cásseres Reyes was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

of the *Mojano* and the *Mojana*, for the *Palenqueros* there is also the territory of the dead, mainly inhabited by the first Maroons, who had returned to the ancestral Africa after their death but continued building paths from there to the mother-community (Pérez Palomino, 2002).

The territories (both tangible and intangible) described in this section have been perceived as the foundation of the community, the culture and the family.

Because having land is one thing, and having territory is another thing. The territory is the space where we move around. It is important to stay vigilant, who sells, who buys, who arrives, who did not come back, who is here and why and what are we producing and what we do not produce.<sup>148</sup>

The loss of territory endangers the *Palenqueros* as a group because they are forced to assimilate themselves into foreign territories through migration and forced displacement, as explained in chapter 5.<sup>149</sup>

For me, losing the territory is like losing our life, the tradition of our people, that is San Basilio de Palenque. The loss of the territory is like the loss of our identity (...) as *Palenqueros* and Afro-descendants, because if we do not have land, how can we support our families (...) Sometimes, I feel frustrated when I cannot reach what I want, that is the land because we here feel that our land, the land is being lost.<sup>150</sup>

This section shows that the *Palenquero* territorialities are entangled in between the world of the living or the town of San Basilio de Palenque, the inverted world of the *Mojano* and the *Mojana*, and the afterlife world of their ancestors that bridges the community with the African continent. To the descriptions of these three worlds described by Pérez Palomino (2002), chapter 5 of this thesis has shown the new geographies of San Basilio de Palenque that run outside the borders of the mother-community as the result of the recent migration to Cartagena de Indias and forced displacement as a consequence of the war.

The next section explores the perception of the interviewees on the effects of the law on the protection of Afro-descendant territories and the *Palenquero* ones. As stated before, the legal strategy continues being the primary option pursued by the *Palenque* despite its failure.

#### **4.b. Protecting Black Territories?**

The idea that the 1991 Constitution through its Transitory Article 55 was a historical territorial reparation for the Afro-descendants loses strength on the ground. Cassiani Herrera's

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<sup>148</sup> Ismael Maestre Cimanca was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>149</sup> Ismael Maestre Cimanca was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>150</sup> Sarai Zuñiga Pedraza was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

interpretation on this matter points out that the Constitution was “a Constitution without leadership,” where the inclusion of human rights, biodiversity and indigenous rights tried to impede the violence that was taking place in Colombia. The Constitutional Assembly did not peacefully accept Transitory Article 55 but the measure gained traction during the constitutional debates with the support of the indigenous people. Therefore, as Cassiani Herrera concludes, there was no appetite for further redress for the Afro-descendants.<sup>151</sup>

Enrique Márquez San Martín, *Palenquero*, argues the internal legal asymmetry in the Constitution regarding the unequal recognition of land rights within the Afro-descendants is not arbitrary as it looks. Blackness as an identity was more developed in the Pacific area.

The ones who identified more themselves as *negros* were in the Pacific, where at that time recognising themselves as *negros* was not easy. At that moment, they were discriminated against, belittled, they [Afro-descendants] placed themselves as *moreno* [brown], *trigueño* [associated with the colour of the wheat], but in the Pacific, they identified themselves as *negros*.<sup>152</sup>

Both Cassiani Herrera and Márquez San Martín agree with the idea that despite this constitutional construction on the recognition of land rights with an emphasis on the Pacific, the inclusion of the phrase “other areas” allowed them to claim participation as ‘other’ Afro-descendant communities as a path of territorial restitution through Law 70.<sup>153</sup> However, Law 70 did not only open the door to potential land restitution but made the Afro-descendants realise that they were not as high a priority regarding land rights as the indigenous people.

For the government, it was never convenient, never had a real interest in giving effective recognition to the black people, Afro-Colombian, or *Palenquero*. The indigenous people are there, they are recognised as such, but for the *negros*, it is not the same (...) Racism is so tremendous that we are something inconvenient, this is what we are (...) We continue being a trouble (...) because we continue attached to the territory. One of the more strong things is the attachment to the territory. In Buenaventura, where they wanted to displace the people to expand the port, the people remained. This is problematic because it is when the war starts.<sup>154</sup>

Aware that they continue to be seen as intruders, Afro-descendants thought that the way forward to protect their territories relied on the strategies implemented by the indigenous people through ethnic legislation. After all, the external legal asymmetry set in the Constitution

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<sup>151</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015.

<sup>152</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>153</sup> Alfonso Cassiani Herrera was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>154</sup> Rosario Charo Mina was interviewed in Cali on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

reinforced that thought: They were not enough, they will not be if a law does not recognise their entitlement in front of the Colombian society.

We said if the indigenous have their way, their laws, a manner to see the world, the law respects that manner to see the world, their way to celebrate, their culture, why we, the Afro-descendants, don't. Therefore, we should utilise the strategy implemented by the indigenous to reach these laws, these goals.<sup>155</sup>

Márquez San Martín describes a process lead by the black communities of the Pacific Ocean, which started in the 1970s. Since then, the recognition of the right to territory was thought possible through the existence of a law that engages with their culture and particularities: "We could not fight for a territory, a culture, an economy, and nothing else, as long as we don't have a law that respects us."<sup>156</sup>

San Basilio de Palenque fell into the legal trap by assuming a way to protect their territory based on a history that was not theirs. They forgot that their territorial rights had a justification since 1714. The community followed the discourse constructed around Law 70 based on empty lands and a model of ecologic and indigenized black communities. Furthermore, extra efforts were made to justify their entitlement as an ethnic group. In this sense, Rosario *Charo* Mina points out,

The construction of Law 70 was made following the indigenous law. It was our referent. It was following this model that we work to fill it with content, from our cultural experience and the life's aspirations of the black people, filling it with content and trying to adapt it. It was a huge effort to try to show all the cultural element and all the elements that could define us as people as an ethnic group. That was a huge debate: Why the *negros*?<sup>157</sup>

However, despite Law 70 and the efforts to be entitled as subjects of land rights, San Basilio de Palenque woke up from the promised land of certainty when *La Bonga* was displaced in the context of the armed conflict in early 2000, and new ways to protect the territory had to be considered by the community.<sup>158</sup>

#### **4.c. The Collective Title Deed of the Dispossession**

The forced displacement of *La Bonga* was not a surprise for the community, but something that they were long expecting. Since the 1950s, the armed conflict had turned this productive

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<sup>155</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>156</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>157</sup> Rosario *Charo* Mina was interviewed in Cali on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>158</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

agricultural area into a military corridor that provided access to the different regular and irregular armed groups to the Montes de María. *La Bonga* got caught in a dispute for territorial control between the military armed forces and the Front-37 of the FARC-EP. As explained in chapter 5, *La Bonga*'s forced displacement in the 2000s started with the assassination of community leaders after warnings made by the military armed forces to stop cooperating with the guerrillas. This cooperation was in the form of rice provision to the irregular armed group because the *Bongueros* were forced to do it under threat of violence.<sup>159</sup> Some of the members of *La Bonga* then migrated to the urban area of San Basilio de Palenque. This forced migration made the *Palenqueros* find a way to give the *Bongueros* protection from territorial dispossession. A collective title deed over their lands was perceived as the solution not only for *La Bonga* but San Basilio de Palenque as well: In a war context, they could be the next victims of forced displacement. However, as described in the following paragraphs, the 2012 collective title deed did not revert land grabbing but accelerated it consistently.

For obtaining a collective title, the community needed to establish first a community council, as required by Law 70 and Decree 1745/1995. The scope of Decree 1745/1995 is related to step-by-step administrative procedures for titling lands, and the authorities that assess the land claims and implement on the ground the collective title deed. It describes the integration and faculties of the Community Council who internally administers the land of the so-called Black territories; secondly, the functions of the state-based Expert Commission, which, for instance, assesses the petitions of collective title deeds made by the Afro-descendant communities, the boundaries of these title deeds and negotiates contracts for the exploitation of the natural resources existent in these territories; and third, the collective title deed procedure (República de Colombia, 1995). For the case of the black communities of the Pacific Ocean, Oslender understands the Community Councils as new administrative and territorial actors, which act as interlocutors in front of the Colombian state and multinationals. These new local authorities overlap with state territorialities (Cairo *et al.*, 2018).

As a common dynamic across the world when a state imposes an alien political structure on a community, the requirement of the establishment of a community council was not easy to digest for San Basilio de Palenque because its way to organise their social structure since the colonial times was through the *Kuagros*. As explained in chapter 2, *Kuagros* were groups of socialisation and cooperation based on age and gender (Cross and de Friedemann, 1979; Pérez

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<sup>159</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.



Palomino, 2002). Although though I do not have a source to substantiate the following idea, when community councils were set as a requirement for the recognition of land rights, Law 70 might have had in mind the black councils.<sup>160</sup> The *cabildos negros* were places in Cartagena de Indias, where the slaves from the same ethnic group (to avoid uprisings) received a sort of health care ‘treatment’ after the passage and before being sold. The black councils later became spaces for redress, cultural and religious exchange for the slaves in the so-called New World (de Friedemann, 1990, 2008). As explained in chapter 4, *palenques* were clandestine rebel communities of runaway slaves and their descendants outside the control of the colonial system, and their defence groups against the military campaigns developed into the *Kuagros* (de Friedemann, 1990). Whether intentional or not, Law 70’s discursive effect is to model Afro-descendant lands after the figure of the spaces of ‘treatment’ of slaves (the *cabildos negros*) rather than as places of resistance (the *palenques*)

It could be argued that *palenques* were mainly processes of resistance with prevalence in the Caribbean area and not in other areas of Colombia. However, Rosario Charo Mina asserts that the *palenque* is a legacy even “for communities which did not have a process of marronage. The marronage is still there” as if imprinted in the DNA of the Afro-descendants.<sup>161</sup> The impact of the political mobilisation of the black communities of the Pacific ocean on the recognition of rights for the rest of the Afro-descendants in Colombian has been described along this chapter, and it was an object of particular analysis in the work of Wade (1993), Cogollo et al. (2008); Escobar (2008); and Wabgou et al. (2012). However, we know very little about how the history of the geographies of marronage analysed in this thesis has impacted on the mobilisation of other Afro-descendant communities in the rest of the country. This analysis is pending to address Rosario Charo Mina’s claim about marronage as an Afro-descendant intangible legacy for non-Maroon communities in Colombia.

Márquez San Martín states that the community started “a process of acceptance. The role of the first community council was to create awareness in the community to accept that way [to organise their territory]” under the form of a community council.<sup>162</sup> In the *Kuagros*, the exercise of power is horizontal, and there is no hierarchy among its members. Therefore, although the members of the first Community Council tried to portray themselves as following

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<sup>160</sup> Transcripts of the debates of Law 70/1993 in the Colombian Congress cannot be accessed remotely. The analysis of these debates can be an area for future research.

<sup>161</sup> Rosario Charo Mina was interviewed in Cali on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>162</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

the same rules of these ancestral groups<sup>163</sup>, this was not perceived as so by the community. The community challenged the authority and the propositions of this Community Council, such as the 2012 collective title deed, making it difficult to implement on the ground. It created a conflict that did not exist before in San Basilio de Palenque, as Manuel Cásseres Reyes says, over who retains the power in the community through the community council.<sup>164</sup>

Before the community council, the authority was exercised by the elders (Pérez Palomino, 2002), the socialisation in the *Kuagros* (Cross and de Friedemann, 1979), and the main division within San Basilio de Palenque was to belong either to the *barrio de arriba* or the *barrio de abajo*. The first district was associated with a better knowledge of the *Palenquero* language and with ancestors coming directly from Congo, and the second district, with *negros criollos* [or born on Latin American soil] as founding men (Moñino, 2017). However, this lineal difference between the districts has been not validated by genetic evidence (Ansari-Pour *et al.*, 2016). Nowadays, the *barrio de arriba* is more associated with the migration to cities to work, and the *barrio de abajo* is linked with pursuing an education. Manuel Cásseres Reyes, a lawyer from the *Palenque*, said that “I am from the *barrio de abajo*, the district of the intellectuals of the *Palenque*.”<sup>165</sup>

The collective title deed is also a construction present in Law 70 but not completely internalised in communities such as San Basilio de Palenque. Agreements on territory were verbal until the 1940s, and it was not until around 1900 that the community started to have more contact with the “outside world”, and therefore, with the practice of individualising the land with barbed wire.<sup>166</sup> This process explained the visit of the members of San Basilio de Palenque in 1921 to a judge to state the borders of their community.

It was in the 1980s and 1990s that the community started to hear about the idea of a private title deed when the first *Palenqueros* went to study in universities: “the lawyers (...) realised that the rest of the world had one [private title deed], and without private title deed, the territory was under risk.”<sup>167</sup> Márquez San Martín highlights that lawyers from San Basilio de Palenque were against the idea of collective territory and the ancestral knowledge, “as the elders used to

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<sup>163</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>164</sup> Manuel Cásseres Reyes was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>165</sup> Manuel Cásseres Reyes was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>166</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Bernardino Perez was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>167</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

say, they knew the *letter*, and therefore, they do not suffer what we suffer because supposedly they have new ideas.” However, this explanation did not have a significant impact on the community, who mainly continued using and possessing their lands under non-formal agreements, because they either trusted the value of the word given or did not have access to the procedures needed to convert their verbal agreements into private title deeds.<sup>168</sup> As explained in chapter 2, informal community agreement over land delivers more certainty than a title deed (Brasselle et al. 2002; Ubink 2009; Smith 2014).

Colombian geographies of resistance have been described as anti-capitalist and anti-commodification of nature (Jímenez-Martín, 2016). However, some voices in the *Palenque* show internal disagreements regarding the organisation of the territory under a counter-hegemonic logic. Manuel Cásseres Reyes, who is a lawyer, states that the collective property is not part of their culture pointing that “the collective title deed is only because of Law 70.”<sup>169</sup> Nevertheless, he highlights some collective practices of the use of the land in the community, for example, the “*mano cambiada*” [‘exchanged hands’], which implies working another person’s land in exchange for some of the produce, and vice versa. Furthermore, he states that the collective title deed is an obstacle for development in the area.

The title deed does not improve the people’s quality of life, inside the territory, people are dying with the title deed because investment is not arriving. No one wants to deal with the prior, free and informed consultation in the communities (...) What are we going to do with the title deed if we are dying inside the territory.<sup>170</sup>

Today the territories under collective titles are like a national anthem [colloquially understood to mean ‘they are words with no consequences’]. They are not useful at all. What did change for *Palenque* with the title? Which benefit did *Palenque* obtain with the title? What can we do with the title if we are dying in the territory? Ana Laura [the researcher], we are dying there, you saw it, you came from there [San Basilio de Palenque] (...) *Palenque* is an S.O.S, a cry for help.<sup>171</sup>

Moreover, Manuel Cásseres Reyes sees as another disadvantage the impossibility to sell the lands to the stronger bidder. Cásseres Reyes highlights that people sold their lands substantially which were included in the 2012 collective title deed.

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<sup>168</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>169</sup> Manuel Cásseres Reyes was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>170</sup> Manuel Cásseres Reyes was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>171</sup> Manuel Cásseres Reyes was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

“the title is not in the head [of the people], there [in the *Palenque*] the people sell what is theirs without taking into account the title deed (...) the collective title deed happened in the community because Law 70, but it was not part of our culture.”<sup>172</sup>

Márquez San Martín also states that people are selling their lands to outsiders, but he added different reasons: threats and bribery promoted by business companies, mainly associated with monocropping in the area, with the assistance of the military forces acting in the Montes de María.

People sell their lands within the collective title because threats and bribes [from business companies] and fear of military incursions in their territory, for instance, in La Bonga, which continues being a path, a strategic corridor.<sup>173</sup>

After the 2012 title deed, Márquez San Martín describes that community leaders received invitations from the military battalion in the area to meet with business managers, who proposed to buy or rent lands in San Basilio de Palenque to do monocropping. After those meetings, he discovered firstly, that these companies were after lands which were dispossessed by armed groups. These companies probably even promoted these dispossessions to have easy and low-priced access to them.

They [the military] asked me to meet them in the Montes de María, in the military battalion. There was the manager of a business company. I was called with two other local leaders. They told us that they could open a bank account for you to buy land in our communities or rent our lands (...) I was the legal representative of the Community Council [of San Basilio de Palenque] and explained them that this offer was against our politics. They insisted the door was open for buying or renting our land. They explained that many people sold their land (...) that they expected it was not an opposition. They were particularly interested in the land where forced displacement took place or was guerrillas in its area because they were the one who were feeding the war.<sup>174</sup>

The business men of the oil palm called me to meet them in María La Baja and they offered me the same [to sell lands or rent them]. They asked what they had to do to convince the community to crop palm. They told me that with this business in the community *Palenquero*'s mothers wouldn't need to sell traditional sweets on the streets and leave their children alone because they will have money. But, I told them, what are we gonna do with the money? Are we gonna buy yuca in Mahates? We ancestrally Mahates came to buy yuca here in *Palenque*. One of the biggest suppliers of banana and rice was María La Baja, today they have money, but they have to go and buy banana and rice to Cartagena.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Manuel Cásseres Reyes was interviewed in Cartagena de Indias on February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>173</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>174</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>175</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

Secondly, Márquez San Martín knew that many members of the community sold their lands or rented them for monocropping. *Palenqueros* became tenants in their territories, who are being used to work the lands for a small salary.

I discovered that many people have sold their lands. I approached them and asked them, if you put your land into the collective title deed, why are you selling your land if you know that it is not allowed? They explained that they sold their lands because they were going to receive a lot of money and they were going to work and there was going to be employment in the town. Others rented their lands. They were told they were going to be administrators of their lands and received a payment.<sup>176</sup>

After these realisations about what was happening as result of the 2012 collective title deed, Márquez San Martín concluded that “the territory is still under risk, despite the laws, the special protection recognised to La Bonga (...) the territory is still under risk.”<sup>177</sup> The question to Márquez San Martín was then what is next for the protection of the territory in San Basilio de Palenque? His answer relied one more time on the law, but this time in the Decree 4635/2011 which aims for land restitution to black, Afro-Colombian, *Raisales* and *Palenqueras* communities (República de Colombia. Ministerio del Interior, 2011).<sup>178</sup> These communities can obtain land restitution if they are victims of land dispossession from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1991 to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021 and the transgression is directly or indirectly linked to the armed conflict (República de Colombia. Ministerio del Interior, 2011). However, the lands lost due to the armed conflict constitute a small portion of the territory, and while worth claiming, is not enough to be considered restitution as a historical reparation.

The same question about the future of territorial restitution was asked to Rosario *Charo* Mina, an Afro-descendant leader in the Cauca region, and she mentioned awareness of their own identity, sense of belongingness, political thinking and re-occupation of their stolen lands.<sup>179</sup> As long as San Basilio de Palenque is not able to reassume their history and become able to diversify strategies, as in the Maroon times, while using the law as a last resort, the battle for the territory seems to be a losing one.

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<sup>176</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>177</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>178</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>179</sup> Rosario *Charo* Mina was interviewed in Cali on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

## **5. Rooting the Right to Territory of Afro-descendants**

The legal aim of protecting the territories of the Afro-descendants clashes with a notion that is deeply rooted in the Colombian society: Afro-descendants are considered intruders, who fought for a space to call their own along with the European invaders and indigenous people during colonial times (Olsen, 1998). This struggle for territory continues to the present day because the Afro-descendants in Colombia may fall under the category of people who seem to belong to no-land, as described by Butler and Athanasiou (2013).

Butler and Athanasiou (2013) give the example of the African-Americans in the United States, who are the target of insults that compel them to go back ‘home’ to Africa. This uprootedness, which is socially constructed in the case of the African-Americans, could also be found in the case of the Afro-descendants in Colombia. This phenomenon requires consideration of the foundation of the right to territory for a racial group –the Afro-descendants– who were neither invaders nor the natives of the Latin American territories.

Maroon groups in Surinam share a similar colonial past with San Basilio de Palenque in terms of slave escapes, the building of clandestine communities and peace agreements with the colonial regime. While analysing these groups, Price (1983) has seen in the migratory movement from Africa to the American continent the roots of their land rights in these geographies. The critique made to Price’s position in this thesis is the word ‘migration’ used by the author as the foundation of land rights for the Maroon communities in Surinam. The word ‘migration’ does not highlight the direct violence (Galtung 1969; 2016) in the passage that brought enslaved African men and women to the American continent. Their kidnapping that caused homelessness -in Smith's words (1994:272)- precaritising their lives in a new geography is the justification for the right to territory of the Afro-descendant communities in Latin America.

Legal discourse has justified land rights for Afro-descendant communities, firstly, in correlation with case law on indigenous people’s rights, which was used as an example to support the claims of the Afro-descendant communities over territory (Giupponi Olmos, 2010). Nevertheless, Afro-descendant communities have a unique historical, social and political process that cannot be disregarded by simplistic assimilation to the history of the indigenous communities, who are first nations in their lands.

Case law on Afro-descendants and land rights are scarce. *The Moiwana community vs. Suriname* (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2005) and *The Saramaka people vs. Surinam* (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2007), delivered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, are turning points in the struggle of the Afro-descendants for territorial reparation in Latin America. Both judgments refer to the situation of Maroon communities in Surinam, who were victims of forced displacements caused by military attacks and business development in the second case.

In *The Moiwana community vs. Suriname*, the Court explains that, like in the case of indigenous communities that have occupied their lands ancestrally based on customary practices, the mere land possession of a Maroon community was sufficient to obtain the official recognition of their collective ownership. This recognition is based on the special relationship, which transcends the material meaning including cultural and spiritual elements that the community has with their lands (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2005).

Furthermore, in *The Saramaka people vs. Surinam*, the Court states again that case law on indigenous people's rights can be extended to the situation of tribal communities to protect their survival because they share similar social and cultural patterns. Nevertheless, it is recognised that the *Samaraka* are not indigenous people while describing their past associated with slavery and asserting their character as a tribal community instead. The Court conceptualises the right to the collective traditional territories, but under the scope of the right to property (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2007).

This last manoeuvre that places the right to territory into the scope of the right to property is the second pitfall in the intent to protect the land of the Afro-descendants: Both the protection of the territories of Afro-descendant and indigenous communities were traditionally based on a property right discourse. Property right discourse had to be reformulated by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to try to capture the particularities present in the relationship between these communities and their lands. The right to property was shaped as collective instead of an individual right to reflect that, for these communities, land is not a commodity. Melo (2006) explains that the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has reinterpreted the right to property by broadening the individualistic scope of the Civil Law tradition to include other types of possession associated with collective exercise and intangible aspects of its enjoyment.

In the *Case of the Afro-Descendant Communities Displaced from the Cacarica River Basin (Operation Genesis) vs. Colombia*, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights analyses the situation of an Afro-descendant community in Colombia. The Court describes the violation of the right to collective property when military and paramilitary forces in 1997 forcibly displaced an Afro-descendant community from their territories in the Cacarica river basin (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2013). Once again, the loss of territory for this community is seen as a loss of property. The Court again missed the opportunity to remove the protection of the territories of the Afro-descendants from the logic of the property rights discourse. The Court did not recognise the right to collective traditional territories as was done previously in *The Saramaka people vs. Surinam*. The change in the Court composition might be the reason of this. There are other reasons why this protection should not be framed under the scope of the right to property.

For the Afro-descendants, their lands are not commodities to trade in the market, and property right discourse does not embrace the collective and intangible aspect of these territories that was explained before. Secondly, it is political because the concept of property has been historically constructed as a racist notion. The right to property was exercised over the bodies of the African slaves while whiteness became a valuable resource, a privilege, and protection against slavery (Bhandar, 2014). In the USA, for instance, the dynamic of the plantation turned the slaves into property, dispossessing them of their African heritage (Yelvington, 2001). Even after the abolition of slavery, the legal distinction between free and unfree black people did not make an immediate difference in practice, as free or unfree black people continued to be perceived as slaves (Armstead *et al.*, 2016).

In Colombia, slavery did not imply the social death of African men and women. Slaves were considered property, but at the same time, subjects with limited legal faculties and souls that could be evangelised and receive the sacraments of the Catholic faith. As examples of these faculties, it could be mentioned the possibility to buy their freedom from their owners, to get married, to own small things, to not be murdered or mutilated without a judicial order, and to seek the protection of the authorities in the case of severe mistreatment (Navarrete Peláez, 2006). In the Colombian context, as explained section 3.a., the recognition of the Afro-descendants as part of the nation began with the 1991 Constitution, 140 years after the abolition of slavery.



The claim of removing the land mobilisation of indigenous communities from the logic of capitalism and ‘possession’ is present in the work of Butler and Athanasiou (2013), as explained in chapter 2, but also in many others. For instance, Keenan (2010) calls for property to be ‘subversive,’ moving from exploitation to community-based practices, such as the ones developed by indigenous communities in Australia. In a Canadian context, Blackburn (2005) explains that land formalization of indigenous communities is an imperative for the global capital to act with certainty through investments. This argument is taken by Mackey (2014), who states that decolonising indigenous land mobilisation implies embracing uncertainty and going against settler’s expectations. These critiques have not been explored in the same way in the case of Afro-descendant communities, and this chapter aims to bridge this gap.

The risk of placing the struggle for territories under the right to property not only concerns San Basilio de Palenque being co-opted in a discourse that considered them as property in the past, but is even responsible for their land dispossession by portraying their territories as precarious spaces, and therefore, passive in the face of land-grabbing. The effect of the legal discourse that ‘protects’ the lands of the Afro-descendants becomes, in fact, a reterritorialization that benefits the powerholders and deprives the black communities in Colombia.

As explained in section 2.a, constitutional reform has been perceived as a way to promote social change and conflict resolution in Colombia. Furthermore, the insufficient participation of the FARC-EP and ELN [the National Liberation’s Army] in the 1991 constitutional reform has been pointed as an obstacle to the end of political violence in the country (Hurtado, 2006). The current peace process provides a context for debates about the convenience of a new constitutional reform. This idea has not been strongly supported by many. However, it could be a promising scenario for the inclusion of an article that acknowledges the right to territory of the Afro-descendants based on something other than the pernicious effects of the property land rights discourse and close to the right to life and the freedom of movement as explained in more detail in the conclusion of this chapter.

## **6. Conclusions**

This chapter demonstrated how the Colombian land rights discourse for black communities has as an effect territorial violence or dispossession and becomes an on-the-ground factor of reterritorialisation in favour of the powerholders. This result is something that none want to

say aloud, but probably is in the mind of many, as evidenced in the resistance against the 2012 collective title deed present in the *Palenque*.

Scholars, such as Delaney (2016), have explained how law can produce unjust spatialities. For instance, property law has been used as an instrument for dispossession by colonialism (Blomley, 2003; Fields, 2012). As examined in this chapter for the case of San Basilio de Palenque, the first dispossession of their lands was discursive when its land was declared empty of history and owners by the law, yet occupied, as another example of cultural violence (Galtung 1969) against Afro-descendants. The second dispossession suffered by San Basilio de Palenque is the tangible loss of their lands, as another example of direct violence (Galtung, 1969).

Therefore, the study of the effect of the Colombian land rights discourse for San Basilio de Palenque expands the examples in the literature of imaginative geographies regarding how space is crafted by discourses in order to pursue certain aims, such as the suppression of certain groups from their lands and the justification of this suppression (Said, 2000; Velásquez Runk, 2015). This case study provides a different example from the ones found in the literature that investigates how the law can become an instrument of precarity and, in some cases, territorial dispossession (Gregory 2006; Gregory 2007; Fields, 2012; Mountz 2013; Vélez-Torres, 2016; Burrige & Gill 2017). This case study differs from previous examples in the *benevolent* intentions declared by the Colombian state through its land rights discourse of preserving the distinct culture and the territories of black communities. The particularity of the territorial dispossession of San Basilio de Palenque as a legal outcome is that it is caused by a law that in its letter has as an aim to protect black territories under a human rights discourse. However, through a schizophrenic discourse, the law declares these territories as both rural and empty, but –paradoxically– ancestrally and collectively occupied by a Maroon-descendant community.

The liberal promise of the colour-blind benevolence of the law falls apart once again (Blomley, 1994; Olund, 2002). The aim of the Colombian land rights discourse deployed by the state differs from the objectives pursued by other legislation which explicitly justifies the dispossession of subaltern communities (Fields, 2012) or puts the focus on business and development interests (Vélez-Torres, 2016). This finding shows that intentionally or unintentionally land rights as discourse is not a reliable instrument to deliver territorial justice for the Maroon territories of San Basilio de Palenque. It is a discourse that produces an unjust

spatial distribution benefiting powerholders (Blomley, 2003; Braverman *et al.*, 2013; Delaney, 2016) to the detriment of racialised subjects. The reasons behind the ambivalence of the land rights discourse for indigenous people pointed out by Blomley (2014) and Anthias and Radcliffe (2015) might be further interrogated through this reading of the effect of land rights discourse for the case of an Afro-descendant community. As Lorde wrote in the 1970s (2018:19) “the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.” This argument is explored in more detail in the conclusion of this thesis. However, it is necessary to point out here that if past and present marronage include in its main objectives the achievement of security, this security will never be achieved through a legal discourse that is schizophrenic and spreads ambiguity by not undoubtedly recognising that Maroon lives are presences in their territories. As stated in chapter 4, territory made marronage possible, but marronage – as resistance- has produced and re-produced – even with precarity - these entangled territories of resistance during centuries from colonial times to the present day.

The analysis of the Colombian lands rights discourse also enlarged empirically the concept of cultural and structural violence developed by Galtung (2016;1969). Firstly, the characterisation of the black geographies as ‘empty places,’ yet occupied, makes invisible the historical ownership of their communities. Secondly, the production of external and internal legal asymmetries on the recognition of land rights - between and within ethnic groups - has caused their segmentation and provoked the *precarisation* of a unified and robust mobilisation towards land restitution. This chapter also extended beyond indigenous people (i.e. Meyers & Mugambwa 1993; Kidd 1994; Justice K Cullinane 2002; Buchan & Heath 2006; Campos-Serrano & Rodríguez-Esteban 2017; Zadorin 2018) the analysis of the use of a refurbished *terra nullius* doctrine in the case of an Afro-descendant community, San Basilio de Palenque. This refurbished *terra nullius* doctrine portrays its territories as ‘empty’ – yet occupied - and not ‘worthy’ of protection, therefore becoming an easy target of land grabbing. Territorial dispossession does not depend on the fact that the process of land formalisation is completed (as mentioned in the introduction of this chapter: no registration of the Resolution No.0466 in the Land Registry) for the case of San Basilio de Palenque. Land formalisation was completed in the territories of the black communities of the Pacific Ocean and did not prevent land grabbing.

Despite this, the legal strategy continues to be the primary strategy for land restitution in San Basilio de Palenque. Assimilation of indigenous people and the black communities of the

Pacific Ocean was also a strategy implemented for these communities to gain land rights entitlement. In order to retain territory, the *Palenque* accepted to lose some land that was within its ancestral territory but currently in the hands of the powerholders. This strategy, implemented in 2012, is currently under review in the community. Specific mechanisms of Law 70, such as the community council and the collective title deed itself, were perceived by the community as alien institutions. Therefore, despite any stipulations imposed by Law 70, the *Palenque* continues to trust its non-formal agreements over land. Land demarcations made by the colonial regime have operated for San Basilio de Palenque as a primary cause of territorial dispossession, and a secondary impetus in the consolidation of the effects of other reasons for land grabbing. Most significantly, the 2012 land demarcation based on legislation embedded in a *terra nullius* discourse was the most detrimental for the community.

Colombian land rights discourse cannot embrace the multiple territories that coexist within the idea of San Basilio de Palenque and its geographies of marronage. The right to territory of the Afro-descendant communities should be consequently understood as distinct from a property right and indigenous people's rights discourses. It can be reframed under the scope of two other rights rooted in the homelessness (Smith 1994:272) inflicted on African men and women by slavery in a new geography that still demands reparation for their descendants<sup>180</sup>:

1) the right to life linked to the cultural and physical survival of these communities. This a notion that started to emerge in the case of *The Saramaka People v. Suriname* delivered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights,

2) freedom of movement, for instance, in the case of the Maroon communities, their autonomous territories were synonymous of freedom from slavery during the colonial times, and nowadays their urban *palenques* continue to be shelters that confront racial discrimination in the city, and their refugee-like *palenques*, places to resist forced displacement.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Precedents on indigenous people's rights delivered by the Court (e.g. Case of the Pueblo Bello Massacre v. Colombia, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2006, and Case of the "Mapiripán Massacre" v. Colombia, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005) highlight the strong connection between their communal property and their right to life understood in a broad sense (Fuentes, 2017). However, this approach is still developed under the scope of the right to property (Article 21 of the American Convention on Human Rights).

<sup>181</sup> In terms of the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, who has been addressing the violation of the territories of afro-descendant communities in Latin American, the right to life is recognised in the article 4 of the American Convention of Human Rights and freedom of movement is recognised in the article 22 of the same treaty.

These legal propositions are just the starting point for thinking through and producing a legal justification of the right of territory of this Maroon community, a long-term project that is still under discussion with them.

## **7. Afterword**

The hopes set out in Law 70 as a tool designed to protect the Afro-descendant lands can also be found in the current discourse of activists from San Basilio de Palenque. On June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017, during a seminar entitled *The Role of the Archive in the Times of Peacebuilding* that I organised in the community to submit my archival findings, Alfonso Cassiani Herrera, *Palenquero*, activist and historian, highlighted the importance of the collective title deed, Law 70 and the historical records to protect their territories. This thesis agrees with the idea that historical records are essential pieces to support the collective memory as evidence of a process of territorialisation that linked land possession with freedom. The path of mistrust in the legal system described in this chapter is not easy to take for me, first as a lawyer, who has devoted her professional life to fight battles within the legal system, and second, as an activist working with other activists, whose faith in a human rights discourse have made them continue struggling against oppression.

Lemaitre Ripoll (2007:14; 2009) delves into the desire for legal reforms when, in fact, law demonstrates its incapability of changing unfairness by its mere adoption. Legal reforms are not pursued for their actual benefits, but because of the emotional political and cultural significances that they appeal to: “If desire is awareness of a lack, it is the lack of ontological human dignity that constitutes desire for law that claims the human sacred. Law stands in the empty space and purports to fill it. This is the reason why law produces so much pleasure, and is desired with so much passion by social justice activists” (Lemaitre 2007:14). Grajales (2015) states that Law 70 did not secure or reverse the territorial dispossession of the Afro-descendant communities but increased retaliation of the business companies and armed groups in the Pacific area. However, for these communities, acquiring the collective title deeds was only the beginning of a process of social mobilisation to advance the recognition of other rights. As stated by Waite (2009), precarity can be a platform for mobilisation and resistance against dispossession.

The question that follows this awakening is, what is left? The answer is not simple, but I have presented its foundation in this chapter. It demands an act of courage to leave behind the false

certainty promised by the law on Afro-descendants and land rights built by the colonial regime and start thinking of strategies for territorial restitution based on the oral tradition and archival records, that in the case of San Basilio de Palenque, play in their favour. It may not be the easiest way, but one worthy of exploration.

## CHAPTER 7: Conclusions

*Palenque gave me life, and a white man enslaved me, I am still tied to his chains  
living my freedom, negra, negrita of the sea.*

*Poem attributed to Sebastián Salgado, Palenquero*<sup>182</sup>

### 1. Introduction

This thesis, *Geographies of Marronage: Dispossession and Resistance in the Last Palenque*, has given answers to the following research questions: What is the past and present significance of territory for San Basilio de Palenque? How has the community experienced and resisted deterritorialisation? How is the history of the territorial struggle of the Maroons mobilised in practices sought by the community to resist against dispossession? And finally, building on the answers to these questions, what is the relationship between the Colombian land rights discourse and the territory of San Basilio de Palenque?

The answers of the research questions were developed in three chapters: Chapter 4: *The Palenque*, Chapter 5: *Entangled Palenques*, and Chapter 6: *The Legal Trap*. Chapter 4 studied the historical geography of the colonial *palenque*, which now serves as the tangible and intangible foundation of the current geographies of marronage of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean, explained in chapter 5. The interaction between the Colombian land rights discourse deployed by the state and the entangled territories of resistance that centuries of marronage have produced was analysed in chapter 6.

I have demonstrated how the territory of the Montes de María made the escape of the African slaves possible. These geographies permitted the slaves' rediscovering with their lost freedom in the context of their rebel communities in colonial times. The Montes de María were the first border known by the Maroons; for them, beyond the *montes* was captivity and, on their side, autonomy. However, this border rapidly proved precarious, and deterritorialisation of the Montes de María was accompanied by violence. Violence was executed over time by different actors, such as white elite landowners, regular and irregular armed groups and, through its land rights discourse and its subsequent territorial demarcations, the state itself.

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<sup>182</sup> This poem was recited by Inirida Salgado Pérez in Cartagena de Indias on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

Nevertheless, the ancestral logic of marronage (gaining space to live in autonomy) continued in the current community practices of reterritorialisation in urban and rural areas to counter dispossession. These practices gave birth to what I call ‘entangled territories of resistance’ that characterise the beauty of the geographies of marronage of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean. These entangled territories of resistance comprise the mother-*palenque*, the urban *palenques* in Cartagena de Indias and the refugee-like *palenques* of *La Pista* and *Rafael de La Bonguita*. This thesis also proved that the Colombian land rights discourse deployed by the state has functioned as the force behind the dispossession of the *Palenque* by portraying their territories as precarious, with neither owners nor history, yet with occupants. The outcome of the implementation of the Colombian land rights discourse was the 2012 demarcation that was the most detrimental element regarding the extension of land recognised to the community, and consequently, of greatest benefit to the powerholders. This demarcation could not reverse dispossession, and in fact, substantially accelerated processes of land grabbing that were taking place in the Montes de María.

In the next two sections of this concluding chapter, I explore the main academic contributions of this thesis and some avenues for future research.

## **2. Academic Contributions**

This section highlights two main empirical contributions of this thesis and explains how they make further significant academic contributions to several bodies of academic literature and suggest avenues for future research, which are described in the next section. The first contribution is that this research developed a geographical analysis of the past and present patterns of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of San Basilio de Palenque. Reterritorialisation practices resulted in the creation of entangled territories of resistance that include the mother-community, the urban *palenques* in Cartagena de Indias, and the refugee-like *palenques*. The analysis of these entangled territories of resistance provides insights into a new example of counter-hegemonic territories of under-represented groups in Latin America (Mançano Fernandes, 2005, 2009, 2010; Lopes de Souza, 2009, 2015; Agnew and Oslender, 2010; Bryan, 2012; Porto Gonçalves, 2012; Zibechi, 2012).

The geographies of marronage of the Afro-descendant population of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean now stand next to other black, *campesino*, indigenous and urban territories that produce alternative spaces, which disrupt state-based territorialities in Latin



America (Mançano Fernandes, 2005, 2009, 2010; Bryan, 2012; Zibechi, 2012; Haesbaert, 2013; Lopes de Souza, 2015; Meek, 2015; Courtheyn, 2018; Halvorsen, 2018). Accordingly, Zibechi (2012) has recognised that the legacy of resistance of the indigenous people has inspired other social movements in Latin America to produce their own territories, free from hegemonic social relationships and in confrontation with the state. The way of resisting and confronting states varies in every counter-hegemonic territory. For example, whereas the *Zapatistas* pursue the establishment of their autonomous communities within the Mexican territory, the *Aymaras* aim to replace the Bolivian state with an *Aymara* nation ruled by the communities. The entangled *palenques* of San Basilio have their own ways of resisting state actions, but they also must resist other powerholders, such as armed groups, business companies, and drug traffickers.

Little is still known about whether the struggles of Maroons have influenced other counter-hegemonic territorial movements in Latin America. Some say yes. For example, Bledsoe (2017) describes how the legacy of marronage is actively mobilised in the Black Social Movement in Brazil in struggles against racial violence and for the legal recognition of Maroon communities in this country while it is only rarely mobilised in the United States of America (mainly in the case of the Black Panthers). In Colombia, Rosario Charo Mina, a black activist from Cauca, explains that marronage is imprinted in the DNA of the Afro-Colombians, inspiring their battles for territorial reparation.<sup>183</sup> Oslender (2008) describes how Pacific Ocean black communities' strategies of flight for survival resemble the historical practice of runaway slaves, who capitalised on the environment to remain hidden from their former captors. Mina's assertion and Oslender (2008)'s example raise the question of to what extent the struggles of the Africans and their descendants in colonial times are also imprinted on the strategies of the other under-represented groups that resist by producing counter-hegemonic territories in *Abya Yala*.

*Abya Yala* is a term that indigenous people's movement has been used to name the American continent after an international indigenous meeting, the II *Cumbre Continental de los Pueblos y Nacionalidades Indígenas de Abya Yala*, that took place in Ecuador in 2004. The use of *Abya Yala* is more than a change of name because it aspires to *recover* the ancestral territory from the discourse of the colonisers. *Abya Yala* was the name chosen by the Kuna people to

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<sup>183</sup> Rosario Mina, activist of the Process of the Black Communities, was interviewed in Cali on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

traditionally refer to the continent, which means blooming and lively *tierra* (Juncosa, 1987; Porto-Gonçalves, 2009).<sup>184</sup> Porto-Gonçalves (2009) explains that the tension between the terms *América* and *Abya Yala* is a dispute between two forms of territorialities. He explicates that the term *América Latina* refers to an America which is mainly European/Latin.

Porto-Gonçalves (2009) states the name, *Abya Yala*, also ignores the presence of the Afro-descendants in this continent. Therefore, he proposes the use of the term *América criolla*. He recognises that the term *criollo* has different connotations in Latin America, for example, it could be associated with the white elites. However, it also captures the people with ancestors coming from other places but born on the continent. In chapter 4, the term *negros criollos* referred to the descendants of the African slaves born in the *palenques*. Other authors, such as Martínez-Magdalena and Villegas Vivancos (2018:20), have added *Quilombola* to *Abya Yala* to make visible the Afro-descendant communities in the continent: “*Abya Yala-Quilombola*.” The word *quilombola* refers to the Maroon communities in Brazil during colonial times (da Costa Segovia *et al.*, 2015).

As explained in this research, there are different Afro-descendant communities with different histories and territories, and Maroon communities are just one of those, with certain forms of territorialisation as analysed in this research for the case of San Basilio de Palenque. Despite this consideration, it is important to keep trying to develop an expression that acknowledges the presence of the Afro-descendants in *Abya Yala*. For instance, Bledsoe (2017) points out that the lack of acknowledgement of the legacy of the Maroon communities in the history of blacks’ struggles promotes structural violence that can potentially devastate black communities. Therefore, as long as we, researchers, are not able to make visible the role of the Afro-descendants in the production of counter-hegemonic spaces in Latin America, states’ logic of denial will endure, embodying new forms of cultural violence (Galtung 2016) against the black geographies in our continent. We will become the executors of the colonial discourse through academic production that reduces the Afro-descendants to complete absences in our countries’ histories (such as in my homeland, Argentina) (Usanna, 2010), or uncomfortable presences, such as in the case of Colombia (Arocha, 1998; Olsen, 1998).

There is also a need to destabilise the hegemonic academic focus on the study of Afro-descendant communities in Colombia which had a tangible impact on their mobilisation for

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<sup>184</sup> The Kuna people were originally from northern Colombia and currently settled in San Blas, Panama (Juncosa, 1987; Porto-Gonçalves, 2009).

rights. The prominence that the black communities of the Pacific Ocean gained in academia (Escobar & Pedrosa 1996; Wade 1996; Escobar 1999; Oslender 2004; Escobar 2008; Cogollo et al. 2008; Oslender 2008; Melo 2015) had (some undesirable) political and legal consequences for the rest of the Afro-descendant groups in Colombia (Wade 1993; 2009). For example, as explained in chapter 6, the causes of legal asymmetries found in the recognition of black territorialities, included the support of academic allies that promoted the cause of the black communities of the Pacific Ocean during the constitutional debates (Leimatre Ripoll 2009). This particular support given to these communities contributed to a legal imbalance in the protection of black territories that potentiates the fragmentation of the Afro-descendant movement in Colombia.

However, it would be unfair to minimise the mobilisation of the black communities of the Pacific Ocean to advance their rights and strengthen their racial identity, as mentioned by Márquez San Martín, a *Palenquero*.<sup>185</sup> The geographical analysis of other under-represented Afro-descendant communities in Colombia has progressively included, for instance, communities in the Cauca region (Mina Rojas et al. 2015; Vélez-Torres 2016) and the Caribbean area (Butrago Villamizar 2006), bringing more research balance. This research contributes to this balance by analysing the community of San Basilio de Palenque in the Colombian Caribbean.

The second contribution is related to the bitter realisation that we (the communities and the activist scholars) were fighting with the wrong arms. Property land rights is a legal discourse that leaves communities unprotected instead of delivering security against territorial dispossession. Quijano (2000:552) states that races considered inferior, such as Afro-descendants and indigenous people in Latin America, were seen as only capable of “producing inferior cultures.” As explained in this thesis, from the perspective of imaginative geographies theory (Gregory, 1995; Said, 2000; Torre, 2010; Velásquez Runk, 2015), the territories of the Afro-descendants and indigenous people were also considered inferior products, precarious, without history and owners, and therefore, they have become easy targets of appropriation since colonial times to the present day. I analysed the operationalisation of the law in the construction of the *Palenquero* territories as precarious spaces from de la Torre’s 1783 report to Law 70/1993.

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<sup>185</sup> Enrique Márquez San Martín, *Palenquero* and former member of the Community Council of San Basilio de Palenque, was interviewed in San Basilio de Palenque on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

This research has empirically enlarged the study of the law as an instrument of precarity (Gregory 2006; Gregory 2007; Mountz 2013; Burridge & Gill 2017), in particular, in the case of black geographies (Vélez-Torres, 2016). Law 70/1993 has been proved to be another example of refurbished *terra nullius* discourse (Meyers and Mugambwa, 1993; Kidd, 1994; Buchan and Heath, 2006; Collis, 2010; Campos-Serrano and Rodríguez-Esteban, 2017; Zadorin, 2018) that also extends the concept of cultural and structural violence developed by Galtung (2016). The analysis of Law 70/1993 shifts the traditional focus on indigenous people, when *terra nullius* doctrine is discussed including the Afro-descendants also as its victims.

The production of decolonised knowledge from a Latin American perspective cannot be achieved from the loneliness and isolation of the scholar (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2016). For Rivera Cusicanqui (2016), producing decolonised knowledge implies working collectively with a purpose or a course of action, ‘thinking’ with the heart and the memories of the peoples. It also requires the production of situated knowledge. For the comprehension of the next paragraphs, the focus should remain on this last assertion made by Rivera Cusicanqui (2016).

Despite highly critical but not completely disruptive approaches to the idea of lands rights (Oslender, 2008; Blomley, 2014; Anthias and Radcliffe, 2015), land rights as a legal discourse have been proven insufficient and inefficient in protecting the territories of the subalterns or redressing their dispossession (Brasselle, Gaspart and Platteau, 2002; Ubink, 2009; Bryan, 2012; Grajales, 2015; Melo, 2015; Vélez-Torres, 2016). This thesis used part of the latter body of critique focused on Latin America and mainly on *campesino*, indigenous and urban subaltern communities for the first time academically to show how property rights as a legal discourse are potentially particularly dangerous for the case of Maroon geographies, as suggested by the geographies of San Basilio de Palenque. This legal discourse is not only particularly dangerous because it cannot prevent or repair territorial dispossession as pointed out by these authors, but it also has demonstrated the capacity to strip away its territories of history and owners facilitating its appropriation by outsiders, despite paradoxically acknowledging their presence.

Furthermore, framing San Basilio de Palenque’s struggle for the production of space under a property rights discourse is using the tools of the colonial system that allowed its dispossession in the past, firstly, as human beings by enslaving them, and secondly, of its social products, including the appropriation of their territories in past and present times. Chapter 4 showed that one of the tools chosen by the *Cimarrones* to resist the violence and insecurity of slavery and

its white spaces, such as cities, mines and *haciendas*, was the building of a new type of territory, the *palenque*, in the Montes de María.

For the case of the British Caribbean, marronage and other slaves' strategies of resistance countered the violence of the plantation, as space from which slavery as a system was produced and reproduced causing insecurity for the African men and women (Noxolo and Featherstone, 2014; Cummings, 2018; Noxolo, 2018). Land treaties between the Maroons and the colonial regimes were perceived as tools to quiet the anxieties of the system that were prompted by the appearance of black rebel communities (Cummings, 2018). Cummings (2018) names the treaties signed between the colonial authorities and the Maroons as land treaties. This name does not do justice to the actual meaning of these agreements because it reduces their political complexity to one of its aspects, which is not minor, the land. In chapter 4, I chose the contemporary term 'peace agreement' because the end of the direct violence was the main strategy chosen to reduce the anxieties of both sides. On one side, the colonial authorities also isolated blackness while protecting white property and spaces, gaining agricultural areas and potential defence resources against invasions, and deterring new slaves' flights and rebellion. On the other side, the Maroons of the Montes de María obtained anticipated freedom compared to the rest of slaves in Colombian and political and (even though precarious) territorial autonomy. Territorial isolation through the performance of the 1714 peace agreement, as a tool, was also negotiated and perceived as beneficial by the Maroons during the 17<sup>th</sup> century showing their agency in a context of insecurity, violence and emergency.

However, Lorde (2018:19) explains "the master's tool will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring genuine change." From a critical geographical perspective, it has also been warned about the toxic use of the master's tool to make the world a more inclusive and just place without decolonising certain concepts, such as solidarity. For instance, Koopman (2008) highlights how, instead of *bringing down* the empire, the white good helper role (or white activist, who works for 'saving' others in need), as a master's tool, can actually contribute to consolidating hegemonies.

After identifying the logic of the master's tool, a question remains: is it possible to completely evade it, in this case of study, land rights as a discourse for the protection of the territories of the subalterns in Latin America? Or, if after acknowledging its violent capacity for territorial dispossession, it becomes necessary to re-read the land rights discourse through the lenses of

the visions of the communities regarding their situated relationship with their territories. This new way to envision the protection of the territories of the subalterns that I propose in this conclusion is inspired by the notion, *ch'ixi*, developed by Rivera Cusicanqui (2016) that connects with the history of *mestizaje* in Latin America. A *ch'ixi* world, the world of the *mestizo* and *mestiza*, is “an intermediate space, where the clash of the opposites creates a zone of uncertainty, a space of friction and unrest that does not allow unity or pacification” (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2016:78).

In the *ch'ixi* space, there is no fusion, there are no white or black, but both elements at the same time. Rivera Cusicanqui (2016:80) states that “there are things that cannot be reconciled” within the *mestizaje*, and this should not paralyse us as *mestizos*. There is a colonial fissure that inhabits every *mestizo* and *mestiza* that lives within me as a researcher and in this research. This fissure is a contradiction that brings pain and bitterness, but it also is a platform for resistance because we were not defeated, and we celebrate survival (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2016). Therefore, under this *ch'ixi* vision, we can work on the contradiction, the friction, of different legal discourses and visions regarding land and territory in our favour strategically. As explained in this thesis, land rights in Western tradition capture the access to land, *el derecho a la tierra*, as a property right to own it as an object. Accordingly, Gilbert (2013:115) defines land rights as “rights to use, control, and transfer a parcel of land.” Land rights historically protected landed and privileged people against power.

In this way, “the right to property applies only to existing possessions and does not address the right to acquire possessions in land” (Gilbert, 2013:117). However, Monsalve Suárez (2004) and Gilbert (2013) have understood land rights as a human rights demand that looks at those who do not have lands (landless people) or are unrecognised as owners, such as women and indigenous people, due to discrimination. Along with land rights discourse, some recent Latin American constitutions, such as the Ecuadorian and the Bolivian, have started to receipt in their legal developments a notion that has ancestrally been part of the communities, the *derechos de la tierra o de la naturaleza* or *Pachamama* [rights of the nature]. Nature, mother nature or *tierra* is not an object, but a subject of rights (Gudynas, 2011; Gregor Barié, 2014).

Nature or *tierra* can be understood through an Andean indigenous concept (Gudynas, 2011), *Pachamama*, a complex organism that demands more understanding (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2016). Gudynas (2011) explains that acknowledging this complexity requires the flexibility to include different concepts of *Pachas* or nature coming from different communities. In other

words, there is no one *Pacha*, but many. As shown in this thesis, the right to territory in Latin America is a concept under dispute in a permanent construction by the subalterns towards collective political projects and dissident modes of living (Mançano Fernandes, 2005, 2009; Lopes de Souza, 2009, 2015; Bryan, 2012; Zibechi, 2012; Haesbaert, 2013; Meek, 2015; Courtheyn, 2018).

As mentioned in chapter 5, Halvorsen (2018:2-5) describes the coexistence between state-based territories and other “bottom-up grassroots” territories in the same space as “overlapping and entangled territories” immersed in a hierarchal and sometimes violent relationship. Halvorsen’s work was published while I was developing my concept of ‘entangled territories of resistance’. I found that the hierarchal and violent relationship against the Maroon geographies of San Basilio de Palenque is not binary - only against the Colombian state - but against other actors for the imposition of territories, whose production represents tangible and intangible losses for the *Palenqueros*. Therefore, this research showed how the territory of San Basilio de Palenque violently overlaps not only with state-based territory but the territories of other powerholders, such as white elites, legal and illegal armed groups, drug traffickers and business companies. Territories of the powerholders were promoted and supported by the Colombian state’s complicity in detriment of Maroon territories, as shown in chapter 5, through a legal discourse that has tried to disappear centuries of Maroon history in the area to facilitate its appropriation: erase this history, to erase this territorial way of living, *cimarronaje* [marronage].

This thesis developed the meaning of geographies of marronage in the Colombian Caribbean as entangled territories of resistance of San Basilio de Palenque in its tangible and intangible aspects and its dynamics of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. In my research of geographies of marronage, I extend Halvorsen (2018:5)’s “entangled territories” in a second way. The term ‘entangled territories of resistance’ is used to describe the production of ensemble spaces *within* San Basilio de Palenque’s territory that configures the geographies of marronage of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean. From colonial times to the present day, *palenque* was freedom, precarity, resistance, and black isolation, a territory, which was the outcome of the escape of men and women during slavery and the migration to urban and rural areas due to different *violencias* in modern times. The entangled territories of San Basilio de Palenque have been permanently nurtured, mobilised and reproduced by the legacy of marronage since colonial times to the present day. There is no *Palenquero* territory without the history of *cimarronaje* [marronage].

This thesis explained that, in colonial times, the record strongly suggested that the *Palenque de San Miguel* aspired to the abolition of slavery until its survival as a group became a priority, and they negotiated freedom, territorial autonomy and isolation. In present times, new *violencias* has caused the migration of *Palenqueros* to urban and rural places creating modern *palenques*. Marronage as freedom in the understanding of Roberts (2017) as a permanent act of flight (Ciccariello-Maher, 2017; Gordon, 2017) must be questioned for the case of San Basilio de Palenque. The act of finding space for achieving freedom and belonging has been accompanied by a permanent state of precarity and insecurity. Cummings (2018) has pointed out a similar critique for the case of the British Caribbean. He highlights that without putting aside the struggle and heroism of marronage, the vulnerability present in this process should also be acknowledged in Maroon Studies. Thus, we must reconsider more celebratory understandings of marronage as freedom, and instead account for the precarity that comes with the equally celebrated ‘permanent act of flight’ and indeed enables and structures this freedom in the first place. Are we free in a permanent act of escaping without belonging? Or, is the building of past and present *palenques*, what has given to *Palenqueros* a foundation to survive and exist under their own identity? This concept of territory or *palenque* cannot be addressed alone by a property land rights discourse. This discourse was even proven violent against the *palenques*.

Therefore, understanding the effect of the Colombian land rights discourse as an actual factor of dispossession of the entangled territories of resistance of San Basilio de Palenque, based on historical and geographical research, can contribute to differently justifying the right to territory of the Afro-descendants. In other words, this means building a justification aware of the effects of the property rights discourse closer to situated notions of the communities regarding the production of space and the right to life and the freedom of movement. This thesis has provided reasons and the basis for justifying the right to territory linked with ideas of uprootedness, freedom and survival after slavery.

### **3. Avenues for Future Research**

We need to know more about the relationship between the *Palenque* and the other rebel communities that were exterminated by colonial campaigns in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Archival research needs to be conducted in the National Historical Archive in Madrid, Spain. This archive contains historical records related to the Inquisition’s trials against Maroons when they were kidnapped again after running away to the *palenques*. These historical records can



contribute to the analysis of other *palenques* of the Montes de María that were almost absorbed by the *Palenque de San Miguel*, which negotiated with the colonial regime and survived.

I am also particularly interested in studying other *pueblos negros* [black towns] in the Montes de María. During my research in the National General Archive of Bogotá, I found maps that could serve to track the locations of former *palenques* that did not survive the war against the colonial regime. In my last visit to San Basilio de Palenque in June 2017, during a workshop, I discussed with *Palenquero* students of anthropology and history, and the historians Maria Cristina Navarrete Peláez and Alfonso Cassiani Herrera, some locations in these maps that were also mentioned by participants during interviews. In some interviews, some villages were identified by the *Palenqueros* as *pueblos negros* and part of the ancestral territory of San Basilio de Palenque. We agreed to develop a research project that matched the oral tradition of these towns along with the archival material collected including the maps. This project also seeks to advance the idea of the participatory historical and geographical research mentioned in chapter 3, where the communities are the ones who interpret and contest the colonial records of their own history.

The connection between the town of San Basilio de Palenque and other *pueblos negros* in the Montes de María, possibly former *palenques*, shows that there are many more potential ramifications for analysing the geographies of marronage of the Afro-descendants of the Montes de María in the Colombian Caribbean. Thus, it is necessary to progress the analysis of migratory *palenques* to other cities in Colombia, and the transnational dimension of this migration to cities such as Maracaibo and Panama City, and their ties with the mother-community, the urban *palenques* in Cartagena de Indias, and the refugee-like *palenques*. Ties among all of them have been described in interviews conducted during my fieldwork.

Moreover, this thesis did not address the impact on the *Palenque* of the forced migration from Venezuela and other areas in Colombia due to armed violence and the political and economic crises in these countries. In these cases, the *Palenque* became a forced destination for survival. For example, in the mother-community, I met children who were born in Venezuela, and were left by their parents under the care of their grandmothers in the *Palenque*. Their parents were born in the mother-community and in the urban *palenques*. They migrated to the *Palenquero* communities in Venezuela looking for job opportunities, and now came back to San Basilio de Palenque escaping from political violence and economic crisis. As explained in chapter 4, *palenque* was also a shelter for people escaping from violence during colonial times, for

example, runaway indigenous people and *zamba* and *mulata* women. Transnational *Palenquero* communities and the *Palenque* as a forced destination for displaced people are completely unexplored in the literature.

Finally, there is a need for more analysis regarding how land rights have operated in other Maroon geographies in the Americas and the Caribbean (da Costa Segovia *et al.*, 2015; Carlet, 2016; Bledsoe, 2017; Cummings, 2018) in order to establish parallels and differences that allow us to fight back – in case that is necessary – the master’s tool of property rights over these territories. A more complete understanding of the relationship between land rights and Maroon geographies can contribute to the emerging concept of territorial peace (Jímenez-Martín, 2016; Cairo *et al.*, 2018) towards the building of just spatialities (Delaney, 2016) for the Afro-descendants. We need to know more about race, place and belonging in Colombia. Restrepo (2007) and Wade (2009) have analysed race and blackness in Colombia during the 20th century. As explained in chapter 2 through Serje's (2007) work, for Restrepo, race is a notion built on geographical, physical and moral characteristics where being ‘black’, for instance, implies an association with population located in lower and tropical areas in the country, with dark skin, lacking morals and culture. As highlighted by Restrepo, expanding this analysis to the colonial period and the post-20th century is essential. I contributed to this in this research by analysing the process of isolating blackness in the Montes de María as the origin of the geographies of marronage and their configuration in the present times. However, more investigation is needed to counter ontological blackness that has impeded acknowledgement of the diversity present amongst Afro-Colombians. The analysis of other *pueblos negros* in the Montes de María can contribute to this aim.

Fighting racism requires ‘destabilising’ and ‘complicating’ the essentialisms around the notion of race (Eppehimer 2015). This essentialism has had consequences, for instance in the law and the recognition of land rights for Afro-descendants. In chapter 5, the analysis of the idea of blackness(es) [*negritudes*] (*Palenquero* or *negro cartagenero* [black person from Cartagena de Indias] identities) within blackness (Afro-descendants in Colombia) may also contribute to deconstructing black essentialism. Nevertheless, many communities remain invisible under rural and indigenised essentialist notions of what it means to be an Afro-descendant community in Colombia.

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