Seeds of Change:  
Campesino, Indigenous & Afro-Descendant  
Empowerment through Food Sovereignty in Colombia  

by  

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RESISTE!
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All works created by Elijah Stevens in 2014 & 2015.
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Map of Organizations, Communities & Events in Colombia

1. Grupo Semillas - Bogotá
2. Casa de Semillas Workshop - San Andrés de Sotavento
3. Semillas de Identidad/SWISSAID Colombia - Bogotá
4. Hogares Ecologicos Workshop - Copacabana
5. RECAB - Medellín
6. CIMA-ASPROCAM Workshop - Las Botas del Tambo
7. FundeCIMA - Popayán
8. ARISA - Santander de Quilichao
9. MST-MQL – San Lorenzo de Caldono
10. Tuta Farmers Market - Tuta
11. Fundación San Isidro - Duitama
12. Granja Mutualitas - Bogotá
13. San Nicolás de Bari
14. San Sebastián
15. ASPROCIG - Santa Cruz de Lorica
Introduction
Breaking New Ground

“Remember, it is in each day that we do our work.
Each day we create things, small and large.”
-Rosa Poveda¹

Last week, after returning home at seven in the morning from a long night of writing and rewriting, I opened my computer to see that I had received a message. It was from Rosa Poveda, a displaced campesino woman who has created an urban farm in the capital city of Colombia and whose life and work is detailed in great length later in this thesis. We spoke for a short while about our lives, sharing small updates: she had just constructed a new vegetable garden, I had just revised my fourth chapter. I told Poveda a bit about the section I wrote on her work, and thanked her for all of the thoughts and kindness she had shared with me. She wished me well in finishing up my studies, saying she hoped we would talk again soon. Then I closed my laptop and fell asleep in my bed in Middletown, Connecticut as she shut off her computer to begin planting seeds in her vegetable bed in Bogotá, Colombia.

Poveda is one of many people throughout Colombia, and the world, working in their daily practices to create alternative constructions of, and in, the modern world, in small and large forms. While Poveda works in a very specific place, this locality is connected to many other localities through conversation, exchange, influence and solidarity in confronting issues of food, agriculture, globalization and the marginalization of campesinos, indigenous people, Afro-descendants and other subaltern peoples.

¹ Rosa Poveda, interview by Elijah Stevens, May 23, 2014, Bogotá, Colombia.
Through food sovereignty – a framework for daily action, social activism and global organizing – campesinos, indigenous people, and Afro-descendants in Colombia are constructing and transforming approaches to agriculture, food systems, and sociopolitical engagement. Subalterns are working towards social transformation and the articulation of new visions and realities of development, modernity, and globalization. These actors and organizations work to construct empowering places for marginalized peoples engaged in the food system in attempt to counter the commodification of labor and food, the erasure of localities, and the destruction of small-scale agriculture through an assertion of rights, identities, and ways of life.

Subaltern people and communities have begun developing, articulating and connecting practices and discourses of food sovereignty to affirm the importance of small-scale food systems and their actors in response to the marginalizing and destructive forces of globalization. Colombian campesinos, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants practice food sovereignty work as a strategy of resistance and contestation against such forces, in diverse actions from the preservation and planting of native seeds to the establishment of culturally-legitimated legal restrictions on GMO crop production. But they also engage deeply with globalization, negotiating and appropriating the potential advantages that globalization, as a heterogeneous and fluctuating force, can offer. Indigenous peoples living in remote, rural communities have adopted techniques and strategies in their agroecological work and political

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2 The concept of food sovereignty, and its development as a framework and movement, is explored in Chapter One.
3 Declaration of Nyéléni,” in Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty (Nyéléni Village, Sélingué, Mali2007).
organizing from other communities; in 2013 and 2014, activists and agriculturalists used social media to coordinate a large series of agrarian strikes across the country. Within the food sovereignty framework and movement, actors and activists are creating small-scale, horizontally structured, place-based forms of engagement that also incorporate greater linkages across communities, regions and nations. These expressions of food sovereignty, and many others across Colombia, facilitate dynamic and complex engagements with the processes of globalization.

This thesis examines the framework of food sovereignty as it is constructed and realized in contemporary Colombia. Through translocality, a politics of place and a politics of difference, and an examination of a broad range of experiences, this thesis proposes that food sovereignty is a unique, critical framework for campesinos, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants in their efforts to negotiate with the forces of globalization and create transformative, alternative realities. This thesis, building from my own field research, deepens the relatively new field of food sovereignty studies, especially in the realm of alternative political geography, and broadens the untended field of contemporary Colombian sociopolitical and cultural analysis. The translocal approach of the experiences and the analysis indicates that the food sovereignty practices and principles of marginalized peoples in Colombia could have significant implications for subaltern actors throughout the world.

Before proceeding with further explorations, I must first briefly explain some of the terminology used throughout this thesis. I use the Spanish word “campesino,”

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6 Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 18, 2014, San Lorenzo de Caldono, Cauca.
7 Fernando Castrillón, interview by Elijah Stevens, May 28, 2014.
which translates to “peasant” in English, because “campesino” signifies not only a class identification and labor role in Colombia, but also a cultural identity and way of life. It is thus a more complex and contextually sensitive concept than “peasant.”

“Indigenous” is a cultural and ethnic identity, both externally-classified and self-identified by peoples in Colombia, within specific groups based on territorial, cultural and historical distinctions. The 1991 Constitution gave national, legal recognition to indigenous peoples and granted them special rights and protections. It is essential to recognize that conceptions of indigeneity are formed through historical, local, national and global forces, such as cultural historical memory, international indigenous rights campaigns, and other forces. These themes will be explored further in Chapter Three.

“Afro-descendants” are similarly identified, externally and internally, as an ethnic, cultural minority group in Colombia. Afro-descendants are peoples who have ancestors who were brought to Latin America as slaves from Africa. Afro-descendants are also recognized by the nation-state of Colombia and granted special rights and protections through the 1991 Constitution. These themes will be explored further in Chapter Four.

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9 Jorge Forero, interview by Elijah Stevens, May 29, 2014.
10 Castrillón, "Interview with Fernando Castrillón."
14 "Afro-Colombians".
15 Colombia, "Constitución Política De Colombia."
The concept of “subaltern” emerges from postcolonial studies, upon which this thesis, in part, constructs its framework for analysis. Building from the work of Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, a subaltern is someone of a social group “suffering under hegemonic domination of a ruling elite class that denies them the basic rights participation in the making of local history and culture as active individuals of the same nation.” 16 Subsequent postcolonial theorists, most significantly Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, have critiqued and developed the concept of “subaltern,” narrowing identification with subaltern identity and emphasizing its situational nature. 17 Although “subaltern” implies the deprivation of agency, subaltern actors can, and do, claim and construct agency. I use both “subalters” and “marginalized peoples” to describe those who have been historically and systematically deprived of agency, which include campesinos, indigenous, and Afro-descendant peoples. These are not interchangeable terms, and are used differently to more accurately describe the agency and situationality of different peoples in different contexts.

The majority of the information within this thesis on expressions of food sovereignty in contemporary Colombia is based on field research I conducted over the course of five weeks at the beginning of the summer of 2014. Beginning and ending my research in Bogotá, I visited organizations, communities and individuals engaged in food sovereignty practices across the country. In various locales within the departments of Bogotá, Boyacá, Córdoba, Antioquia and Cauca, I spent time

observing people’s agricultural practices, attending events and workshops, socializing, and conducting extensive interviews. In these experiences, I engaged with a broad range of actors and communities, including campesinos, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, NGO officials, activists, agronomists, academics and others. While I frame this research in a historical and sociopolitical context and ground my approach in a theoretical framework, the core of this analysis draws from my observations, interactions and interviews.

Through reflections on this research process and extensive academic investigation upon my return to Wesleyan in the fall of 2014, I began to construct a framework in which to organize and analyze all of this field research. At the intersections of analyses of agri-food systems, political economics, post-colonialism, globalization, development, actor-networks, subalterns, and alterity arise “alternative geographies of food.” Such alternative geographies of food, constructed through the food sovereignty framework, recognize the “spatiality of contemporary social organization” that essentially constructs globalization. Globalization is defined by the compression of space-time, ultimately obscuring and erasing “place” within global space. These reconfigurations of spatiality have produced unequal relations of power across scales, especially through the dispossession and destruction of campesino, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples’ lands, and their marginalization from sociopolitical and economic realms of engagement.

While the food sovereignty framework is implicitly and explicitly resistant to the destructive, hegemonic forces of globalization, it is not categorically anti-modern, anti-development, or even anti-globalization. Food sovereignty is an alternative approach, emerging from place-based grassroots forms of resistance to, and criticism of, mainstream globalization discourse and practices, linking knowledges and political actions across the world.\textsuperscript{21} In building horizontally between groups from the Global South, not as an imposition of the Global North, agency is fundamentally constructed by and for marginalized subaltern actors.\textsuperscript{22} The food sovereignty movement creates alternative geographies and spatialities of food through the reassertion of local places of action and the simultaneous linking of small-scale actors and communities in regional, national, and international networks in order to strengthen agricultural and activism skills, efficacy, knowledge, and power.

This alternative approach to globalization is best understood through the concept of translocality. Principally, translocality is the recognition of localized specific contexts and practices within a broader framework of globalized forces and the intrinsic connections and mutual influences of these realms of the local and the global. This concept emerges in part from decolonization methodologies of political geographical analysis, in direct contrast with the hegemonic discourse that has privileged perspectives from the Global North concerning knowledge, space, and the world order. A range of disciplines, including geography, area studies, cultural

studies and development studies, has begun using translocality as a critical framework to analyze globalization.23

This thesis draws from the conceptions of translocality of multiple scholars. Anthropologist Clemens Greiner and geographer Patrick Sakdapolrak define translocality as “multi-scalar engagements of mobile and immobile actors…formed by ‘localized context and everyday practices,’ [emerging] at the same time as the ‘material, spatial and embodied.’”24 In a globalized world, actors engage in processes on local levels while also interacting with global spaces, creating new, multidimensional spaces. Within translocal realms, marked by uneven power relationships, “mobile and immobile actors negotiate and struggle over power and positions through the exchange of various capitals which are valued differently across different scales.”25 The framework of translocality emphasizes the power imbalances present within globalization; while suggesting a more fluid notion of spaces in which the local and the global interact, such spaces are not equalized or conflated, but remain marked by difference in their conception, valorization, and potentiality.

Translocality expands understandings of place by articulating a mobile dynamic between local and global spheres. This concept allows an analysis of the multilevel dynamics of localization and globalization within the food sovereignty framework with an alternative understanding of place that moves beyond the traditional, limited discourse of globalization and highlights the important role of actors struggling with uneven power relationships.

24 Ibid., 6.
25 Ibid.
Through everyday food sovereignty practices, marginalized peoples transform spaces that they do not have the opportunity, rights or privilege to occupy into places for the articulation of alternative realities. Place-making and place-based movements are not constrained to normative geographical notions of bounded “local” places. As feminist economic geographer J.K. Gibson-Graham writes, “place is not a local specificity (or not that alone) but the aspect of potentiality.”26 Gibson-Graham and anthropologist Arturo Escobar articulate the politics of place as a new form of political imaginary, emerging from a perspective of difference from subaltern actors, as a realm in which alternative “socionatural worlds” are possible,27 the potential to “become something other” beyond neoliberal capitalism and globalized development.28

This critical perspective enables the envisioning and construction of translocal places of difference. Amongst the seemingly homogeneous and hegemonic space of globalized modernity, there exist “heterotopias,” places of contestation and inversion “outside of all places,” yet fundamentally situated, and engaged with the broader reality of space.29 Drawing from the work of philosopher Michel Foucault and Gibson-Graham, heterotopias are those places beyond the totalizing and universalizing forces of globalization, “outside” the spaces of control, in which people engage in alternative economic activities.30 These heterotopias are non-

30 J. K. Gibson-Graham, ""Place-Based Globalism": A New Imaginary of Revolution," Rethinking Marxism 20, no. 4 (2008): 662; Foucault, "Of Other Spaces."
hegemonic places, constructed from a perspective of difference, thus offering the possibility for alternative forms of engagement and expression in the modern world.

The principle understanding of translocality within the context of place-based, grassroots, social movements such as food sovereignty comes from the work of Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar concerning Afro-Colombian culture and activism. Drawing from Escobar’s approach, the reassertion of place is an essential analytical tool as well as a powerful mobilizing framework for social movements. An examination of the global dynamics of food sovereignty movement cannot maintain the traditional constructions of globalization in its academic approach. As Escobar writes, “there is a need for a corrective theory that neutralizes this erasure of place, the asymmetry that arises from giving far too much importance to ‘the global’ and far too little value to ‘place.’”

Escobar’s corrective theoretical approach is essential to fully encapsulating the place-based tenets of food sovereignty as a social movement and mobilizing framework. Place-based social movements advance “a place-based localizing strategy for the defense of local models of nature and cultural practices; a further strategy of localization through an active and creative engagement with translocal forces, such as similar identity or environmental movements or various global coalitions against globalization and free trade”; and a shifting political strategy linking identity, territory and culture at local, regional, national and transnational levels.” The decolonizing perspective of translocality unsettles traditional paradigms and spatialities of

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33 Territories of Difference : Place, Movements, Life, Redes, 7.
globalization, allowing for an analysis of food sovereignty that accounts for its global and local aspects, its dispersed peoples and places, and the pertinence of uneven relations of power.

The varied and various expressions of food sovereignty practices by marginalized peoples in Colombia demonstrate a range of approaches to translocal engagement with globalization. Working within Escobar’s overarching analytical framework of modernity/coloniality /decoloniality (MCD), highlighting perspectives of difference in theory and practice allows for a better understanding of the range of expressions of contemporary reality. Escobar presents three major forms in which alternative expressions of contemporary reality are constructed: alternative development, alternative modernity, and alternative to modernity. Alternative development “implies a level of contestation over the terms of development but without challenging its underlying premises” and “entails a struggle over the running of projects to reduce control by experts and socioeconomic elites.” Alternative modernity involves a “more significant contestation of the very aims and terms of development on the basis of an existing cultural difference and place-based subjectivities.” Finally, alternative to modernity is defined as “an alternative construction of the world from the perspective of the colonial difference.” These notions have contradictory as well as complementary aspects, and are realized in overlapping and interconnected ways within various projects and realities.

36 Ibid., 179.
37 Ibid., 184-85.
38 Ibid., 196.
Within the activation of a translocal politics of place in the food sovereignty framework, subaltern actors engage with complex forces that deeply affect their processes of empowerment. The interaction between local and global systems, radical and conventional paradigms, and liberating practices and oppressive conditions engender complicated expressions of alternatives to/of modernity and development. While place-making through the food sovereignty framework has transformative potential for the empowerment of marginalized peoples, it is important to recognize where such transformations can be fragile, unsustainable or co-opted. The food sovereignty practices and projects detailed throughout this thesis will demonstrate the complexities of these engagements with globalization and articulations of translocal geographies towards the expression of a wide range of visions of the modern world.

Chapter One provides crucial historical and sociopolitical context, exploring the globalized interactions that have led to the expression of food sovereignty as a framework and movement of and for marginalized peoples in Colombia. It then examines agrarian policy and discourse in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, in Latin America, and Colombia more specifically. This chapter then details the development of food security as a framework for mainstream globalized development. Subsequently, the chapter explores the development of food sovereignty in response to the failures of food security and ongoing issues in the agri-food system, and defines its fundamental framework. Finally, this chapter explains how Colombia represents a significant context for the study of food sovereignty.

Chapter Two examines how marginalized communities and educational facilitators build food sovereignty through radical pedagogical practices and bottom-
up organization. Through Freirian pedagogy and conscientization, campesino-a-campesino information networks and *dialogos de saberes*, educators provide a platform for the expression of subaltern knowledge and culture and the construction of alternative realities through everyday praxis. This analysis is based primarily in a study of three different educational workshops in San Andres de Sotavento, Copacabana, and Las Botas del Tambo amongst indigenous, campesino, and mixed campesino/Afro communities, respectively, concerning distinct issues and projects of food sovereignty. This chapter also examines the challenges within radical pedagogical practices and the limitations to such transformations.

Chapter Three considers how the practice of food sovereignty provides marginalized peoples with the tools for, and concrete articulations of, active political, cultural, and economic engagement and assertion. Through an overarching framework of place-making, this chapter examines three distinct forms of subaltern empowerment through food sovereignty practices and discourses in the contestation of marginalization. The first looks at the Nasa indigenous peoples in Cauca and their political and cultural place-making. The second part examines a farmers market organized in the municipality of Tuta, in which campesino peasants engaged in cultural and economic place-making. The third part examines an urban farm in Bogotá called *Granja Mutualitas* led by Rosa Poveda, demonstrating a form of cultural and physical place-making. These analyses raise important questions about the contradictions of political expression, the nature of indigeneity, the social embeddedness of alternative food systems, the effects of singular versus long-term
engagement, and the roles of urban space and feminism in the food sovereignty framework.

Chapter Four examines how subaltern actors work within the food sovereignty framework to construct translocal forms of sociopolitical engagement. This chapter looks closely at two indigenous/Afro-Colombian communities, San Sebastián de Lorica and San Nicolás de Bari de Cordoba and their agroecological practices and sociopolitical organizing in order to confront the challenges of environmental degradation and dispossession, and economic and political marginalization, that they face. Through their food sovereignty practices, these communities articulate dynamic sociopolitical identities and forms of engagement that contest normative political structures. This chapter examines how marginalized peoples challenge globalization through the building of translocal networks and communities that continue to emphasize local place and subaltern empowerment.

The manifestations of food sovereignty explored throughout this thesis demonstrate the complex dynamics of marginalized peoples’ engagement with the world and the broad range of alternatives to and of modernity they are envisioning and constructing on a daily basis. In doing so, this thesis advances the small but growing discipline of food sovereignty studies. This work challenges totalizing views of globalization, reminding us of the diverse and complicated nature of modernity and the many expressions of contestation, resistance, and engagement in its construction.
Chapter One
Nuestras Raíces: The Roots of Food Sovereignty Framework in Colombia

I. Agrarian Policy in the Twentieth Century

In a small building on a half hidden street in the center of Bogotá is the office of the non-governmental organization Grupo Semillas, one of the most significant and active forces in the construction of food sovereignty in Colombia. It is one of my first days in the country, and only the second meeting of my research process. After spending an hour on buses back and forth across the city, I have finally found myself sitting across the table from Germán Vélez, the director of Grupo Semillas, trying to catch my breath and properly phrase the first in a long list of questions I have prepared: “¿Qué significa la soberanía alimentaria?”¹ But before I begin, Vélez offers me a cup of coffee – made from Colombian beans – and says to me, “We can talk about food sovereignty, but first we need to talk about food, agriculture, and Colombia, its history, its people and its politics.”²

An exploration of food sovereignty in Colombia first requires a focused look at the recent agricultural history of Colombia, and Latin America as a whole, from a political, economic and social perspective. Such an analysis contextualizes contemporary agricultural activities and food sovereignty activism and facilitates an understanding of the local, global, and translocal dynamics of food sovereignty.

Although not necessarily providing radical, systematic or sustainable structural changes, agrarian reform played an important role in many social movements and political regimes in Latin American countries in the mid-twentieth century. Social and political struggles against the landowning classes and the state

¹ In English, this translates to “What does food sovereignty mean?”
carried out in part by peasant and indigenous movements motivated many Latin American governments to implement agrarian reform. While peasants benefited somewhat from these policies, the major legacy of agrarian reform was the accelerated collapse of the landowning oligarchy and the increasing implementation of agricultural commercialization and globalized development. ³ Many Latin American countries created import-substitution industrialization policies to promote economic modernization and reinforce national production. Colombia followed such policies between 1950 and 1967, with economic expansion focused primarily on the industrial sector.⁴ While these policies did facilitate some economic growth and state-support for small and medium-scale producers amongst the agrarian populations, they primarily served large-scale industrial development initiatives and set the stage for increasing appropriation and exploitation of agricultural land.⁵

The rise of neoliberal doctrines through globalization in economic policies implemented nationally and internationally from the 1970s onwards led to the undoing of many pro-peasantry structures. The increase in goods imports and trade imbalances had a detrimental effect on internal agricultural production and small-scale farmers. After the global food crisis in the early 1970s, Latin America’s import-substitution policies largely came to an end with the implementation of structural adjustment programs under the guidance, direct and indirect, of the International

⁵ Carlos Felipe Gaviria Garcés details how the post-war development paradigm in Colombia, especially beginning in the 1980s, facilitated the full commodification of land while excluding a large portion of the population from the development process and facilitating further displacement of small-scale farmers. Carlos Felipe Gaviria Garcés, "The Post-War International Food Order: The Case of Agriculture in Colombia," Universidad de Antioquia: Lecturas de Economia, no. 74 (2011): 130-35.
Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. These programs promoted privatization, deregulation, fiscal orthodoxy, global market liberalization, and prioritization of multinational agribusiness over small-scale local producers. Agricultural subsidies for smaller-scale, internal production were replaced by a focus on foreign trade and large-scale industrial agriculture. Simultaneously, public resources for technical assistance, expansion, research and infrastructural investment were cut across Latin America, leading to “depeasantization and displacement under postcolonialism.”

These forces constitute the neoliberal “food regime,” which encompasses the political and economic policies, local and global dynamics and power relations between people and institutions within the agri-food system.

Significantly, Colombia was protected from some of the more severe global neoliberal economic initiatives, at least in their initial implementation. Colombia was the only major Latin American economy that did not default on or restructure its public debt and the government continued to play a significant role in economic legislation, regulation and production. Nonetheless, the Colombian government prioritized urban industrialization and large-scale agribusiness over smaller agricultural endeavors, promoting market liberalization and widespread development. While Colombia maintained certain buffers from complete free-market capitalism, national economic policies were strongly influenced by the increasingly globalized economy dominated by these neoliberal practices in Latin America and beyond.

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9 Hudson, Colombia: A Country Study, 146.
II. Professionalization of Agricultural Knowledge

Large-scale agribusiness has come to dominate the contemporary food regime in Colombia and around the world, utilizing increasingly professionalized, industrialized, and technological methods in their agricultural practices. From the Green Revolution to the “biotechnological revolution,” governments, agribusiness corporations, international bodies such as the World Bank, and other policy-makers have touted technology and scientific expertise as the driving forces of agricultural development, framing these mechanisms as necessary tools to effectively and efficiently produce agricultural goods to meet the modern world’s growing needs. As such, the current food regime demands implementation of scientific and technological advancements and modern management techniques. In this food regime, the displacement of small-scale producers from the land and their livelihoods and the instatement of a hierarchical globalized agribusiness have also been accompanied by a transformation of agricultural knowledge systems.

In the development of modern agriculture, the rise of biotechnical scientific knowledge marginalizes campesino and other cultural forms of knowledge. This evolution not only reflects a change in the methodologies being implemented, but also the power dynamics at play. Scientific knowledge is constructed through a process of distinctions and exclusions to determine what is considered to be “knowledge.” The arbiters of this development have predominantly been Western

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and Western-educated scholars, policy-makers, and other figures with significant power and privilege. Scientific thought is not a fixed, absolute set of laws, but rather a sociologically-determined paradigm made of an “entire constellations of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given community.”\(^{13}\) The consolidation of this constellation towards a concrete knowledge system carries powerful assumptions and consequences, replacing people-oriented thinking with capital-oriented thinking.\(^{14}\)

The Green Revolution and the biotechnological revolution are themselves technological paradigms inherently shaped by Western scientific thought. These agricultural systems of thought and practice “not only select solutions but also have exclusionary effects on alternative solutions …[They] define both the agendas for research and development and the technologies that are excluded from the frame of vision and technological imagination”\(^{15}\) The framework of these agricultural models is so intrinsically dependent on Western scientific thinking that every factor involved in the agricultural process must be seen and evaluated through this epistemology. In contemporary agriculture, scientific knowledge has established an undisputed epistemic hegemony, pushing local and alternative forms of knowledge so far into the margins that they become difficult to identify.\(^ {16}\)

Expert scientific knowledge is often explicitly manifested as mechanisms of

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control and exclusion, as copyrighted and marketable resources held in the hands of transnational, Western corporations such as Monsanto and Cargill. Green and biotechnological methodologies have often been implemented through top-down, externally-sourced paquetes tecnológicos (technological packages), with high-yield seeds, chemicals, and new, foreign processes.\textsuperscript{17} Colombian farmers, as others in the Global South, can no longer implement or access their ancestral knowledge about agriculture, disempowering them further. These systems are built on World Bank-designed Transfer of Technology strategies, emphasizing “centralized expert development of technology and diffusion through professional extension,”\textsuperscript{18} narrowing the control of the agricultural processes to those with the scientific and technological expertise – most often those with money, power, and ties to the Global North. While such methodologies of agricultural extension have proved inappropriate, ineffective, and unsustainable,\textsuperscript{19} they continue to be implemented.

Within the modern agricultural system, there is no viable place for small-scale producers, their practices or their ways of thinking. “With the Green Revolution, we have lost our place in the system,” says Jorge Forero, a social scientist, campesino and member of the agricultural action-research organization Colectivo Agrario Abya Yala in Bogotá, “We are losing ourselves, our culture and our knowledge.”\textsuperscript{20}

Such sentiments are echoed by small-scale producers and ethnic minorities across Colombia, and are at the roots of people’s involvement in food sovereignty

\textsuperscript{17} Eric Holt-Giménez, "Movimiento Campesino a Campesino the Political Ecology of a Farmers' Movement for Sustainable Agriculture in Mesoamérica" (University of California, Santa Cruz, 2002), 32.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Forero, "Interview with Jorge Forero."
work. Luis Enrique Hernandez Viloria is an indigenous farmer from Jején, Cordoba, part of the Zenú resguardo community that declared themselves a Transgenic Free Territory in defense of their cultural sovereignty in 2005.\textsuperscript{21} He sits with his elderly father and mother as he takes a midday break from his fieldwork. “Everything that I know, I learned from my father, who worked this land before me. It has been this way for many generations,” Hernandez Viloria says. “But it doesn’t feel like there is a place for us or that way of thinking anymore. There are few ways we can express it.” \textsuperscript{22} The territorial and economic marginalization caused by agroindustrial development in Colombia not only jeopardizes the livelihoods of small-scale farmers, but also their means and forms of expression, organization and thinking.

\textbf{III. Development of Food Security}

Parallel to economic globalization, a discourse of “food security” arose in Colombia and around the world. Food began to be framed as a development and public health issue. International organizations such as the World Food Council, FAO Committee on World Food Security and the International Fund for Agricultural Development arose to address issues of hunger.\textsuperscript{23} Food security, as defined by the FAO in 1974, is “the availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset

\textsuperscript{21} Resguardos are indigenous territories protected under the 1991 Constitution of Colombia. Cordoba y Sucre Resguardo Indígena Zenú de San Andres de Sotavento, Colombia, \textit{Reglamento Interno Para El Control Del Territorio, La Biodiversidad Y El Conocimiento Tradicional, Y Frente a La Introduccion De Semillas Y Alimentos Transgenicos} (Bogotá: Grupo Semillas, 2011); Colombia, “Constitución Política De Colombia.”

\textsuperscript{22} Luis Enrique Hernandez Viloria, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 5, 2014, Jegén, Colombia.

fluctuations in production and prices.” 24 In Colombia, the Comité Nacional de Investigación en Tecnología de Alimentos y Nutrición (National Committee on Food and Nutrition Technology) was established in 1974 in connection with the internationally-organized Inter-Agency Project for the Promotion of National Food and Nutrition Policies, promoting food policy’ in line with international development policy. 25

The concept of food security has evolved over time, but continues to reflect the dominant neoliberal development discourse. In 1996, the declaration of the UN World Food Summit declared food security to be a condition in which “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” 26 This definition serves to simultaneously depoliticize the current food regime, obscure the structural failures of food security, and promote neoliberal development programs to solidify Western dominance of food systems and systemic inequality for people in the Global South. Within the discourse of food security, food is regarded as an issue of insufficient trade “rather than hunger by privileging access to food rather than control over systems of production and consumption” and turns to the “corporate/neoliberal food regime” for “food aid and technological development” as its solutions. 27 In the continuity of discourse and practice of food security by the United Nations, World Bank, USAID, and other global development institutions, food security has failed to

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26 Patell, "Food Sovereignty," 665.
27 Wittman, "Food Sovereignty: A New Rights Framework for Food and Nature?," 91. (emphasis is included in original text)
produce effective and sustainable changes in the food and agriculture conditions of most Colombians, and peasant populations across the Third World.

IV. Emergence of Food Sovereignty

In response to these ideas and policies that have dominated global agriculture, the food sovereignty movement has emerged as a powerful grassroots force across the world. The concept of food sovereignty emerged in 1996 at the World Food Summit as introduced by La Via Campesina, an international peasant movement with strong roots in Latin America. La Via Campesina is made up of 163 rural organizations of peasants, small-and medium-scale farmers, rural workers, and indigenous and landless peoples.28 The organization had been established in 1993 in response to the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which had a significant impact on global agricultural policy through the establishment of the World Trade Organization and the serious reduction in trade barriers and protectionist national economic policies.29 The GATT policies, while intended to facilitate international trade and improve the global agricultural economy, privileged developed countries’ agricultural and economic policies while capitalizing on the weaknesses in those of developing countries. La Via Campesina was thus founded on the realization

of the need for a global peasant-based efforts to confront and defend against globally
determined agricultural policies.30

In 1996, La Via Campesina organized an international meeting in Tlaxcala, Mexico as an alternative to the United Nations’ World Food Summit, to discuss growing concerns about the effects of globalization and consolidation in the agri-food system.31 At this meeting, La Via Campesina declared food sovereignty to be the “right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity.”32 This initial definition of food sovereignty is in some ways a radical departure from the traditional discourse on food politics. Unlike food security, this conception of food sovereignty challenges the dominant agri-food system hegemony, recognizing its structural faults and politicized nature. Food sovereignty illuminates the need for renewed agency by small-scale food producers in agrarian policy decision-making and reinserts people and their cultures and practices into a food system that has been thoroughly commodified and dehumanized. Yet this definition also remains within the confines of traditional paradigms of nation and rights. The language of food sovereignty “inserts itself into international discourse by making claims on rights and democracy, the cornerstones of liberal governance.”33 This articulation of dominant international language and structures reflects the totalizing power of globalization over the agri-food system in the mid-1990s, in discourse and in practice. While food movements had been fomenting amongst small agricultural communities, especially in the Global South,

32 Patel, "Food Sovereignty,” 665.
33 Ibid.
there was no substantial alternative framework for addressing the social, political and economic questions of the food system before the rise of food sovereignty.

As the food sovereignty movement has developed over time, the concept of food sovereignty has simultaneously been transformed and has transformed the concepts of food systems of the traditional paradigms that it confronts. The definition of food sovereignty was rearticulated at the Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty in 2007 by La Via Campesina and others as the “right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their systems.” This definition no longer focuses on the responsibility of nations in transforming food systems, but instead turns directly to people, especially small-scale agricultural producers, as the primary actors. Food sovereignty increasingly focuses on individuals’ and communities’ rights to define and produce their own food systems. Food sovereignty has emerged in Latin America not only because of its roots in the work of Latin American activists and intellectuals but also because its principles reflect the beliefs and desires of campesino, indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples across the region as a tool for critical engagement with the forces that marginalize them.

As a critical response to this marginalization and the top-down structure of the contemporary global agroindustrial food regime, small-scale producers have developed, and continue to develop, food sovereignty as a radical, bottom-up

34 “Declaration of Nyéléni,” in Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty (Nyéléni Village, Sélingué, Mali2007).
35 My field work throughout Colombia and Bolivia, as well as experiences in Guatemala, have demonstrated the powerful connection that many of these communities feel to the essential ideas of food sovereignty and their acknowledgement of the articulation of their demands within the framework of food sovereignty. This is made clear throughout the subsequent chapters.
framework and movement. They seek to upset these hegemonic forces and reassert the role of small-scale actors – including peasants, indigenous peoples, and Afro-descendants – in the processes of food production, cultural expression, and political engagement. Food sovereignty activists and actors ground their work in a principle of the radical transformation of society, in confronting and upsetting the contemporary global balance of power, through alternative food and agricultural practices. Such a transformation towards sustainable and inclusive agri-food systems requires a “paradigmatic revolution in education, research and extension for food, agriculture and environment.” The food sovereignty movement thus demands a radical rethinking of epistemology and pedagogy in order to transform the agricultural paradigm at work, and the food system as a whole. Food sovereignty processes utilize radical pedagogical techniques to assert these knowledges and emphasize the cultural and personal aspects of the food system and the global political economy.

The concept of food sovereignty is not only very new and still evolving, but also conceived of differently by different cultural groups and social organizations, an essential component to its framework. While La Via Campesina is a powerful force in the food sovereignty movement, perhaps the most influential and widespread, it is neither the only voice nor the definitive authority. Food sovereignty is not an established paradigm or concept, but rather a “potential new framework emerging from diverse set of contemporary grassroots production practices and political

approaches.”

The very nature of the food sovereignty framework in its development predicates fluid, varied, and potentially contradictory expressions. Food sovereignty cannot be defined by one individual or one organization, nor can a universal conception of food sovereignty be applicable to all local, specific cases. The vital importance of local knowledge and practice to the food sovereignty movement means that certain articulations of food sovereignty are not necessarily applicable for another circumstance, nor necessarily translatable, in linguistic and contextual terminology, from one community to another.

At the same time, an analysis of food-based activism and alternative agricultural practices requires a thorough understanding of food sovereignty. Despite the multiplicity of expressions and articulations of food sovereignty, this analysis requires grounding in the specific framework of food sovereignty. While the rise of food politics has brought about new dynamics of food security, this concept is too entrenched in traditional paradigms to effectively respond to the needs of marginalized people and effectively address global food issues.

While various concepts, such as “food activism,” “food justice,” and “food democracy,” have risen to prominence in response to the failures of food security, food sovereignty is the most comprehensive, responsive and effective framework.

39 Patel, "Food Sovereignty."
40 For example, Nilson Morales, the organizer of Agrosolidaria, a small-scale farmers' loan national network based in Bogotá explicitly asserted the depoliticized nature of their food sovereignty work, and emphasized the sustained subsistence and economic viability of peasant lifestyles. This rationale works within the economically-predicated framework of this organization and does serve to benefit small-scale farmers in work that can and should be defined as food sovereignty, but it is a definition that is vastly different from the more politically-engaged, cultural practices of other groups, such as Grupo Semillas.
Nilson Morales, interview by Elijah Stevens, May 25, 2014, Bogotá.; Vélez, "First Interview with Germán Vélez."
Food activism describes the “efforts by people to change the food system across the globe by modifying the way they produce, distribute, and/or consume food.”41 While food activism incorporates food sovereignty as an expression of activism, it is not necessarily an expression of intrinsic rights within the food system. Food justice is seen as “the right to food as a component of a more democratic and just society... [involving] an explicit critique of the global food system and a theoretical framing of local initiatives as both the practice of democracy and as means of de-linking from the corporate global food system.”42 This concept does not preclude or prevent the existence of food sovereignty, and indeed broadens understandings of it. But the concept of food justice also relies heavily on concepts of civil society and democracy that are not necessarily applicable to all contexts of food sovereignty. Food democracy is articulated similarly to food justice, as “citizens having the power to determine agro-food policies and practices locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.”43 While food democracy is also essential to an understanding of food sovereignty, it is limited by its intrinsic reliance on normative political structures without questioning their structural faults. While certainly not devoid of complications and limitations,44 food sovereignty is a broad and inclusive framework that allows for a vast array of expressions that contain the potential for radical,

44 The specifics of such challenges within the food sovereignty framework are demonstrated throughout this thesis.
alternative constructions of the contemporary world and constantly asserts the
centrality of subaltern people to food systems and their transformations.

V. Locating Food Sovereignty in Colombia

Colombia is a critical case study for understanding food sovereignty because it exemplifies many of the conditions that appear within the food sovereignty framework across Latin America and simultaneously highlights unique local, regional, and national contexts that challenge and expand understandings of food sovereignty. For one, Colombia’s agricultural activities reflect the tensions of the current food regime, in which modernization and globalization have supported large-scale agribusiness even as small-scale agriculture has continued to exist. Colombia reflects the tendencies of the post-World War II international food regime, in which the government has given major subsidies to the private sector, large-scale, international agribusiness has expanded, land and labor are increasingly commodified, and the social and cultural components of agriculture have been displaced and diminished.45

The push for globalized agriculture in Colombia in the growth of export-oriented production in the 1950s through the 1980s was facilitated by policies that benefited medium- and large-scale producers in industrialization and export and luxury crops.46 Through these policies, the Colombian government has appropriated land from small-scale farmers, removing them from markets and production spheres,

46 ibid., 128.
promoting agribusiness economics that marginalize peoples and their lands.\footnote{Ibid., 129.} In the 1990s, especially under the presidency of Cesár Gaviria, the Colombian government facilitated globalized agricultural development through a series of broad economic liberalization reforms, reducing international trade and investment restrictions.\footnote{Hudson, \textit{Colombia: A Country Study}, 58.} This had led to major reductions in internal agricultural production and increasing reliance on foreign food sources. Imports of corn, a traditional staple crop of Colombia, were negligible until 1990 but have since grown rapidly, reaching 3.3 million metric tons in 2010.\footnote{“Colombia Corn Imports by Year,” Index Mundi, \url{http://www.indexmundi.com/agriculture/?country=co&commodity=corn&graph=imports}; Fitting, “Maize as Sovereignty: Anti-Gm Activism in Mexico and Colombia.”} This is representative of the displacement of internal production, creating a high dependence on cheap imports of wheats and other cereals.\footnote{Gaviria Garcés, "The Post-War International Food Order: The Case of Agriculture in Colombia."} In the 21st century, state-sponsored trade liberalization, bio-fuel production, agribusiness promotion, GMO implementation, and United States-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement have furthered globally-oriented agricultural modernization.\footnote{Ibid., 135-36.; Jacobo Grajales, "State Involvement, Land Grabbing and Counter - Insurgency in Colombia," \textit{Development and Change} 44, no. 2 (2013): 13; Vélez, "First Interview with Germán Vélez."} Through the National Agricultural Institute, the American military and development initiative Plan Colombia, and other initiatives, such policies perpetuate the dynamics of 20th century actions in increasing inequality through mainstream development in Colombia.\footnote{Fitting, "Maize as Sovereignty: Anti-Gm Activism in Mexico and Colombia," 6.; Vélez, "First Interview with Germán Vélez."} Since 1960, the Gini index, measuring inequality, has grown from 0.841 to 0.885 in 2009.\footnote{"Divide and Purchase: How Land Ownership Is Being Concentrated in Colombia," in \textit{Oxfam Research Reports} (Oxford: Oxfam International, 2013), 7.} Today, approximately 80\% of land in Colombia is in the hands of
14% of landowners. The implementation of large-scale agriculture and globalized commercial acquisition of land have limited small-scale producers’ access to resources, economic viability, and role in the dominant development process.

In addition to the economic and political policies implemented across Latin America, Colombia has experienced heightened land-based inequality and marginalization as a result of over fifty years of nation-wide violence. The armed conflict between guerrilla, military and paramilitary forces and the violent operations of narcotrafficking and the War on Drugs have created hostile territories and displaced peoples across the country. The violence in Colombia is “largely about the acquisition of natural resources, the control of commercial enterprise and the exploitation of national peoples.” In the 1980s, narcotraffickers began investing and laundering their drug profits by buying large expanses of land across the country. Guerrilla forces, sometimes involved in narcotrafficking as well, have used violent land grabs as a form of investment, production and territorial dominance. In response, government institutions and military and paramilitary forces have also adopted land-grabbing as a strategy for territorial assertion and production in their fighting against guerrillas and narcotraffickers. These practices have led to the dispossession of rural peasants, indigenous peoples, and Afro-descendants.

This displacement has forced many rural peoples to flee to the cities, abandoning their peasant lifestyles and traditional agricultural practices. Jorge Forero

54 Ibid.
57 Castrillón, "Interview with Fernando Castrillón."
58 Vélez, "First Interview with Germán Vélez."
notes that much of the current agricultural land issues originates in the armed conflict.\textsuperscript{59} This forced displacement “reflects the permanent exclusion of farmers from agricultural production areas…[together,] the conflict and the policies have helped to make rural issues worse over time.”\textsuperscript{60}

Despite the destructive forces of economic liberalization, globalized development and violent conflict, agriculture remains a central feature of Colombia, economically and socially. Approximately 17\% of Colombians are formally employed in agricultural labor,\textsuperscript{61} though the percentage of people with agrarian livelihoods is certainly higher, given the informal and familial nature of small-scale agriculture in Colombia. The geography and climate of Colombia allow for a diverse range of agricultural production, and small- and medium-scale agriculture continues to exist across the country, from cassava cultivation to coffee farms to cornfields.\textsuperscript{62} Colombians across the country, from displaced campesinos in Bogotá to suburban Afro-descendant NGO workers in Cauca to rural Zenú indigenous farmers in Cordoba, continue to assert the centrality of agriculture to their lifestyles and cultures. Agriculture is a significant economic activity but it is also a way of life, a defining characteristic in the identity of many Colombians.

Indeed, displacement and development are intrinsically linked in the case of Colombia, exemplifying the violent and destructive forces of the current food regime on small-small agricultural producers. The production of palm oil, as well as other

\textsuperscript{59} Forero, "Interview with Jorge Forero."
\textsuperscript{60} Gaviria Garcés, "The Post-War International Food Order: The Case of Agriculture in Colombia," 129.
\textsuperscript{61} "Employment in Agriculture (% of Total Employment)," The World Bank, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS.
\textsuperscript{62} Hudson, Colombia: A Country Study, 146.; my field research experiences throughout Colombia also demonstrated this diverse range of agricultural production.
products in Colombia “brings together violent means of dispossession and land acquisition, the development agenda and public policies intended to stimulate agribusiness.” Under Plan Colombia, USAID has put hundreds of millions of dollars into development initiatives, aimed at reducing the production of coca, and, more often than not, promoting increased governance and agribusiness-oriented processes, damaging the cultural practices, sovereignty, and viability of small-scale agriculturalists. The displacement of more than four million campesinos, caused by the dual forces of violent conflict and globalized development has made land a vital issue to many Colombians, locating food sovereignty at the nexus of political, social and economic struggle.

The presence of communities of peasants, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants in Colombia highlights the centrality of food sovereignty as a marginalized peoples’ movement. Despite the massive displacement of rural people and the subsequent migration to urban zones, many Colombians identify as campesinos, or peasants. As Maria Velma Echeverría, an activist and community organizer from Riosucio, Caldas states, “Everyone is implicated in this food sovereignty…because everyone has roots in el campo. We are all connected to the earth. We all come from a peasant culture.” Additionally, while indigenous and Afro- descendant peoples do not necessarily constitute a large percentage of the

63 Grajales, "State Involvement, Land Grabbing and Counter-Insurgency in Colombia," 213.
65 Ibid., 1.
population of Colombia - 2% self-identify as indigenous\textsuperscript{67} and 10.6% as Afro-
descendant\textsuperscript{68} - the growing presence of indigenous and Afro-descendant activism and
identity construction has illuminated the multiethnic identity of the Colombian nation
and affirmed and institutionalized protections and rights for these ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{69} The
guarantees of identity-based rights and protected territories for indigenous and Afro-
descendant peoples in the 1991 Constitution have provided critical and challenging
spaces for their engagement on the national level.\textsuperscript{70} Thus, indigenous and Afro-
descendant people are significant to the activities of marginalized peoples in the food
sovereignty movement in Colombia. As marginalized peoples and small-scale
agricultural producers, these communities constitute the fundamental bases of the
food sovereignty movement and framework.

In spite of, and in resistance to, the many issues in the contemporary agri-food
system, there is an abundance of organizations, communities and individuals engaged
in food sovereignty practices across Colombia. From institutionalized national
organizations such as \textit{Grupo Semillas}, to small-scale, rural Afro-Colombian fishing
collectives, Colombia contains many translocal expressions of food sovereignty,
revealing the complex facets of this movement and framework.

\textsuperscript{70} Castrillón, "Interview with Fernando Castrillón."
Chapter Two
Planting Seeds: Radical Pedagogy in the Development of Food Sovereignty

I. Introduction: The Roots of Radical Pedagogy

Driving his pick-up truck along winding dirt roads lined with thick vegetation that occasionally opens up to vistas of rolling hills, Alexander Fernández is gesturing enthusiastically at the surrounding landscape. After celebrating Colombia’s World Cup win against Côte d’Ivoire, Fernández, the Agroenvironmental Coordinator for a grassroots campesino social organization named FundeCIMA, is preparing for a workshop the next day and orienting me to the geography and politics of the central Cauca region. “This is mostly farmland. Now it’s agroindustrial, but it’s also still a lot of small, campesino land. This is where most of our food comes from,” he says. “Food sovereignty does not come from out there, from Bogotá, from the government, from the university. It comes from here, from the people, from their actions and ways of life.”

The work of food sovereignty begins within communities, in their daily efforts to survive and thrive through small-scale traditional and alternative agricultural practices. Such practices are built on principles of grassroots, bottom-up mobilization and horizontal, democratic organization that challenge dominant hegemonies and promote communitarian empowerment and the revalorization of autochthonous knowledge, in harmony with a growing communication between alternative agricultural knowledges. While these principles are expressed through a wide range of practices and in a range of vastly divergent communities, they form the seeds from which food sovereignty emerges and grows to be a broader framework across

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1 Alexander Fernández, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 21, 2014, Popayán, Colombia.
Colombia, and the world. In the face of the enormous challenges to small-scale producers in the globalized food system, communities and grassroots organizations are implementing radical pedagogical techniques in their efforts to establish, sustain and develop their agricultural practices. Through an examination of three workshops for different food sovereignty projects amongst distinct communities – an indigenous resguardo in the Caribbean, a small campesino network outside of Medellín, and a rural campesino and Afro village in central Cauca - this chapter explores how communities and organizations are building food sovereignty through democratic grassroots organization and dialogic, Freirian pedagogy.  

All of these workshops were significantly tied not only by the overarching theme of food sovereignty, but also by their fundamental grounding in radical, bottom-up pedagogical and organizational principles with deep Latin American roots. While the philosophical nature of these workshops was most often subverted to the practical and material concerns of the projects, this theoretical grounding was articulated through their structures and practices, through conversations with their facilitators, and analysis of their organizational materials. These practices grow out of the pedagogical frameworks of Paulo Freire, the Campesino-a-campesino Movement, and Dialogos de Saberes processes.

Radical pedagogy as it is expressed today in the work of these food sovereignty projects, and many others, is fundamentally based in the pioneering work of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and theorist. Freire’s theoretical framework of a radical educational philosophy emerge from his 1968 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012).
*Oppressed*, in which he explores contemporary systems of oppression through a class-based, Marxist analysis and sets forth a pedagogy for the resistance to oppression, by the oppressed.³ Freire establishes a framework in which oppression can be confronted and undone through a radical pedagogy grounded in oppressed peoples’ agency, dialogic engagement and praxis – transformation of the world through reflection and action.⁴ Through “co-intentional education,” built on horizontal teacher-student engagement, oppressed people can upset traditional educational thinking and the power structures implicit in it, in order to unveil and create knowledge mutually and work towards liberation.⁵ Freire’s notions of *conscientization* - the development of critical consciousness⁶ – and liberation through this radical pedagogy have resonated with theorists, activists and peasants in Latin America and across the world into the 21ᵗʰ century, and have been fundamental to grassroots social movements in the development and articulation of their principles of popular education and societal transformation.

Grassroots organizations and social movements have integrated Freirian pedagogy into radical agricultural practices through the *Movimiento Campesino-a-Campesino* (Peasant-to-Peasant movement) and *dialogos de saberes* (“dialogues between ways of knowing”), placing principles of dialogic, horizontal, bottom-up education at the heart of agroecology and food sovereignty. *Campesino-a-campesino* initially emerged as a small-scale experiment in alternative agriculture amongst a

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³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid., 51.
⁵ Ibid., 69.
⁶ Ibid.
village community of Cachikel Mayans in the highlands of Guatemala. After facing diminishing returns from Green Revolution technology and an increasingly burdensome credit-debt cycle that accompanied these globalized agricultural developments, the Cachikel indigenous community, with the assistance of an NGO, began to experiment with agroecological techniques, in a framework “consistent with Freire's ‘teacher-learner/learner-teacher’ model of horizontal adult education.”

This campesino-led experimentation, demonstration and education built on traditional practices and environmental and biological science, all grounded in principles of biodiversity, sustainability, the promotion of synergisms, biological interactions and soil fertility. The subversion of top-down, universalized mainstream models of agricultural development, promotion of indigenous knowledges and simultaneous integration of borrowed alternative techniques proved difficult but definitively successful. Further articulated in the work of Roland Bunch, this approach of people-centered agricultural development became established as a framework for small-scale agricultural work across a broad variety of contexts. The Campesino-a-Campesino and people-centered agricultural models began to be adapted and implemented amongst small-scale agricultural communities throughout Central and South America, with peasants working as the fundamental agents of their own education and development.

9 "Movimiento Campesino a Campesino the Political Ecology of a Farmers' Movement for Sustainable Agriculture in Mesoamérica," 53.
11 Bunch, "People-Centered Agricultural Development."
Through the practice of *dialogos de saberes*, Freirian pedagogy has played a fundamental role in the construction of food sovereignty. For La Via Campesina, as a diverse, international organization that is built from peasants’ grassroots-oriented struggles and aims to construct food sovereignty through marginalized peoples’ voices, horizontal dialogue between many different ideas, approaches, knowledges, and worldviews is essential. As such, the organization has build a methodology of *diálogo de saberes*, the collective creation of knowledge and ideas through intentional dialogue between “between people with different historically specific experiences, cosmovisions, and ways of knowing, particularly when faced with new collective challenges in a changing world.”12 This praxis is also incorporated into the processes and daily practices of small-scale food sovereignty work, as organizations and communities interweave various forms of knowledge in order to confront the challenges they face and build sustainable and thriving alternatives.

II. Situating the Workshops

The three workshops explored in this chapter all reflect these principles of building food sovereignty through local, bottom-up organizational structuring and marginalized local knowledges. The first was a preparatory meeting for the establishment of a *Casa de Semillas* (Seed House) amongst the Zenú indigenous community based around San Andres de Sotavento, Cordoba. Mauricio García, an agronomist from the *Campaña Semillas de Identidad* (Seeds of Identity Campaign)...

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12 Cosmovision is the concept of indigenous worldviews, not only in their religious and cultural perspectives but in their active realizations of alternative constructions of the world. Maria Elena Martínez-Torres and Peter Rosset, "Diálogo De Saberes in La Vía Campesina Food Sovereignty and Agroecology," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 41, no. 6 (2014): 962.; Forero, "Interview with Jorge Forero."
and Remberto Gil Baquero and Alvaro Hernandez of the *Red Agroecologica del Caribe* - RECAR (Agroecological Network of the Caribbean) facilitated this workshop. *Campaña Semillas de Identidad* is a national-level organization that seeks to aid indigenous, peasant and Afro-descendant communities and networks in the building of autonomy and food sovereignty through the support of native seed initiatives.  

*Red Agroecologica del Caribe* is a regional social non-profit organization that supports and strengthens cultural and organizational processes to benefit vulnerable ethnic and campesino communities.  

Established in 2002, RECAR brought together five indigenous associations within the Zenu resguardo, such as ASPROAL and ASPROINPAL, into a second-tier organization to further regional coordination and cohesion in the advancement of their initiatives.  

ASPROAL, or *Asociación de Productores Agropecuarios Alternativos* (Association of Alternative Agricultural Producers), is a non-profit organization established in 1992 by a local group of Zenú indigenous small-scale producers, to assist their families and communities dealing with land dispossession.  

ASPROAL has worked through horizontal structures to improve organizational capacities, socioeconomic recuperation and sustainable, local agricultural development.  

Both *Campaña Semillas de Identidad* and RECAR are actively engaged in cultural, political and economic grassroots-based food sovereignty projects amongst marginalized communities.

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17 Baquero, "Interview with Remberto Gil Baquero."; Grupo Semillas, "Recuperando Ganado Criollo En Colombia."
The meeting took place in the open-air meeting space of in the center of San Andres de Sotavento, where ten farmers from the surrounding area gathered. All in attendance identified as farmers and as indigenous, members of the Zenú resguardo and RECAR participants. While not all members participated in this particular workshop, those who were in attendance represented many small communities and families throughout the area. Those who chose to participate would be the foundational figures of the Casa de Semillas project and were committed to the communitarian work of RECAR and Campaña Semillas de Identidad in defending local traditional viability, cultural autonomy and food sovereignty.

The intent of this workshop was to lay the groundwork for the establishment of a Casa de Semillas in the area. The Casas de Semillas project is an initiative being established by various communities throughout Colombia in conjunction with Campaña Semillas de Identidad to establish a community locale to store, protect and commercialize traditional seeds. In doing so, the community seeks to safeguard their agricultural reserves and protect, share and revalorize traditional and ancestral knowledge. While the idea of a Casa de Semillas was not new to this community, and they had been discussing such possibilities, this was the first formal meeting of this particular group of people to actively initiate the project.

This day-long workshop focused on the practical and abstract elements involved in the establishment of the Casa de Semillas, including the contextual and conceptual framework for the significance of the Casa de Semillas, the establishment of the Casa de Semillas’s principles, the technical aspects of the functionality of the

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19 Ibid.
Casa de Semillas, including a dramatization, and a discussion of the logistics and coordination of the various communities and farmers involved.

The second workshop was a meeting of the Hogares Ecológicos (Ecological Homes) project in Copacabana, Antioquia. It was facilitated by Tarsicio Aguilar, the general coordinator of the Asociación Red Colombiana de Agricultura Biológica – RECAB (Colombian Network of Biological/Ecological Agriculture). RECAB is a regional social non-profit organization that seeks to construct alternative development through environmental culture, fair trade practices, and solidarity economy systems. RECA was started in 1993 by a group of ten people with assistance from Belgian institutions, growing through the establishment of regional organizational structures and agroecological projects; while significantly larger today, RECAB still operates through direct management, each area organizing under its own structure alongside a broader coordinating committee. They work for “food sovereignty, gender equality, biodiversity conservation and the defense of familial campesino agriculture.”

RECAB organizes and supports agroecological projects such as Hogares Ecológicos and many other initiatives, as well as educational, organizational, commercialization and political advocacy programs for the promotion of alternative agriculture and campesino peoples. This particular program, organized with the support of Corantioquia, the environmental division of the departmental governmental and EcoPetrol, a state-owned petroleum company that funds social initiatives, aimed to create small-scale networks of agroecological farms and gardens

22 Tarsicio Aguilar, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 12, 2014, Medellín, Antioquia.
23 “Asociación Red Colombiana De Agricultura Biológica”. 
through technical and social assistance to promote alternative agriculture practices, support campesino livelihoods and build community organization.

The meeting was held at the home of one the participants in the Hogares Ecológicos program. In addition to Tarsicio Aguilar, an agronomist student from the University de Antioquia, and myself, there were twelve participants, all who identified as campesinos or tied to the campesino culture. These campesinos came from Copacabana and the surrounding communities and all had plots of land that they were farming.

The intent of this particular workshop was to facilitate the organization of a network of producers. The group had established their agroecological approaches on their farms through the process of the overarching project, and was now working to create a cohesive and supportive network of producers. Because the financial and technical support for these campesinos was coming to an end, the intent was to build a network that would allow for the long-term sustainability and viability of their agroecological project. The workshop focused on the technical and conceptual aspects of network-building in order to explore the possibilities available to this community, to build on democratic and agroecological principles, and to construct a network that was culturally-sensitive, autochthonous and horizontally organized.

The third workshop I attended was a meeting between the Comité de Integración del Macizo - CIMA (Macizo Integration Committee) and a campesino, and partially-Afro-descendant, community in Las Botas del Tambo, Cauca. CIMA is

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24 As explained in the first chapter, many Colombians who live outside of rural areas, in urban or semi-urban spaces, often identify as campesino and/or with campesino culture. This is because Colombia has a rich history of campesino heritage and many who do not live in the campo/lo rural are only one or two generations away from it – often because of violent displacement or development, not by choice.
a social organization based in Cauca that seeks to promote Macizo campesino culture, ways of living, political advocacy and natural environment in the region. While active as a series of grassroots peasant mobilizations in the Macizo region, especially Cauca and Nariño, throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, CIMA was officially established as a social movement in 1994 at a summit in which organizational processes and guiding principles were laid out.\textsuperscript{25} Through the structure of a non-profit entity, FundeCIMA, the organization works for the “recovery, conservation, maintenance, defense and reasonable use of the natural, human and cultural resources of the Cauca, the Macizo region and Colombia, through the implementation of plans, programs and projects which foster the comprehensive development of communities.”\textsuperscript{26} FundeCIMA advances an agenda of human rights promotion, cultural valorization, social and political engagement, alternative development, and environmentalism and food sovereignty is an essential component of their principles and projects.

This meeting was held in the home of one of the members of the Las Botas community and was made up of twelve people, all who identified as campesinos. The meeting was facilitated Alexander Fernández, the Agroenvironmental Coordinator for FundeCima. The meeting was mostly held indoors, with a tour of the family’s small farming plot during the lunch break.

The intent of this meeting was to incorporate the local community of campesinos, who had recently established themselves as an association of producers, ASPROCAM, into CIMA. As most often occurs in the building of CIMA’s networks,

\textsuperscript{25} Alexander Fernández, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 19, 2014, Popayán, Colombia.
ASPROCAM had reached out to CIMA after they had formed, knowing it to be a prominent and effective community organizing and empowering movement.\(^{27}\) Having just established themselves as an association, ASPROCAM sought out incorporation into the CIMA in order to receive support for their local initiatives, gain training and organizational resources for social, political and cultural advancement, and engage in the broader regional community projects. While other communities in the region have developed their organizational processes and activism through CIMA over many years, the Las Botas community was only beginning to do so, largely in order to gain assistance in their attempts to regain lost land, and practice their traditional farming practices to promote their cultural heritage, economic viability, and environmental sustainability.\(^{28}\) Fernández’ intent in this meeting was to learn about the community and their goals, as well as to fully explain CIMA and FundeCIMA, their structure, principles, and approaches.

\(^{27}\) Luis Elluver Valdez, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 20, 2014, Las Botas, Cauca.
\(^{28}\) “CIMA-ASPROCAM Workshop,” (Las Botas, Cauca: FundeCIMA, 2014).
III. In Situ Pedagogical Practice

One of the most elemental, yet critical, forms of the radical pedagogical approaches in these workshops resides in their representations of outside-the-classroom, culturally-sensitive learning. By building in situ educational practices, organizations and communities are emphasizing the importance of the places in which knowledge, agriculture, and the people constructing them, are located. As a framework and movement that seeks to serve the needs of marginalized people and respect their values, diversity, and culture, food sovereignty “requires an in situ education, that is, a reflexive education that builds knowledge based on the surrounding environment.”

The Casa de Semillas, Hogares ecológicos and CIMA-ASPROCAM workshops all took place in non-traditional educational spaces, ones in which the campesino, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples involved felt comfortable, respected and in control. This approach serves to physically and

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29 Jason Meisner, "Food Sovereignty as Resistance: Mocase's Defense of Territory and Indigenous Campesino Knowledge in Argentina" (M.A., American University, 2013), 81.
culturally broaden the “landscape of knowledge production,” as a way of “unsettling the megastructure of the academy as the knowledge space par excellence.”\textsuperscript{30} The engagement of \textit{in situ} pedagogy recognizes the power dynamics of the spaces of knowledge and its creation,\textsuperscript{31} working towards the creation of transformational places of inclusive, alternative knowledge production.

In San Andres de Sotavento, the \textit{Casa de Semillas} workshop was held in the outdoor meeting space of ASPROAL. The indigenous farmers in attendance were members of this association by their own volition and had attended other meetings, trainings and workshops in this space.\textsuperscript{32} As they sat and formulated their principles and plans, they could look out into the fields and forests being discussed. This environmentally-inclusive learning space contextualized their work, emphasizing the practical and day-to-day aspects of the project and allowing them to feel comfortable and in control of their space of learning, reflection and actualization.

The conscious choice of pedagogical space was also reflected in the RECAB \textit{Hogares Ecológicos} workshop and the CIMA workshop. In the Copacabana community, RECAB organized their workshops to rotate between the homes/lands of the participants, each session being conducted at a different locale. Not only did this delegate responsibility and equalize transport logistics, it allowed all of the participants to claim ownership for their spaces of training, and demonstrate their actions in the project. In this process of \textit{in situ} experiential learning and sharing, dialogue and conscientization emerges amongst “when visiting the farm of a peer,

\textsuperscript{30} Escobar, \textit{ Territories of Difference : Place, Movements, Life, Redes}, 268.
\textsuperscript{31} Michel Pimbert, "Transforming Knowledge and Ways of Knowing," in \textit{Towards Food Sovereignty: Reclaiming Autonomous Food Systems} (2009), 58.
\textsuperscript{32} Baquero, "Interview with Remberto Gil Baquero."
seeing, touching, feeling, even tasting an alternative practice as it is actually functioning on that farm, allowing peasants to imagine and translate it into their own vision.” 33 The experience of learning within the environmental context of manifestations of alternative agricultural practices creates a pedagogical experience that valorizes traditional knowledge as well as experimentation, and demonstrates the very real possibilities of both to motivate further implementation.

This particular RECAB workshop was held outside on a small terrace area and was interspersed with a walking tour of the gardens, and an outdoor lunch prepared with food grown, for the most part, by the participants. Through these activities, the training process was fully integrated into the environment. While this particular workshop focused on somewhat abstract concepts of network-building and community organizing, these ideas were being constructed within a space that reflected the concrete, day-to-day work of the participants in creating food sovereignty through their small-scale agroecological practices.

In Cauca, the CIMA workshop followed a similarly culturally-sensitive, community-oriented approach to the creation of pedagogical space. While FundeCIMA has an office in the city of Popayan that can, and does, accommodate large meetings and events, this workshop was held in the home of Luis Viron, one of the members of the Las Botas community and the coordinator of ASPROCAM. Although this meeting was held with the intent of incorporating ASPROACAM into the broader organizational framework, this siting emphasized local communities’ self-directed engagement in the CIMA structure.

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33 Martínez-Torres and Rosset, "Diálogo De Saberes in La Vía Campesina Food Sovereignty and Agroecology," 992.
While ASPROCAM sought out CIMA in order to strengthen their association, build civil and political structures, become a part of a larger network, and fight more actively and effectively for their demands, the fundamental principles and resources for such training, networking and long-term capacitation was clearly grounded in that which they already had – their agricultural processes, their culture, their ways of being and of thinking. Luis Elluver Valdez, who had articulately described how their squashes are grown and harvested as we walked through the agricultural land, spoke to this:

“We know how to manage the earth, we know how to grow our food. But we can barely do it – we don’t have enough land or resources, and we are forced to use chemicals and foreign mechanisms and buy imported products. We're tired of asking for so many things, and without being able to question anything. We know that together we can obtain something for ourselves, our children, our neighbors, and our community. ‘Knowledge is what we have’ – there’s a saying that’s said that when you lose something, if you know what it is, then when you do not have it, you can achieve with what you know that you value.”

Valdez is communicating that even when one is constrained by political, social and economic marginalization, there remains power of knowledge grounded in agricultural and cultural practices, and further education and training stems directly from that. Thus, it is essential that the pedagogy of such workshops occur in the environments in which the marginalized communities can claim dominion and authority.

The in situ model of food sovereignty pedagogy upsets the colonization of knowledge and nature at their intersections and highlights the place-based centrality of such practices. The practice of engaging with radical bottom-up and dialogic

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34 Valdez, "Interview with Luis Elluver Valdez."
pedagogy within the natural environment breaks down the rigid definitions of what knowledge and nature are and can be. Escobar emphasizes that “many rural communities in the Third World ‘construct’ nature in strikingly different ways from prevalent modern forms”\(^{35}\), a critical perspective that is articulated in this \textit{in situ} pedagogical practice. It is through such practice that “place” emerges as a culturally-embedded phenomenon, and the simultaneous and overlapping work of knowledge-creation and place-making occurs, providing opportunity for the articulation of alternative cosmovisions and worlds from marginalized perspectives.

By locating the workshops within the outdoor spaces in which the communities may claim authority, knowledge and control, \textit{Red de Semillas de Identidad}, RECAB and CIMA recognize the power dynamics invoked by space and place and privilege the knowledges of these communities that are rooted in place. Such \textit{in situ} pedagogical spaces are explicitly non-traditional, promoting alternative learning beyond classroom-style banking-model schooling. They challenge the decontextualizing and delineating character of normative education and development by actively presenting the ecological environment as the space of learning, living, and engaging. Creating a reflective approach through \textit{in situ} pedagogy emphasizes the “place-based consciousness”\(^{36}\) of many Colombian peasant, indigenous and Afro-descendant knowledges, taking a critical approach to the environment, “in all its ecological, social, economic, cultural and spiritual dimensions.”\(^{37}\) As Alexander Fernández explains, “It is essential that we hold our meetings in communities’ spaces

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 153.
\(^{37}\) Pimbert, "Transforming Knowledge and Ways of Knowing."
– their homes, community centers, and especially their lands – because that is where their knowledge is.”38 These ideas attest to the culturally-aware orientation of food sovereignty that highlights agricultural peoples’ place-based ways of thinking. For communities built on agricultural practices, their livelihoods, lifestyles and agri-food systems are dependent on “holding local soil and local memory in place.”39

IV. Valorizing Marginalized Peoples’ Knowledges

The valorization of marginalized peoples’ knowledges plays a fundamental role in the processes of food sovereignty workshops. In challenging the exclusion and eradication of such knowledge systems central to mainstream development paradigms, food sovereignty projects in Colombia actively seek to emphasize the legitimacy and potentiality of campesino, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples’ knowledges. In all three of the workshops that I attended, this valorization of marginalized peoples’ knowledges was an overarching theme.

This fundamental principle was propagated in part by the workshop facilitators. These facilitators - Mauricio García, Tarsicio Aguilar, and Alexander Fernández - identified themselves as fundamentally connected to the communities with which they were working, while also noting their differences they came from other locales and had received formal higher education in agricultural engineering and other disciplines. They all made a point of explicitly acknowledging their own distinct pedagogical backgrounds while subverting this formal training to the community members’ own knowledge systems. García emphasized this at the

38 Fernández, "Second Interview with Alexander Fernández."
beginning of the *Casa de Semillas* workshop, saying, “You are the ones who can say what it is you want and need, not the technical expert, not me.”⁴⁰ Rather than ignoring or hiding their own educational experiences in order to promote alternative forms of knowledge, these facilitators stressed the importance of appropriately and effectively bringing together diverse roots of knowledge creation. “We are all coming to these workshops with different sources of knowledge, different ways of thinking,” Aguilar said during the beginning of the *Hogares ecológicos* workshop, “What matters is how we utilize these knowledges together, as a network, toward our goals.”⁴¹ These notions reflect key elements of self-reflection and awareness of power dynamics and diversity of knowledges that are essential to food sovereignty’s transformational work.

García, Aguilar and Fernández have worked hard to develop their methodologies and their self-awareness through their experiences with various projects over time. In interviews, all three recognized their own shortcomings and attempts to grow and evolve in their practices. García is originally from an agricultural community in the central Pacific region, though now works in Bogotá through SWISSAID as the General Coordinator of *Red de Semillas de Identidad*. “Through all of the work I do,” García says, “I am learning all the time.”⁴² Aguilar has lived in Medellin throughout his life and has been involved in social activism and agricultural work for many years. “I have been a part of the RECAUB process almost since its beginning,” Aguilar states, “It is always a process of growth. I have to

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⁴⁰ Remberto Baquero Señor, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 4, 2014, San Andres de Sotavento, Cordoba.
⁴¹ “Casa De Semillas Workshop.”
⁴² Garcia, "Interview with Mauricio Garcia."
always be aware of my role.”

Fernández grew up in Popayan in a campesino family, though attended university across the country to study agronomy. Returning to Popayan, he realized that agricultural science was not enough, and began his own studies of social science and agroecology as he became more actively involved in CIMA. “I realized that I could not just be an expert in agricultural science…So I read Freire and others, and worked alongside communities…That is how to become knowledgeable, or at least try to.”

The profound shift toward teacher-student/student-teacher dynamics within this pedagogical approach demands rigorous and challenging action taken by all those involved, regardless of position of power and privilege.

The process of reclaiming and revalorizing knowledge rooted in marginalized peoples and communities is the key foundational aspect to the formation of a radical pedagogy within the food sovereignty framework. Both farmers and facilitators must begin by trusting marginalized peoples’ abilities to reason. The pedagogical formation of agroecology and food sovereignty begins with the “recognition, recovery, and valorization of autochthonous, local and/or traditional knowledges.”

Before transformational action can be taken to carry out food sovereignty projects, this process of empowerment must take place. “There is a lot of legitimacy in the campesino methodologies and ways of thinking,” states Fernandez, during the CIMA-ASPROCAM workshop, “and we defend these campesino thoughts and practices

43 Aguilar, "Interview with Tarsicio Aguilar."
44 Fernández, "Second Interview with Alexander Fernández."
45 Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 60; 66.
46 Martínez-Torres and Rosset, "Diálogo De Saberes in La Vía Campesina Food Sovereignty and Agroecology."
because it is from them that food sovereignty and autonomy are constructed." This articulation of the importance of campesino peoples’ knowledges, echoed amongst indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, through repeated and clear language drives the processes of food sovereignty workshops and projects.

The participants also voice this need for this fundamental valorization in order to create food sovereignty. The bottom-up expression of the value of one’s own knowledge exemplifies the critical grassroots nature of this pedagogical practice. Throughout the course of my research in Colombia, in these workshops and amongst other communities I visited, I often heard such expressions of the (re/)valorization of autochthonous knowledges by campesino, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples as a critical foundation for their empowerment and engagement. “We can only begin a process of change and growth as a community if we recognize that we know things, and use that,” says Victor Salgado Castillo, a Zenú indigenous farmer, member of ASPROAL, and participant in the Casa de Semillas workshop. Castillo, and others, expressed their engagement with ideas of food sovereignty, community organizing and social change through their knowledge bases, their cultural heritage and agricultural practice.

This critical consciousness is not always actively realized nor explicitly recognized – a challenging enough task for anyone, but especially people whose knowledge systems exist outside the realm of recognition for legitimate and appropriate knowledge. When this awareness is voiced, it often emerges as a form of self-confidence and motivation amongst peoples who have been so consistently

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47 “CIMA-ASPROCAM Workshop.”
marginalized and denied opportunities for growth and self-expression. “One of the most beautiful parts is being able to share the knowledge that you have, that you know, that helps you,” expressed Hector Juan Valencia, a campesino farmer and Hogares ecológicos workshop participant, “and to recognize that we have learned many things and can share them with our colleagues.”

Many did not speak with the same eloquence and articulateness of Salgado Castillo or Valencia, but it is through the processes of the radical pedagogy of these food sovereignty projects that this critical consciousness comes to be formed and articulated.

More than the repetition of such statements, the actual prioritization and articulation of marginalized peoples’ knowledges and knowledge systems is critical to food sovereignty pedagogy. This is achieved through dialogue between all participants in the creation, expression, negotiation and enactment of knowledge. The dialogic framework is an essential starting point and constant process for the emergence of ideas and realities of food sovereignty. Such dialogic processes were all expressed, through various means and to varying degrees of success, in the Casa de Semillas, Hogares ecológicos and CIMA-ASPROCAM workshops as critical methodologies for community engagement, knowledge valorization, and social critique and transformation for the realization of food sovereignty.

The Hogares ecológicos workshop best demonstrated the effective and engaging use of dialogic processes to facilitate a horizontally-structured formation of a food sovereignty project, drawing on a diversity of campesino knowledges and

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49 Hector Juan Valencia, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 17, 2014, Copacabana, Medellin.
perspectives. While the course of events of this workshop had a formal structure, dialogue ran throughout and constituted a critical component during each part of the process. Conversation is essential,” Aguilar says, “We cannot accomplish anything unless all voices are participating. So we work to make sure that that is always present in our projects.” This precedent that had been established and developed over the course of the workshops prompted vocal and active participation from everyone involved. The level of dialogue on the day I attended, coming at the end of a series of multiple workshops, was definitively greater than it had been at the beginning, according to Aguilar: “Making participation happen can be difficult. You have to work for it.” Sitting in a circle of chairs and benches on the outdoor patio, the workshop proceeded as a series of conversations, short presentations, question-and-answers, and other forms of communal dialogue. Through this process, the participants articulated their concepts for the creation of a broader network of small-scale agroecological producers, drawing from their own knowledges and experiences as well as the communal knowledge created over the course of the project. Overall, Aguilar certainly spoke more than the other participants, but his voice did not dominate the workshop. He spoke as a facilitator, guiding the conversation, presenting ideas and concepts, encouraging deeper explorations of thought. There was a clear intentionality to his engagement with the group, highlighting the self-aware and self-reflective practices in the creation of critical consciousness and in enacting a dynamic that subverted traditional educational power structures and promoted horizontal, community-oriented interaction.

51 Aguilar, "Interview with Tarsicio Aguilar."
52 Ibid.
While the CIMA-ASPROCAM workshop had significantly less of a dialogical component, dialogue did arise at a critical juncture in workshop, in an exploration of the themes and issues important to the Las Botas community and ASPROCAM. While there are many common threads to the issues faced by rural communities in Colombia, and even more similarities to the campesino and Afro-descendant communities in this region of Cauca, Fernández did not enter this meeting voicing presumptions about the problems and needs of the people in their desire to affiliate themselves with CIMA. In order to understand the prevalent concerns amongst this community, Fernández took a break from presentation to explicitly ask the group about their issues and desires. In such processes, initial steps of encounter depend on collective identification of relevant issues, experiences and lessons, leading to self-study, documentation, analysis and horizontal sharing. The community members spoke about the deprivation of land, lack of financial resources, culturally-discordant education and poor road quality. While many of these ideas aligned directly with CIMA and the food sovereignty movement, others were more tangential, yet fundamental to the dialogue and overall process all the same. In the building of a horizontally-oriented structure that valorizes and emphasizes campesino knowledge for the creation of food sovereignty, community empowerment and social

53 Dialogue is a key component to much of CIMA’s work, but the primary purpose of this workshop was to comprehensively explain CIMA’s principles, structures and operations as a foundation and social movement, in order to begin to establish a connection between CIMA and ASPROCAM. Thus, dialogic processes took on more of a supporting role in this particular meeting. As Aguilar had noted, the creation of effective dialogue is a complicated and gradual, while constantly fundamental, project and must be built with care and diligence. While this does not necessarily explain Fernández’s dominance in this particular workshop, it provides insight into the subordination of dialogue in this initial meeting. “CIMA-ASPROCAM Workshop.”
54 Martínez-Torres and Rosset, "Diálogo De Saberes in La Vía Campesina Food Sovereignty and Agroecology."
55 "CIMA-ASPROCAM Workshop."
56 Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 120.
transformation, this group must explore the conjunctions of CIMA and ASPROCAM’s principles and goals, and establish the primary themes of concern to address.

Dialogic processes also arose in a quieter role in the overall program of the Casa de Semillas workshop. While Mauricio García was the primary speaker throughout most of the workshop, even after asking questions to the participants about their experiences, practices and thoughts, there was a critical use of community-oriented language that reflected dialogical pedagogical practices. At the start of this workshop, and in the context of previous meetings and projects of the local indigenous farmers, some of which García had also participated in, there was an evolution of language in the naming of the Casa de Semillas as a project and concept that reflected the peoples’ culture, cosmovision, and epistemology. What had once been a “banco de semillas” (seed bank) in other projects amongst other communities, became a “casa de semillas” (seed house) and a “pañol de semillas” (seed storeroom, roughly). 57 These word changes not only reflects the community’s particular use of language and contextualizes the project within familiar, everyday notions, they also transform an externally adopted concept into a communally constructed project. This transformation reflects the indigenous community’s knowledge system and cultural practices, subverting capital-oriented notions of transaction and emphasizing communitarian values. In the construction of culturally-centered dialogic pedagogy, marginalized peoples design the terms and issues through their own initiative. 58 The dialogic processes utilized in the transformation

57 “Casa De Semillas Workshop.”
and creation of the language of the Casa de semillas, which extended beyond the name and into the descriptions of its principles and uses, are essential to promoting autochthonous knowledge valorization and expression, community-oriented learning and development, and horizontal structures of creation and action.

V. Learning through Multidisciplinary Activities

The radical pedagogy of food sovereignty projects utilizes multidisciplinary educational activities and methodologies, challenging the hegemony of traditional educational and development approaches, reflecting the cultural practices and knowledge systems of marginalized peoples, and incorporating a diverse range of forms of expression to promote alternative, experimental and transformational learning and growth. Rural agriculturalists with little or no formal education “are not accustomed to learning through the written word or by listening to presentations.”59 In

response to this, radical agrarian pedagogical programs have developed an “informal but sophisticated” methodology of demonstrations, games and group activities to teach agroecological themes (small-scale experimentation, diversity-stability, fertility, and others) that allows marginalized peoples to “learn, understand, present, remember and apply agroecological concepts to sustainable agricultural development.”

This flexible and responsive approach is established in correspondence with “agricultural seasons, farmer’ cognitive development, family capabilities and village organizational opportunities.” This methodology is utilized within the food sovereignty framework in varying forms depending on the needs, cultures, epistemologies, and practices of the communities. In the Casa de Semillas, Hogares ecológicos, and CIMA-ASPROCAM workshops, participants engaged in role-playing, small group work, tactile exercises, and field tours as approaches within this radical pedagogy.

Role-playing activities were utilized most clearly in the Casa de Semillas workshop as an educational approach to promote the learning of new skills and practices in a concrete, engaging and communal methodology. Halfway through this workshop, the participants engaged in a simulation of the dynamics and interactions of the casa de semillas. They began by determining the necessary roles (i.e. farmer bringing seeds, casa de semillas manager, farmer obtaining seeds, etc.) for creating a simulation of the casa de semillas, and then volunteered to take on the various roles. They then acted out the possible scenarios that would take place in the casa de semillas, with suggestions and questions from the other participants and the facilitators called out from their positions in the “audience.” This activity brought the

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60 Holt-Giménez, "Movimiento Campesino a Campesino the Political Ecology of a Farmers' Movement for Sustainable Agriculture in Mesoamérica," 82.
61 Ibid.
concept of a *casa de semillas* out of the abstract, grounding it in real, lived interactions, built from the experiences and knowledges of the community themselves. This was a process of not only understanding the *casa de semillas*, but also creating its operational structures. Based on their own worldview and context the community members actively created the concepts and practices of the *casa de semillas*. While other communities, indigenous, campesino or Afro-descendant, may have worked from related foundational principles and perhaps drawn from similar knowledge systems, the particular experiences, ideas and dynamics of this Zenú community in the San Andres de Sotavento region directly contributed to the formation of this particular *casa de semillas*.

Small group work played an important role in the *Casa de Semillas* and *Hogares ecológicos* workshops, as a tool for the encouragement of active input by all participants in idea brainstorming and logistical work. In the *Casa de semillas* workshop, after much of the principles and operational structures of the project had been discussed, the participants broke off into small groups based on their specific communities within the region. They then set about determining how many families and how many farmers made up these communities, in order to get a sense of the levels of supply and demand for the *casa de semillas*. Although many of these participants had been quiet during the whole-group work, this small-group activity provided a space in which they felt comfortable to engage and apply their agricultural and communitarian knowledge to a very specific logistical problem. Previously reserved individuals became lively participants, demonstrating their eagerness to

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62 "Casa De Semillas Workshop."
contribute their knowledge, their skills for working cohesively as a group, and highly specific data regarding the number of families and farmers in their communities. This work was both a tremendous benefit to the understanding of the logistical operations of the casa de semillas, and an active tool for engaging these indigenous peoples and their knowledges’ in an alternative pedagogical approach that promoted their confidence and comfort, perceptively drew on their knowledge systems, and developed their horizontal knowledge-creation and organization capabilities.

In the Hogares ecológicos workshop, small group work was used in a similar process in order to develop the operational and conceptual framework of the project. The participants formed small groups based on their communities within the region and broke off into these groups at various points in the workshop. One of these small group moments focused on the articulation of the concepts of groups and networks, and the differences between the two, in order to understand the principles, processes and potentials of networks so as to successfully build a network of small-scale agroecological campesino producers. Another moment required the small groups to reflect on the various concepts and skills that they had developed over the course of the project and create an educational presentation of one component, in preparation for future sharing with other community members. These activities drew on the particular knowledges of the participants, bringing forth their autochthonous knowledges, communal experiences, and workshop-developed concepts to explore conceptual and practical ideas grounded in the material practices of the project.

The Hogares ecológicos participants also engaged in a tactical exercise to facilitate learning of abstract principles of network-building. Aguilar initiated an
activity at the very start of the workshop in which the participants created a web with a ball of yarn, experimenting with different ways of establishing connection points. By letting certain points fall, they observed the different sources of strength and weakness in their web. Throughout this activity, Aguilar facilitated a conversation about how this web represented the networks of small-scale agroecological producers that they were attempting to establish, and the different ways of building these networks to facilitate strength and sustainability. “Using this yarn, we can realize how connections and linkages between people and communities are built,” Aguilar explained, “This is a way of explaining and exploring abstract issues and ideas, especially if there is illiteracy within a community.”63 This activity took a fairly abstract, theoretical concept and made a very real, lived example to which the participants could engage and relate. They brought in their own knowledges to make sense of the process and to create a communal dialogue on the building of an effective network.

Finally, the CIMA-ASPROCAM workshop incorporated a field tour of the host family’s farmland as a distinctive pedagogical tool to provide a platform for the community’s articulation of their agricultural knowledge and practices and to ground the more abstract, conceptual work of the meeting within the natural, lived environment. This field tour took place in the middle of the workshop, after a lunch break. The participants, along with Alexander Fernández and I, walked around the small plot of land that belonged to the host, conversing about the different agricultural practices being implemented, and the various crops being cultivated.64 This field tour

64 “CIMA-ASPROCAM Workshop.”
disrupted more traditional educational aspects of the workshop and placed the knowledge creation and articulation directly into the hands of the community members. “This is where our knowledge is based,” reflected one participant, Carlos Giraldo Montenegro, “We have a strong understanding of what has been illustrated on environmental improvement, on land management.” In this context, Fernández and I were the uniformed student subjects as the Las Botas community members taught us about their practices and land, actively subverting the traditional teacher-student dichotomy. This field tour also emphasized the in situ, place-based nature of CIMA’s work, actively connecting the discussions of political action, social change, cultural empowerment and power with the environment and the everyday agricultural practices of the community.

VI. Networks of Knowledge

The food sovereignty projects developed through these workshops create horizontally-oriented, bottom-up organization, linking knowledges and expanding beyond the scale of the initial participation. While these workshops focused on building the local, small-scale work within and from the community, there is a fundamental component of scaling-up and –out involved in these projects to create broader community and expand the agricultural, social, economic and political impacts of these food sovereignty endeavors. This work reflects a radical translocal approach to knowledge-building, the building of publicly accessible and inclusive networks for learning and teaching.66

65 Carlos Giraldo Montenegro, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 20, 2014, Las Botas, Cauca.
66 Illich, Deschooling Society, 77.
Initially, these workshops build linkages between the knowledges of the active participants. These workshops brought together individuals of varying degrees of connection. In the Casa de Semillas workshop, all of the participants were members of the Zenú resguardo and of the farmers’ association ASPROAL; they were all part of the San Andres de Sotavento regional community and had worked together before, in meetings and workshops such as these, and in their agricultural work. The Hogares ecológicos workshop brought together various campesinos from the Copacabana area, many of whom had not known each other before the project had begun; this was the most disparate group of participants, and they came from a wide range of experiences with agricultural practices. In the CIMA-ASPROCAM workshop, the participants were members of the small community of Las Botas and had come together to form the ASPROCAM group; this was their first time meeting Alexander Fernández, from FundeCIMA in Popayán. Despite the variance in association and community across these workshops, all three brought together participants with intention and self-awareness toward linking and growing knowledges.

The facilitators and participants in these workshops articulated the initial networking of knowledges within the small-scale communities as a base from which to grow. García began the Casa de Semillas workshop with questions, asking, “What are the principles of this community pañol, from your own philosophies? To start down this road we must determine these things from what you know as individuals and as a community.” Aguilar echoed similar notions in the initial web-making exercise: “We are bringing together many different people, ideas, and experiences to

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67 “Casa De Semillas Workshop.”
create this network… in this process of teaching and learning from our own examples.”

This metaphor for web-building extends throughout concepts of knowledge building for radical agricultural projects. The individual strands of limited experience and knowledge are woven together into a “dense tapestry of ‘knowledge-power’ which holds potential energy for collective action at community and political levels.” The linking of knowledges amongst the community of participants traverses these projects, from the proceedings of the meetings to the dynamic interactions of the envisioned goals. The casa de semillas, for example, seeks to create broader community strength through the exchange of native seeds, a concrete manifestation of the peoples’ knowledges.

The creation of these networks leads to the “strengthening of the community and economic processes, responding to local needs in ways that transcends cultural and food supply concerns.” The principles of CIMA’s organizational work also reflect this base of knowledge linkages; “We are building a different educational model,” Fernández states, “that begins here, that is constructed between us, between our knowledges, from below.” This process develops from the linking of such knowledges to establish horizontal structures of communication, creation and organization that instill particular notions and values to extend these structural principles beyond the operations of the workshops to the projects as a whole, and to the broader networks of the communities.

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68 Aguilar, "Interview with Tarsicio Aguilar."
70 “Casa De Semillas Workshop."
72 “CIMA-ASPROCAM Workshop."
The participants in these projects also work to build more complex levels of knowledge linkages, by connecting diverse, autochthonous knowledges of campesino, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples alongside external scientific and agroecological knowledges. The CIMA-ASPROCAM workshop best exemplified the ways in which these projects seek to create associations between different communities and their knowledges for empowerment, engagement and food sovereignty. By establishing an official connection between the two groups, the members of the Las Botas community become part of broad network of communities engaged in the social, political and agricultural work of CIMA. Through this association, they would become participants in environmental education schools, meetings, dialogos de saberes, workshops, political campaigns, farmers markets, marches, and other forms of horizontally organized community building.

The participants in this workshop expressed their hopes of learning many things through their integration into CIMA, as well as sharing their own knowledges. “Being a part of CIMA can teach us how to be involved in the struggles of our friends and colleagues, to work in solidarity, and know what it is that we have,” stated Luis Elluver Valdez.73 This process of network-building is an essential component to the campesino-a-campesino methodology for sharing agricultural and social strategies.74 This approach broadens the impact of agroecological projects and reinforces the effectiveness and sustainability of these initiatives towards food sovereignty.

While emphasizing the primacy of autochthonous knowledge amongst marginalized communities, food sovereignty projects also seek to incorporate a

73 Valdez, "Interview with Luis Elluver Valdez."
74 Holt-Giménez, "Movimiento Campesino a Campesino the Political Ecology of a Farmers' Movement for Sustainable Agriculture in Mesoamérica," 71.
diversity of knowledges into their processes. In revalorizing localized knowledge systems, these projects are careful to not shut out other forms of thought and action, but rather actively engage with them. The knowledge systems of campesino, indigenous and Afro-descendant may share a similar marginalized status, but they also have many differences. Indigenous knowledge systems are based on spiritual cosmovision and transmission through communal cultural traditions.\(^75\) Peasant knowledge systems are based on daily agricultural practices and farmer-to-farmer exchange.\(^76\) Afro-Colombian knowledge systems are grounded in cultural traditions growing out of their position of alterity and externalization/marginalization, and are shared through communal and familial exchange.\(^77\)

The *dialogo de saberes* process within the food sovereignty framework works to recognize these differences and build active communication and sharing across these knowledge systems in order to promote the agroecological work of a broad spectrum of marginalized communities.\(^78\) In the *Casa de Semillas* project the conceptual roots of the seed house/storeroom are not based solely in conceptions of the Zenú *resguardo*, but are developed from indigenous, campesino and Afro-descendant methodologies and practices.\(^79\) The project also builds from scientific knowledge, drawing from the experiences of Mauricio García and other agroenvironmental scientific processes. The selective incorporation of such modern

\(^{75}\) Martínez-Torres and Rosset, "Diálogo De Saberes in La Vía Campesina Food Sovereignty and Agroecology," 989.

\(^{76}\) Ibid.

\(^{77}\) Escobar, *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes*.

\(^{78}\) Martínez-Torres and Rosset, "Diálogo De Saberes in La Vía Campesina Food Sovereignty and Agroecology," 988-89.

\(^{79}\) García, "Redes Y Casas Comunitarias De Semillas Nativas Y Criollas: Importancia, Principios, Objectivos, Funcionamiento Y Experiencias". 2, 6.
innovations and technologies is key to marginalized peoples’ dynamic processes of “cultural affirmation and self-determination.”

Radical pedagogical approaches to food sovereignty projects build on Bunch’s people-centered agricultural development framework and the campesino-a-campesino framework to promote horizontal organization and knowledge sharing in the utilization of farmers as extensionists. Those who participate in projects such as Hogares ecológicos not only develop the skills to implement these agricultural practices, but also to teach others in their communities how to do so. This approach promotes sustainability, dynamism and horizontal structuring of knowledge sharing. While the participants of the Hogares ecológicos project may have initially been at a disadvantage because of the lack of an already-established community, they were uniquely positioned to build a broader network in their small-scale agroecological farming work. This particular workshop focused intently on both the conceptual principles and operational skills needed for effective network-building and community-based extension. The participants spoke with confidence and excitement about their role in the diffusion of the agroecological knowledge they had developed. “It’s important that everything we’ve learned doesn’t just stay with us, in our heads,” stated Blanca Restrepo, “but that we take advantage of it, share it, so that the families of the communities may have access to a proper food supply.” Another participant, Joel Villa Munera, articulated the distinct nature of this radical repositioning: “There have been many programs that have ‘given us fish’, so to speak. But this program ‘teaches us to fish’, and to teach, as well. It is a knowledge that is sustainable and

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80 Pimbert, "Transforming Knowledge and Ways of Knowing," 47.
81 Blanca Restrepo, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 17, 2014, Copacabana, Medellin.
transferable.” These statements speak to the profound power of community members as extensionists in the creation of knowledge for food sovereignty projects through a horizontally-oriented, sustainable, culturally aware, *in situ* approach.

All of these approaches to creating knowledge linkages reflect the translocal nature of food sovereignty. The radical pedagogy of the food sovereignty framework is fundamentally built on principles of the simultaneous valorization of local, marginalized knowledges while also recognizing the global influences and linkages of various knowledges for a dynamic construction of alternative agroecological practices. This translocality is voiced not only by academics and project facilitators, but also by the participants. Reflecting on the *Hogares ecológicos* project, Blanca Restrepo states, “This has opened doors for us. It has not closed us off in our thinking but opened it up – not just to Medellin, but to the globe.” The dynamics of the *Casa de Semillas, Hogares ecológicos*, and CIMA-ASPROCAM workshops demonstrate that this translocality is fundamental to the sustainability, flexibility and diffusion of people-centered agroecological development.

**VII. Engaging a Praxis of Food Sovereignty**

Radical pedagogy in the food sovereignty movement is constructed through praxis that promotes transformation through daily practice over discourse. For the facilitators and participants of the *Casa de Semillas, Hogares ecológicos*, and CIMA-ASPROCAM workshops, the most important work of their projects toward the realization of food sovereignty is not in the development of the theoretical and

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82 Joel Villa Munera, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 17, 2014, Copacabana, Medellin.
83 Pimbert, "Transforming Knowledge and Ways of Knowing," 10.
84 Restrepo, "Interview with Blanca Restrepo."
conceptual grounds of their projects, but in their operational practices. Through reflective action in their daily activities, these communities are building praxis towards agricultural and social transformation. This praxis requires an ever-present sense of awareness and reflexivity for the goals of radical social change through food sovereignty. The development of such an approach is evident in the recognition of knowledge-power dynamics, the valorization of marginalized knowledges, the implementation of dialogic processes, and many of the other elements of these workshops. As Laura Cristiana Dulcey Giraldo, a teacher and member of ASPROCAM reflects, “The empty stomach cannot think or reflect on what it should do. We need to generate a critical consciousness of, through and toward food sovereignty.”

It is the critical action, intrinsically tied to this self-reflective thought, that is emphasized so forcefully in food sovereignty projects. In this methodology, dialogical consciousness-raising is brought together with agricultural problem-solving. The field work of the participants is just as much, if not more, of a fundamental component of the processes of the overall projects that these workshops facilitate. As Fernández says, “Knowledge and understanding of the environment isn’t in technical expertise, it is in experiences. For example, in the use of compost, there is a process: where it comes from, how to obtain it, how to manage it, how to turn it, how much to use, when it is prepared. These knowledges are incorporated into the community and

86 Pimbert, "Transforming Knowledge and Ways of Knowing," 54.
87 Laura Cristina Dulcey Giraldo, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 20, 2014, Las Botas, Cauca.
88 Holt-Giménez, "Movimiento Campesino a Campesino the Political Ecology of a Farmers' Movement for Sustainable Agriculture in Mesoamérica," 58.
practiced daily." This statement reflects the value placed in the experiential learning processes, subverting both theoretical notions and scientific developments to lived experiences. Aguilar made a similar point of emphasizing the essentiality of practice in working toward food sovereignty. “Food sovereignty is not our foundational ideology. Food sovereignty is the consequence of the work that we are doing by articulating, promoting and constructing a better life.” The participants in these workshops also express the importance enactment of food sovereignty through reflective practices in their daily experiences. “This project not only shows us how to think but how to have knowledge,” says Blanca Restrepo, “It is not only knowing in a verbal form, but also knowing through demonstration. And when you can demonstrate the process and speak freely of it, then it’s certain that you truly know it.”

89 “Cima - Comité De Integración Del Macizo Colombiano”.
90 Aguilar, "Interview with Tarsicio Aguilar."
91 Restrepo, "Interview with Blanca Restrepo."
VIII. Negotiating the Challenges of Food Sovereignty Pedagogy

There are, of course, challenges and insufficiencies to the pedagogical practices utilized in these workshops, especially in the attempts to engage in fully inclusive dialogic processes. In both the Casa de Semillas and the CIMA-ASPROCAM workshops, it often seemed that the facilitators, Mauricio García and Alexander Fernández, were providing the proper space for participatory dialogue. Yet when opportunity arose for dialogue, the participants were often quiet and uneasy. This lack of dialogue, even as it was articulated as a fundamental component, highlighted the challenges of radical pedagogy, especially in the initial stages of implementation.

The reticence amongst participants reflects the powerful influence of mainstream agriculture and pedagogy. These farmers have incorporated the hegemony of scientific thought that devalues and marginalizes their own knowledge systems. The constant subjugation to this ideology and practice has convinced many
small-scale agriculturalists that they are incapable of producing their own ideas.\textsuperscript{92} When asked about the long-term goals and principles of the project she was participating in, one campesino woman, who wished to remain anonymous, responded, “I’m not very well versed in these academic themes. I am from the countryside. I don’t have much knowledge.”\textsuperscript{93} The consistent and constant denial of the legitimacy of their own knowledges and practices by the mainstream scientific and academic paradigms has undermined the confidence and capabilities of campesino, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, leading them to rationalize and internalize such hegemonic notions and reinforce them through the resistance to actively engage in dialogue and to voice their ideas and beliefs.

It is clear that while this reticence to participation in dialogue is a critical challenge to the realization of horizontal education and organization in the food sovereignty framework, transformation toward engagement is possible. A day after the CIMA-ASPROCAM workshop, Fernández and I traveled to another community in Cauca to see their communally-managed farmland and speak about their food sovereignty work. In 1994, this community began their work in a similar process to that of ASPROCAM in 2014, establishing association with the CIMA network. In the past twenty years, they have participated in many workshops, projects, forums, and political actions. With the technical and legal assistance of FundeCIMA, the community had gained access to a relatively small but critical plot of land and had transformed it into an agroecological, biodiverse, communally-run farm that provided a significant portion of their food supply.

\textsuperscript{92} Freire, \textit{Pedagogy of the Oppressed}, 63.  
\textsuperscript{93} “Hogares Ecológicos Workshop.”
In addition to these achievements in food sovereignty, the community members articulated a high level of participatory, dialogic engagement. They spoke with confidence of both their agricultural practices and the more abstract political and social aspects of their work, and the fundamental connections between the two. This stark difference from the previous day with ASPROCAM demonstrated the complex, but essential, process of implementing radical pedagogical practices for the transformation toward knowledge valorization, community empowerment and horizontal organization.

Aguilar reflected on these challenges in his own work through RECAB, stating, “This is a large project of transformation and articulation that is not very rapid. It’s about making changes in our minds before changes in our farms. Seeing these transformations in people is the most important – in your families, in your neighbors.” In the face of disempowerment, marginalization and lack of access to education and resources, the process of effectively enacting radical pedagogical practices amongst campesino, indigenous and Afro-descendant communities is slow and challenging. Yet, through careful, conscious daily praxis, this process can lead to transformative social change.

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94 Aguilar, "Interview with Tarsicio Aguilar."
Chapter Three
Cultivating Places: Indigenous Activism, Campesino Markets and Urban Farming

Subaltern communities in Colombia, such as peasant, indigenous and Afro-descendants, engage with the food sovereignty framework to empower and assert themselves in political, economic and cultural places. Through this place-making, in the construction of new, alternative places and in the engagement with institutionalized spaces, these marginalized peoples are expressing fluid, performative identities, shaped by their affirmation of cultural and ethnic heritage and the contemporary, globalized context in which they are asserting themselves. This analysis will focus on the political and cultural engagement of the Nasa indigenous people in the Cauca region, the cultural and economic expression of Boyacán peasants in the Tuta farmers market, and the spatial and cultural assertion of Rosa Poveda and Las Granjas Mutualitas urban farm in Bogotá.

My introduction to these various communities and peoples was established through various connections, which all initially began in Bogotá. Jorge Forero, the sociologist and activist who I met early on in my time in Bogotá, had studied with Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe, a member of the Nasa indigenous community. Forero initiated an email correspondence between Paskwe Ulkwe and me to coordinate my visit. And although Fernando Castrillón and others associated with Grupo Semillas initially spoke with me about Las Granjas Mutualitas, it was Forero who brought me to meet Poveda. Additionally, while I had read briefly about Fundación San Isidro, the organization that facilitated the Tuta farmers market, in a list of participating organizations in a food sovereignty conference that Grupo Semillas had held, I made contact with the Fundación through the assistance of Mauricio García. While the
various peoples discussed in this chapter express distinct cases of food sovereignty work, these interconnections between these actors and their projects expresses the multidimensional places of engagement they are building.

I. Nasa Indigenous Peoples & Political and Cultural Place-Making

The case of the Nasa indigenous peoples along the Western Cordillera who are engaging in food sovereignty projects situates empowerment in their construction of political and cultural places and raises critical issues about the character of political expression and the nature of indigeneity based on cosmovision, ancestry, and the politics of personal identity.

Ia. The State of the Nasa Environment

The Nasa are an indigenous peoples who are utilizing the food sovereignty framework to assert their presence in their native territorial land, practice their culturally-based agricultural methods, and promote their political rights, representation and demands. In my time amongst the Nasa people, I spoke extensively with leaders of particular food sovereignty-related social organizations
and observed the day-to-day life of Nasa peoples in the small, rural community of San Lorenzo de Caldono. In Santander de Quilichao, an urban space in which many Nasa, displaced from their ancestral lands, live alongside campesinos, Afro-descendants and others, I met with Ramón Hortado, the vicepresident of Asociación Regional Indígena por la Defensa de la Soberanía Alimentaria (Regional Indigenous Association for the Defense of Food Sovereignty – ARISA). In San Lorenzo de Caldono, I met with Harold Piamba, one of the leaders of the Movimiento Sin Tierra – Nietos de Manuel Quintin Lamé (Landless Peoples’ Movement – Descendants of Manuel Quintin Lamé – MST-MQL). Movimiento Sin Tierra – Nietos de Manuel Quintin Lamé is not officially affiliated with the Brazilian organization MST, though they are linked by ideological and structural similarities and in their fight for land rights and broader social transformation.¹ I was assisted in my research by Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe, who connected me with these indigenous leaders, spoke with me extensively about food sovereignty, activism and the Nasa people. Paskwe Ulkwe hosted me in his home, where I spent time investigating the agricultural practices, the daily life, and conversing with and eating alongside his family members. Paskwe Ulkwe studied political science at university and is a coordinating member of MST-MQL.

The Nasa indigenous people’s economy and culture are primarily based on agriculture, a way of life that has been threatened by a multiplicity of forces. The Nasa live primarily in the highlands of the Cauca Department of southwestern Colombia. It is a rural, fairly undeveloped, highly vegetated region where people live

¹ Paskwe Ulkwe, "Interview with Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe."
geographically disparately but are connected by a strong sense of community. The Nasa cultivate coffee, maize, beans, tubers, sisal, vegetables, medicinal plants, sugar cane, and potatoes, and also raise cattle. This family-oriented agricultural economy has shifted over time and monocultures have displaced small-scale and subsistence crops - “those that we as indigenous people have always cultivated,” explains Hortado. Many of the Nasa peoples live according to traditional practices, utilizing similar housing, cooking, and gardening to that of their ancestors. The Nasa have also adapted to modernity: they own televisions showing World Cup games, families communicate by cellphone, natural stucco is reinforced with concrete. The Nasa carry out most of their formal political processes through the cabildo system, originally a Spanish colonial institution that is now a form of indigenous political and cultural autonomy. Officially recognized in Colombian law, the cabildo system is a rotational, elected, representative body reflecting community principles and collective decision-making procedures. The cabildo is the indigenous peoples’ “own way to exercise authority and gain experience with political control in their community, and in relation with the authorities of the dominant society.” Through these systems, the attempt to Nasa people function fairly autonomously.

The Nasa’s autonomy, and the ways of life that sustain it, are increasingly threatened as the Nasa are caught in the middle of the fighting between the government, paramilitaries and armed guerilla forces and violence of the drug trade and the War on Drugs. Historical colonization, governmental legislation, and the

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2 Gilberto Villasenor III, "The Politics of Indigenous Social Struggle in Colombia" (College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, DePaul University, 2014), 7.
3 Ramón Hortado, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 18, 2014, Santander de Quilichao, Cauca.
violence of military forces have caused massive dispossession of lands. Currently, most Nasa families possess only a half to one hectare of land.\textsuperscript{5} Lack of agricultural land and resources along with reduction of profitability of native crops led many in Nasa community to turn to illicit drug production of coca and marijuana, which has put them into an increasingly vulnerable position.\textsuperscript{6} Not only has this meant the jettisoning of traditional agricultural practices, it has also led to increased displacement, violence and external control of the land. Such forces, directly and indirectly influenced by the rise of neoliberal governance and globalized economics, have actively contributed to the erasure of the Nasa’s physical and sociopolitical place.

For the Nasa people, agrarian reform and resistance to land dispossession are place-based strategies central to their political advocacy and empowerment and are part of a push for broader systemic transformation. Land dispossession carried out by state, private, guerilla and other forces, has been a major threat to Nasa livelihoods, severely restricting their agricultural, economic and cultural viability. The latifundio system has been used, since colonial times, as a form of political control of territory and peoples by the landholders.\textsuperscript{7} Land appropriation has been exacerbated by the land awards granted by the government to those who do not have claims to such awards and by unconstitutional judicial practices of privatization of common lands.\textsuperscript{8} This has made it clear to the Nasa people that integral judicial and civil institution reform and new systems of land jurisdiction, in the hands of the indigenous people, are needed.

\textsuperscript{5} Harold Piamba, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 18, 2014, San Lorenzo de Caldono, Cauca.
\textsuperscript{6} Hortado, "Interview with Ramón Hortado."
\textsuperscript{8} Yamile Salinas Adbala, "El Meollo Del Fondo De Tierras En Colombia," ibid.
Contemporary political and economic practices exacted onto the land of the Nasa people have created and exacerbated the conditions for dispossession and destruction, leading the Nasa to push for alternative political and economic systems that recognize agroecological, environmental and cultural concerns.

The Nasa’s political engagement through food sovereignty has a strong cultural base in historical political organization and resistance throughout the twentieth century. Much of the Nasa’s legal and extralegal political activism is inspired by the indigenous leadership and activism of Manuel Quintín Lame. Quintín Lame (1883 to 1967) led an indigenous protest movement demanding systematic and comprehensive reforms at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1971, the Consejo Regional Indigena de Cauca/Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC) was established as “one of the most consolidated of the nation’s indigenous organizations.” Indigenous activism, while strong throughout the latter half of the 20th century, rose with the drafting and establishment of the 1991 Constitution, which recognizes Colombia as a pluriethnic and multicultural nation, leading to integration into formal legislative processes. The 1991 Constitution guaranteed a range of indigenous rights toward their political autonomy, including the recognition of resguardos to “elect their own authorities according to their own customs, to design and implement development plans, [and] to exercise indigenous customary law to

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10 Rappaport, Intercultural Utopias: Public Intellectuals, Cultural Experimentation, and Ethnic Pluralism in Colombia, 2.
11 Ibid., 3.
resolve disputes within the community.”

This institutionalization of indigenous rights led to a shift from civil disobedience and direct action techniques to formal political and legal processes. The Nasa found that by “embracing a politics of ethnic difference, they were able to avoid the subversive label and to achieve the recovery of land in a nonthreatening way for the Colombian state.”

This tenuous interplay between indigenous customs and activism and formal institutions of the state has offered some possibilities for the advancement of indigenous initiatives and autonomy. But such engagement with the state has also been mired by challenges, constraints and co-options. Through institutional and non—institutional means, the Nasa have constructed alternative political programs through economic, social, cultural, educational, identity, and ethnicity organizational projects. Frustration with the failures of the formal structures to produce real changes in favor of the indigenous communities have led to the Nasa to return to more explicit, direct activist work.

While the historical and modern conditions provide a strong ground on which land and food activism are built, contemporary Nasa communities and individuals are increasingly approaching their sociopolitical struggle through food sovereignty. The fundamental intersections between food, culture and democracy in the food sovereignty framework reflect the Nasa indigenous cultural connection to the land and their food, and their belief in self-assertion through their traditional foods. In the

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14 Sandoval Forero, La Guardia Indígena Nasa Y El Arte De La Resistencia Pacifica, 38.
food sovereignty framework within the Nasa community, there is an active negotiation between autochthonous and imported ideas. “Food sovereignty is a relatively new idea for us that we are using in our agricultural practices and our organizing,” says Paskwe Ulkwe, “But it is also based in our tradition and community. It is very much ours.”

The food sovereignty framework provides a means through which the Nasa can articulate the intersections of indigeneity – culture, food, land, politics, and community – and address the multilayered issues of development and destruction that are infringing on their lives and livelihoods. “Through food sovereignty, we are building connections between our culture, our agriculture, our politics and across communities,” states Hortado. In discussing the dynamics between the real and ideal in their food sovereignty work, Paskwe Ulkwe states, “We are trying to create new ways of being in the world, new worlds, that resist and change what is happening to us.” This is an active expression of Escobar’s alternatives to modernity, the “expression of a political desire, a desire of the critical utopian imagination.” For the Nasa, working through food sovereignty practices means the construction of both practical everyday manifestations and prefigurative demands towards societal transformation, both of which are instrinsically linked to each other – the making of physical place and the making of sociopolitical and cultural place.

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\(^{16}\) Paskwe Ulkwe, "Interview with Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe."
\(^{17}\) Hortado, "Interview with Ramón Hortado."
\(^{18}\) Paskwe Ulkwe, "Interview with Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe."
\(^{19}\) Escobar, Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes, 196.
Ib. Expressions of Nasa Political Assertion and Place-Making

Through food sovereignty, the Nasa people are constructing a variety of means to engage with mainstream and alternative politics and assert themselves in the places of their native territory and across other scales. There is an intrinsic “systematic plasticity”\textsuperscript{20}to the definition of food sovereignty, creating a realm in which a multiplicity of concepts and practices for place-making arise from the grassroots level. “There are many forms of politics that we are engaging in,” says Paskwe Ulkwe, “all for food sovereignty, for our peoples, in different forms.” The articulation of the politics of food within food sovereignty work provides the possibility for political engagement in a multiplicity of expressions, subtle and explicit. The dynamization of politics is deeply liberating and empowering for a peoples who have been systematically excluded from formal political processes. Even as the 1991 Constitution and subsequent legislation have facilitated broader participation in normative politics, Nasa indigenous activists see engagement with this formal, institutional system only as part of their broader project to expand the meanings and capacities of politics. While rights may play a large part in this politics, building sustainable, widespread and inclusive democratic systems to ensure creation and completion of political projects through food sovereignty activism frames this as a transgressive approach to rights.\textsuperscript{21}

More radically, food sovereignty politicizes the everyday actions involved in the food system, thus transforming marginalized subaltern food producers into political actors, through their own reflexive praxis of conscientization in relation to

\textsuperscript{21} Patel, "Food Sovereignty."
their daily life and food. Subalterns, with limited outlets for political expression, manifest their political action as rumors, hidden transcripts, veiled critical speech, and other forms of everyday resistance.\textsuperscript{22} For the Nasa, this articulation of political place-making and self-assertion in the enactment of their ancestral agricultural activities through the food sovereignty framework has been transformative.

Food sovereignty emerges as an alternative form of political empowerment and place-making in a space where there is little political involvement, representation or state support. In addition to the destructive forces brought upon their territories, the state provides minimal resources or support for the Nasa peoples, and offers little opportunity for active political involvement or civil society participation. In the contemporary Colombian political space, where the state is an “occasional, sometimes marginal, actor,” “semiautonomous and culturally distinct indigenous communities are the only permanent authorities.”\textsuperscript{23} The indigenous leadership, in the form of cabildos, certainly provides an avenue for the political articulation of the Nasa people, but it is often insufficient for affecting real change. As Hector Piamba, one of the leaders of MST-MQL, recounts,

“There are various mechanisms for obtaining land. The cabildo, with state resources, as part of the General System of Participation, could purchase land, but this is difficult to achieve because of the minimal resources given by the state. Alternatively, families can solicit the government to buy land for them but this process has been very delayed, even when the Nasa have staged occupations in various farmlands. But more than twenty years have passed and these deals have not been legalized”\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{23} Rappaport, \textit{Intercultural Utopias: Public Intellectuals, Cultural Experimentation, and Ethnic Pluralism in Colombia}, 37.
\textsuperscript{24} Piamba, "Interview with Harold Piamba."
Despite purported political and legal means by which the indigenous people may make claims to territory, as an assertion of their rights, there is very little follow-through on the part of the state. Indeed, of the 110,000 hectares that former President Uribe’s administration had promised to victims of displacement, only 50,000 were allocated between 2002 and 2007. Even the major representative body for the indigenous community, CRIC, has increasingly frustrated and disappointed the Nasa communities with their ineffectiveness and surrendering their indigenous-oriented political values. As such, the Nasa communities have designed and implemented their own alternative mechanisms toward realizing their goals. Piamba also reflects on how the lack of conventional methods has spurred innovations for the Nasa’s autonomous place-making.

“The concepts of food sovereignty have helped us create new mechanisms. We cannot think solely in the enlargement of the resguardo, because there are other indigenous resguardos in the area around ours. And we cannot turn to property rights because these are caught up in writing and juridical process, and there is little property. So we established a land commission to collect and analyze information, how many families need land, where we can obtain it, how we can obtain it. And from there we orient ourselves.”

These restrictions on the assertion of the Nasa’s political demands and cultural beliefs and demands have motivated the Nasa communities to construct places for such expression.

The formation of the Movimiento Sin Tierra – Nietos de Quintin Lame social movement is a definitive expression of the Nasa peoples’ construction of new

27 Piamba, "Interview with Harold Piamba."
alternative forms of representation and assertion and is a tool for their political engagement in their demands for land access, cultural rights, and food sovereignty. MST-MQL formed in 2009 as a grassroots organization of community members from Caloto, Santander and Caldono. From an original 100 families, the organization now includes 600 families amongst the local communities. With a growing population and continual dispossession, MST-MQL’s major focus is the recuperation of lands so that their peoples can cultivate and sustain themselves. MST-MQL is a horizontal, bottom-up social movement, constructed to provide the Nasa people with a means by which to assert their demands for their cultural and constitutional claims to the land. Each village has its own dynamics and processes according to their own logic and culture, and from there, the group grows through general coordinations across municipalities. This organizing has allowed the Nasa to participate in various political programs within the cabildo, including trainings, workshops, and assemblies that have generated many ideas and strategies to address their needs and demands. They have also participated in marches, sit-ins and other direct action campaigns. Food sovereignty is at the heart of MST-MQL’s activities and principles: Paskwe Ulkwe states that “food sovereignty is something that we are implementing on the basis of autonomy, because when we say that we are working the land, in a particular process, we are developing our own methodologies, our own systems, and this is engendering

28 Paskwe Ulkwe, "Interview with Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe."; Piamba, "Interview with Harold Piamba."
29 "Interview with Harold Piamba."
30 Paskwe Ulkwe, "Interview with Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe."
31 Piamba, "Interview with Harold Piamba."
32 Paskwe Ulkwe, "Interview with Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe."
power in us.”33 Through the creation of MST-MQL, the Nasa community members have deepened their activist skills, strengthened their collective organizing, and developed a new political structure to express and realize their political and cultural goals.

The direct action of civil disobedience through the three-month occupation of Finca Japío by CRIC, MST-MQL predecessors, and other groups exemplifies the non-institutional and counter-institutional measures that the Nasa indigenous people are taking towards food sovereignty in the face of lack of support and access to mainstream political paradigms. Organizing is not fully sufficient for achieving the goals of the Nasa peoples, especially when institutional politics are so constrained. Grassroots direct action acts as a response to, negotiation with, and alternative to, the dual forces of the strong hand of the state and dominant market actors.34 After the completion of the land commission, the Nasa community established a “complex analysis and series of demands…in order to obtain access to land and resources,” but the government failed to take any action.35

In response, members of the Nasa community from Caloto, Santander, Silvia, Morales, Totoró organized a sit-in occupation of the Finca Japió in Caloto for three months. As Piamba explains, the community chose Finca Japió “because of its historical significance, its relationship to Simon Bolivar and because it signifies our dispossession, so an occupation would get the attention of the government.”36 The occupation was peaceful for the most, but tensions came to a violent climax with

33 Ibid.
35 Piamba, “Interview with Harold Piamba.”
36 Ibid.
police accusations of indigenous weapon possessions and subsequent confrontation that led to the shooting of a 16-year-old indigenous youth, Belisario Camayo Güetoto. These actions called the attention of the government, and President Uribe finally met with representatives of the Nasa community, leading to recognition of the legitimacy of the indigenous peoples and their land claims.

The Finca Japío occupation highlights the strength of the Nasa indigenous peoples’ strength in organizing towards political empowerment and the realization of their demands. This action is also representative of the Nasa community’s intentional place-making actions: the occupation of farmland from which they have been dispossessed is a physical and symbolic manifestation of their presence in the environmental and sociopolitical landscape of Colombia. The occupation marks a complicated dynamic in the Nasa people’s activism, in its expression through extralegal, counterstatist means to articulate political and cultural claims, while simultaneously seeking recognition and action by state. Despite the traumatic violence of the police actions, and frustration with inadequate long-term results from the government, the Finca Japío occupation continues to stand as a tremendous success for the Nasa people of their political and cultural legitimacy, assertion of demands, and belonging to the land.


The formation of the Asociación Regional Indígena por la Defensa de la Soberanía Alimentaria (Regional Indigenous Association for the Defense of Food Sovereignty – ARISA) is a further demonstration of alternative forms of sociopolitical organization for the Nasa. This organization exemplifies the Nasa’s creation of participation and empowerment through horizontal structures and the interconnectivity of culture, environment and politics. ARISA was established in 2009, primarily in response to the failed agreements between the state and local producers to stop illicit crop cultivation and to work toward substantial and sustainable food sovereignty.\(^{39}\) ARISA is made up of 2,500 Nasa people from Toribio, Caloto, Santander, Caldo, Silvia, Totoró and other communities, and operates horizontally with significant input from the grassroots level and a rotating system of leadership.\(^{40}\)

ARISA attempts to develop community resources and training for self-assertion and autonomy. As Hortado states, “The mission of ARISA to negotiate dynamics so that the people can be in a position to change their cultivation. Creating this change cannot be done through state intervention.”\(^{41}\) Instead, the organization works toward effective sovereign production, focused on ancestral crops, familial needs, and innovative agroecological practices. Through its organizing, advocacy, trainings and projects, ARISA has succeeded in buying and repossessing land, improving productive capacities, and strengthening organizational abilities.\(^{42}\)

\(^{39}\) Hortado, "Interview with Ramón Hortado."

\(^{40}\) Ibid.; Paskwe Ulkwe, "Interview with Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe."

\(^{41}\) Hortado, "Interview with Ramón Hortado."

\(^{42}\) Ibid.
ARISA has provided the Nasa community with the framework and resources to re-establish ancestral practices in the land, distancing themselves from the drug trade and fortifying their cultural identity through new sociopolitical means. “This food sovereignty work puts us and our ways back in the environment,” says Hortado.43 Through dialogues with peasant and Afro-descendant communities and the transformation of agricultural practices through experimentation and incorporation of other techniques, the communities of ARISA are establishing themselves not only in their native environment, but also in a broader landscape of food sovereignty practice and activism. This resistance to the erasure of indigenous practices and land through active territorial, cultural and political place-making facilitates the Nasa people’s survival, empowerment and amplification.

The participation by the Nasa community in the protests and strikes of the Paro Agrario demonstrate the Nasa’s use of the food sovereignty framework to create direct, radical political action, build networks across communities, and assert their presence and demands in a public space. The Paro Agrario, a series of nation-wide strikes focused on the agrarian issues of small-scale producers, took place in the fall of 2013 and the summer of 2014.44 The Nasa community, through ARISA and MST-MQL, as well as other indigenous organizations, and in coordination with indigenous, peasant and Afro-Colombian peoples across the region and country, participated actively in direct actions of the Paro Agrario, including public marches and transport blockades along the Panamerican Highway as well as organizational procedures of Cumbre Agraria, the leadership summit of the movement that drafted declarations and

43 Ibid.
44 Vélez, "First Interview with Germán Vélez."
demands. These actions led to talks with the government on comprehensive agrarian reform in favor of peasants, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and other subaltern groups.

While the Paro Agrario was a national movement with thousands of actors from various sectors, the Nasa community participated with clear intentions based in their own cultural practices and sociopolitical demands. “As an organization, and as Nasa indigenous peoples, we entered the Paro Agrario with an understanding of the platform of specific demands and with some points of our own... to engage with it,” states Paskwe Ulkwe. This place-based emphasis allowed the Nasa peoples to participate in the collective movement without the erasure of their particular identities and needs. The Paro Agrario was a remarkable realization of subaltern organizing and activism on food and agrarian issues on a national scale, and provided a radical and novel platform and place for the Nasa peoples’ assertion of their indigenous identity, cultural agrarian practices, and political demands.

Just as significantly, the Nasa indigenous people are articulating expressions of everyday political engagement through food sovereignty. The Nasa peoples’ practices of ancestral and agroecological agriculture in spite of, and in resistance to, technologically-oriented, monocultural agribusiness, drug production and trade, environmental degradation and dispossession, and violence are representative of small-scale yet transformative subaltern politics. Nasa agricultural practices that “confer immediate and concrete material advantages while at the same time denying

45 Paskwe Ulkwe, "Interview with Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe."; Hortado, "Interview with Ramón Hortado."
46 Castrillón, "Interview with Fernando Castrillón."
47 Paskwe Ulkwe, "Interview with Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe."
resources to the appropriating classes” are a form of active resistance and empowerment in a context in which there is limited political engagement or opportunity.\textsuperscript{48} As Paskwe Ulkwe expresses, “What we do in our practice has an ideological sense because on a basic level it is resistance to the capitalist system.”\textsuperscript{49} The Nasa peoples’ actions to continue their agriculture and lifestyles exemplify what Escobar refers to as \textit{desarrollo integral}, a comprehensive, self-directed development. Arising from the Nasa’s position of difference, this \textit{desarrollo integral} intrinsically links life projects, involving self-subsistence and sustainability practices with political projects, such as self-management, ethno-territorial organization and so forth.\textsuperscript{50} Through the framework of food sovereignty, emphasizing interconnectedness and the position of alterity of marginalized actors, the Nasa’s daily activities are realized as political activities.

Through the development of food sovereignty as an explicit practice and discourse, the Nasa peoples are redefining and expanding the meaning of politics through the politicized nature of their daily practices. In exploring and articulating the politics of difference and politics of scale that are fundamental to food sovereignty, the Nasa peoples are developing new expressions of what it means to be political, expressions that emphasize their position as small-scale subalterns within a globalized system. Paskwe Ulkwe expresses this eloquently. “Food sovereignty comes from the home. It is the power to decide and think about the products that one is consuming. It then becomes a discourse, a dialogue within the family,” he says, “Politics is dialogue

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\textsuperscript{49} Paskwe Ulkwe, "Interview with Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe."
\textsuperscript{50} Escobar, "Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization," 148.
\end{flushright}
and the possibility of engaging in argument, the process of negotiation. The politics of food sovereignty begins in the garden, in the kitchen, and grows outward from there." Paskwe Ulkwe and others in his community are developing transformational understandings of politics grounded in their practice and praxis that provide access and control to this space from which they have been excluded.

There is an intrinsic and unresolved tension in the Nasa’s construction of nonnormative political structures alongside integration to formal political institutions. The Nasa are creating new forms of political expressions that diverge radically from the hegemonic systems that have contributed to their marginalization and destruction, constituting alternatives that are enabling significant transformations in the worlds they inhabit. But the purely radical nature and potential for revolutionary social change that food sovereignty actors, in the Nasa community and beyond, express to be at the heart of the food sovereignty framework are called into question by appeals to, and reinforcement of, state-oriented politics. Rights-based politics and the neoliberal state are intrinsically tied to capitalism, and thus appeals to the state for rights to “undermine private property are paradoxical.” Such appeals are a predominant mechanism of the food sovereignty framework, endangering and weakening the transformative vision. These contradictions challenge the projects of alternatives to modernity and alternative modernity that food sovereignty activists often evoke, suggesting that such political approaches only express alternative development, contestation of terms without challenges to the root structures.

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51 Paskwe Ulkwe, "Interview with Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe."
legitimizing state politics and development that are fundamentally based on the marginalization of indigenous peoples.

Yet state-oriented engagement is not one-sided, and such appeals to the state not only demand state action but also incite changes in the state’s standard operating procedures and expands participation in representative structures. In a landscape in which the Nasa have critical needs for their survival and limited means by which to realize them, the turn to normative political structures is a reasonable and, occasionally, productive approach to the claiming of lands and recognition of indigenous culture and rights. These actions take place alongside more radical, non-state and counter-state expressions that are all part of the Nasa peoples’ complex and comprehensive practices and discourses through the food sovereignty framework. Emerging from the Nasa’s perspective of difference as a form of empowerment and transformation, such appeals to the state are a key part of the Nasa peoples’ construction of political place. While complicating the revolutionary nature of food sovereignty, the Nasa’s multi-faceted approaches to political place-making construct many overlapping and sometimes conflicting expressions of alternatives to and of modernity.

Ic. Construction Through (and of) Nasa Culture

The expression of the Nasa peoples’ indigenous culture is a critical component of their food sovereignty work in the processes of self-assertion and place-making. Food sovereignty activists and actors emphasize the relationship between food and cultural identity, revalorizing the connections within the food
system that the contemporary food regime obscures and erases.\textsuperscript{54} As a place-based social movement, actors in the food sovereignty framework construct sociopolitical realities by “linking identity, territory, and culture” at all scales.\textsuperscript{55} This relationship is especially integral for indigenous peoples such as the Nasa, for whom “a ‘right to define agricultural policy’ is indistinguishable from a right to \textit{be} indigenous.”\textsuperscript{56}

In the Nasa cosmovision, land is more than merely space for cultivation, it is a territory in which their social, economic and political vision is grounded and grown.\textsuperscript{57} For the Nasa, the highlands is the spiritual origin place of their peoples and identity, populated not only by peoples, animals and plants, but by \textit{duendes} (elves) and other spirits, and “is the symbolic location where ceremonies of reaffirmation of knowledge are performed; of recognition of indigenous authority.”\textsuperscript{58} Through this cosmovision, the Nasa people have constructed an understanding of place that fundamentally intertwines territory, culture and identity, a place that is not only a spiritual conception of the land, but a very real physical manifestation that shapes their thinking and daily life.

The intersections of agriculture, culture and identity within the food sovereignty framework fundamentally align with the Nasa cosmovision. As Piamba states, “The discourse of food sovereignty is very much our own, from a natural equilibrium.”\textsuperscript{59} Hortado articulates a similar perspective, saying, “food sovereignty comes from us historically, from our parents, they taught us how to work, how to

\textsuperscript{54} "Declaration of Nyéléni."
\textsuperscript{55} "Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization," 163.
\textsuperscript{56} Grey and Patel, "Food Sovereignty as Decolonization: Some Contributions from Indigenous Movements to Food System and Development Politics," 10.
\textsuperscript{57} Villasenor III, "The Politics of Indigenous Social Struggle in Colombia," 71.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 93.
\textsuperscript{59} Piamba, "Interview with Harold Piamba."
produce... What we want now is to reclaim that... so that we can subsist and survive from what we have.”⁶⁰ Through the articulation and practice of food sovereignty, the Nasa peoples are breaking from solely economic and scientific frames to re-embed critical consciousness and cultural awareness into agriculture. The Nasa cosmovision, and its expression through place-based food sovereignty practices, construct an alternative to modernity, a fundamentally different world.

The Nasa peoples are also transforming their notions of culture in their efforts toward empowerment and asserting their presence. Cultural identity is not a fixed notion, or merely a nostalgic retreat to “traditional” notions and practices, but a living, ever-changing, even prefigurative concept,⁶¹ that can be utilized as a tool to promote a peoples’ well-being and livelihoods. For indigenous activists “culture is more of a political utopia than a concrete and preexisting thing. Culture is a tool for delineating a project within which people can build an ethnic polity protected from the hegemonic forces that surround them, including drug lords, paramilitary units, and guerrilla columns.”⁶² For the Nasa, especially those engaged in sociopolitical activism, cultural identity is a mechanism for the articulation of difference and the creation of alternative places of expression and assertion. It does not exist unchanged from the notions of ancestors, but is instead engaged with, affected by and affecting, the modern world.

As a translocal movement and framework, food sovereignty facilitates active and responsive interaction across communities, on local and global scales. For the

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⁶⁰ Hortado, "Interview with Ramón Hortado."
⁶² Rappaport, Intercultural Utopias: Public Intellectuals, Cultural Experimentation, and Ethnic Pluralism in Colombia, 39.
Nasa, this inspires new ways of conceiving of themselves, their practices and the world. As Hortado states, “Respecting the traditions and heritage of our indigenous culture is important, but it is also important to recognize how our culture exists today, in dialog with other cultures and other ideas, in our processes.”63 This dynamic relationship between tradition and modernity, and between local and global, is a fundamental component to the strategic engagement with globalization and translocal empowerment. “We are utilizing our own ancestral practices, and other forms of agroecology, that we learn from other communities, from other parts of Colombia and the world, as part of our practices of food sovereignty,” says Paskwe Ulkwe.64 Through this translocal form of engagement, the Nasa are transforming their cultural identities to navigate their contemporary realities and to resist and interact with the forces that marginalize them.

The Nasa peoples’ active transformations of indigeneity have a deeply prefigurative and performative nature that facilitates the creation of alternatives to and of modernity. Indigeneity is not a fixed, unmoving notion, but a dynamic identity that is “anchored in traditional practices and forms of knowledge and as an ever-changing project of cultural and political construction.”65 In their food sovereignty work, the Nasa peoples have critically engaged with their own indigenous cultural identities, highlighting and appropriating components of their ancestry, employing the nation-state’s notions of indigenous identity and the Constitutional rights that it bears, and incorporating contemporary ideas from other cultures and communities. This is a

63 Hortado, "Interview with Ramón Hortado."
64 Paskwe Ulkwe, "Interview with Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe."
deeply decolonizing practice that recognizes a place-based and pluriversal - rather than universal - modernity, continually opening up to (re/)introductions of languages, memories, economies and social organizations. Such transformations of identity allow the Nasa to assert their position of cultural difference within the modern world without creating a static dichotomy with this world. The translocal, decolonizing framework of food sovereignty provides the potential for the living nature of identity, neither constrained to a stagnant, disempowering notion of the local nor subsumed into the universalizing neoliberal subjugation of the global. Instead, through their engagement with ideas, practices and movements of food sovereignty, the Nasa articulate identity based in an interconnected and intersectional place.

In evoking ancestral practices in relation to contemporary agriculture, the Nasa are not necessarily reflecting an entirely historically accurate view of ancestral agri-food systems, but rather crafting a modern vision of their heritage. “Historical identities,” writes Escobar, “are neither rigid or essential nor fully contingent. They are grounded in a familiar style of practices, and it out of this contextual grounding that they change.” Nasa peoples’ constructions of their historical identity are thus constructed through their daily lives, their engagement with modernity, and their place-based activism. In contrasting the current cultivation of monocultures of coca and marijuana that many Nasa have been forced to adopt with previous forms of agriculture, Hortado reminisces, “This is not how it has always been. Our ancestors cultivated many crops, organically, in harmony with the land. The crops were

nourishing and plentiful.”68 This evocation may be romanticized and simplified in some respects, but it is consistent with the Nasa’s living memory and resonant with the potential for a future reality that reflects contemporary indigenous principles. The presentation of a “partially illusory past”69 makes it possible for the Nasa to strategically signify their place-based identity, thus strengthening their claims to territory, their position in the food system, and an empowered situatedness in the broader world.

In the adoption of elements of the state-oriented notion of indigeneity, the Nasa take on a skillful approach to the construction and expression of their identity. Colombia’s institutional conception of indigenous peoples, based in the 1991 Constitution, while definitively more dynamic and enabling than that of many other nation-states, is intrinsically conflated, formalized and fairly immobile. This identity also conflicts with certain self-perceptions of Nasa culture.70 Yet by using the state-defined identity, and inevitably internalizing and adapting to elements of it, the Nasa are able to make legal and political claims to autonomy, territory and their ways of life. Such interactions are limited, slow-moving, and, more often than not, frustratingly disappointing. But, by engaging with the state through appeals to this identity, Nasa activists initiate judicial and bureaucratic processes that force the state to deliberate on, and potentially transform, its own constructions of indigenous identity.

Finally, the translocality of the food sovereignty framework and movement facilitates a dialogic and relational construction of Nasa identity. Identity is

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68 Hortado, "Interview with Ramón Hortado."
70 Piamba, "Interview with Harold Piamba."
constituted from a position of difference through active engagement with the world, through encounter, boundary-making, incorporation and exclusion.\textsuperscript{71} The adoption of cultural discourses and practices, whether they are from other indigenous groups within the Cauca region or from activist communities in France\textsuperscript{72}, does not displace the essential territoriality of Nasa cultural identity, but instead allows this identity to adapt to constantly shifting issues, and the dynamic geographies of such issues, of the contemporary globalized world. The growing articulation of alternative frameworks of development and sustainability across communities engaged in similar missions and visions, prefigurative and performative forms of identity, galvanizes Nasa indigenous expression and action towards the realization of their envisioned futures.

Such adaptations destabilize notions of unchanging indigeneity but do not reduce the importance of cosmovision and ancestry, and the principles of land and territory that accompany those concepts. Rather, the Nasa strengthen their cultural identity, making it more dynamic and responsive, inserting it into realms in which it had not been previously accepted, and grounding it in a broader, translocal conception of place. In this way, the Nasa are constructing alternative frameworks within and beyond normative constructions of modern reality.

\textsuperscript{71} Escobar, \textit{Territories of Difference : Place, Movements, Life, Redes}, 203.
\textsuperscript{72} In discussing the global interconnectedness of the food sovereignty movement, Paskwe Ulkwe used an example of learning about the strategies of French farmers in their attempts to resist land dispossession in a workshop and incorporating those ideas into MST-MQL’s projects. Paskwe Ulkwe, "Interview with Julio Cesar Paskwe Ulkwe."
II. Tuta Farmers Market & Campesino Economic and Cultural Place-Making

The case of the farmers market that was organized in Tuta, in the central, mountainous department of Boyacá, is representative of campesino resistance and empowerment, through economic and cultural place-making in food sovereignty practices, and raises concerning evocations of “natural” food and the transformative potential of singular events within the food sovereignty framework.

IIa. Constructing the Farmers Market

Through participation in a farmers market held in the central plaza of the municipality of Tuta, the campesino community of Boyacá engaged in a place-based form of empowerment that emphasized their cultural practices and constructed alternative economic structures. This event, expressing a particular form of food sovereignty practice, provided a setting in which the campesino participants asserted themselves in a tangible and visible physical realm, and constructed a significant action of contestation against the marginalization of campesino identity and the dominance of mainstream capitalist economic practices. The organizers and
campesino participants of this farmers market constructed an intentional place for producers and consumers from disparate locales to come together and realize expressions of campesino culture and alternative economics.

The farmers market in Tuta was a special event organized by Fundación San Isidro, a grassroots non-profit organization in Duitama, Boyacá, and Mercados Campesinos, a national coalition of campesino organizations based in Bogotá, with assistance from the local alcaldía of Tuta. A group of these organizers arrived at the plaza in Tuta at 6 a.m. to set-up tables, tents and a stage for the market. Soon after, around 15 vendors, some individuals and some families, arrived from different parts of the department of Boyacá. While some lived only a 20-minute drive of Tuta, others had come from hours away to participate. All of these vendors identified as campesinos, and defined their agricultural goods and artisanal crafts as campesino products. Each vendor had a set of tables on which to display their products, often presented without labels in the wooden crates into which they were originally placed from picking. The vendors stood or sat behind the tables, often chatting with family members and other producers. The interactions in the market were like those of many farmers markets around the world, with local residents and visitors from nearby communities wandering between stalls, asking questions about the products, buying goods, farmers carrying on conversations about food and life, trading and bartering between each other and so on.

The farmers market also had an outdoor dining area with long, communal tables and public food preparation. Cooks prepared traditional campesino dishes, such

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as plantain wraps and soups, and brought it directly to the diners, mere feet away. Outside of the tents was a giant makeshift fire-pit on which multiple large pigs were roasting. Chicha, a traditional fermented corn drink, was set out in the table in bottles for communal serving, as is customary in campesino culture. People sat together, conversing and eating, engaging publicly and deliberately with their food, with the cooks and growers, and other consumers – family, friends and former strangers.

Around midday, Maria De Los Santos Salamanca Silva and Esperanza Cortes Gutierrez, two coordinating members of Fundación San Isidro, organized a ceremony in the center of the plaza to honor native seeds and campesino agriculture. Gathered in a loose circle around a compass made of vegetables, fruits and seeds laid out on the ground, Silva and others spoke about cultural heritage and the protection of native seeds. A dialogue was opened up to the community to express thoughts on campesino culture, reflections on the market, and more. People spoke explicitly about GMO production and the free-trade agreement with the United States and how these policies and practices of “neoliberal capitalism” and “globalization” harm campesino agriculture and ways of life. The ceremony closed with Gutierrez urging the community to keep thinking and discussing these issues and ideas, and a stirring cheer of “Por y Para los campesinos!”

Immediately following the seed ceremony, members of the Tuta community performed a series of dance and musical acts. These performances are typical of campesino celebrations, and were organized by community members for the occasion. The dances were folkloric group pieces, performed in ornate costumes and

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74 María Hernández, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 10, 2014, San Nicolás de Bari, Córdoba.
75 “Ceremonía De Semillas,” (Tuta, Boyacá: Mercado Campesino de Tuta, 2014).
76 Translation: “By and for the peasants!” Ibid.
highly choreographed, stylized movements to traditional music. Spectators watched from the sides, intermittently returning to conversations with friends and family or buying produce from the vendors, as groups of people, ranging from 5 years old to 50 years old, performed. While all of these pieces honored campesino heritage and culture, some made explicit reference to connection to food, including a dance to the song *El Guarcirqueño* – the singer sings “…you ate my tamales and left the pot cold,” - the dancers holding ceramic pots and woven baskets as they spun and wove around each other. Later, a group of three young girls timidly took the stage to sing a song they had written about organic and agroecological food and cultivation. In this vibrant and varied spectacle, the campesino community actively articulated the interconnections between food, community, nature, activism, song and dance in campesino culture as a way of life and expression of difference, and asserted this *desarrollo integral* within a self-made public place.

**IIb. Campesino Displacement and Placement**

The Tuta farmers market engages in a translocal politics of place, through the participants’ assertion of their localized campesino agricultural environments, the creation of a fundamentally place-based trade system in a central, public space, and the evoking of national and global issues, thus articulating the construction of a heterotopia of resistance. The farmers market, as a small-scale project towards food sovereignty that engages people in nonnormative economic and cultural practices, embodies Foucault’s notions of heterotopia and Gibson-Graham’s counter-hegemonic activities outside the realms of control. In a broader space in which campesino producers do not have such opportunities for direct economic exchange and cultural
expression in the public sphere, the Tuta farmers market engages a politics of place towards the creation of alternatives to and of (post/)modernity.

The organizing of this farmers market responded to the systematic legal and economic dispossession, and subsequent cultural invisibilization, of campesino lives and livelihoods. Throughout the twentieth century and into the 21st, political and economic policies in Colombia have repeatedly marginalized campesino peoples, forcing them off their land and out of their agricultural and cultural practices, to the edges of society. The Constitutional changes in 1991, while promoting the rights of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, had the effect of demobilizing and disempowering campesino identity and social movements. Before the 1990s, peasants, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples were often unified in sociopolitical activism through their general status as peasants. The Constitutional recognition of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples as ethnic groups with particular rights alienated campesinos from such social movements. Simultaneously, and partially because of this articulation of multiculturalism, informal social mobilization across the country was shrinking.

This has left little room for campesinos’ expression of their agricultural practices, cultural identities, and sociopolitical demands. “Not only can we not practice what it means to be campesino, politically it is difficult. The campaigns of politicians are often built on engagement with campesinos but then when they ascend to power, they forget us, they forget the campesinos,” reflects Nilvia Corredor, one of the campesino vendors, “And the government does not know how to milk a cow, or

77 Forero, "Interview with Jorge Forero."
78 Castrillón, "Interview with Fernando Castrillón."
79 Ibid.
how to plant a strawberry. That, campesinos know.”

This displacement and restriction has forced the campesino community to seek alternative means of expression and empowerment. The farmers market was organized by Fundación San Isidro, which works for the “training and empowerment of campesinos through various programs and according to the necessities of each community.” Two of the main leaders of Fundación San Isidro, Esperanza Cortes Gutierrez and Maria De Los Santos Salamanca Silva, spoke at length about the systematic invisibilization of the campesino peoples, their ways of life, rights and expressions. Through food sovereignty, they find enormous potential for new, alternative ways to recuperate, revitalize, and re-emplace campesino peoples.

The marginalization and invisibilization of campesinos has occurred not only within political, economic and cultural realms, but also within physical spaces. In the modern food regime, small-scale producers, especially campesinos in the Global South, are sociopolitically and geographically displaced and invisibilized from the food system. As Jorge Forero, the Bogotano sociologist, notes, “The contemporary economy does not have room for campesino markets. We see them less and less in our cities and town; they are replaced by tiendas and supermarkets, containing imported, processed foods.”

The establishment of a farmers market, an event that constitutes markedly different expressions of social, as well as economic and cultural, dynamics emphasizes transformation of space into place. The temporary take-over of the Tuta plaza, the geographical center and historical hub of public politics and social

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80 Nilvia Corredor, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 1, 2014, Tuta, Boyacá.
82 Forero, "Interview with Jorge Forero."
engagement in Latin American towns and cities,\textsuperscript{83} constructs a concrete heterotopic place of counterhegemonic activity and campesino expression.

The organizers, farmers and visitors of the farmers market actively contributed to the visibilization and place-making of campesino farmers through the placement of the market in the public space, the presentation of produce next to its producers, and the direct, personal engagement between producers and consumers. The articulation of place involves an “engagement with and experience of a particular location with some measure of groundedness (however unstable), boundaries (however permeable), and connections to everyday life, even if its identity is constructed and never fixed.”\textsuperscript{84} Through the conspicuous material construction within the central plaza, the facilitators and farmers create a grounded place, fluidly bound by the surrounding streets, for engagement in alternative economic practice, cultural expression and intimate human interaction. “This definitely makes us more present for people. We are here in the middle of the plaza. Usually we are far away in our fields,” states Pedro Luis, as he hands a head of greens to a customer.\textsuperscript{85} Yamar Flores expresses a similar assertion of place and culture in this direct and public realm of engagement: “We are in the center of the city, as producers, as farmers, as ourselves, because we are peasants, workers, we have connected with nature, in order to be able to produce our crops and bring them here.”\textsuperscript{86} Within the Tuta farmers market, food is


\textsuperscript{84} Escobar, \textit{Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes}, 30.

\textsuperscript{85} Pedro Luis, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 1, 2014, Tuta, Boyacá.

\textsuperscript{86} Yamar Flores, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 1, 2014, Tuta, Boyacá.
“re-spatialized” and “resocialized”\textsuperscript{87} through the direct connections re/established between food and land, food and producer, and producer and consumer. This process transforms the food system to emphasize and empower the role of the producers, fundamental to the realization of food sovereignty, and constructs a place of non-hegemonic, even counterhegemonic, practice.

\textbf{IIc. Building an Alternative Economic Framework}

Within the farmers market, the producers and consumers enact distinct, alternative economic practices that work outside of the mainstream capitalist system and construct an economic heterotopia. Gibson-Graham and Escobar’s politics of place demonstrate the possibility for alternative economic systems beyond the apparent totality of global capitalism. From a position of place-based alterity such as campesino identity, the economy is not a singular nor abstract system, but a “a realm of heterogeneity and difference,” a decolonizing perspective that “makes visible noncapitalist practices and leads to a rethinking of production from cultural and ecological perspectives.”\textsuperscript{88} In both academic analysis and lived practice, this perspective reveals the existence of noncapitalist activities, with transformative potential. The construction of a form of “commercialization different than the major food systems operating under a capitalist logic” is the first objective of the Mercados Campesinos program,\textsuperscript{89} revealing the explicit recognition and prioritization of the possibility of enacting alternative economics beyond capitalism. The existence of

\textsuperscript{87} Wendy Parkins and Geoffrey Craig, "Culture and the Politics of Alternative Food Networks," \textit{Food, Culture and Society} 12, no. 1 (2009): 90.
\textsuperscript{88} Escobar, \textit{Territories of Difference : Place, Movements, Life, Redes}, 102.
\textsuperscript{89} Comité de Interlocución Campesino y Comunal and Instituto Latinoamericano para una Sociedad y un Derecho Alternativos, \textit{Mercados Campesinos Y La Región Central De Colombia: Hacia Una Política Pública De Apoyo a La Economía Campesina} (Bogotá: Gente Nueva Editorial, 2010), 2.
economic diversity proclaimed by the Tuta farmers market destabilizes the hegemony of the capitalist economy and allows campesinos to create their own empowering places of economic engagement.

While the participants in the farmers market utilized monetary-based exchanges, they also engaged in many practices outside of the bounds and logic of capitalism towards the enactment of a form of community economy. Gibson-Graham presents the concept of “community economy” in juxtaposition to the mainstream economy, an alternative economic realm that emerges from a politics of place. While the farmers market in Tuta does not reflect all of the attributes of Gibson-Graham’s community economy framework, the community economy framework is advantageous to conceptualizing the non-normative characteristics of this economic place. The economy of the farmers market expresses a “place-attached,” “small-scale,” “decentered,” “community-led,” “ethical,” “oriented to local market,” “culturally distinctive,” “environmentally sustainable” and “harmonious” system,” core values to the creation of community-oriented economies. The alternative economic practices of the farmers market not only function counter to the mainstream economy, which has systematically marginalized and impoverished campesinos, they also promotes place-based, bottom-up action that integrate goods with culture, nature and ideology, evoking fundamental principles of food sovereignty. Through the construction of this community-oriented economy, the participants in the Tuta

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90 J. K. Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 86-87. This description of the Tuta farmers market takes into its analysis the “noneconomic” elements of the farmers market, a resocializing of the economy that is fundamental to Gibson-Graham’s framework (see pages 88, 95). For a complete list of characteristics of community economy - some of which do not apply to the Tuta farmers market – and their counterparts in mainstream economy, see Figure 23 on page 87.
farmers market work towards the realization of an alternative framework of modernity.

The campesino farmers articulated the immediate economic benefits of this community economy, often in explicit contrast to the mainstream economic system. “This market helps campesinos economically,” states Luisa Trago, “because it gives us an opportunity to bring our products to a market where it is important these products are ours and that they are organic, not produced with chemicals, and sell them directly to people, which is not typical.”91 Trago articulates the distinctness of the farmers market as an alternative economic realm in which campesinos may benefit from value-added notions of goods and direct exchange. Luisa Trago’s sister, Isabel Trago, also highlights the importance of the decentered, community-led direct exchange of the farmers market for campesino farmers. “In this market, there aren’t any middlemen. We are the planters, the producers, the cultivators, the vendors,” she says, “Typically there are middlemen who buy our produce and resell it, and they are the ones who make a profit.”92 Nilvia Corredor elaborates this benefit in comparison to the perpetual challenges of mainstream economics for campesinos, stating, “It is often very difficult to sell our produce, it often goes through up to five sets of hands. But here we can sell our produce directly from harvest to consumer.”93 In the participation and creation of this alternative economy of the farmers market, the (re/)positioning of people and community at the center of the food system, the campesino producers realize substantial immediate benefits that facilitate their viability, sustainability and self-driven development.

91 Luisa Trago, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 1, 2014, Tuta, Boyacá.
92 Isabel Trago, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 1, 2014, Tuta, Boyacá.
93 Corredor, "Interview with Nilvia Corredor."
While there is a tendency in farmers markets, amongst their vendors and consumers and in analyses, to evoke a defensive localism, the nature of the Tuta farmers market, given its infrequent occurrence and the disparate community of producers, produces a reflexive localism that is more open and invokes translocal conceptions of place. Defensive localism is a regressive counterpoint to the globalized food system that exaggerates and isolates the role of direct, localized social relations – social embeddedness – in alternative market approaches. Analyses of defensive localism offer a critique of the turn towards the “local” in many alternative food projects, questioning the suppositional association with positive values of an orientation towards localism for its own sake.\(^94\) While certain ethical and cultural connotations were ascribed to produce of the Tuta farmers market, there was little expression of the presupposed and unconscious value of the “local.” Although the market was constructed as an alternative food system and economic network that emphasized place and community and small-scale production and exchange, it drew from a regional geography beyond the small town of Tuta. Participants who came from hours away articulated a strong affiliation for the place-based nature of the campesino culture of the farmers market, but this was not a spatially-specific, local sentiment.

The Tuta farmers market facilitated the creation of a community-oriented economy that was not a predetermined, homogeneous community but rather an

intentional, non-presupposed community in the process of formation. The participants in the market claim a collective campesino identity while articulating a dynamic range of meanings of this identity, bringing together a diversity of views as they build affiliation and intimacy. In this context, “politics of place” becomes a “politics in place,” where place is alive and lived, intrinsically and explicitly. Such a context facilitates the creation of a reflexive localism, one that emphasizes small-scale, place-based, direct engagement between people, but does not situate that “local” place in a bounded, immobile and unsubstantiated locale. Instead, this reflexive localism is a “mutually constitutive, imperfect, political process in which the local and the global make each other on an everyday basis.” Through this reflexive localism, the Tuta farmers market participants construct a translocal place that encourages a conscious praxis of the principles of both campesino culture and food sovereignty within their actions as they build their community.

While the participants in the Tuta farmers market did not draw on empty notions of “local” in the valuations of their food, their expressions of “traditional” qualities produce similarly romantic, injudicious and unproductive notions. Although “traditional” and “local” are fundamentally distinct concepts, both are often evoked as values of “quality” in emphasizing the sociality of alternative food systems. The focus of many of the participants on the organic, non-GMO, and “traditional” nature of their products hinders the broader potential of this work by basing the value of campesino agriculture in static, nostalgic and even inapplicable ideas, often adopted

95 Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*, 85. This component of the community economy draws from the work of Jean-Luc Nancy in *The Inoperative Community*.
96 Amin, "Spatialities of Globalisation."
97 DuPuis and Goodman, "Should We Go “Home” to Eat?: Toward a Reflexive Politics of Localism."
from global alternative food frameworks. Alternative economic perspectives highlight the social dimensions of economics, but in their shift away from mainstream economic discourse, often obscure price considerations within economic systems. The viability and development of the Tuta farmers market is contingent upon the acknowledgment and assessment of how the social values of alternative food systems exist on a spectrum of marketness, in which price considerations compete with other economic values.

Economic relations cannot only be considered through non-price considerations, such as positive emotional connotations toward “natural,” “organic” or “non-GMO” food. Price considerations maintain a central role in the farmers market system. This economic system is based, for the most part, on monetary exchange at fairly fixed prices that are competitive to other markets while profitable for the producers, largely because of the direct economic exchange. While the farmers market participants are unequivocally engaging in alternative community economic dynamics, traditional economic principles continue to exert strong forces within this system.

The articulations of “natural” as an ethical and market value, placing undue emphasis on uncritical and presupposed social connotations, express an essentialized notion of nature and agriculture that is limiting and unsustainable. As a response to mainstream food products, the campesino producers have perilously inflated such evocations of “natural” and “organic,” a regression toward a similarly limited realm.

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98 The term “organic,” for example, was often used to describe the food of the farmers market, even when the agricultural techniques used for their production have not been evaluated according to, nor necessarily comply with, organic specifications.

as the unreflexive and defensive “local.” Uncritical notions of “natural” and “local” both emerge as reactionary defenses against modern, global agriculture that are often utopic, static, and reductive. The reification of nature through such evocations demands a fixed notion of nature, neither complex nor changing. This romanticized retreat to a false sense of tradition of nature thus ends up “being produced and marketed as an image, as a simulacrum or pastiche,” and the true significance of “natural” and “organic” become devoid of any true meaning.

The campesino producers of the Tuta farmers market do not have a simple or fixed view of nature or agriculture. Their daily practices identify and engage with the complexities of the environment. Yet, the expressions of “natural” qualities limit the dynamic character of their food, environment and agricultural practices. Given that the economic system at work in the farmers market clearly demonstrates alternative characteristics of a community economy – some of which do have dynamic moral and cultural valuations – the recognition of conventional market influences does not negate the radical, transformative potential of the market in its assertion of campesinos’ economic and cultural practices, but rather offers a pragmatic and responsive approach to the creation of alternative economic systems.

IIId. Campesino Culture in the Farmers Market Ceremonies

The construction of a community economy within the farmers market enabled the campesinos to explicitly assert their cultural identity. The alternative economic practices of this food sovereignty community economy are deeply culturally

100 Donald B. Thompson, "Natural Food and the Pastoral: A Sentimental Notion?,” *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 24, no. 2 (2011): 172.

embedded, thus encouraging the simultaneous expressions of economic and cultural differences. “For me, being campesino means to cultivate the earth and bring our products to market as we are today,” reflects Luisa Trago, “to show that our people produce onions, tomatoes, beans; to demonstrate – look, here, yes we grow this!”

For campesinos, their customary economic practices are a fundamental component of their identity – being campesino means cultivating the land and producing food – and the dynamics of the farmers market created by these producers attempt to reintegrate those forces. “This market shows who we are as campesinos, what are practices are,” says Nilvia Corredor. The expression of such campesino economics and culture is a significant manifestation of a place of self-identification and self-assertion for these campesino farmers.

The seed ceremony held during the farmers market demonstrated an attempt to explicitly articulate and integrate the cultural, economic and sociopolitical aspects of the event, emphasizing the importance of native seeds, agroecological practices and the campesino way of life. Silva and Gutierrez, enlisting the assistance of a group of children, laid out seeds and produce from each of the vendors on a brick circular form in the center of the plaza, creating a compass shape, marking this space as a particular place, localizing the attention of the activities within this created space while reminding people of the various communities from which the farmers had come. The farmers market vendors and attendees gathered around the circle of seeds and produce, as Maria and others spoke about the importance of this market for those involved: “Food sovereignty is about valorizing, protecting and taking care of our

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102 Trago, "Interview with Luisa Trago."
103 Corredor, "Interview with Nilvia Corredor."
territory; it is about rescuing the seeds of our culture.”104 The conversation that was created around the produce, in which people spoke to various issues and ideas, reflected the heterotopic dynamics of the market. It was a decentered, respectful, dialogic process that highlighted the intersections of food, land, culture and community, in which the campesino participants created a place of cultural and economic contestation and the expression of an alternative to and of development.

The seed ceremony not only highlighted the symbolic and material manifestations of campesino agriculture, the participants also articulated translocal constructions of identity, community and engagement. While the participants in the market gave value to localized practice through small-scale economies, direct engagement and public performance, these ideas were contextualized within a broader understanding of the dynamics of the food systems, culturally, economically and politically. Silva and other participants spoke explicitly of the negative effects of globalization on local agriculture and campesino lives, while simultaneously articulating a flipside to globalization – the recognition of and accessibility to the construction of broader networks of peoples in the defense of autochthonous, small-scale production. Not only did the local participants speak to these factors, Gutierrez asked me, as an American, as well as an Austrian woman who was also in attendance, to speak about our thoughts on the farmers market and the food system. In this way, a further politics of difference was articulated, and a global network of knowledge and practice was constructed. This dialogic and relational encounter,105 simultaneously defining and blurring the boundaries of the place of engagement, facilitated the

104 "Ceremonía De Semillas."
expression and deepening of campesino. As globalization leads to the “re-scaling of territories,” in which there are new “articulations of intersecting and overlapping” spatial scales,106 effective and responsive cultural and political engagement requires a reflection of such multiplicity and relativity of scale, as was highlighted by the dynamics of this ceremony.

The activities of the outdoor dining area further reinforced the intrinsic relationship between food and culture in campesino identity. The foods being prepared under the tents, such as beef stew and corn on the cob, are traditional campesino foods, and the preparation and eating of them is not only a significant component of daily life for campesino peoples, it also clearly associates people with campesino identity.107 Much of this food was the produce of the very same vendors, an intentional process of direct realization of the producer to consumer dynamic of this alternative food system. This practice of direct engagement between the various actors in the food system, and the celebratory and communal way in which people were eating their food, intentionally marked this food as a cultural object, something imbued with value beyond its role in the mainstream economic system. In this direct interaction with their food and food system, people took part in a conscious practice of eating, a “political act,” according to Wendell Berry, “an interruption from the normal practices and a democratic realization of expression and decision-making.”108

In this intentional place of eating, consumers took on new forms of engagement and became active participants in the assertion of the place, culture and economics of their food.

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107 Vélez, "First Interview with Germán Vélez."; Castrillón, "Interview with Fernando Castrillón."
108 Berry, "The Pleasures of Eating."
The folk dance performances that followed the seed ceremony expressed the significant connection between the alternative food practices of the farmers market with the cultural heritage of the campesinos. The food sovereignty discourse emphasizes the intimate relationship between food and a broad range of cultural practices, enacted through people’s daily activities, practical and ceremonial. The dances that were performed have a long history within campesino culture in Colombia and the intense preparation of the costumes and choreography and dedication to the performance are one of the most significant ways in which these campesinos honor their heritage in an expressive, lived manner.109 While some of the dances had direct references to food, many did not; they were dynamic expressions of campesino culture and, within the context of the farmers market, were intrinsically linked to campesino agricultural practices. By employing a variety of forms of cultural expression, the campesino participants in the Tuta farmers market constructed alternative, multi-dimensional articulations of place that emphasized the intimate interconnections of food, economy and culture as a way to assert their presence as campesinos.

IIe. Strengthening the Place of the Tuta Farmers Market

While the Tuta farmers market was a significant place of campesino self-expression and empowerment, it is important to recognize its weaknesses and shortcomings. The lack of explicit recognition of the deeper social implications of the work of the farmers market from the campesino participants demonstrates the limitations of this work in achieving the transformative goals of food sovereignty.

109 Cortes Gutierrez, "Interview with Esperanza Cortes Gutierrez."
Partially reflecting the precedence of practice over discourse in the food sovereignty framework, “quiet food sovereignty” emerges in certain contexts, formed not through coordinated action or outspoken discourse, but rather in small-scale daily practices – refusals, profanations and other expressions of “petty acts” of resistance\(^\text{110}\) - and shorter-term, more self-interested goals\(^\text{111}\). Yet in the context of the Tuta farmers market, and contemporary Colombia more broadly, in which social movements and the explicit expression of food sovereignty are present and possible, even as they are challenged, quiet food sovereignty serves as an insufficient process, and analysis, for critical engagement.

While the organizers explicitly and repeatedly voice a definitive discourse of food sovereignty, the farmers’ limited articulation of the principles and potentialities of the market demonstrates a fundamental discordancy. The lack of broader social possibility within the expressed visions of the campesino producers hinders the influence of the farmers market in facilitating the creation of a counterhegemonic place of campesino assertion. Further dialogue and engagement of all participants in these types of farmers markets is so vital for the development of broader and deeper notions of social transformation through food sovereignty.

The engagement towards more systemic food sovereignty and broader campesino participation in economic, political and cultural realms is limited by the singular occurrence of the farmers market. While there is a heightened intentionality to the practices manifested in this market, with aims of further engagement with such


practices, these are not truly a realization of day-to-day practices towards the creation of sustainable food sovereignty. Food sovereignty rests upon the building of alternative forms of practice and praxis in daily activities, more so than the deepening of organizational structures or the articulations of discourse. For food sovereignty to be realized, people must engage with it over extended periods of time, working in slow, intentional processes toward broader transformations. It is everyday forms of contestation and engagement that are the fundamental elements for the construction of “self-determined food systems” and “new social configurations of collective survival” towards food sovereignty. The farmers market in Tuta should thus be considered within the broader context of the day-to-day activities of the campesino participants and the ongoing projects of Fundación San Isidro in their deep-rooted and quotidian forms of resistance, subsistence and engagement in alternative, radical and transformative practices that are essential to the long-term construction of food sovereignty.

The farmers market, as a heteropic place in which difference and contestation emerges, is inherently limited in its ability to alter broader economic and social systems that continue to marginalize campesino farmers. Within the politics of place, the expression of such alternative realities that resist the totalizing force of globalized capitalism occurs not on a grand scale, but in relatively small contexts of space and time. Scaling up and universalization, fundamental components to broadening influence, are intrinsically antithetical to the heterotopia. Community economy cannot supplant mainstream economy without becoming that selfsame hegemony.

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But this does not completely annihilate the potential of the heterotopia of the farmers market to influence the broader world. The heterotopia is still engaged with the rest of the modern world. The existence, and recognition of the existence, of the farmers market as a self-constructed realm of alternative economic and cultural interaction can be inspiration and example for others, especially within the fundamentally interconnected and dynamic framework of food sovereignty. The heterotopia of the farmers market also destabilizes the hegemony and normativity of the economy, resocializing mainstream economics to be more cognizant and inclusive of “full range of noncapitalist and alternative capitalist organizations and practices.” The heterotopia of the farmers market constitutes, in some ways, an alternative to modernity – a significantly challenging realization of transformational alterity. If the participants of the Tuta farmers market take lessons, tools and inspiration from it and adapt them to other contexts of their lives, whether that be intentionally seeking out direct producer-to-consumer foods or the creation of conversations about food systems and campesino culture, or something else, they will be actively constructing varied and various expressions of alternative development, alternatives to development and alternatives to modernity and engaging in the practices of food sovereignty in their daily lives, the fundamental process towards the realization of global food sovereignty.

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III. Granja Mutualitas & Urban Campesino

The case of Rosa Poveda and *Granja Mutualitas*, Poveda’s farm within the city of Bogotá, provides a strong example of concrete place-making through food sovereignty practices in an urban environment, challenging the dispossession and invisibilization of Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs), and presents important issues of urban space and feminism in the food sovereignty framework.

IIIa. Growth in the Urban Environment

In Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, the southeast part of the city is abruptly cut off by steep hills and the roads often disappear into dirt and vegetation. It is here that some of the poorest residents of the city live, pushed to the edges by large-scale rural displacement and urban development projects. On one such street in the aptly named barrio *La Perseverancia*, is a refuge from the noise, violence and concrete of the surrounding city. Behind tall concrete walls painted with brightly-colored murals showing the faces of *campesinos* – peasants – and plants, is a small farm called *Granja Escuela Agroecológica Mutualitas y Mutualitos* (Mutualist Agro-ecological...
Farm School) – *Granja Mutualitas* for short – built and run almost entirely by one woman, Rosa Poveda. This farm is not only her home and her source of nourishment and employment, but also a place for education, community organization, environmental action, political engagement, reconciliation and more. It is through this urban agricultural project that Poveda and those who work with her engage directly with the forces of their contemporary reality – violence, poverty, displacement and marginalization – and claim agency and authority. *Granja Mutualitas* as both a zone of abandonment and zone of potentiality, a place in which Poveda and her community articulate the intersectionalities of environmentalism, feminism and socioeconomic issues and Internally Displaced Peoples identity through a framework of translocal food sovereignty. Poveda’s work in building this project in an urban environment evokes the increasingly important exploration into the roles of feminism and urban space within the discourse and practice of food sovereignty.

Poveda has lived in Bogotá for most of her life, her *campesino* family forced to leave their home in the countryside when she was a small child because of violence. In 2007, after buying the property rights to the 1800 square meter plot of land where her farm now resides, she began work on the transformation of the land from a garbage dump into a living space and farmable land.\(^{114}\) Along with others, Poveda has built a multitude of small-scale agroecological projects in her farm, including terraced gardens, hanging plant systems, and low-water vegetable beds. This cultivation allows her to produce food for her family and others, and make a small income. Poveda has also organized many community workshops, educational

initiatives, public policy trainings and environmentally-sustainable food sovereignty projects. Poveda’s work has also sought to promote the roles and rights of campesino women and displaced peoples in society, through her everyday work, and in her more long-term sociopolitical initiatives.

The ongoing violence in Colombia, from military, paramilitary and guerilla forces, has led to a huge displacement of rural peoples – mostly poor campesinos, indigenous and Afro-descendants – to urban areas. Many rural areas have come under the direct control of these forces, using violence and the threat of violence to gain control of communities and land. Often, displacement occurs under extreme duress, with families and individuals fleeing overnight with few resources or plans.\(^{115}\) This displacement has forced many people to the nation’s capital: Bogotá has the largest number of IDPs in Colombia, with a total of about 550,000 arriving since the turn of the twenty-first century.\(^{116}\)

While initial violence grew from guerilla groups fighting for land reform and counterinsurgency measures, much of the contemporary violence has been perpetuated by mainstream development initiatives. This protraction of violence is carried out by both state and non-state actors in their claims to natural resources. Guerrilla groups fund much of their operations with drug production and trade, thus demanding control over territories and people for labor.\(^{117}\) Simultaneously, government desires for acquisition and protection of petroleum and palm oil

\(^{115}\) Juan Esteban Zea, "Internal Displacement in Colombia: Violence, Resettlement, and Resistance" (Portland State University, 2010), 40.

\(^{116}\) Ibid., 7; Sistema de Información sobre Derechos Humanos y Desplazamiento - SISDHE, "Numero De Personas Desplazadas Por Municipio Y Año De Llegada," ed. Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento - CODHES (Bogotá2012).

\(^{117}\) Vélez, "First Interview with Germán Vélez."
resources facilitates state-sponsored violence.\textsuperscript{118} International development initiatives also fuel this violence, with paramilitary forces displacing regions for the benefit of transnational corporations.\textsuperscript{119} All of these factors contribute to the significant displacement that continues to occur across the nation.

The dispossession and marginalization of displaced peoples does not end with their arrival to Bogotá, but continues through sociopolitical and economic invisibilization. While Colombia has established a legal framework for the protection of IDPs, it has many hindrances and failings that make it difficult for IDPs to receive necessary support. Often, IDPs are caught between the difficult choice between “satisfying basic material needs by seeking employment and undertaking the extensive work necessary to access emergency aid.”\textsuperscript{120} Lack of political literacy or representation and the infiltration of violence into their urban lives keeps IDPs from asserting themselves and demanding their rights. Finally, the normalization of displacement takes agency from IDPs’ struggles and depoliticizes their existence. Displacement within Bogotá is not necessarily hidden or ignored, but rather taken for granted, and as such, its “continued existence is not politically problematic.”\textsuperscript{121} Such forces disempower IDPs and marginalize them from participation in sociopolitical spheres.

There is also a significant physical marginalization of displaced persons within Bogotá, through which they are simultaneously neglected and abandoned.

\textsuperscript{120} Carolina Olarte Olarte and Illan rua Wall, "The Occupation of Public Space in Bogotá: Internal Displacement and the City," \textit{Social & Legal Studies} 21, no. 3 (2012): 327.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 328.
Population growth and development have pushed poor people to the physical limits of the city, to the southeast region and the eastern edge of the hills. Many IDPs live in “zones of high risk,” designated as such by the government’s resettlement program that allows for temporary habitation of such undeveloped surrounding areas. These areas offer a contentious form of empowerment and state control – IDPs resist subjugation by moving to areas outside of the formal processes of urban development, while declaring themselves to be displaced persons in need of assistance from the state. Within such spaces, what João Biehl refers to as “zones of abandonment” present extreme marginalization, they also offer the potential for agency and transformation. While *Granja Mutualitas* is not within an official “zone of high risk,” it occupies a very similar space of simultaneous abandonment and potentiality. Its existence on the very edges of the city on the site of an old garbage dump, along with the vision and work that has been put into it, offer the possibility of a place ‘outside’ the spaces of control.

Poveda’s transformation of this space into a thriving farm and community hub is a realization of the potential of such zones. With no formal training in agroecological projects or sociopolitical organizing, only her own desire to create the life she hoped for and bring empowerment to herself and her community, Poveda has built a place in which alternative forms of thinking and practice with regard to the environment, politics, identity and more, are flourishing. She states, “I always dreamed of this place…I had imagined myself living on my own farm. But I never

124 Gibson-Graham, ""Place-Based Globalism": A New Imaginary of Revolution," 662. .
thought God would give it to me in the middle of the city.”

Poveda’s radical reconceptualization of herself and the space she inhabits allowed for her to create a space for the cultural, political and economic assertion of herself and her community outside the traditional framework. Even amongst all of the restrictive forces of neoliberal cities, it is through the work of urban agriculture projects that “inner-city urban forms are being reinvented and reshaped from the bottom up through the spreading multitude of heterotopias, the diverse shifting mosaic of cultural forms that everywhere transform space into place.”

When asked about the possible impact of *Granja Mutualitas’s* work on community political engagement, Poveda emphasizes that the space of the farm involves the people of the community in both local and national politics, going on to state that “Within this space we want to inform people about critical participation and politics…that is more than just voting” Poveda’s work subverts her subjectivity as a poor campesina *victima*, claiming a new role as an empowered leader and organizer in a space she has constructed herself. Poveda realizes the transformative force of *Granja Mutualitas* by grounding her vision in daily activities. For some urban social movements, the city is an “object of utopian desire, as a distinctive place of belonging within a perpetually shifting spatio-temporal order.”

But within *Granja Mutualitas*, Poveda is carrying out very real practices of transformation in her daily existence, whether it is in the cultivation of organic fruit or the organization of a community meeting on violence against women.

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125 *Rosa Poveda Builds Urban Farm and School in Bogota*, (Youtube: CCTV America, 2014), Video.
127 David Harvey, *Rebel Cities : From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2012), xvi.
There is no grand planning or waiting for revolutionary social change.\textsuperscript{128} Poveda realizes her own place of difference in the present through careful and unrelenting daily practice.

The creation of this transformational place through food sovereignty practice in the context of the city of Bogotá demonstrates the possibilities within such urban spaces for the creation of food sovereignty. The majority of food sovereignty work takes places in rural areas, growing out of the agricultural work of campesinos, Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples. Yet significant organizational work also takes place urban spaces. \textit{Grupo Semillas} and \textit{Red de Semillas de Identidad}, two of the largest food sovereignty networks in the country, are based in Bogotá. They benefit greatly from the infrastructure and interconnectivity that are fundamental components of this urban environment. The urban process and experience foster a distinct potential to ground anti-capitalist struggles such as the food sovereignty movement.\textsuperscript{129} The transformative potential of \textit{Granja Mutualitas} could not be realized were it not for its urban setting – the ability to build a local community while gaining access to a multitude of resources, and connection to national and international networks. While rural areas continue to be the principal focus of food sovereignty work as the primary realm of food production, expanding the discourse of food sovereignty to encompass activities within urban spaces allows for a more inclusive framework and the recognition of significant forms of engagement with food sovereignty in the everyday lives of urban dwellers.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., xvii.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 119-20.
IIIb. Planting the Seeds of Feminism in Food Sovereignty Work

While not clearly articulated in her own language, Poveda’s agroecological work in *Granja Mutualitas* expresses a form of ecofeminism that transcends the strict human-nature binary of mainstream agricultural development, and constructs new spaces for the expressions of critical demands within the intersectionality of food sovereignty. Poveda’s work is a form of women’s self-empowerment through food sovereignty practice that reflects feminist thought. Yet the absence of explicit recognition of this feminism reflects the need to deepen feminist-oriented practice and discourse in the food sovereignty framework. Feminism is a central principle towards the realization of food sovereignty – the Nyeleni’s second proclamation of its struggle calls for a world in which there is “recognition and respect of women’s roles and rights in food production, and representation of women in all decision making bodies.”

Yet, often the role of women in the transformation of food systems goes overlooked or underemphasized. Aligning with traditional Colombian gender divides, 75% of farmers are men, thus elevating the role of men in social organizations focused on food issues. All the same, women play important roles in food production and food sovereignty projects, and are vital to comprehensive and egalitarian transformation of food systems. A critical feminist lens, in both analysis and practice, compels the exploration and articulation of places of difference. The further articulation of women’s roles and the important relationship between feminism and food sovereignty would allow women like Poveda to realize more fully the

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130 “Declaration of Nyéléni.”
transformational nature of their daily activities and more prominently assert themselves.

In her projects and reflections, Poveda’s emphasis on the fundamental intersections between the land and people’s lives, health and rights demonstrates ecofeminist principles that emerge in food sovereignty work. In ecofeminist thought, separations between people and nature, and production and reproduction, are man-made forces that serve to destroy the environment and oppress people, especially women. The food sovereignty framework provides a platform for the reconciliation of such separations by emphasizing the relationships between people, culture and the environment in the food system. Food sovereignty, as articulated by Poveda, is “autonomy, security” and “the recuperation of peasant, indigenous and Afro-descendant culture that has been lost to the forces of the state and the [Global] North,” as well as a “a force for the health of our bodies and our minds.”

Throughout conversation, Poveda makes connections between food sovereignty and internally displaced persons’ rights, climate change, spirituality, and many other themes. Poveda’s understanding and articulation of food sovereignty as social movement and a mobilizing framework transcends cultural valorization and economic protectionism, engaging issues of environmental sustainability, political engagement, and human health. These intersections are fundamental aspects to food sovereignty, and are essential to its potential as a mechanism for critical engagement of marginalized peoples.

134 Poveda, "Interview with Rosa Poveda."
135 Ibid.
The intersections of environmentalism and feminism provide an integral context for Poveda’s confrontation of the multifaceted issues she faces and in *Granja Mutualitas’s* assertion of place-based politics. This intersectionality emerging from the environmental justice movement, which holds many of the same fundamental principles and goals as the food sovereignty movement, demands the critical, paramount positioning of (Third World) women of color in processes of social transformation. Through the perspective of women such as Poveda, actors, activists and organizations can facilitate alternative articulations of production and reproduction to strengthen the inclusivity and interconnectedness that are fundamental to the creation of food sovereignty. Poveda echoes this intersectionality and its relationship to Third World women and their bodies. Poveda connects the environmental destruction of current agricultural practices to the increasing prevalence of premature adolescence and youth pregnancy and states, “My work is about education in forms of productive sustainability and defending our bodies.”

This approach to her discourse and practice recenters concepts of environmentalism and feminism within the concrete context of her daily activities of sustainable agroecology and asserts the importance of such actions for the creation of alternative ways of living and engaging with the world. The articulation of the “everydayness of nature” in these practices “brings environmental issues home,” locating them as a

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137 Ibid.
138 Poveda, "Interview with Rosa Poveda."
place-based politics within the *Granja Mutualitas* as a place for their praxis and expression into the greater community.

Poveda’s articulations of the importance of native seeds as both a tool for agricultural autonomy and cultural assertion is a breakdown of the rigidity of mainstream agricultural development discourse, demands recognition of campesino lives within modern society. This approach challenges the human versus nature binary of modern agricultural development, in which the increased technologization of agriculture compartmentalizes and diminishes the role of agrarian cultures and the peoples who practice them.\(^{140}\) Poveda challenges this binary by emphasizing the importance of using native seeds, not only for agroecological purposes, but also because of their cultural significance, their reflection of Colombian campesino livelihoods.\(^ {141}\) Poveda's work places people and culture at the center of her agricultural practices, continually reiterating the role of community, the vindication of cultural knowledges, and the holistic and spiritual qualities of food and nature. The renewal of a politics of connection and regeneration challenges these forces, a critical form of engagement for marginalized people. In the context of *Granja Mutualitas*, this is especially important for Internally Displaced Persons, for whom urban farms are “sources of plants for medicine and traditional recipes and are diverse agroecological spaces that biophysically and symbolically connect migrants to their origin community.”\(^ {142}\) Thus, the underscoring of the interconnections between the economic and scientific importance of native seeds with their cultural significance not

\(^{140}\) Shiva, "The Seed and the Earth," 46.

\(^{141}\) Poveda, "Interview with Rosa Poveda."

\(^{142}\) Mares and Peña, "Urban Agriculture in the Making of Insurgent Spaces in Los Angeles and Seattle," 265.
only actively engages and resists mainstream agricultural development but also promotes an alternative approach that is centered on the intersectionality of nature, people and culture along with political and economic practices.

IIIc. Constructing a Translocal Place

*Granja Mutualitas* has built local and global connections throughout its growth, articulating new translocal communities for reinvisioning the world. *Granja Mutualitas* expresses a fundamental translocal strategy for engaging with the world, the “defense of the local as a prerequisite to engaging with the global.” Poveda’s work continues to center around the local as the primary space for engagement, through the valorization of small-scale agricultural practices, through neighborhood community-building, through the enactment of everyday politics concentrated in farm work within the transformative realm of the *Granja Mutualita*. Yet she also takes on a global perspective, building networks on transcommunal and transnational levels. Poveda speaks of her work in relation to the implementation of the Free-Trade Agreement with the United States, to World Bank policies, to climate change, expressing the need for global encounter through *Granja Mutualitas’* work. This work is done through seed exchanges with organizations in Brazil, Switzerland, Italy and Spain, in *minga* workshops with disparate peasant communities, in alliances with international food sovereignty organizations such as La Via Campesina, and in dialogues and information sharing with foreign researchers like myself.

144 Poveda, "Interview with Rosa Poveda."
Poveda and Granja Mutualitas establish an inclusive place for engagement that does not diminish one scale – global or local – for the other and build a new translocal worldview. Poveda’s hybridized goals of new transformative expressions of campesino life are critical expressions of the non-binary negotiations that are essential to establishing alternatives to and of development and modernity in today’s world. In an age of post-development/“zombie” development, in which normative paradigms have continually failed Poveda and so many other campesinos, marginalized peoples are realizing the need for new interpretations and conceptualizations of the contemporary world based on “cultural hybridization encompassing manifold and multiple modernities and traditions.” Poveda sees her urban farm as a truly transformative space, as do many others who come to visit, study or work. While Poveda seeks to revalorize campesino culture and practices, turning to ancestral knowledges and intentionally non-industrial labor, she also recognizes the ways in which such practices are intrinsically new and transformed. “Campesinos need a different form of being,” says Poveda, “to demonstrate the possibility of returning to the countryside and finding new ways to be campesinos.”

In this translocal negotiation between local and global, and tradition and modernity, Poveda develops a place of dynamic engagement and the expression of alternative possibility within her farm.

When the day ends at Granja Mutualita, the evening sun falls beyond the furthest concrete wall after trailing below the tall fruit trees. Poveda heads inside her home and prepares dinner for herself and her children. On the day I’ve met with her,

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147 Poveda, "Interview with Rosa Poveda."
Poveda is making a quinoa soup. “All of the vegetables are from our farm. The quinoa I received from a family of farmers who I met at a workshop here in Bogotá. This is what it means to be a campesino for me.”\textsuperscript{148} For Poveda, in her framework of resistance and transformation, even this act of cooking is a political and cultural action, an assertion of her identity as a displaced campesino woman, in the face of all sorts of confounding pressures. Through a politics of place and articulation of intersectionality, Poveda is constructing a transformative, empowering place and deepening the framework and potentiality of food sovereignty.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
I. Introduction

Along the River Sinú, a fisherman steps into the knee-deep water. While years before he may have been entering the river to catch fish, he is now using the muddy, brown water to rinse out a plastic barrel. Then, he returns inland to tanks that his community has built to raise and cultivate fish. “See,” he says, “I’m still a fisherman. But in a different way. Everything is different now.”¹

The Northern Pacific indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, San Sebastián de Lorica and and San Nicolás de Bari de Cordoba, are constructing dynamic sociopolitical identities and relations through their food sovereignty work that challenge formal national and international political constructs of citizenship and civil society. In a context in which the state continually fails to critically engage with

¹ Hector Vitalua, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 10, 2014.
the people, or address their needs, these communities are exploring and building forms of both resistance and engagement that articulate and address their demands. Through food sovereignty-aligned agroecological and social projects, these communities are finding ways to defend their livelihoods, cultures and lands that confront conventional forms of citizen-state relations and create a translocal politics that assert the local places they inhabit while working within a globalized context.

The notions of social and political identity that the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities are articulating through their food sovereignty practices and organizations work within new, alternative frameworks of translocality. These constructions challenge strictly bounded, nation-state-centered notions of civic engagement and citizenship to express forms of identity and relationships within small-scale local, large-scale transnational and more abstract, non-geographical spheres. By moving beyond the binary framework of modernity/coloniality into Arturo Escobar’s modernity/coloniality/decoloniality approach, in both the analytical approach and in these communities’ practices, possibilities of transformation and liberation through new sociopolitical dynamics are built by subaltern actors and recognized in their analysis. This perspective allows us to move beyond the bounds of neoliberal capitalism to the creation of places “outside” the spaces of control, in JK Gibson-Graham’s words, in which new forms of political engagement and citizenship may emerge.

Both normative and non-normative conceptualizations of sociopolitical identity engagement are fundamentally based on the formation of citizenship through

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3 Gibson-Graham, ""Place-Based Globalism": A New Imaginary of Revolution," 662.
the pursuit and construction of political imaginations. Saskia Sassen writes that most of the scholarship on citizenship “has claimed a necessary connection to the nation state.” This conception of citizenship and nation-state, which has become thoroughly accepted and reinforced in legal and cultural grounds, in Colombia and throughout the world, is based in our socially constructed political imaginations. T.H. Marshall’s seminal theorization on citizenship sees citizenship as a “mobilizing imaginary,” an imagination of “an ideal citizenship against which achievements can be measured and towards which aspirations can be directed.” In Marshall’s framework, this mobilizing imaginary directs citizenship toward an ideal relationship with the nation-state. Citizenship to a nation-state is framed by, and helps to construct, an “imagined political community,” in the words of Benedict Anderson, a theoretical realm of political activity built on perceived commonality and relationality. This foundation of citizenship in political imaginations highlights the socially constructed nature of such political institutions and the significant globalized cultural, political and economic forces at work that shape them - no matter how formalized, legalized and depoliticized they may be presented.

In emphasizing the formation of citizenship and political engagement based on political imaginations, the perceived universal and apolitical quality of these concepts is destabilized and decolonized. Their socially constructed nature highlights the potential for the articulation of alternative political realms to which citizenship

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can be aligned. As JK Gibson-Graham illustrates, a decolonizing perspective of alterity reminds us that “not everything that emerges from globalization can be said to conform to the capitalist script.”

This is particularly important for the expressions of marginalized indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, whose existence is both alienated by and challenging to mainstream conceptions of citizenship in Colombia, which are closely tied with projects of globalization and capitalism. Subalterns’ perspective of difference allows for new political imaginings of citizenship to emerge. Citizenship is “always a prefigurative and perforative demand – a claim that things could be different; that things should be different…of imagining collective identities and ways of being that are at stake; and of acting in the name of such collectivities.”

The political imaginations that are at the foundation of citizenship inherently offer aspirational possibilities toward difference and change and place for its enactment. Translocal constructions of political engagement and citizenship highlight the performative nature of citizenship, transcending the nation-state orientation of “parochial forms of political community” that reinforce systems of inequality, marginalization and violence. Through the food sovereignty practices of the San Sebastián and San Nicolás de Bari community organizations, in their agroecology practices and their sociopolitical mobilizing, these peoples are constructing alternative political imaginaries, engaging with those of the nation and the globe, and proposing new possibilities for citizenship and political engagement.

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9 Clarke et al., Disputing Citizenship, 104.
This approach attempts to recognize the range of possibilities, challenges and contradictions within these community organizations’ work in sociopolitical expression through the food sovereignty framework. While an analysis that incorporates a politics of place and a politics of difference recognizes and emphasizes marginalized perspectives, it also must take into account the forces that continue to restrict the expression of those perspectives. Building from the work of Deborah Yashar, who takes a critical approach to traditional identity politics theory in her analysis of citizenship and its contestations in Latin America, this analysis “draws on poststructural assumptions that individuals are plural subjects with multiple configured identities; these identities are socially constructed and transmutable. But it also assumes that very real structural conditions of poverty and authoritarian rule can impede the unencumbered expression of identities and pursuit of collective action just as they can shape needs as preferences.”\textsuperscript{11} This approach allows for possibilities that transcend traditional paradigms and construct alternatives while simultaneously recognizing the constraints and challenges that continue to exist and confront such possibilities.

Such a dynamic and inclusive analysis is essential to translocality, in which globalized modernity is not rejected in the formation of alternative sociopolitical identities, but rather engaged with actively. This analysis thus considers how the construction of alternative sociopolitical frameworks is not merely a radical, emancipatory project, but rather, one that is deeply challenged and shaped by normative constructions, is threatened by its own internal contradictions, and is

enabling of further forms of marginalization. Just as my analysis recognizes these varying and potentially contradictory elements, so does the food sovereignty work of these indigenous and Afro-descendant community organizations.

II. San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián Communities

The communities of San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián are located in the Córdoba department of Colombia, in the Northern Pacific region. The Sinú River, which runs through the region, and alongside which these communities have been built, has shaped the landscape into a vast and vegetative wetlands. San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián are small, rural, peasant communities that are made up of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. These communities have limited modern infrastructure and base their livelihoods primarily on crop cultivation, fishing and artisanal craft-making. The members of these communities see such practices, while tools for economic production and trade, as fundamental sources of their cultural and ethnic heritage and contemporary expressions of identity. The ecological and biological environment of the wetlands region provides the means for their sustenance, survival, self-expression and community-building.

One of the major issues that the communities of San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián face is the confluence of state, nonstate and international forces that disrupt and destroy their livelihoods and lives. In the contemporary neoliberal state, the

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12 According to Ivan Correa, director of the grassroots community non-governmental organization ASPROCID, which facilitates and connects many of the food sovereignty-related projects in the region, these communities have long histories of interconnections between indigenous and Afro-descendant cultural and ethnic peoples, and clear distinctions are not necessarily discernable. Thus, while many identify as indigenous and/or Afro-descendant in these communities, they also express their identities collectively through the terms of “campesino,” as well as “fishermen” and “artisans,” these being their primary livelihoods. Ivan Correa, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 10, 2014, Lorica, Córdoba.
decrease of direct consent to the power of the state has lead to the state’s increasing
dependence on the use of coercive force.\textsuperscript{13} The Pacific communities are caught in the
middle of a dangerous intersection of government development projects, Drug War
policing and paramilitary/army violence that subject the peoples to violent,
destructive institutional forces. In the 1990s, the state implemented \textit{Plan Pacífico},
with funding by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, in the
Pacific region as a large-scale capital-driven development program that did little to
incorporate the perspectives of the communities of the region.\textsuperscript{14} While development
initiatives have become somewhat more cognizant of the cultural and environmental
diversity of the Pacific region in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, the lasting effect of this program
and its introduction of foreign influenced agribusiness have sharply intervened in, and
restricted, the lifestyles of Afro-Colombian and indigenous peoples. The growth of
both illicit coca crop cultivation and subsequent eradication and monitoring by the
state, with immense funding from the United States,\textsuperscript{15} has led to land dispossessioin,
biodiversity deterioration and surveillance-based disciplining of the land and peoples.
The region has also continued to face severe violence from guerilla, paramilitary and
state military forces, caught in the crossfire and directly attacked.\textsuperscript{16}

The Urra Hydroelectric Project has grown to the be the one of the most
significant and disruptive forms of external intervention on the communities of the


\textsuperscript{14} Escobar, \textit{Territories of Difference : Place, Movements, Life, Redes}, 157.


\textsuperscript{16} "Violence in Development: The Logic of Forced Displacement on Colombia's Pacific Coast," \textit{Development in Practice} 17, no. 6 (2007).
Northern Pacific, a prime example of globalized development’s destructive presence in the region. The hydroelectric plant was built along the Sinú River between 1992 and 1998 as a multinational initiative with backing from Canadian and Swedish firms. The project has been the site of major, sometimes violent, disputes involving indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples’ organizing, calling into question the national and international infringements on the livelihoods of such communities, and the legitimacy of Constitutional protections of their rights and territories. It has also had major detrimental environmental impacts: the draining of the wetlands, the disruption of natural flooding patterns, and the decimation of the migratory *bocachico* fish population. The communities of San Nicolás de Bari, San Sebastián, and others along the Sinú River have thus almost entirely lost the environmental conditions and resources upon which they depended for their food and trade.

These intersections of aggression and intervention in the lands and lives of the rural communities of the Northern Pacific region have led to massive physical and cultural displacement. This has forced many people to abandon their traditional agricultural and fishing practices and migrate to urban areas across the country. “Every day buses leave for Bogotá, full of people,” says Yalila Paloma Zuñiga, of San Nicolás de Bari, “The displacement is huge.” Such activities have produced a
“terrorized sense of place” and “empty space” in the words of Ulrich Oslender\(^{21}\) - a realm from which the inhabitants have been pushed out and alienated. These processes transform the landscape, in effect, from localized place into dislocated and disembodied space.

Through food sovereignty focused projects and organizational processes, the agricultural indigenous and Afro-descendant associations of San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián seek to confront this destructive intervention and displacement in their lands, assert their rights and ways of life, and, on a fundamental level, survive. “Food sovereignty is the source of life, the way to be independent, happy, empowered, the way to be ourselves. And we are working for it every day in our projects,” says Ivan Correa of San Sebastián. The major project being implemented by both of these community organizations is the development and utilization of man-made ponds to cultivate and harvest *bocachico* fish. These ponds serve to replace the fish supply of the rivers and provide the food and trading goods for the communities. While physically constructed primarily by members of the local community, funding by the state, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture was essential to their creation.\(^{22}\) Although the ponds required intensive labor to construct and demand consistent replenishment that the river system would naturally produce, they have proved fairly successful.\(^{23}\) “We are fundamentally fishing peoples. And our fishing was gone,” states Victor Oquenda, the treasurer for

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\(^{21}\) Oslender, "Another History of Violence: The Production of "Geographies of Terror" in Colombia's Pacific Coast Region," 83; 88.

\(^{22}\) Juan Francisco Palomo Girente, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 10, 2014, San Nicolás de Bari, Córdoba.

This complex relationship between autonomy and state-dependency is addressed later in the chapter.

\(^{23}\) Hernández, "Interview with María Hernández."
San Sebastián’s Fishermen Organization, “But this is a way to have our life and quality of life again.” While the long-term sustainability of this system is yet to be seen, these tanks are helping to revitalize the communities’ engagement in their traditional cultural practices and their autonomous food system.

Members of the local agricultural associations within the San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián communities are also working to develop agroecological cultivation, drawing on autochthonous methods and foreign approaches to produce gardens and farming plots. Through various projects and workshops, these communities are combining ancestral knowledges and practices with those learned from other communities – regionally, nationally and internationally. The particular notions of agroecology, as well as food sovereignty, may be adopted from outside, but their principles resonate intrinsically with the cultures of the communities. “We are growing produce and herbs for our food and medicine,” says Yalia Echeverría, “Our ancestors worked this way.” In response to the loss of territory and resources, and the economic, environmental and sociopolitical restrictions on traditional cultivation and trade methods, these community organizations are developing innovative practices of resistance, subsistence and growth.

The indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples of San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián are connected to each other and other communities in the framework of the Association of Producers for the Communitarian Development of the Greater Marshlands of the Lower Sinú (ASPROCIG), to promote their cultural agroecological practices and assert their sociopolitical capacities toward the defense and

advancement of food sovereignty. ASPROCIG is a second-tier grassroots organization made up of 37 small-scale community organizations within the region that come together to develop broader associational and organizational capacities, coordinate sustainable agricultural projects, defend their lands, receive training and resources, and strengthen their social and political power. Formed in 1994 by local producers, ASPROCIG has developed various programs and initiatives dedicated to the promotion of fishing, artisanal craftmaking, and subsistence agriculture. While growing to include more communities over the course of its existence, ASPROCIG has continued to focus its attention on local needs and particularities in the implementation of its projects. There is an active multi-scalar dynamic at work in the structural organization of ASPROCIG. The organization functions through a primarily horizontal structure, focusing much of its planning and decision-making within the small-scale communities, while also holding zonal meetings led by a board of directors.

Both San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián have established community organizations that function as local chapters of the broader structure of ASPROCIG. Within these small, tight-knit communities, everyone is affected by the projects implemented through ASPROCIG, though only a portion actively participates in the formal proceedings. ASPROCIG also organize ecological fairs and regional assemblies and participate in national-level events in coordination with similar organizations. Additionally, through affiliation with international organizations, such

26 Correa, "Interview with Ivan Correa."
28 "Interview with Ivan Correa."
29 Zuñiga, "Interview with Yalila Paloma Zuñiga."
as Redmanglar International, International Rivers and the Earth Island Institute, ASPROCG participates in transnational knowledge exchanges and global environmental and political campaigns.\(^{30}\)

While the current economic and political systems predominantly undermine the ways of life of these communities, deepening their historical and geographic marginalization, ASPROCG serves as a means with which to resist, engage with, and attempt to overcome such forces. Through ASPROCG, these community organizations build food sovereignty, and the means to survive and thrive physically, culturally and politically, through their place-making agricultural activities and sociopolitical empowerment. They are not only working to produce food in accordance with their cultural heritage, nor are they solely protecting the lands on which they live and cultivate. These community organizations are also actively negotiating with national and global frameworks of culture and ethnicity, and political engagement and citizenship, while contesting mainstream normative conceptions and constructing alternative, translocal notions.

III. The State of State Sociopolitical Identity

The contemporary nation-state institutional framework for citizenship and sociopolitical identity in Colombia for indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples is fundamentally based on the concepts established in the 1991 Constitution. This constitution set out particular structures for the incorporation of marginalized communities in the national political imagination. For the first time, the ethnic and cultural pluralism of Colombia was formally recognized in official, institutional

\(^{30}\) "Asprocig".
The 1991 Constitution articulated the “notion of ethnicity as part of discursive framework of the nation-state.” For Afro-descendant communities, this signified, theoretically, the recognition of themselves as an ethnic group and the ownership of collective territories as an ethnic group. Transitory Article 55 states that:

“The government will create a law that recognizes, for Black communities that have come to be occupying public lands (tierras baldías) in the rural riparian zones of the rivers of the Pacific basin, in accordance with their traditional practices of production the right to collective property over the areas that will be demarcated by the same law.”

This led to the institution of Ley 70 in 1993, inspired by and, further spurring, the development and engagement of various commissions and governmental bodies, as well as grassroots social organizations, focused on territory, culture, environment and the comunidad negra. The Constitution of 1991 also granted particular guarantees for indigenous rights, representation, autonomy and territorial protections. This is exemplified by Article 246, which states:

“The authorities of the indigenous peoples may exercise jurisdictional functions within their territorial environment, in accordance with their own laws and procedures as long, as these are not contrary to the Constitution and the laws of the Republic.”

These critical concepts, while fomenting within cultural and ethnic groups throughout the 20th century, had never before been articulated in such a comprehensive and interconnected manner, let alone as part of the formal, national construction of Colombian sociopolitical identity and engagement.

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32 Colombia, "Constitución Política De Colombia." Translation from Ng’weno, *Turf Wars: Territory and Citizenship in the Contemporary State*, 43.
34 Colombia, "Constitución Política De Colombia." Translation is my own.
These laws and Constitutional articles established a legally recognized relationship between Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples and the state that simultaneously opened up political space for assertion and empowerment and drew strict boundaries in which such engagement could be formally manifested. Such terms allowed for the articulation of a politics of black and indigenous ethnicities on the national level. They also gave legal legitimation to claims of rights, autonomy and territory, extremely significant for these communities whose lives and lands have been so consistently marginalized and destroyed, within and beyond the legal framework of the nation. Through this sociopolitical grounding, nation-state citizenship has become more institutionalized, emphasizing neoliberal notions of individual autonomy and responsibility. 35

At the same time, the framing of Afro-descendant and indigenous identities within the discourse of “ethnicity” has been constraining and challenging for these communities. The notion of “ethnicity,” in its development, directly depended upon both national and international ideas — largely World Bank constructed ideas — of indigeneity, territory and blackness. 36 In financing land titling, an essential demand by both Afro-descendant and indigenous communities in the Constitutional process, the World Bank drew from its Indigenous Peoples Policy, thus establishing a framework for the formal cultural distinction of Afro-Colombians. 37 Such a notion of ethnicity was, and is, inherently universalizing of marginalized cultural identity, limiting the

36 Ngweño, Turf Wars: Territory and Citizenship in the Contemporary State, 428; "Can Ethnicity Replace Race? Afro-Colombians, Indigeneity and the Colombian Multicultural State."
expression of multiethnicity it purports to recognize. This has been a particularly complicated framework for Afro-descendant peoples, for whom the notion of ethnic identity has been tied to imposed ideas of a cultural heritage outside the bounds of Colombia,\textsuperscript{38} thus creating further alienation and displacement. Additionally, Constitutional Court processes, including those specifically pertaining to the dispossession of lands for the development of the Urra hydroelectric project, have demonstrated that the introduction of multiethnicity and interculturality into a (neo-) liberal framework fails to reconcile the tensions between principles of universal equality of liberalism and distinct rights of multiculturalism and frames Afro-Colombian identity within a limited basis dependent on race.\textsuperscript{39} These institutional conceptualizations undermine the complexity of Afro-Colombian’s ethnic and cultural sociopolitical identities and insufficiently address their demands and rights. Finally, the continual absence and exclusion of indigenous and Afro-descendant engagement from formal political institutions highlights the restrictive nature of neoliberal citizenship and “inclusion” in the political imaginary of the nation-state.

IV. Engaging and Disengaging with the Nation-State in a Globalized Context

Translocality provides a necessary frame through which to critically analyze contemporary sociopolitical notions and institutions because it maintains a focus on the actions and discourses of local peoples while also recognizing the globalized system in which such actions play out, and the forces of globalization on contemporary comprehensions of political engagement, citizenship and the nation-

\textsuperscript{38} Turf Wars: Territory and Citizenship in the Contemporary State, 86.
state. Globalization has given rise to transformative and sometimes contradictory restructurings of the nation-state, economic trade and human mobility, transforming places into spaces and reconfiguring the meanings of and interactions between peoples, communities, and institutions. Global democratization has promoted direct participation and recognition between people and institutional bodies, reinforcing elements of the nation-state. Simultaneously, neoliberal policies of globalization have facilitated economic privatization, deregulation, and opening and the deconstruction of national institutions toward a “shifted and reorganized…state apparatus” in which governmentality is not necessarily diminished, but rather relocated to less consolidated realms. The nation-state as a capable and adequate “unit of political community to address and mediate the new configurations of political relations” is increasingly called into question. These transformations destabilize the “national state-centered hierarchies of legitimate power and allegiance,” leading to deterritorialized conceptions of citizenship that transcend the bounds of the nation-state.

The intersecting forces tied to globalization in contemporary Colombia that have led to dispossession and displacement, as well as greater communication and association, constructing many new forms of mobility and boundary-transgression, destabilize normative understandings of nation state-centered citizenship, producing people with ties to multiple political communities and excluded from others. Sassen

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42 Sassen, "The Repositioning of Citizenship: Emergent Subjects and Spaces for Politics," 42.
sees this as the second integral transformation of globalization upon citizenship: the “emergence of multiple actors, groups, and communities partly strengthened by these transformations in the state and increasingly unwilling automatically to identify with a nation as represented by the state.”

Thus, the effects of globalization on the nation-state and the marginalized people acting within it necessitate a radical reconsideration of citizenship.

The lack of attention and resources from political figures to the communities of the Northern Pacific, and the subsequent disillusionment in the people, has led to a sociopolitical context in which there is minimal engagement between the state and the people and a general lack of civil society. “Why do people have nothing to do with political matters?” asks Ivan Correa, the director of ASPROCIG, “Because the people say what we need, make our demands, ask that our rights be complied with, and nothing changes.”

The frustration with state politics has made many in the Afro-descendant and indigenous communities feel alienated and disenfranchised from the nation-state and institutional politics as a whole. “In family spaces, in public spaces and other spaces of interaction, people are not part of political dialogues,” states Yalila Paloma Zuñiga, and Afro-Colombian woman from San Nicolás de Bari, who is also the secretary of ASPROCIG. “Our governmental system does not allow for this. Politics is only for people who have a lot of knowledge, who are familiar with the system, or have money.”

This lack of engagement with la política, formal politics,

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43 While this suggests an imbuing of agency in these actors, it is important to recognize that while globalization may provide opportunities for contestation by marginalized actors, the institutional structures of globalization actively work against the agency of subalterns such as Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples. Ibid., 4.
44 Correa, "Interview with Ivan Correa."
45 Zuñiga, "Interview with Yalila Paloma Zuñiga."
highlights the failures of true enactment of the Constitutional principles of multiethnic inclusivity, and the estrangement of marginalized peoples from political processes and thought.

The real and perceived exclusion, the disillusionment and the lack of civil society demonstrate a fundamental lack of connection to the state-based notion of citizenship for these communities. The institutional transformations since 1991 have failed to actively engage the people, especially those who have been historically marginalized, in the political imaginary of the nation-state. As Bettina Ng’Weno writes about contemporary Colombia, “While new conceptualizations of citizenship and national belonging are coming into place, they remain closely tied to old conceptualizations that have structured national belonging for centuries.” This structure of national belonging preserves the exclusion of Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples, reconstituting the historic dispossession and disenfranchisement into its contemporary practices. “How can we be citizens if it is only the main leaders who are making the decisions?” asks Paloma Zuñiga, “And these are decisions to drain our wetlands, to give permissions and grant licenses to others to establish megaprojects in our lands…to make their own Colombia.” The current framework for citizenship and political engagement serves to marginalize and otherize Afro-descendant and indigenous people, creating a further placelessness of their sociopolitical identities.

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46 People’s understandings of politics is also complicated by the fact that, in Spanish, “politica” refers to both “politics” and “policy,” which further conflates the relationship between politics with formal, nation-state processes and alienates people from more inclusive understandings of politics.

47 Ng’weno, "Can Ethnicity Replace Race? Afro-Colombians, Indigeneity and the Colombian Multicultural State." 432.

48 Zuñiga, "Interview with Yalila Paloma Zuñiga."
The San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián communities are further alienated by the national Colombian political system because their mixed Afro-descendant and indigenous identity complicates the state’s definitions and legal bounds of ethnicity. Both communities are made up of a mixture of Afro and indigenous peoples, and often individuals identify with both groups as parts of their ancestry. While the Constitution suggests the recognition of the multiethnicity of the nation, such legal definitions and their implementation fail to provide a proper platform for the articulation of the rights of more ambiguous multiethnic communities. “We are trying to demand the rights to our lands, as Afro-Colombians and as indigenous peoples,” states Hubert Randona of San Sebastián, “It is a complicated process. We are not well-informed. But also the system is very unclear.”

Contemporary notions of multiehnicity and multiculturalism in nation-state frameworks fail to address the identities and issues of many actors. For black and indigenous communities, declaring rights and territories based on claims of difference in the bounds of “ethnicity” ignores issues of class, race and multivalent intersections and prompts further separation from the national imaginary, and other marginalized identities. Multiculturalism as a sociopolitical identity is based on growing cultural diversity within nation-states of the Global North and has been “exported” to Colombia and other parts of the Global South, imposing a Eurocentric political agenda that facilitates the implementation of global capitalist logic though not

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49 Ibid.
50 Hubert Randona, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 11, 2014, San Sebastián, Córdoba.
necessarily emancipation. Under an apolitical guise of integration and tolerance, multiculturalism as a political project often obscures problems of power relations and inequality, leading to further exclusion and subjugation of marginalized peoples. The heterogeneous Afro-descendant and indigenous nature of the San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián communities cannot be incorporated into the state’s definitions of political identity. Action and empowerment through food sovereignty oriented toward the nation-state thus provides a limited and conflicted realm of engagement.

All the same, direct appeals and demands to the state are an intrinsic component of the San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián community organizations’ food sovereignty projects. For one, financing for the fish ponds and agroecological cultivation projects is provided in part by the state, often through the Ministry of Agriculture. The community organizations, through their association under ASPROCG, make requests for financial resources and equipment in order to implement these projects. The state also provides programs for agricultural and organizational training. “We have participated in a national-level meeting led by the Ministry of Agriculture that focused on rural opportunities. We are trying to participate in another,” says Juan Francisco Palomo Girente, of San Nicolás de Bari. “These are resources to invest in our training, in organization, administration, production, and commercialization.” While Girente and others acknowledge that the government has continually failed to provide for them, and has instead often acted to their detriment, they are willing to engage, cautiously, with the government, if it

52 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Another Knowledge Is Possible : Beyond Northern Epistemologies (London; New York: Verso, 2007), xviii.
54 Correa, "Interview with Ivan Correa."
55 Palomo Girente, "Interview with Juan Francisco Palomo Girente."
means that they can gain the resources necessary to recuperate their lands and practices for longer-term goals of cultural assertion, empowerment and food sovereignty.

These community organizations, while recognizing the deep challenges and failures of the Colombian legal system, do make appeals to their rights in order to further their projects. “We make legal demands, we write letters to the politicians, and other campaigns, to try to pressure the government to recognize our territories,” says Geraldo Ruiz of San Sebastián.56 Hubert Randona also voices these efforts to rights based claims directed at the nation state: “We are working for our Constitutional rights, to demand that we are citizens, as we are.”57 Such statements and projects reflect the community organizations’ attempts to engage with the state, despite the little it has provided for them in the past – a performative political identity that is aspirational toward a more ideal and inclusive political community. This appeal to a formal nation-state framework is a strategy of radicalizing and extending existing rights, in which the community activists “take the state seriously as an area of struggle,” to assert existing sociopolitical rights and construct counter-hegemonic alternatives to the restrictions on democratic politics that are “integral to neoliberal hegemony.”58

A rights-based framework is fundamental to the food sovereignty framework, both on the local level and internationally. Economist and food sovereignty theorist Raj Patel points out that such appeals to rights are complicated, potentially

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56 Geraldo Ruiz, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 11, 2014, San Sebastián, Córdoba.
57 Randona, "Interview with Hubert Randona."
contradictory, and elusive. Patel rights that “to make the right to shape food policy meaningful is to require that everyone be able substantively to engage with those policies.”

Clearly, the communities involved in ASPROCIIG do not see these conditions as already constituted, nor do they see these rights as already fully constructed in the national imaginary, legally or socially. Instead are making demands to prefigurative rights, transgressive in that they are oriented more toward themselves as communities than the institutional bodies of the nation states. Their political identity and engagement, while limited in many ways, is active and ambitious, engaged in a process of creating citizenship rather than accepting static normative definitions.

V. Constructing Alternative Sociopolitical Identities

The San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián community organizations are also actively engaged in the construction of sociopolitical identities and communities that challenge and complicate the nation-state-oriented institutions of politics through their agricultural and sociopolitical projects. This transformative works seeks to challenge and overcome the limitations of nation-state, corporate and international body power through bottom-up constructions that recognize the “political power of local communities, and their federation into a global non-statist network,” as Vodovnik writes. This translocal citizenship breaks from normative political identity frameworks while keeping both ethnic and non-ethnic associational components at play in a context that recognizes a vast spectrum of spheres of engagement, in which

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59 Patel, "Food Sovereignty," 670.
60 *Transgressing Rights: La Via Campesina's Call for Food Sovereignty * Feminist Economics 13, no. 1 (2007): 92-93.
the local and global are horizontally related, sometimes even overlapping. Through their food sovereignty work, these community organizations are facilitating the construction of translocal sociopolitical engagement that simultaneously recognizes the massive challenges and constraints to expression, association and enactment while actively creating places for realized alternatives of assertion, empowerment and connection.

On the most fundamental level, participants in the San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián community organizations are asserting a localized, place-based politics through their small-scale projects that emphasize the importance of their community and assert their rights to their lands and waters in their food sovereignty projects. The gardening and fishing projects being implemented by these communities are a means by which they can constitute their lands as place, articulating their rights to the land and water, deepening the dynamics of local community engagement, and asserting the cultural and agricultural communitarian significance of the land. “We lose our community when we lose our lands and ways of cultivating,” states Candida Paloma, of San Nicolás de Bari. “These projects encourage community engagement and interaction.”

Such projects reinvigorate the peoples’ connections to each other and the land, in old and new environmental, cultural and sociopolitical dynamics. Through their food sovereignty work, the local landscape as a place of engagement is “endowed with meaning and the constitution of identities, subjectivities, difference and antagonism,” an environmental, as well as cultural and sociopolitical place, to which the community holds a sense of belonging. Through their agricultural activities

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and community organizing, the local territory is transformed into a place in which sociopolitical identity and affiliation is constituted. “This is a social and political movement because our daily life here is political. It is not politicking, but it is politics, states María Hernández, of San Nicolás de Bari, “Every action for the wellbeing of the community is political.” The direct linking between the local place and political action in daily practices signifies the construction of a local form of sociopolitical space and identity that is more inclusive, egalitarian and intersectional than state-oriented constructions. While not all of the community members articulate this politicized nature of their actions so explicitly, there is a feeling that resonates throughout of the significant place-making that they are constructing, and their affiliation and empowerment through the construction of a new sociopolitical realm.

Local conceptualizations of citizenship and civil society do not negate or supersede other levels of political membership but rather critically interact with them in this politics of scale to challenge and complicate their meanings. While emphasis on the local is essential to the marginalized communities’ assertion of culture, land and life in the face of dispossession, displacement and environmental and cultural destruction, the food sovereignty projects at play amongst these rural communities are

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64 Hernández, "Interview with María Hernández."
65 It is important not to inherently assume greater value to localized forms of knowledge and practice, which presents a romantic, nostalgic and incomplete view of local spaces. As Escobar writes, “‘place’ and ‘local knowledge’ are no panaceas that will solve the world’s problems. Local knowledge is not pure or free of domination; places might have their own forms of oppression and even terror; they are historical and connected to the wider world through relations of power, and in many ways determined by them.” It is the possibility for difference, and contestation, that arises from the local, even when that local is not inherently pure, that is significant for the possibility of the construction of alternatives. Escobar, "Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization," 157.
not a form of defensive localism,\textsuperscript{66} nor constituted in a vacuum,\textsuperscript{67} but are rather specifically located in time and space and exist in relation to sociopolitical forces on broader scales, influenced by and influencing of, such forces. “What we are doing here is, most importantly, for us and our community,” states Paloma Zuñiga, “but it also part of a bigger system.”\textsuperscript{68} Localized sociopolitical community provides the opportunity for alternative forms of engagement that are humanizing, empowering, responsive, culturally-sensitive and amenable to change. Yet they are also mediated by forces of inequality, exclusion and destruction, both internal and external, which are fundamental components to be negotiated with. Local conceptualizations of political engagement developed through food sovereignty work do not negate or supersede other levels of political membership but rather critically interact with them in a “politics of scale”\textsuperscript{69} to challenge and complicate their meanings.

The lack of state-level political engagement and the perceived absence of “civil society,” in formal terms, opens up the potential for the construction of sociopolitical community based in the social organization of ASPROCIG. This organization is not only a network for the enactment of agroecological projects and assertion of the members’ rights and beliefs, it is a cultural and political assemblage that transgresses state boundaries, breaks down marginalizing barriers, and builds a broad community of individuals and villages united by cultural heritages, institutional and societal exclusion, and sociopolitical beliefs. As Juan Diaz reflects, “We feel more strongly organized in our community because we are members of ASPROCIG.

\textsuperscript{66} Winter, "Embeddedness, the New Food Economy and Defensive Localism."
\textsuperscript{67} Grey and Patel, "Food Sovereignty as Decolonization: Some Contributions from Indigenous Movements to Food System and Development Politics," 5.
\textsuperscript{68} Zuñiga, "Interview with Yalila Paloma Zuñiga."
\textsuperscript{69} Clarke et al., Disputing Citizenship, 156.
To be in this association means that we can work for our rights and maintain our land and practices; we are part of a larger community.\footnote{Juan Diaz, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 10, 2014, San Nicolás de Bari, Córdoba.} ASPROCIG fosters organization, communication and cooperation that are “essential for transcending geographic dispersion, language barriers and cultural unfamiliarity.”\footnote{Yashar, Contesting Citizenship in Latin America: The Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Postliberal Challenge, 71.} There is a careful scaling up that occurs in the work of ASPROCIG, in which the local is continually reasserted as broader connections are built; they are engaging in a “politics of scale” from the bottom up by engaging biodiversity networks and building coalitions with other place-based struggles.\footnote{Escobar, "Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization," 161.} Through ASPROCIG, which has been working with communities in the region for over a quarter of a century,\footnote{Correa, "Interview with Ivan Correa."} new forms of sociopolitical identity, affiliation and engagement have emerged that have little to do with the nation state.

The San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián community organizations’ construction of translocal sociopolitical engagement builds on the globalized dynamic of the food sovereignty movement to transcend and contest Colombia’s nation-state oriented notions of citizenship and political identity. In certain instances, this plays out as direct communication with global actors: “We have participated in exchanges of experiences here with others in the country as well as with others from Honduras, Guatemala,” says Randona.\footnote{Randona, "Interview with Hubert Randona."} The globality of the food sovereignty framework and movement is also an inspiring and uniting force on a more abstract, spiritual level. “We recognize that there are other Afro and indigenous organizations along the same
paths as us,” says Randona, “which gives more strength to our process.” These communities recognize that the problems they are facing are global issues and often intertwined with processes of globalization; to also develop an understanding of the global movements that align with theirs creates a deeper sense of a global sociopolitical community of marginalized peoples, linked in substance and in solidarity in their struggles. Constructing a global realm of political engagement and citizenship through the food sovereignty movement provides small-scale communities with the possibilities of broader and deeper social transformation and the enactment of real alternatives across the globe in which they are active and vocal participants.

The global sociopolitical community of the food sovereignty movement, because it is often constructed as an imagined community built on solidarity and shared principles even without formal associational ties, is inherently prefigurative. “Through connections to others in networks and webs, we believe in the possibility of another world,” reflects Correa. It is this prefigurative and performative quality – essential in a context in which there are not always direct connections between locales of a broader social movement - to which Colin McFarlane draws attention in defining a translocal assemblage, a succinct concept for the food sovereignty framework. “Assemblage does more than emphasise a set of connections between sites in that it draws attention to history, labour, materiality and performance. Assemblage points to reassembling and disassembling, to dispersion and transformation, processes often overlooked in network accounts.”

75 Ibid.
76 Correa, "Interview with Ivan Correa."
translocality of the food sovereignty framework that the community organizations of ASPROCIG are constructing, there is a constant negotiation of influences, local and global, in the articulation of identities, principles and strategies for engagement and empowerment. For a people that have felt so consistently alienated, ignored and harmed by the nation, and excluded from the political imaginary of the nation-state, this construction of a globalized notion of sociopolitical community that intrinsically valorizes and prioritizes their local actions and knowledges is a truly empowering force.

Perhaps the most radical reconceptualization of sociopolitical community is the community organizations’ construction of environmental citizenship through their food sovereignty work. Appeals to principles of justice, through normative conceptions of citizenship, and attempts to institutionalize La Via Campesina’s calls to rights fail to enact systemic change and continue to leave marginalized actors, those at the center of the food sovereignty movement, vulnerable and excluded. In translocal environmental citizenship, an alternative imagined community is constructed in which “nature and socio-political subjectivity are mutually constitutive nodes in complex networked assemblages of actors, discourses and biophysical flows.” Environmental citizenship is an emancipatory form of political community that is sovereign, though not necessarily coterminous with nation-states, and is radically strategic in exploring alternative modes of the governance of ecological commons in ways that “enable both local autonomy and institutional

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accountability.” People in San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián construct this translocal environmental citizenship through their articulation of their deep connection to the land, as its benefactors and its protectors. “This work reminds us of the importance of the land, our connection to the land,” states Paloma. Similarly, Zuñiga says, “As Afros and indigenous people, we are the protectors of the land.” In articulating this connection to the land through their food sovereignty projects, these community organizations construct a sociopolitical community directly in relation to the environment, as opposed to other bounded regions, such as the nation-state. This environmental citizenship also builds a responsibility towards and stewardship of the environment beyond normal institutional frameworks. Such alternative forms emerging out of environmental citizenship have even been adopted by local-level state mechanisms of environmental protectionism. The San Nicolas de de Bari and San Sebastián community organizations’ food sovereignty work integrally orient these community members toward a translocal environmental citizenship because it positions their sociopolitical actions and engagements in a context that is fundamentally based in local, ecological work while also explicitly recognizing and engaging with the broader dynamics of the food system, on the national and international level. Food sovereignty practices highlight and transgress boundaries and borders that limit the role of marginalized peoples in food systems and allow them to develop their sociopolitical community in an alternative realm, that of their environment.

80 Analiese Richard, “‘Sin Maíz No Hay País”: Citizenship and Environment in Mexico’s Food Sovereignty Movement,” ibid., 63; 74.
81 Paloma, “Interview with Candida Paloma.”
82 Zuñiga, “Interview with Yalila Paloma Zuñiga.”
83 Correa, “Interview with Ivan Correa.”
VI. Critical Reflections on Nasa Sociopolitical Constructions

The construction of alternative forms of translocal political engagement through the food sovereignty framework, while empowering for marginalized peoples in many ways, also presents significant challenges, contradictions and constraints. For one, the demand for recognition by, and resources from, the nation-state system is, in some ways, contradictory to, and possibly hindering of, the simultaneous attempts at constructing alternative translocal frameworks of sociopolitical identity and engagement. Can appeals to the state for rights and resources by members of ASPROCG in their attempts to realize their food sovereignty projects coexist with alternative, transgressive methodologies? While increased involvement with nation-state oriented politics could lead to greater state control over local actions, thus infringing on the potential for transformative food sovereignty, strategic appropriation and reciprocative engagement by small-scale communities with the state can challenge and hinder such control. In such circumstances, “subaltern groups tend to appropriate aspects of the institutions, procedures and discourses that constitute the pillars of hegemony, and put these to use in ways that reflect their interests experiences and ambitions.”

Moreover, in the contemporary globalized context in which these community organizations are carrying out their work, it is inconceivable that they would not be engaging with the state. Indeed, engagement with the state is essential to asserting themselves on a broader level and deepening the institutional impact of their work. As

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such, this engagement should be carried out carefully and dynamically so that it does not reinforce the alienating and restrictive paradigms of normative nation-state political frameworks, increasing the vulnerability of marginalized peoples. If engagement with the state is inevitable, ASPROCIIG and its local associations must construct a groundwork for this engagement that also allows for the expression of alternative frameworks of sociopolitical identity engagement.

The articulation of such mindful and reflexive praxis in the engagement with the state needs further development by the community organizations of San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián. Although many individuals in these communities express their frustrations with the state, and their simultaneous grassroots efforts to realize changes for themselves, there is a lack of critical analysis of the intersections of these dynamics, and the role of the state in realizing food sovereignty projects. Engaging with development demands engagement in “the struggle for power to define what is understood by ‘needs’ and to devise means to meet them.” While these community members who express their grievances and frustrations have clear understandings of the issues they face, they are sometimes at a loss to define realistic, pragmatic long-term mechanisms for their revitalization, leaving them vulnerable to state-driven development initiatives that exclude their ideas and strategies.

For Zuñiga to state that there is no real political dialogue and that politics is “only for people who have a lot of knowledge, who are familiar with the system, or

have money," a notion that is echoed throughout these communities, while indicative of the people’s legitimate sentiments, such notions can be further disempowering and contribute to the “bloated body” of the capitalist nation-state. There is a dangerous tendency to flatten and magnify the nation-state, making it more difficult to critically engage with. Social movements often regard the state as an “apparatus dominated by ruling elites, which are opposed to the interests of the majority.” The state is perceived as a single, fixed enemy, distinct from the people, indeed the counterpoint to their struggle, even as they make demands of it. In order to critically engage with the state, members of these communities must develop dynamic understandings of the state in which its unfixed, illusory character and the multi-actor, internally-divergent nature are recognized. A more comprehensive perception of the state allows for an awareness of, and affiliation to, the range of actors that construct it and facilitates the inclusion of alternative forms of sociopolitical activity, which these community organizations are creating, in notions of civil society and politics. Through this critical development, the community organizations may more effectively engage with the state in a more egalitarian, dialogic process of exchange and influence, while simultaneously constructing their alternative frameworks of sociopolitical identity and engagement.

The construction of such alternatives also raises the possibility for further reduction of direct engagement with the dominant political system of the state,

87 Zuñiga, "Interview with Yalila Paloma Zuñiga."
89 Boden, "Neoliberalism and Counter-Hegemony in the Global South: Reimagining the State," 88.
limiting the potential for food sovereignty projects to actively transform the state and increasing the vulnerability of the peoples involved. The reduction of the state’s role in welfare and services and increasing economic inequality under neoliberalism, along with the ever-increasing rise of development initiatives has produced a new form of governmentality dominated by NGOs, aid agencies, international bodies, and other non-state actors,92 a governmentality with increased layers of subjugation but decreased accountability and consistency. As Zuñiga states, “In the absence of the state, we are creating our own places of politics.”93 This may create the possibilities for empowerment and assertion in new sociopolitical realms, but it also allows the state to abdicate responsibility for its citizens and promotes further neoliberal privatization of social services.94 When the communities of the Pacific Region develop their own mechanisms for survival and empowerment outside of the framework of the state, the government is further disincentivized to provide resources, conform to legal accords, or recognize these communities as part of the national community, as citizens of the nation-state.

Additionally, the rejection of state-based notions of political engagement, and thus rights, requires turning to other frameworks for the bases of rights, which the food sovereignty framework does not sufficiently address. In contesting notions of the state’s ultimate authority, “food sovereignty paradoxically displaces one sovereign, but remains silent about the others. To talk of a right to anything, after all, summons up a number of preconditions which food sovereignty, because of its radical

92 Boden, "Neoliberalism and Counter-Hegemony in the Global South: Reimagining the State," 88.
93 Zuñiga, "Interview with Yalila Paloma Zuñiga."
character, undermines.” The rights framework that those involved in food sovereignty work tend to turn to is that of La Via Campesina. While La Via Campesina is built on principles of democratic, dynamic engagement that facilitate inclusion and change, this is not enough to facilitate the concretization of rights toward the full realization of such alternative sociopolitical realms. Patel reminds us that, “If we talk about food sovereignty, we talk about rights, and if we do that, we must talk about ways to ensure that those rights are met, across a range of geographies, by everyone, in substantive and meaningful ways.” Without further development of the deepening and broadening of preconditions for rights in various settings, the construction of alternative sociopolitical realms may leave already marginalized peoples further vulnerable to dispossession and destruction.

The possibility of further displacement and erasure has dangerous potential for these marginalized communities. This rejection from the national imaginary allows for what Hannah Arendt sees as a total alienation: “the loss of home and political status [could] become identical with expulsion from humanity altogether….the loss of a community willing and able to guarantee any rights whatsoever.” The translocal sociopolitical realm created in the food sovereignty movement, while empowering and mobilizing in many regards, may also be susceptible to catastrophic weakness because of its un-institutionalized, even anti-institutionalized, position. In a critique of transnational citizenship, Jonathan Fox writes that “Transnational civil society actors are constructing new kinds of membership, but do they involve rights and responsibilities that are sufficiently clear

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95 Patel, “Food Sovereignty,” 668.  
96 Ibid., 671.  
to count as transnational citizenship? Or are the boundaries of both the concept and the actors themselves so difficult to pin down that transnational citizenship is watered down by its very breadth?98 These questions highlight the dangers of placing too much weight in empowerment through an unfixed and under-recognized sociopolitical framework, even as it provides such transformative potential. The response, then, must be for actors to continue to articulate and deepen their notions of translocal sociopolitical identity and engagement through a range of approaches on an array of scales and interrogate its foundations to further develop concrete manifestations of its potential.

Finally, it is essential to recognize that the San Nicolás de Bari and San Sebastián community organizations’ food sovereignty practices and activism, and their construction of alternative sociopolitical frameworks, are taking place in a context of extreme intervention, destruction, negligence and violence. An analysis of the agency and empowerment of these organizations must fully recognize the extreme challenges that they face. Marginalized peoples “exist as a supplement to the national; subjects are rarely fully stateless, but bear the imprint of state power on their subsequent movements.”99 There are very real theoretical and material dangers of suggesting subaltern agency where it is so intensely repressed and withheld, as such assumptions can often leave the subaltern actors open to further exploitation and

98 It is important to note that Fox uses the language of “transnational” here, as opposed to “translocal.” While there are many similarities between the concepts, transnationality does not recognize the central importance of the local in its analysis, and focuses less on the politics of scale. All the same, this is an important set of questions to ask of translocal citizenship and I believe that the same potential weaknesses lie in notions of translocality.

violence. In the context of Black women’s activism in the Colombian Pacific Region, Asher notes that “Privileging the autonomy of culture or gender underestimates the degree to which the Network’s activities are shaped through and against the discourses of the new political economic interventions and ethnocultural politics in the region.”\textsuperscript{100} There is increasing intervention on all sides: state and non-state resources for projects, but also increased presence of multinational development projects, armed forces and drug activities, and escalated violence and displacement. In such a context, marginalized peoples’ activism and relation to external forces must not be seen as entirely autonomous nor co-opted.\textsuperscript{101} While Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples are constructing autonomy and sovereignty through food sovereignty, and new alternative conceptions of citizenship separate from the state, they are still very much subjects of the nation-state – the neoliberal state works ever more to simultaneously to alienate and control its subjects. The activism and daily life of these communities is very much shaped and influenced by the practices and discourses of the state. Simultaneously, through their food sovereignty work, the participants in these community organizations are constructing forms of sociopolitical identities and engagement to shape and influence the practices and discourses of the state, as well.

These challenges and dangers that are intrinsic to marginalized peoples’ contestations of normative modes of political engagement and citizenship highlight the importance of comprehensive translocality to their construction and analysis. We cannot imagine Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples crafting new forms of

\textsuperscript{100} Asher, "Ser Y Tener: Black Women's Activism, Development, and Ethnicity in the Pacific Lowlands of Colombia," 32.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 33.
sociopolitical identity and engagement in a decontextualized realm. The lack of state responsibility, resources and democratic involvement with these communities certainly opens up space for alternative possibilities of empowerment. But it is also deeply displacing, physically and spiritually. And while the state is absent in certain regards, it is also very clearly present in others. The globalized, neoliberal state is constantly developing new and subtle mechanisms to exert its control over its subjects. A translocal citizenship thus articulates alternative possibilities from positions of difference that respond to such multifaceted forces through place-making and deep sociopolitical engagement that emphasizes the local as the site of daily activity and locus of development and growth, while working with global dynamics, networks and ideas to broaden and fortify its strengths. People within these communities recognize, more than anyone, the enormous challenges that they face in attempting to maintain their livelihoods, protect their lands, grow their crops, and assert their political and cultural identities. They take on diverse and even divergent approaches in their food sovereignty work, articulating political identity and engagement on a range of scales, in their attempts to contest these challenges and realize their goals.
Conclusion
(Re)planting Seeds for Future Harvests

I began this thesis with both no expectations and many expectations. I arrived in Colombia with few definitive plans. I knew that there were communities and organizations engaged in food sovereignty practices, but had very little clear sense of who they where or what exactly it was that they were doing. In my preconceptions, there was a clear overarching framework to food sovereignty in Colombia. Having spent the past few months reading off and on about the Paro Agrario strikes that had taken place in the fall of 2013 and spring of 2014, I imagined that there was an overt, unified mobilization around food issues throughout the nation. Based on my previous understandings of food sovereignty, I conceived of it as a solidified, while growing, social movement, a sociopolitical organization with a deep ideological discourse.

While these are certainly elements of food sovereignty, I quickly discovered upon arriving in Colombia that this was a very simplistic view. The Paro Agrario had ended by the time I had arrived, and although the Cumbre Agraria summit between the government and a broad range of grassroots organizations and activists had established groundwork for comprehensive agrarian reform, the momentum of such explicit and structured food sovereignty work had faded, especially as the presidential elections, and simultaneous nationwide disappointment and disengagement, took to the sociopolitical stage.

But this did not mean that there were not active and vibrant forms of food sovereignty being constructed and expressed on a daily basis all over the country. Although I was not fully aware of it at the time, I was forced to take a decolonizing approach towards my assumptions about the food sovereignty movement. By
engaging in a subconscious politics of place, and with the very conscious assistance of various activists, academics, farmers and others, it became clear that food sovereignty was not just a long-term social movement or ideological discourse, but rather, and more importantly, a framework of daily practices, found in many diverse, small-scale expressions, towards the fulfillment of basic needs of survival and the construction of transformative notions and realizations of peoples' worlds.

This thesis has explored a broad array of marginalized peoples' expressions of food sovereignty practices and praxes across Colombia. The longer-term forms of social organizing and transnational networking through La Via Campesina and other groups are fundamental components to the food sovereignty framework and to the construction of broader social transformation throughout the world. It is their presence and principles in the food sovereignty framework that enable and expand the translocality that is at the heart of people's engagement with globalization.

But there are other studies of La Via Campesina and food sovereignty as a transnational social movement. There are few in-depth analyses of daily practices of food sovereignty in small-scale communities in the Global South, and definitively fewer concerning campesino, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples in contemporary Colombia. This thesis has sought to remedy that, planting a decolonizing, translocal approach to the analysis of subaltern actors and their engagement with agri-food systems, globalization and a whole array of issues in their enactment of food sovereignty. As this thesis has demonstrated, it is from small-scale, place-based practices that food sovereignty emerges, becoming a broader, transformational, translocal force for the engagement of marginalized peoples in a
globalized world and the construction of alternatives within and to that world. Within the confounding spatialities of globalization, and the complex dynamics of food sovereignty as a global and place-based movement and framework, it is a politics of difference and politics of place that makes visible the simultaneously prefigurative and pragmatic alternative practices that exist throughout Colombia. Such a perspective enables the revelation of such alternatives and transformations throughout the world.

In addition to the many external forces that continue to marginalize campesinos, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, there are structural challenges within their practices and discourses. For one, lack of full popular participation in workshops and trainings undermines the validity of the grassroots foundations of radical pedagogy. Secondly, claims to alternative political practices paradoxically appeal to liberal systems of rights and representations. Additionally, producers in alternative economic frameworks often invoke hollow and misappropriated rhetoric of the “natural,” as well as the “local,” that obscures environmental and market complexities. Furthermore, the occasional nature of farmers markets and similar events does not create sufficient momentum for sustainable and structural change. And finally, the failure to recognize the role of women and feminism in food sovereignty ignores core perspectives towards comprehensive transformation. While these issues do not completely invalidate the potential for transformative action, they are significant limitations that demand further negotiation in the development of food sovereignty.
In the progression of globalization and neoliberal capitalism toward greater degrees of placelessness and abstraction, inclusive and effective approaches to engagement, contestation, and insurrection are increasingly grounded in the corporal. In many ways, there is nothing more corporal than food. We depend on it for survival, for growth, for the vitality of our mental and physical health, and we engage with it on a daily basis. Food has the power to bring people together on local and global scales, whether socially, culturally, economically or politically, that few other concepts or substances have. It is this fundamental groundedness and translocality from which food sovereignty has grown and continues to grow.

After spending days with Alexander Fernández, carrying on long conversations about food, politics and soccer, attending workshops and meetings, staying at his family's home, driving through the countryside, and observing the day-to-day work of FundeCIMA, it was time for me to leave Colombia. While driving me to a bus station so that I could head back to Bogotá briefly before flying home to the United States, Fernández and I reflected on the past few days, the things I had learned over the course of my five weeks of research, the things he had learned over the course of his many years working with CIMA. Before dropping me off, Fernández reiterated a point he made often in our conversations, one that many others had emphasized in conversations and interviews. "The discourse of food sovereignty, yes it is important. But it is nothing without practice," Fernández says, "It is the practice, every day, of food sovereignty that is critical. It is practice and praxis that create food sovereignty."\(^1\)

\(^1\) Alexander Fernández, interview by Elijah Stevens, June 22, 2014, Popayán, Colombia.
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